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

Newsletter December 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 from our visit to Bangor on 1st November. There is no meeting in December (because many of us have a rather full December with services, concerts etc.). Our next meeting is on Monday 19th January at 7:00pm when we are to visit the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall to see, hear and play the organ there.

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter, so if you are able, please consider writing a short article for us. We can cope with most formats of material (including handwritten material). Please send your contributions to the Publications Officer.

On behalf of all the officers of the Association, I would like to wish you and yours a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Iain Stinson

St Peter's, Aston, Cheshire



This is a Grade 1 listed building: the chancel was built in the 17th century and the nave in the 18th century. The Ernest Wadsworth organ was installed in 1906 in the gallery at the back of the church. Work was carried out by Jardines following bomb damage in the 1940s.

(Grt: 888, Swell: 884, Ped: 16, Sw Octave, Sw->Grt, Sw->Ped, Grt->Ped). NPOR N04412.





What would you play on this organ for a Christmas concert?
(Ask John Evans what he did play!)

"Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to Bangor…"

[Reference to the novelty song sung by Fiddle's Dram and reach number 3 in the charts in 1979. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs8EVlzd3mI]



We *did* have a lovely time when we visited Bangor Cathedral and Bangor University on Saturday November 1st. We began at the Cathedral where Martin Brown (Cathedral Organist) gave us an excellent talk about the Cathedral and about the history and development of the cathedral's organs. The origin of the present instrument is a Wm Hill & Sons organ built 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 a substantial 78 stop cathedral organ! (NPOR: R01575).

The organ occupies most of the north side of the choir: the original Hill case to the east, and a simpler case in the northwest of the choir. The console is located under the more westerly case in a small room which opens into the choir and is surrounded by a large part of the organ. It is not the best place to hear the instrument and must take skill and experience to balance the organ and the singers in the choir. The organ does sound wonderful in the cathedral and offers a tremendous palate of sounds to use.

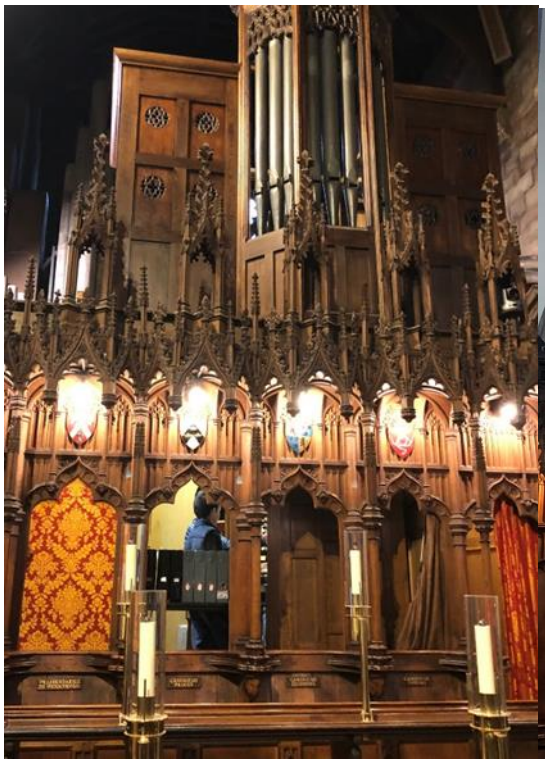
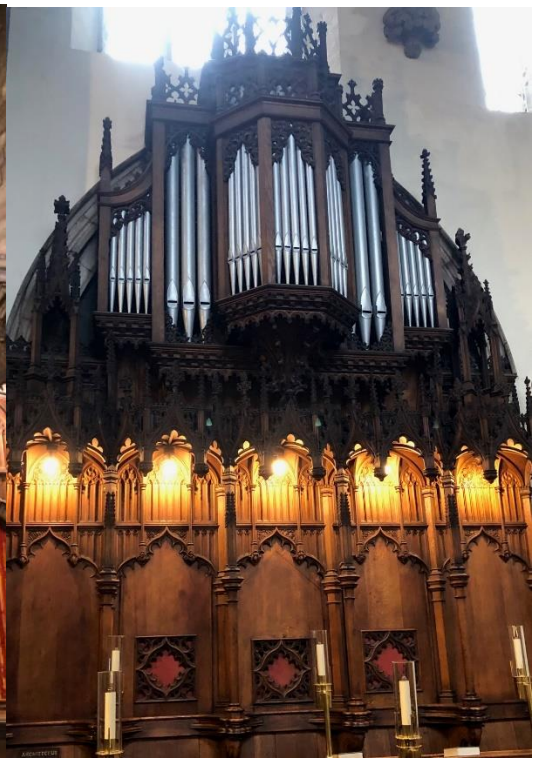
After Martin demonstrated the organ for us, many of our members present really enjoyed playing the organ (with a generally orderly queue forming on the steps leading to the "console room"). It was a treat to hear such a variety of music.

We left the cathedral and made our way to the University. It was an open-day for the University and I'm not sure what the University staff made of our group arriving to play the organ in the Prichard-Jones Hall. However, we were warmly welcomed by Joe Cooper (who is on the staff of the University) and made our way to the platform in front of the Werkprinzip style case of this organ. Joe told us about the origins of the instrument: it started life in a local chapel as a T.C Lewis organ, was rebuilt in 1927 by Willis. (NPOR 11676). When the chapel closed and was converted into apartments, the organ was used in 1973 by Hill, Norman &Beard as the core of the neo-baroque instrument in the Prichard-Jones Hall. It was rebuilt in 2010 by David Wells. (NPOR N11677).

Our members were able to enjoy playing this very different style of instrument. The Trompeta Real (en chamarde) was very loud!

We are very grateful to Joe Cooper and Martin Brown for hosting our time in Bangor and generously giving up their time on a Saturday afternoon. We are also grateful to our member Abhay and general secretary Katriona for making the arrangements.

We really did have "a lovely time the day we went to Bangor."












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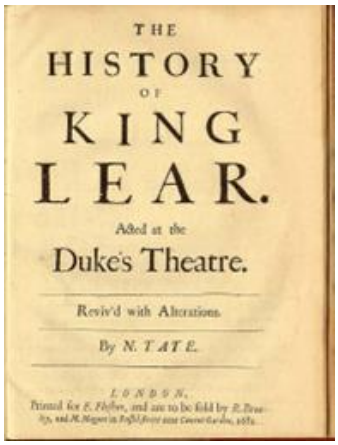
Origins of Hymns - *While Shepherds Watched*

As we approach Christmas, it is appropriate I write about one of our best-known carols describing the annunciation to the shepherds, with words attributed to Nahum Tate (1652-1715), who became Poet Laureate in 1692, and Royal Histographer in 1702.

Nahum Tate was born in Dublin in 1652, the son of Puritan clerics, his father being Faithful Teate (ie not Tate). After living in Provost's lodgings at Trinity College, Faithful moved the family to England (firstly East Greenwich) then became a preacher in Sudbury, Suffolk from 1654 to 1658.

They moved back to Dublin by 1660 where Nahum attended Trinity College from 1668, graduating in 1672. Returning to London later that year he began making a living as a writer, taking the name "Tate". He published a volume of poems in 1677, and wrote regularly for the stage, including 'The Enchanted Lovers', the story of Dido and Aeneas, which was adapted for Purcell's opera of that name in about 1688. He also wrote the words for Purcell's birthday ode (for Queen Mary) 'Come Ye Sons of Art' (including that wonderful duet for two counter tenors 'Sound the Trumpet').


Trinity College, Dublin


THE
HISTORY
OF
KING
LEAR.
Acted at the
Duke's Theatre.
Reviv'd with Alterations
By N. TATE.

Another work was a version of 'King Lear' omitting 'the Fool' and performed at the Duke's Theatre in 1681. He was closely connected with 'New Version of the Psalms of David' (published 1692), to which his licensed supplement in 1702 included hymns *While Shepherds Watched*, *As Pants the Hart*, and *Through all the Changing Scenes of Life*, all in our hymn books today. At the time of its publishing, *While Shepherds Watched* was the only Christmas hymn authorised to be sung by the Anglican Church, others being regarded as 'too secular'. This continued for much of the 18th century.


St George the Martyr, Southwark

Nahum Tate was poverty stricken for much of his life and died in 1715 at the 'Mint', Southwark (a location which had become the haunt of debtors) where he had taken refuge from his creditors. He is buried in St George the Martyr, Southwark.

Almost universally the tune which has been used for our hymn was 'Winchester Old' which first appeared in 'Este's Psalter' (called 'The Whole Book of Psalms') in about 1592 as simply 'Winchester'. Christopher Tye rearranged some of the psalms, then George Kirbye, a madrigalist from East Anglia was employed by Este to arrange tunes from his psalter. This is possibly the origin of our tune. That tune is 'Winchester Old' which first appeared in Hymns Ancient and Modern' in 1861, in a newer arrangement by William Henry Monk. Being of a common metre (CM), W*hile Shepherds* has been sung to many other well-known tunes including 'Lyngham' and 'Martyrdom'.

Becoming more popular and rather more lively is the tune 'Cranbrook' written in 1805 in the Kent village of that name by a Canterbury shoemaker. A favourite of mine, it was well known as having been adapted by Yorkshire folk for their anthem "*On Ilkla Moor baht 'at"* (standard English: "On Ilkley Moor without a hat"). (I was born in sight of Ilkley Moor!). I also use 'Cranbrook' for *O for a Thousand Tongues to sing my Great Redeemer's Praise*.



Sadly, it is one of those hymns which have been the subject of parody in various versions by mischievous school children, often referring to the washing of socks, but they are not for publishing here!

Brian Moate



Seilo Chapel, Llandudno
1905 Peter Conacher
('The Old Firm')
NPOR 11697

Future meetings

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.

Saturday 14th February 2:00pm
West Kirby Methodist Church



The organ in West Kirby Methodist Church was built by Henry Willis III (1936) and has 25 speaking stop and a full set of couplers. Details of the specification are on the NPOR (N18328)

Saturday 14th March at 2pm
Christ Church, Port Sunlight



The organ in Christ Church Port Sunlight was built by Henry Willis II in 1904 and is thought to be the only unaltered Willis II organ.
A major programme of restoration was undertaken by Henry Willis & Sons in 2006. The work carried out included complete re-leathering of all 24 reservoirs, re-leathering of

	 	all Willis-lever key actions and piston combination actions. The instrument was cleaned and overhauled and the pipework and console were cleaned and restored. The organ has four manuals and 41 speaking stops. It uses Willis II's floating pneumatic lever action. The organ sounds magnificent in the large church. Details may be found on the NPOR (N04405) and on the Willis website.
Monday 13th April 7:30pm Christ Church, Willaston		The organ in Christ Church is a two manual and pedal instrument. It was built by Nicholson (Worcester) in 1925/6 and rebuilt in 1999 by David Wells (Liverpool). Details may be found on the NPOR (N01136). The church has recently been reordered and the acoustic improved and the organ sounds better than ever.
May		Details to be agreed.
Saturday 13th June, 2pm All Saints' Gresford Annual Meeting and organ visit.		The organ in All Saints' is a fine three manual Wm Hill & Son instrument built in 1871, and rebuilt in 1912 by Hill and in 1995 by Roy Billingsley. Details on the NPOR N11754.

Saturday 25th July 2pm. Christchurch Chester		We are going to visit the Brindley & Foster two manual organ in Christchurch, Chester. The specification is given on the NPOR, N04295. The special Brindley & Foster registration aids (noted in the NPOR entry) are still working on this instrument.

BIOS update

The British Institute of Organ Studies, BIOS, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026 with a residential conference in Oxford from 9-11 April. The topic of the conference will be "The Global British Organ". The conference will be based at Wadham College, Oxford, a seventeenth-century foundation located in the heart of Oxford's "dreaming spires". Details may be found on the BIOS website.

A significant part of BIOS's activities is the maintenance and development of the National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR). Many of you will be familiar with this valuable resource which is presently free of charge at the time of use. BIOS is a charity run by volunteers and needs our support for its many activities. If you find the NPOR useful, then please consider supporting BIOS.



BIOS produces a number of excellent publications including an annual journal and newsletters. BIOS also publishes some important books about organs in the UK and about UK organ builders. Their most recent book is "Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Organ Builder of Paris: *The British Connections*". Its author, Gerald Sumner, lives in the northwest of England and, in addition to technical details about the Cavaillé-Coll organs in the UK, gives very interesting information about society in the 19th century.

BIOS publications may be purchased from their website, https://bios.org.uk/.

Live music!

Chester Cathedral organ recitals

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

4th December	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
11th December	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
18th December	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
1st January 2026	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
8th January	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
15th January	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
22nd January	David Holroyd (St Peter's Formby)
29th January	Graham Eccles (St Asaph)

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

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 December	Chetham's School of Music Pianists
9th December	Rose Mclachlan (Piano)
16th December	Pip Clarke (Violin), Havilland Willshire (Piano)
23rd December	William Bracken (Piano)
6th January 2026	Simon Watterton (piano)
13th January	Chetham's School of Music Instrumentalists
20th January	Gema Lu Cai (piano)
27th January	Catherine Strachan (cello), David Hammond (piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals 12.45pm – 1.35 pm

Retiring Collection

24th January 2026	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
21st February	John Hosking (Blackburn Cathedral)

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

Liverpool St George's Hall

Usually Tuesdays from 12:45pm – 1:30pm. Tickets (at the door) £10.75

Professor Ian Tracey, Organist to the City of Liverpool.
Wednesday 10th December 12:45pm rearranged from 16th December
Tuesday 23rd December 7:00pm Evening Organ Recital of Christmas Music.

Cost to be confirmed.

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

Music at Blackburn Cathedral

Wednesday Concerts

3rd December	John Hosking
7th January 2026	Nigel Spooner
14th January	Graham Eccles
21st January	Mark Brafield
28th January	Kumi Choi

***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.

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

Bangor Cathedral

Check the website https://bangorcathedral.churchinwales.org.uk

Details of the Bangor Cathedral organ may be found on the NPOR: R01575

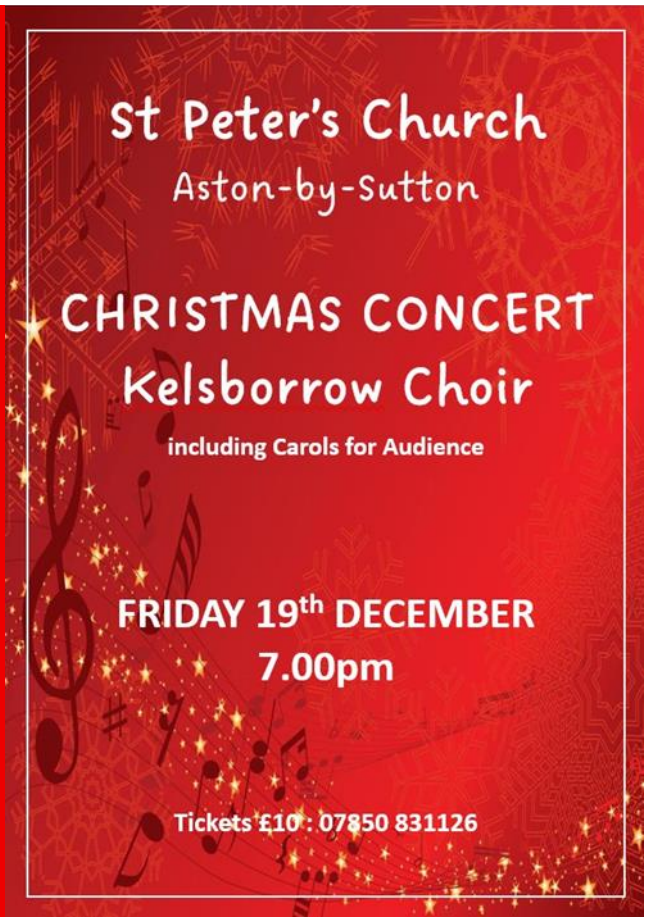
St Asaph Cathedral

Check the website https://stasaphcathedral.wales/en

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.











Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Parr Hall, Warrington