Chester & North-East Wales
Organists' & Choirmasters' Association
Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists
www.cnewoca.org.uk

Newsletter July 2025

The newsletter for July is being prepared a little earlier than usually because of my holiday. It includes a report of the Annual General Meeting and of our visit to Christ Church Birkenhead. Unfortunately, attendance was rather low at the meeting, but we hope more people will come to our "Organ Crawl" around three Chester churches.

The programme for the 2025/6 season is making good progress and we have some interesting instrument to visit. Details will be presented with the invitation to renew your membership (in late July or early August).

Could you write something for the newsletter? Please send it to us, we'd love to hear from you.

Our next meeting: Saturday July 19th is an "organ crawl" around three city centre Chester Churches. We are going to visit the churches to see and play their interesting organs.

Wesley Methodist Church St John Street Chester CH1 1DA 3/29 J.J Binns NPOR D04853	
St John the Baptist Vicar's Lane Little St. John Street Chester CH1 1SN 3/27 Hill NPOR N04296	

St Werburgh's Grosvenor Park Rd Chester, CH1 1QJ 3/36 J.J. Binns / George Sixsmith NPOR E00905	

We shall start our meeting at Wesley Methodist Church at **1:00pm**. Please be on-time!

Our Annual General Meeting – June 14th 2025

Our AGM was held on Saturday, 14th June at Christ Church, Birkenhead. We are most grateful to the resident organist, Paul Broadhurst, for making us welcome with copious tea, coffee and biscuits.

Nine members attended the AGM and apologies were received from eight members. It was felt that more members might have attended had we chosen a more central venue; this will be borne in mind next year.

The Chairman, Tony Warren, opened the meeting at 1.30pm.

Having dealt with apologies for absence and the minutes of the 2024 AGM, the Treasurer, Raymond Moulton, was asked to present the annual accounts. These showed a small profit, which he attributed to the savings made in postage and printing by most of us receiving our newsletters electronically. Raymond expressed our thanks to David Bird for acting as Independent Examiner.

The meeting agreed unanimously to the addition of the following clause at the end of Section 3 of the Constitution: "Members under the age of 18 years must be accompanied at any Association event by a parent, guardian or responsible adult approved by their parent or guardian." It was further agreed that if parents/guardians are made aware of this requirement when their child joins (and a written record of this is retained by the Membership Secretary) then the responsibility for compliance rests with the parent/guardian.

In his Chairman's Report, Tony Warren commented that it was pleasing to welcome some new members during the year. He noted with sadness, however, the recent death of member Bill Silversides.

Nominations had been received in writing for all the Management Committee Officers and for one Committee Member. There being no volunteers to fill the second Member role, the committee was elected en bloc:

Chairman	Tony Warren
Vice-Chairman	John Evans

General Secretary	Katriona Moulton
Membership Secretary	Angela Evans
Treasurer	Raymond Moulton
Publications Officer	Iain Stinson
Committee Member	Nigel James

David Bird was elected as Independent Examiner for 2025-2026.

New member, Emily Burgess, expressed thanks for the warm welcome and encouragement she and her son, Ralph, had enjoyed since joining the Association.

Tony Warren closed the meeting at 2:01pm and everyone moved to the chancel of Christ Church to hear Paul Broadhurst introduce the Grade 1 listed Father Willis organ.

Katriona Moulton, General Secretary

The Father Willis organ at Christ Church Birkenhead

Paul gave us a detailed history of the instrument and then demonstrated the various tonal colours of which it was capable before finishing with a piece displaying the organ's full dynamic range.

The organ was installed in 1860 in the West Gallery (II/25) and in 1881 it was moved to its current location in the southeast 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: R01983







(Thanks for Brian Moate for the photographs.)

Would you like to play this?

You may know that some organ builders have done other related work. During World War II a few organ builders built aircraft parts and in peacetime some have made fine furniture or worked on other engineering projects. How about this for diversification?


Strand Electric CD controller (c1955)

"This console was used only to change the stage lighting in a theatre. Changes made to only those control channels which had been selected to change by selecting the associated **stopkey,** either manually or magnetically by a memory preset and recalled by the group of 15 round push buttons (**thumb pistons**) at the left-hand side.

This "organ console" remotely controlled banks of resistance dimmers which were connected to motor driven shafts via magnetic clutches. The speed of the motor (and therefore the dimming) was controlled by the operator with a foot pedal (the same as the **'Swell pedal'** on an organ.)

It is not surprising it looks like an organ because all except the fader levers were manufactured for Strand Electric by the **John Compton Organ Company** - crafted would be a better word because each was made by just one man who started by

choosing the timber, made the very intricate memory boxes and did all the interconnection wiring, and signed it internally. The first one was for the Palace Theatre, London, the last for the rebuilt Abbey Theatre, Dublin.


Light Console (c1935)

The forerunner of this system was called the *Light Console*, employing similar technology, but without fader levers to preset precise intermediate intensity levels - this had an organ-type keyboard, but with 12 keys to an 'octave'. These coloured keys were in effect submaster dimmers for the channels controlled by the same coloured stopkeys. As such it was ideal for fast, broad effects. The most famous Light Console was at the London Palladium where it was in full view at the end of the circle.

CNEWOCA Committee Members

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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.

19th June	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
26th June	David Hill MBE (Rutland)
3rd July	Simon Walker (Glenalmond College, Perth)
10th July	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
17th July	Nathan Monk (Oundle recital award winner)
24th July at 6:45pm	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
31st July at 6:45pm	Graham Eccles (St Asaph)

Summer Evening Organ Recitals

From 24th July until 28th August, organ recitals will begin at 6.45pm and last one hour.
The Summer series includes the return of the ***Battle of the Organs*** on Thursday 28th August.
Tickets available from the cathedral admissions desk and chestercathedral.com

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 (01244 500974)

Liverpool Cathedral

Summer Organ Recitals Sundays 4:00pm – 4:45pm
Retiring collection

22nd June	Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral)
6th July	Daniel Bishop (Liverpool Cathedral)
13th July	Edward Carew (Liverpool Cathedral)
20th July	Ian Wells (Liverpool Parish Church)

Details of the Willis Organ in Liverpool Cathedral may be found on the NPOR E00301.
(This does not include the details of the Echo organ.)

Music at Wesley

Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester

Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts
12.45pm – 1.35 pm
Retiring collection

17th June	Yutong Jiang (Violin), Yifan Ma (Piano)
24th June	Lionel Clarke (Cello), Brian Heald (Piano)
1st July	Melvin Chan (Piano)
8th July	Daniel Goharriz (Clarinet), Lauren Turner (Piano)
15th July	Amy Wakefield (Piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals 12.45pm – 1.35 pm
Retiring Collection

21st June	Paul Carr (Birmingham)

Details of the Binns organ in the Wesley Centre are at the NPOR D04853.

Liverpool St George's Hall

Tuesdays from 12:45pm – 1:30pm. Tickets (at the door) £10.

Professor Ian Tracey, Organist to the City of Liverpool.

17th June	15th July	16th September
14th October	18th November	16th December

Details of the Willis Organ in St George's Hall may be found on the NPOR N01921

Music at Blackburn Cathedral

Wednesday Concerts

18th June	John Robinson
25th June	Jonathan Clinch
2nd July	Chris Totney
9th July	John Hosking
16th July	Eira Lynn Jones (Harp)

***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.

Bank Holiday Celebrity Organ Concerts

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

Monday 25th August David Hill

Details of the JW Walker / David Wood organ may be found on the NPOR**: E00533**

Music at St John's Chester

Wednesdays at 1:00pm

18th June	Adam Parish, Piano
25th June	John Evans, Organ
2nd July	William Green, Piano
9th July	John Richards, Guitar
16th July	Friedhelm Flamme, Organ
23rd July	John Evans, Organ
30th July	Jeremy Hagan, Baritone

A collection for Music at St Johns will be taken at door and it is appreciated if you are able to leave a donation via Gift Aid. Refreshments will be available.

Details of the Hill "Coronation" Organ may be found on the NPOR:N04296.

https://stjohnschester.uk/music-at-st-johns/

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.

2nd July	Martin Brown (Bangor Cathedral)
6th August	Ben Bloor (Brompton Oratory, London)
10th September	Alessandro Bianchi (Italy)

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

Victoria Hall in Hanley

We wish to inform you of two exciting concerts which will happen at the Victoria Hall in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent at noon on 19th July and16th August.

The first is by the prodigy Jan Liebermann who is coming to the UK especially to play for us. Listen to him on YouTube! The second is by the prize-winning Charles Francis who has recently received his Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, USA where he studied under Nathan Laube. Again, he can be heard on YouTube.
Details of their programs are on www.victoriahall-organproms.co.uk under Prom Dates. This site also gives the location of the Victoria Hall.

organrecitals.uk lists recitals across the country. You can search for recitals in particular area and register your own recitals, and it's free.



St David's Cathedral

The cathedral's organ was built by Henry Willis in 1883, and had three manuals and thirty-one stops. It was rebuilt by Hill, Norman and Beard in 1953, when no significant tonal alterations were made, but the instrument was housed in a new case by the architect Alban Caroe. This was smaller than the previous 'pipe-rack' by Willis, which meant that almost the entire pedal organ had to be moved off the screen to a new enclosure in the South Transept. This created enormous problems of balance, with these pipes too loud in the quire and not loud enough in the Nave. Further work took place by Rushworth & Dreaper in 1980, and Percy Daniel & Co in 1986 and 1989.

The organ was dismantled in September 1998 and underwent a major restoration and rebuild by Harrison & Harrison of Durham between 1998 and 2000. A new case of limed oak (incorporating parts of the old east case) once again houses almost the entire pedal organ on screen, the Willis Choir removed in 1980 was re-instated, and with a few other additions in the style of Father Willis, the new organ now has four manuals and fifty-four stops.
NPOR R00087