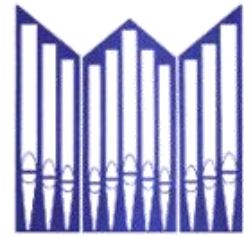


## Chester & North-East Wales Organists' & Choirmasters' Association

Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists

[www.cnewoca.org.uk](http://www.cnewoca.org.uk)



### Newsletter April 2025

As Easter approaches, it is a busy time for church musicians, with extra services and special seasonal music to enrich the liturgy (of whatever style). It all takes planning, coordination with clergy and others and often extra rehearsals. It can be very rewarding but also perhaps a little stressful! James Runcie's book *The Great Passion* is a fictional account of life in the Bach household during the preparation of first performance of the St Matthew Passion. You might find reading this brings a new perspective to things! (ISBN 978-1408885543)

This edition of the newsletter includes a report about our March "Come and Sing" event and details of the remaining meetings of the 2024/2025 season. Your committee is busy developing the programme for 2025/2026 and we would welcome any input you may have. Would you like to organise an event for us (with help from others)?

If you would like to write something for the newsletter, then please send it to us, we'd love to hear from you. The deadline for the next edition is the end of April.



International  
Organ Day

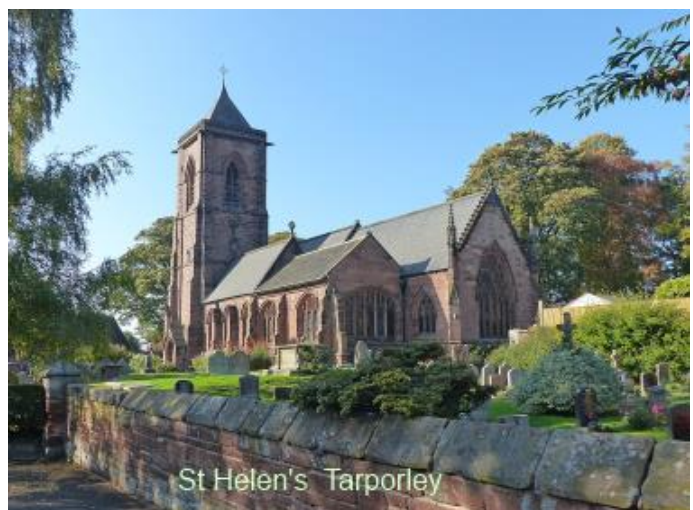


**April 26<sup>th</sup> 2025**

International Organ Day returns on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025, encouraging organists around the world to celebrate the organ and organ music. *So come along to our meeting on that day!*

### **Our next meeting: Saturday 26th April 1:00pm – 4:30pm** **St Helen's Tarporley and St Boniface Bunbury**

We shall begin our visit at St Helen's Tarporley at 1:00pm where the organist, Chas Harden, will give us some details about the instrument and play for us before we have an opportunity to try the organ for ourselves. The 2/25 Willis / Jardine / Fletcher organ is described on the NPOR [N04432](#).



At St Helen's, 26<sup>th</sup> April is the Spring Afternoon Tea in the Done Room (church hall). This could probably enhance the afternoon as we may have extra Afternoon Tea visitors popping in to listen. And, for a small fee, we can enjoy tea, coffee and cake in the hall, raising money for church funds.

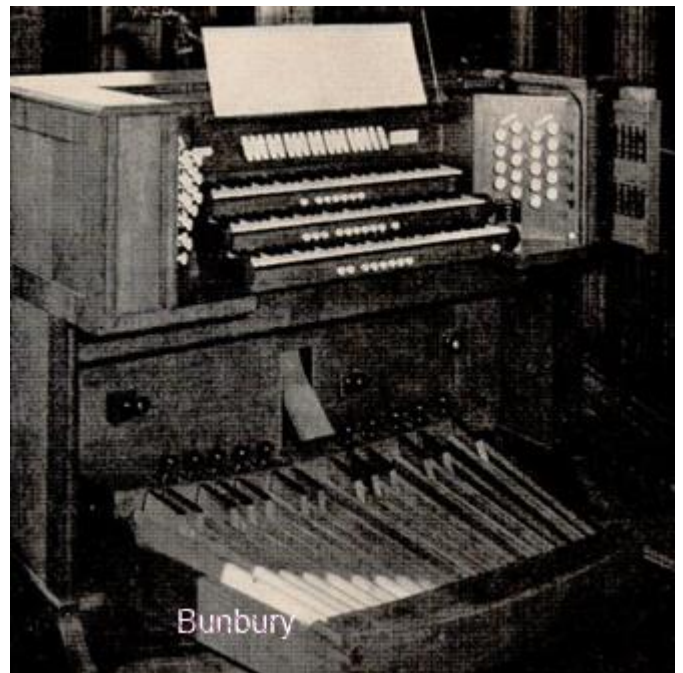


We'll leave Tarporley for the short drive to Bunbury where we shall visit St Boniface church to see and play the three manual and pedal organ. We expect to arrive at St Boniface at about 3:00pm. This organ started life as a P. Conacher (Huddersfield) organ and was rebuilt by Willis (Willis IV) in 1968. The specification may be found on the NPOR: [D01311](#). (There may have been some work carried out after the Willis rebuild.)

***St Helen's Church, High Street, Tarporley, CW6 0AG.***

***St Boniface Church, Wyche Road, Bunbury, Cheshire, CW6 9PN***

*St Boniface is situated in Higher Bunbury, approx. 400m from the village centre, next to the Dysart Arms. There is ample parking nearby.*



## **Our March meeting**

Our meeting on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March was attended by more than 120 people! More than 90 singers came along to sing Sir John Stainer's "The Crucifixion" at Hamilton Street Methodist Church in Chester and some 30+ came along to listen.

We were very fortunate to have two outstanding soloists: Philip Cartwright (who incidentally is an organ builder in Newcastle-under-Lyme) was our tenor soloist and David Whitley from Chester was our bass soloist. Both soloists very convincingly sang the roles given to them in Stainer's score. David sang the words of Christ beautifully, conveying the differing moods, from the disappointed, "Could ye not watch with me one brief hour", to the triumphant, "coming in the clouds of heaven" and the terrifying narrative, "There was darkness over all the land...". The tenor soloist is the narrator for most of the piece, and Philip made an

excellent job of this, keeping us interested throughout our journey through the story. The tenor solo “King ever glorious” rang out wonderfully in the church. The tenor and bass duet was sung with care and sensitivity: It is too easy to over sentimentalise this piece – Philip and David got this just right. Our organist, John Evans, did a great job with the organ part. John used all the colours of the well-resourced instrument to “illustrate” the music: there were delicate flutes, strings and solos stops, deep roaring reeds, and gate-flinging trumpets and tubas. John’s playing complemented the soloists and choir and completed the performance with the organ’s own part.

The choir was so good. With “Come and Sing” events you never really know until the day if you are going to have only one tenor and 30 basses, or twenty altos and 5 sopranos. Fortunately the balance was pretty good (something like 40 sopranos, 20 altos, 15 tenors and 20 basses). At our rehearsal (just before the performance), we began by singing “Cross of Jesus...” to warm up and get used to singing together in the church. We made sure everyone could see the conductor and checked that everyone sang at the speeds being set (with some silly games). At the rehearsal, we sang through the choir items, paying attention to the performance nuances given by the conductor. We looked at *some of* the four-part men’s phrases in the solo narrative (the words from the cross). (One was not rehearsed, and caused the conductor some anxiety at the performance, however, it was sung perfectly.) Three of the choir sang the “voices in the choir” parts in the narrative: thanks to Greg Yates, Nigel James and Richard Morgan-Jones for performing these short phrases so competently.

There was a short break between the rehearsal and performance for refreshments.

After being welcomed to the church (by John Evans), the performance began. There was an appropriate level of tension and concentration as Philip began “And they came to a place...”. David sang the challenge: “Could ye not watch with me...” and then the choir came in with a pianissimo “Jesu, Lord Jesu...”. We were off. The story had begun. The organ solo introduction to “The Procession to Calvary” brought us to a very enthusiastic “Fling wide the gates”. As Stainer’s fanfare-like climaxes faded away, the hymn “Cross of Jesus” began with calm, smooth reassurance, contrasting with a very powerful “From the ‘holy, holy, holy’” verse, giving the audience a chance to sing with us. The iconic “God so loved the world” was sung with subtlety and precision: very moving. The choir’s singing in “The appeal of the crucified”, with its recurring but varying phrase “is it nothing to you”, took us through all the musical (and spiritual) emotions of the Crucifixion: the huge (and for Stainer) dissonant “Crucify” and the very personal “O come unto me...”. The final solo (with the men’s chorus) ends “And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost”. The silence in the building at the end of this

was unforgettable. The final hymn, “All for Jesus”, was an explosion of joyous singing and brought the performance to a magnificent end.

The whole event was most enjoyable: many members of the choir asked would we be doing something similar again?

The event was organised by the Association’s committee, but particular thanks must be given to Angela and John Evans for the detailed organisation of this “Come and Sing”. Thanks to the churches who lent us copies of the score and to Hamilton Street Methodist Church for hosting the event. I had the privilege of conducting the rehearsal and performance and hope that the direction was clear and that everyone enjoyed the day, I certainly did!

The Association made no charge for taking part in the event and covered the costs from our funds. At the event a collection was taken for Christian Aid, and a magnificent total of £757 was collected and has been sent to Christian Aid

**Iain Stinson**





## Seen on Facebook...



Melanie Plumley wrote  
 "...this lovely little Alexander  
 Young organ has helpful note  
 names as part of re-topped  
 keys - in case I forget!"

## Future Meetings this season

<p><b>Saturday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:00pm</b>  <b>St Mary and Christ Church, Llanfairfechan</b></p> <p>St Mary and Christ Church  Aber Road  Llanfairfechan  LL33 0HN</p>		<p>Our May meeting will be a visit to the Historic Grade I Hill organ in St Mary and Christ Church, Llanfairfechan. This III/39 instrument is located on the north side of the chancel and speaks boldly into the church. It is regarded by many as the best organ in North Wales. NPOR: <a href="#">N11699</a></p> <p>Before the meeting, some members are gathering for lunch at noon at The Beach Pavilion Café, Promenade, Llanfairfechan, LL33 0BY. Everyone is welcome to join us.</p>
<p><b>Saturday June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1:30pm</b>  <b>Christ Church Birkenhead AGM and visit to the Father Willis organ</b></p> <p>Christ Church,  Bessborough Rd, Oxton,  Prenton, CH43 5RW  <a href="http://christchurchbirkenhead.net">http://christchurchbirkenhead.net</a></p>		<p>Our June meeting will begin with our short Annual Meeting where we shall hear reports from our officers and elect the committee for 2025-2026. We shall then see, hear and play the Historic Grade 1 Father Willis organ. The organ was installed in 1860 in the West Gallery (II/25) and in 1881 it was moved to its current location in the south east chamber. In 1888 the Choir Organ was added (all by Willis). In 1926 and again in 1948 the Willis firm overhauled the organ and in 1977 Rushworth and Dreaper cleaned and overhauled the instrument. NPOR: <a href="#">R01983</a></p>
<p><b>Saturday July 19<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>An organ crawl around three city centre Chester Churches</b></p> <p>We shall start our meeting at Wesley Methodist Church at 1:00pm.</p>	<p>We are going to visit three churches to see and play their interesting organs...</p> <p><b>Wesley Methodist Church</b>  St John Street  Chester CH1 1DA  3/29 J.J Binns <a href="#">NPOR D04853</a></p> <p><b>St John the Baptist</b>  Vicar's Lane  Little St. John Street  Chester CH1 1SN  3/27 Hill <a href="#">NPOR N04296</a></p> <p><b>St Werburgh's</b>  Grosvenor Park Rd  Chester, CH1 1QJ  3/36 J.J. Binns / George Sixsmith <a href="#">NPOR E00905</a></p>	

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## Live music!

### Chester Cathedral organ recitals

#### Weekly Organ Recitals

Organ Recitals are free with a retiring collection and no ticket is required. The suggested donation for the recital is £5. The recitals take place on **Thursdays** and start at 1:10pm.

10 <sup>th</sup> April	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
17 <sup>th</sup> April	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
24 <sup>th</sup> April	Graham Eccles (St Asaph)
1 <sup>st</sup> May	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
8 <sup>th</sup> May	John Kitchen (Edinburgh)
15 <sup>th</sup> May	Benjamin Chewter (London)
22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Lyndon Hills (Nantwich)
29 <sup>th</sup> May	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)

Details of other recitals from <https://chestercathedral.com/visit/organ-recitals>

**Details of Chester Cathedral Grand Organ NPOR:** [E01969](#)

#### Sponsor a Recitalist

If you would like to sponsor a recitalist, please get in touch with Philip Rushforth at [philip.rushforth@chestercathedral.com](mailto:philip.rushforth@chestercathedral.com) (01244 500974)

### Liverpool St George's Hall

**Tuesdays from 12:45pm – 1:30pm.** Tickets (at the door) £5.

**Professor Ian Tracey, Organist to the City of Liverpool.**

15 <sup>th</sup> April	13 <sup>th</sup> May	17 <sup>th</sup> June
15 <sup>th</sup> July	16 <sup>th</sup> September	

**Details of the Willis Organ in St George's Hall may be found on the NPOR** [N01921](#)

### Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1:00pm Professor Iain Tracey.

**Details of the organ may be found at** <https://www.liverpoolphil.com/the-orchestra/liverpool-philharmonic-hall-organ-restoration/>

## Music at Wesley

Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester

### Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts

**12.45pm – 1.35 pm**

*Retiring collection*

8 <sup>th</sup> April	Edward Harris-Brown (Piano)
15 <sup>th</sup> April	Una Pavlovich Alldridge (Violin), Edward Harris-Brown (Piano)
22 <sup>nd</sup> April	Jeremy & Brian Heald (Piano Duet)
29 <sup>th</sup> April	Chetham's School of Music Pianists
6 <sup>th</sup> May	Andrea Kim (Cello), Holly Calder (Piano)
13 <sup>th</sup> May	Adam Davies (Piano)

### Saturday Organ Recitals

**12.45pm – 1.35 pm**

*Retiring Collection*

26 <sup>th</sup> April	Graham Eccles (St Asaph)
17 <sup>th</sup> May	Peter Cooke (St. Francis, Chester)
21 <sup>st</sup> June	Paul Carr (Birmingham)

Details of the Binns organ in the Wesley Centre are at the NPOR [D04853](#).

## Music at Blackburn Cathedral

### Wednesday Concerts

9 <sup>th</sup> April	John Robinson
16 <sup>th</sup> April	Katelyn Emerson
30 <sup>th</sup> April	Olivia Hunt (Soprano), John Hosking (Piano)
7 <sup>th</sup> May	Maximillian Elliot
14 <sup>th</sup> May	Ben Chewter
21 <sup>st</sup> May	Ian Wells (

**The concerts begin at 12:15pm and are free to attend.** Suggested donation £5. Unless stated, all Wednesday concerts feature the iconic Wood/Walker organ.

### Lent Organ Meditations

**This follows Choral Evensong on Sunday and start at around 4.40pm and then at 5.10pm there is an opportunity to discuss the music with the organist.**

13 <sup>th</sup> April	John Hosking (Blackburn Cathedral)
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### Bank Holiday Celebrity Organ Concerts

**Concerts start at 11:00am. Tickets £10 at the door**

Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> April	William Fielding
Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> May	Ian Tracey (Liverpool)
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> May	John Hosking (Blackburn)

Details of the JW Walker / David Wood organ may be found on the NPOR: [E00533](#)

## Bangor Cathedral

Details in the Cathedral's bilingual magazine to be found from

<https://bangorcathedral.churchinwales.org.uk/buchedd/>

Details of the Bangor Cathedral organ may be found on the NPOR: [R01575](#)

## St Asaph Cathedral

Wednesdays at 7:30pm, retiring collection.

2 <sup>nd</sup> April	Graham Eccles
7 <sup>th</sup> May	tba
4 <sup>th</sup> June	Christopher Enston (St Asaph Cathedral)
2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Martin Brown (Bangor Cathedral)
6 <sup>th</sup> August	Ben Bloor (Brompton Oratory, London)
10 <sup>th</sup> September	Alessandro Bianchi (Italy)

Details of the cathedral organ may be found at <https://stasaphcathedral.wales/en/music/the-organ>

[organrecitals.uk](http://organrecitals.uk) lists recitals across the country. You can search for recitals in particular area and register your own recitals, and it's free.

## Mass in Blue

Liverpool Anglican Cathedral Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 7:30pm

This will be an extraordinary musical event as choirs from across the North West, including the esteemed Choir of Liverpool Cathedral, come together to perform Will Todd's renowned Mass in Blue. This dynamic setting of the Latin Mass uniquely blends classical choral singing with the vibrant rhythms and harmonies of jazz.

Experience the power of 250 voices accompanied by a 12-piece traditional jazz ensemble, all under the baton of Will Todd himself, honorary president of our Liturgy and Music Foundation. This promises to be an unforgettable evening of musical brilliance and spiritual upliftment.

In the first half of the concert, the Cathedral Choir will perform a selection of 20th-century choral music with music by Dove, Mathias, Daley and Howells. The Mass in Blue will be performed in the second half of the concert.

Further information at <https://liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/events/mass-in-blue/>

## Hamilton Street Methodist Church, Chester




## Organs on the move...and Generative AI

The large Willis organ formerly in St Peter's (York Place) Brighton has been removed and is being used as the basis of a new instrument for St John's College, Cambridge. The specification of the instrument as it was in St Peter's (IV/47) may be found on the NPOR [N00951](#).

Putting "organ st peter brighton" into a Google search, produced the following Generative AI output.


◆ AI Overview

The pipe organ at St. Peter's Church in Brighton, originally built for the Hampstead Conservatoire of Music by Henry Willis in 1888, was brought to Brighton in 1910 and has since been removed, with parts reused at St. John's College Chapel, Cambridge. 



Trying "new organ st john cambrige" in Google gave more Generative AI:

◆ AI Overview

St. John's College, Cambridge is installing a historic "Father" Henry Willis organ in its chapel, a project that involves relocating the existing Mander organ and restoring the Willis pipe-work, with completion expected by May 2026. 



Here's a more detailed breakdown:

### The Project:


St. John's College is undertaking a major organ project to replace its current Mander organ with a historic Father Willis organ. 

### The Willis Organ:

The Willis organ, built in 1889 for Hampstead Conservatoire and later moved to St. Peter's Church in Brighton, will be restored by Harrison & Harrison Ltd. 

"chester cathedral organ restoration" showed less detail:

◆ AI Overview

Chester Cathedral's grand organ, built in 1876 and rebuilt multiple times, is currently undergoing a full refurbishment and rebuilding, thanks to a £1.4 million grant from the Julia Rausing Trust, ensuring its continued use in worship and music. 



AI might be another useful tool for organ research. **Why not give a try for yourself?**