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

Newsletter September 2025

This newsletter provides you with information about our future meetings and details of organ concerts and recitals in our area. There is a report on the OrganFest at St Michael's Shotwick and a most interesting article from Katriona Moulton's brother on his cycle ride to raise funds towards the cost of repairing the organ at his church.

Membership renewals are underway. Have you renewed your membership yet? Contact Angela Evans (our membership secretary) if you have any questions about renewing your membership or joining us.

The programme for the first part of the 2025-2026 season is included in this newsletter. The committee are continuing to confirm what looks like another very exciting season. If you have any suggestions about future events, please let any committee member know. If there are special organ or choral events in our area which you know about, then please let me know so I can include them in our future newsletters.

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter, so if you are able, please consider writing a short article for us. We'd love to include your review of a piece of music or a recording, a history of the organ you play or know well, some hints and tips you want to share about playing the organ, details of interesting instruments you have come across in your travels near and far, and anything else of "organic" or choral interest. We can cope with most formats of material (including handwritten material). Please send your contributions to the Publications Officer.

Iain Stinson

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Our next meeting: Saturday 13th September 3:00pm St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury



We are visiting Shrewsbury to see, play and hear this very fine three manual, 42 stop organ which is in the west gallery of the church. The organ started as a 1904 Norman & Beard organ was rebuilt by Nicholson in 1963 and by Harrison & Harrison in 1985, 1990 & 2011. (NPOR N01397). We hope the organist Tony Pinel will be able to play for us and tell us about this organ before members can try it themselves.

The address of the church is St Chad's Terrace, Shrewsbury, SY1 1JX. The church is only a short walk from the Park and Ride, *Shoplatch* stop (but it is uphill). We may be able to arrange a couple of parking places near the church for any member who has difficulty walking: please contact Katriona Moulton. Please note the revised starting time.

OrganFest: St Michael's Church, Shotwick *Saturday 9 August 2025*

This Festival was the brainchild of Rosemary Taylor, church warden at St Michael's, who has liaised with CNEWOCA through Katriona to bring this event to fruition. It is the conclusion of a project undertaken by Cartwright and Cartwright to clean all the pipework. We were welcomed by Revd John Coyne who led us in an opening prayer. Rosemary then briefly introduced proceedings.

Eight organists participated offering items to create a diverse programme. Four well known hymns were also sung giving the audience a chance to participate.

Brian Moate started the proceedings with a Voluntary in A minor by John Stanley. Two of Elgar's Vesper voluntaries followed and the set was completed by the Prelude and Fugue in G minor BWV 558 (attrib. J S Bach).
Kate Markey accompanied the first hymn: Love Divine, all loves excelling (Blaenwern). The congregation were in good, rich voice.

Refreshments followed kindly provided by friends and members of the Church. There were two further interludes allowing time to socialise as well.

Greg Yates set began with a quiet reflective piece by Percy Whitlock: Fidelis, one of his Four Extemporisations followed by the vigorous Chorale Prelude Valet will ich dir geben by J S Bach, BWV 735.



Nigel James continued with Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565. Following that Nigel played Thiman's Meditation on the Irish Tune (Slane). A point of interest is that 2025 marks the 50th Anniversary of the death of Eric Thiman, who played at the City Temple, London (once

colloquially known as the Cathedral of the Free Church). That led us smoothly into the singing of Be thou my vision.



Abhay Prabhakar, Junior Organ Scholar at Bangor Cathedral began with Five Short Chorale Preludes by Peter Hurford, characterful pieces that each display a different mood. The vigorous and joyful Chorale and Chorale Prelude on Christ Lag in Todesbanden BWV 625 came next. His set concluded with the lovely Prière à Notre-Dame by Léon Boëllmann. Abhay then accompanied us in the singing of Alleluia, Sing to Jesus (Hyfrodol) with a last verse reharmonisation by Edward Bairstow.

Our youngest member, *Ralph Burgess*, Organ Scholar at Birkenhead School then delighted us with his sensitive playing of Herzlich tut mich verlangen (BWV 727). Two contrasting trumpet tunes in G minor and D by Jean-Paul Verpeaux followed, making use of the fine Cornopean stop. We were then treated to the first movement of Concerto del Signor Meck by Johann Gottfried Walther, making excellent use of the contrast between Great and Swell.



Ralph's mother, *Emily Burgess*, who has only been learning the organ for five months then played two works from the Eight Little Preludes and Fugues attributed to J S Bach: Prelude no. 1 in C major (BWV 553) and the Prelude and Fugue no. 5 in G major.

The freelance organist and teacher, *Ken Fayle* then brought us a work by a figure who influenced Bach, Dietrich Buxtehude – Prelude and Fugue in D major BUXWV 139. A rather lovely gentle prelude on Brother James' Air by Christopher Tambling followed. Ken also accompanied the last rousing hymn 'And did those feet in ancient time' (Jerusalem).

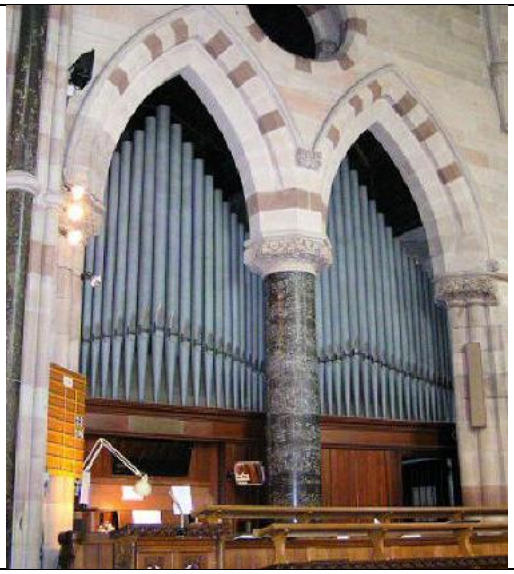
Kate Markey brought the OrganFest to a conclusion with the celebratory and cheerful Tuba Tune in D major (op. 15) by Craig Sellar Lang.

Although there wasn't a headcount it is estimated that 90-100 attended and the event raised £500 for St Michael, Shotwich towards the cost of the work done on the organ.

A very enjoyable afternoon for performers and those that came to listen.

Nigel James

Programme for the 2025 season

Saturday 13th September 3pm St Chad's Church St Chad's Terrace Shrewsbury SY1 1JX		We are visiting Shrewsbury to see, play and hear this very fine three manual, 42 stop organ which is in the west gallery of the church. The organ started as a 1904 Norman & Beard organ was rebuilt by Nicholson in 1963 and by Harrison & Harrison in 1985, 1990 & 2011. (NPOR N01397)
Saturday 18th October Llandudno	We are visiting two churches in Llandudno. Ray Stythe-Jones will be our host for the visits to both of these instruments.	
1:00pm Holy Trinity Llandudno LL30 2RH		The organ in Holy Trinity is a large three manual Rushworth and Dreaper instrument completed in 1972. It is origin is a Hill organ from 1873 which was rebuilt by John Stringer in 1885c with new action. (NPOR R01578 and N11691)
3:00pm St Paul's Church Craig-y-don LL30 1TP		The organ in St Paul's has a *BIOS Historic Organ Certificate (grade II).* It is a three manual and pedal organ with 31 stops built by Wm Hill & Son in 1920, with a major overhaul in 1969 by Hill Norman and Beard. Some work was also carried out in 1938. (NPOR N11694)

Saturday 1st November Bangor	Joe Cooper from Bangor University and the Cathedral will be our host for our visit to Bangor. We shall be visiting two very different style instruments.	
1:00pm Bangor Cathedral	 	The origins of the organ may go back a Samuel Green instrument of 1779, but most certainly go back to work started by Wm Hill & Sons in 1871 and completed with a rebuild in 1896. Hill, Norman & Beard worked on the organ in 1929 and Rushworth & Dreaper cleaned it in 1935. The John Compton Organ Co. rebuilt the organ in 1953/4 and in 2007 David Wells (Liverpool) rebuilt the organ with new electric actions. The organ is now a substantial 78 stop cathedral organ! We are very fortunate to be able to hear and play this instrument. (NPOR: R01575)
3:00pm Bangor Univeristy Prichard-Jones Hall		The organ in the Prichard-Jones Hall is a 1973 Hill, Norman & Beard instrument with the pipework arranged on the Werkprinzip style. This dates from when some British builders were building neo-baroque style organs (albeit with electric action), often with rather high and somewhat shrill sounding mixtures. In 2010 David Wells (Liverpool) rebuilt the organ. (NPOR N11677)

2026 **Monday 19th** **January** 7:00pm Liverpool Philharmonic Hall		The organ in the Philharmonic Hall was built in 1939 by Rushworth and Dreaper, who carried out further work in 1983. David Wells (Liverpool) worked on the instrument in 2004 and in 2022 Henry Willis & Sons carried out a major restoration of the instrument. The specification of the organ may be found on the Liverpool Phil website. The organ has 66 speaking stops over four manuals and pedals. This is a very special opportunity for members of the association to visit this fine instrument.

Fundraising cycle for the organ built by Robert Postill of York



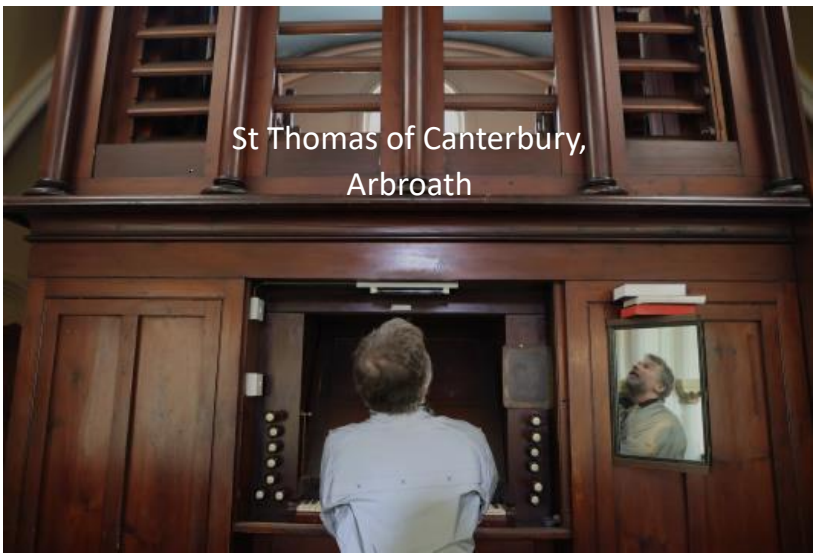
St John the Evangelist in Killingworth was consecrated in 1869, but the building was never finished, which is very obvious when the church is viewed from the north; but a happy result of the money running out is the organ not being stuck in a chamber but sits at the west end where it can speak freely. As part of a reordering of the church to provide a kitchenette, toilets, proper disabled access and heating that works a major project was launched (see https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp3gy0p32mvo), which includes restoring the organ.

The organ is a two manual and pedal Postill of York organ with a BIOS Grade II Historic Organ certificate (NPOR N13280). A summary of the specification is Grt 8,8,8,4, 4, 2⅔, 2, trm, Sw 8,8, 8,8, 4, 8, 8 Ped 16. S->G, G->P, S->P. Some of the

Swell organ 8ft stops are from TC and the action is mechanical. A summary of the organ (in lay terms), a description of the current state of the organ and some details about Robert Postill can be found at https://killingworthparish.org.uk/organ-history/.

In a possible moment of madness, I suggested to fund raising committee I could cycle to all of the remaining Robert Postill organs having read Dr Max Elliot's PhD thesis on York based organ builders (https://www.yorkorganhistory.co.uk/). I've given a very abbreviated description of the various rides, or this article would go on for several pages! On a training run (and an attempt to work out how my new cycle computer worked) I realised it was turning into a sort of pilgrimage.

The first run took 3 days to reach St Thomas of Canterbury, Arbroath. This included a painful hailstorm just before Berwick-upon-Tweed, a very scary 5 mins on the A1 near Cocksburnpath, getting lost in Edinburgh, crossing the old Forth Road bridge and a long ride across Fife which got increasingly hard as I battled tiredness to the Tay bridge (I kept going with a combination of chocolate and the prayer of others). I made it to the hotel 30 mins before they stopped serving food. Day 3 was a gentle 15 miles to Arbroath and a go on the organ which was a joy to play and gave me hope for what Killingworth will sound like with the organ restored.


St Thomas of Canterbury, Arbroath

I was met by my daughter and her boyfriend who gave me a lift up to Aberdeen for a family weekend (both our children sang at St Machar's cathedral)
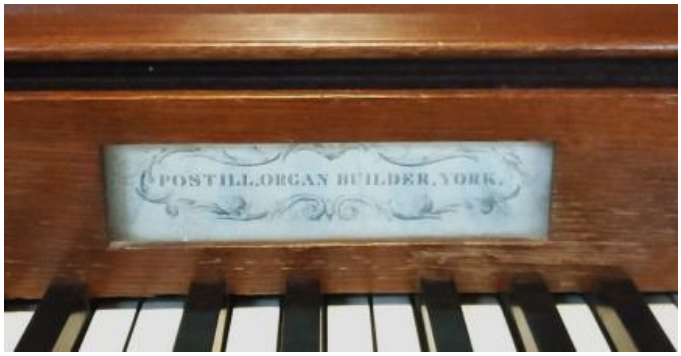
After a couple of months, it was an allegedly easy cycle down to St Mary Magdalene, Hart Village, though I manged to get 'mislaid' on the way back so ended up on the train from Sunderland. The next run to St James the Less, Forest in Teesdale was hard work, cycling 79 miles and climbing 2905 metres (I chickened out of the final climb on the way home). The organ is out of action being last played in the 1930's and there are only monthly services.



The final run of 2024 was a two day run to York and visits to St Helen's Wheldrake and St Michael and All Angel's Sutton-in-Derwent. The former organ was two manual, whilst the latter was a single manual with one octave on the pedal. The tone from both was lovely with the second having a decidedly 'un-victorian' sesquialtera.



St Helen's, Wheldrake



St Michael and All Angel's Sutton-in-Derwent

This year after retiring from full time work, it was a big run down to see a barrel organ (no longer used) at Holy Trinity, Blacktoft – the parish have a parish room open with an honesty box for tea and coffee and toilets. I may have false memories of years ago but I'm sure there used to be a lot more public facilities.

A couple of days with my wife following in the car passing through Epworth (home of the Wesley family) saw the visit to St Nicholas, Tuxford which needs some TLC but made a glorious noise, followed the next day by the unexpected pleasure of morning prayer at Southwell Minster.



Arriving at St Nicholas, Tuxford

It took two days to get to Blenheim Palace, stopping in Leicester and mingling with tourists in Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford. Sadly, they couldn't find the keys for the Postill in the chapel in Blenheim Palace.

There followed two days of hard cycling into a headwind with an overnight stop and the only puncture on the trip ending up rather tired in Lincoln.



Chapel in Blenheim Palace

A quiet sit and morning prayer in the Cathedral was lovely and a good start to a quiet ride (avoiding the A15) up to Beverley via the Humber bridge passed a number of quiet churchyards with the uniform graves of airmen (on both sides) killed in WW2.

The final visit was St John the Evangelist, Folkton – another single manual instrument but in very good condition.


St John the Evangelist, Folkton

After a night in Scarborough, interrupted by seagulls having a domestic argument most of the night, it was a long haul up the coastal path, hoping to get to at least Hartlepool. In the end the climb out of Sandsend just north of Whitby defeated me, though I was heartened to read the steam trains on the old railway line I followed often had to take several goes at it to climb the 1 in 39 gradient to reach Ravenscar!

In total I cycled 1490 miles and climbed 20022 metres (2 ¼ times the height of Everest!) – it was only "to" the organs, not "to and back again", but I'm planning to cycle back from them all when time allows.

Some thoughts as I cycled. Firstly, we live in a beautiful country, I saw deer, hares and a lot of wild birds I can't name. Views were wonderful, especially on the quiet back roads. It also gave me time to think and pray as I pedalled on, the choral evensong at Ripon brought back many memories, including that of the choir at St Peter's Heswall (where I was a treble and started to learn the organ under the instruction of Mr Pat Salisbury).

Last (and by no means least) thanks must go to the clergy, churchwardens and congregations for opening churches, providing me with cups of tea and biscuits. Thanks to my wife for arranging hotels and phoning clergy and to the family for lifts back home. Finally, thanks to those motorists (and particularly HGV and tractor drivers) who gave me room when overtaking, returned waves of thanks and let me though tricky junctions. It was all worth it when the Heritage Lottery Fund gave sufficient money to restore the organ and (probably more importantly!) replace the heating. The organ will be back in the church early in 2026 on its new balcony. Visitors wishing to play will be very welcome.

Nigel Brown

Live music!

Chester Cathedral organ recitals

The recitals take place on Thursdays at 1:10pm. The suggested donation is £5.

4th September	John Keys (Nottingham)
11th September	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
18th September	Christopher Herrick (London)
25th September	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
2nd October	Victoria Ulrioksen (Norway)
9th October	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
16th October	Friedhelm Flamme (Germany)
23rd October	Michael Phillips (Malvern College)
30th October	Graham Eccles

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

18th October 3:00pm 99th Anniversary Recital, Ian Tracey.

Admission £15.

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

2nd September	Callum Mclachlan (Piano)
9th September	Hefin Flute And Harp Duo
16th September	Marie-Claire Taylor (Piano)
23rd September	Chetham's School of Music Instrumentalists
30th September	Jonathan Richards (Guitar)

Saturday Organ Recitals 12.45pm – 1.35 pm

Retiring Collection

20th September Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)

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.

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

10th September	John Hosling
17th September	Nigel Spooner

24th September John Robinson
1st October Victoria Ulriksen

***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.

Sunday 19th October 5:00pm The Complete Organ Works of Duruflé

Friday 24th October 7:00pm Hans Zimmer - Interstellar (Roger Sayer)

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

3rd September Adam Parish (Piano)
10th September John Evans (Organ)
17th September Imogen Garner (vocal) with John Gough (Piano)
24th September Dunelm Duo (Piano/Sax)

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.
10th September Alessandro Bianchi (Italy)
Details of the cathedral organ may be found at
https://stasaphcathedral.wales/en/music/the-organ

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

Our member Alun Huges wrote:

"Recently on YouTube I stumbled upon a video of "The Organized Crime Duo" and I was wondering whether anyone else had come across them. The duo consisted of Canadian organists Rachel Mahon and Sarah Svendsen. Rachel was of course at Chester Cathedral for a while and is now Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral. As their website explained, the goal was to entertain audiences with music and antics (involving costume changes, dazzling shoes and hot tempers) while promoting the organ and making the instrument interesting and accessible to a diverse audience, appealing to everyone from the organ aficionado to the first-time organ concert attendee.

I'd never seen anything like it. I suppose some will like it and some will hate it. Whatever else, I thought the virtuosity quite extraordinary! Here's the link - I hope you enjoy it!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qK5QJwUdlAg