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

Newsletter June / July 2026

Our Annual Meeting Saturday 13th June, 2pm

This will take place on Saturday 13th June at 2pm at All Saints' Church Gresford. Papers for the annual meeting were circulated to all members by post in the middle of May. They may also be access on the website It is important that all members try to attend this meeting at which we shall elect the committee to take the Association forward into the next season (starting in September 2026). Please consider joining the committee and helping with the running of the organisation. There will be some vacancies that need to be filled as some of the present team are stepping down.

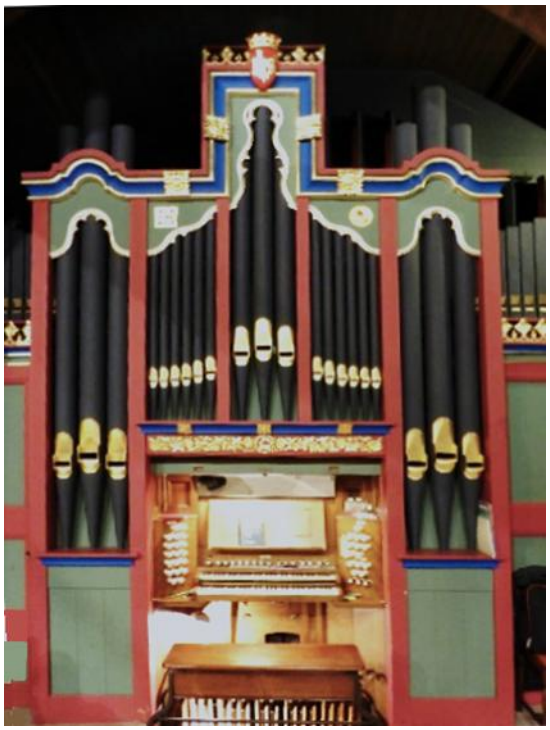


After the Annual Meeting we shall visit the church to hear and play the fine three manual Wm Hill & Son instrument built in 1871, rebuilt in 1912 by Hill and in 1995 by Roy Billingsley. Details on the NPOR N11754.



Church address: *School Hill, Gresford, Wrexham LL12 8RW*

Our final meeting of the season: Saturday 25th July at 2pm



Our final meeting for this season is on Saturday 25th July at 2pm when we shall visit Christchurch, Chester to see, hear and play the historic Brindley & Foster two manual organ.
The specification is given on at NPOR N04295.
The special Brindley & Foster registration aids (noted in the NPOR entry) are still in working order on this instrument. The *Brindgradus* is a type of general crescendo pedal similar to the German *Rollschweller*. The *Transformers* are pre-programmed combinations selecting a "solo" voice and accompaniment. These are complex pneumatic action devices!

Our visit to All Saints' Church, Daresbury, Saturday 16th May

The Church is strongly associated with Lewis Carroll and the Lewis Carroll Centre at the church provides the context for a visit to All Saints, where Lewis Carroll was young Charlie Dodgson and his father was the vicar, in the early part of Queen Victoria's reign. We began our visit with an excellent tour/talk telling us about the history of the church building and about Lewis Carroll's connections to the church.
We then enjoyed a lovely cup of tea and tried out the Nicholson organ described At NPOR J00045.
The organ is a 2 manual and pedal instrument built by Nicholson & Co (in 1963 and rebuilt in 2002). [Ped: 32, 16,16, 16, 8, 8: Grt: 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 2 2/3, 2, II; Sw:8,8,8,8,4,2, II16, 8. Couplers.]. It replaced an instrument by Jardine & Co (Manchester) NPOR C01333 which was initially installed on the west gallery (now removed) in Revd Dodgson's time (c1866). We enjoyed playing the organ which sounded well in the building.





It was a very enjoyable afternoon, and we are very grateful to members of All Saints who came to welcome us, serve tea and tell us about the church and Lewis Carroll.

However, it was extremely disappointing, and indeed a little embarrassing, that only five members came to the meeting (three members had sent their apologies). There were more people from the church to look after us than members attending.

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Meetings for the 2026-27 Season

Your committee is working on the programme for meetings for our next season, which begins in September 2026.

- Have you ideas for meetings that you would like to suggest?
- Are there some organs in the area (or not too far away) that you think we might find interesting to visit?
- Are there different types of events that you think would be of interest?
- Are you able to help arrange or host a meeting?

Your committee would love to hear from you. Please let any member of the committee have your ideas.

As we are visiting All Saints Gresford with its fine Hill organ, I thought members might like to know a little more about the Hill firm. (I used Anthropic's Claude AI tool to help write this for us…)

William Hill & Son: A Dynasty of Organ Builders

William Hill (1789–1870) stands as one of the most significant figures in the history of the British pipe organ. Born into the trade — his father Thomas Hill worked for the renowned builder Samuel Green — William was apprenticed early and eventually took over the business of his mentor, John Avery, before establishing the firm that would bear his name. By the 1830s, Hill & Son was among the most productive and respected organ-building firms in the country.


William Hill

Hill's early instruments reflect the prevailing English taste of the period. The organ he built for St Luke's, Chelsea (1824) is representative: a two-manual instrument of modest compass with Great and Swell divisions, its Great encompassing the expected Open Diapason, Stop Diapason, Principal, Twelfth, Fifteenth, and Sesquialtera, with a Trumpet and Clarion completing the chorus. The Swell was more modest — a Stop Diapason, Principal, Hautboy, and Trumpet, enclosed in a swell box of limited compass. There was no independent pedal organ to speak of — merely pull-downs activating the lowest manual pipes. The tonal palette was strongly indebted to the eighteenth century, featuring prominent open and stopped diapasons, delicate flutes, and a gentle chorus culminating in a mixture. Reeds were present but relatively mild. This was music for a box pew congregation, designed to lead and support, not to overwhelm.

A similarly conservative approach is evident in the organ Hill built for St George's, Wolverhampton (1830), again a two-manual instrument, though here a rudimentary pedal stop — an Open Diapason of sixteen pipes — hints at the direction of travel. The Great was somewhat fuller, with a Dulciana added to soften the ensemble, and the Swell gained a Mixture, suggesting a growing awareness of the need for greater brilliance in larger buildings.

Everything changed after Hill's encounter with the ideas of Dr Henry John Gauntlett and, crucially, with the German theorist and builder G. F. Walcker. In 1840–41, Hill undertook a radical rebuilding of the Birmingham Town Hall organ — one of the most ambitious projects of its day. The manual compass was extended to the then-novel CC, and a fully independent pedal organ was provided, encompassing an Open Diapason 16ft, Principal 8ft, and Trombone 16ft — a dramatic departure from the pull-down conventions of earlier decades.

Birmingham Town Hall



The Great organ ran to some twenty stops, including a Double Open Diapason 16ft, two Open Diapasons, Stopped Diapason, Gamba, Principal, Flute, Twelfth, Fifteenth, Seventeenth, Nineteenth, Sesquialtera, Mixture, Posaune 8ft, Clarion 4ft, and Trumpet 8ft. The tonal scheme drew consciously on north German models, with bold chorus work and a greater sense of architectural scale. This instrument was a watershed: it demonstrated what a large, systematically conceived English organ could achieve.

The organ Hill built for St Mary Islington (1854) shows his mature style in a large parish church context. The Great here comprised a Double Open Diapason 16ft, two Open Diapasons 8ft, a Stopped Diapason, Gamba 8ft, Principal 4ft, Flute 4ft, Twelfth 2⅔ft, Fifteenth 2ft, Mixture III,

Sesquialtera II, Trumpet 8ft, and Clarion 4ft — a full and well-balanced chorus. The Swell had grown substantially, now including an Open Diapason, Lieblich Gedact, Keraulophon, Principal, Fifteenth, Mixture, Cornopean, Hautboy, and Vox Humana. A separate Choir organ provided softer accompanying colours, and the Pedal offered a proper double bass of 32ft alongside the usual 16ft and 8ft stops. This was the Victorian parish organ at its most complete.

The Schulze Influence

It was around this time that a new and powerful influence began to make itself felt. Edmund Schulze (1824–1878), the last of five generations of a distinguished German organ-building dynasty, had arrived in England in 1851 with an instrument for the Great Exhibition, and it quickly became clear that he had something genuinely new to offer. His five-manual organ at Doncaster — now Doncaster Minster — became a place of pilgrimage for English builders and organists, widely regarded as one of the most important organs erected in England in the second half of the nineteenth century. Where the prevailing English style prized a bright, assertive diapason chorus and powerful reeds, Schulze offered something warmer and more complex: broader-scaled diapasons with rich harmonic development, string stops of a distinctive dry, woody character, and a refinement of the softer flue department quite unlike anything in the English tradition.

Hill's response was characteristically measured. The period from 1856 to 1870 shows a clear evolution in his work: chorus reeds placed on higher pressures, heavier metals used in pipe-making, more spacious internal layouts, and — most tellingly — the adoption of quint mixtures, wooden string stops, and small gedeckts of a type directly traceable to Schulze's influence. Yet Hill never surrendered his own identity. He retained his firm's English chorus foundation, its architectural sense of scale, and its assertive reeds. The result was a synthesis rather than an imitation — a broadening of the tonal palette rather than a wholesale change of direction.

The Mulholland Grand Organ at Ulster Hall, Belfast (1862) illustrates this perfectly. One of the finest concert organs of its day, it was described by the critic Cecil Clutton as standing "somewhere between the French and German organs of his day" — which is precisely why it remains, to this day, remarkably versatile across a wide range of repertoire. It is neither Schulze nor Willis, but unmistakably Hill: warm and flexible in the flue work, commanding in the full chorus, and built with the architectural intelligence that had characterised the firm since the Birmingham Town Hall rebuilding two decades earlier.


Mulholland Grand Organ

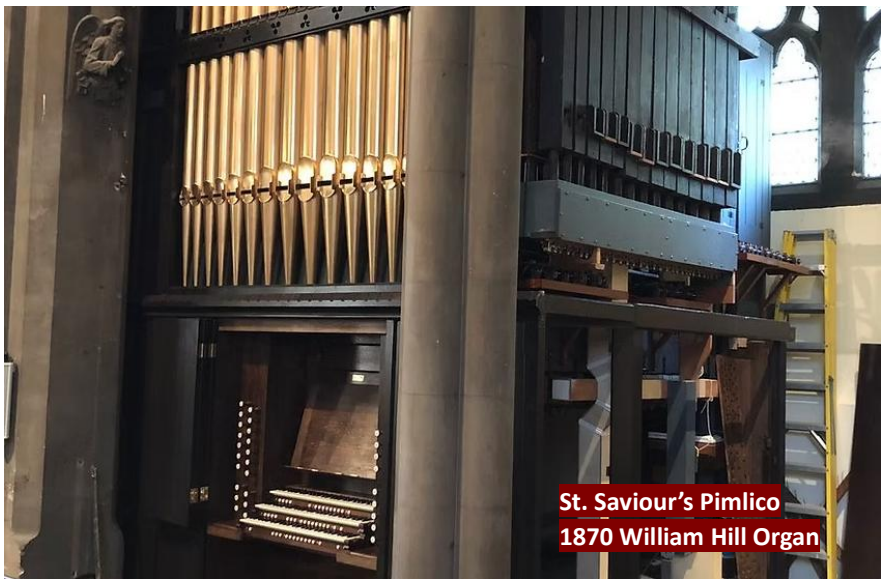
The connection between Hill and Schulze ran deeper than mere stylistic borrowing. Isaac Abbott, who had worked in the Hill workshop for twenty years, went on to found

Abbott and Smith of Leeds — a firm that explicitly followed Schulze's tonal principles. This suggests that Schulze's ideas had permeated the Hill workshop from within, carried by the craftsmen who passed through it, even as the firm itself maintained its own distinctive voice.

His magisterial rebuilds at York Minster and St Paul's Cathedral gave those buildings instruments of genuine grandeur, capable of filling vast Gothic and Baroque spaces with a full and cohesive sound. The York instrument as rebuilt in 1859 extended to over sixty speaking stops across four manuals and pedal, the Great and Pedal departments in particular displaying a commanding weight of tone enriched by the broader scaling and more complex mixture work that Schulze had helped inspire. By the time of his death in 1870, William Hill had transformed the English organ from a polite Georgian accompaniment instrument into the great Victorian machine — a worthy vehicle for the ambitious sacred repertoire of the age, and an instrument that could speak with authority to both the English choral tradition and the growing appetite for continental organ music.

Thomas Hill and the Firm's Later Victorian Flowering

When William died, his son Thomas (1822–1893) assumed control of a firm already at the peak of its reputation. Thomas proved a worthy successor, maintaining his father's commitment to quality while steering the business through the rapidly changing landscape of late Victorian organ building.


St. Saviour's Pimlico
1870 William Hill Organ

Thomas's tenure coincided with the height of the Gothic Revival and the great church-building boom, generating enormous demand for substantial instruments. He continued to develop the bold diapason choruses his father had pioneered, while refining the firm's reed voicing to produce a rounder, more integrated ensemble, and carrying forward the Schulze-inflected warmth in the flue department that had become a Hill hallmark.

The Worcester Cathedral organ of 1874 is among Thomas's finest achievements. The Great organ contained a Double Open Diapason 16ft, two Open Diapasons 8ft, Stopped Diapason 8ft, Gamba 8ft, Octave 4ft, Stopped Flute 4ft, Twelfth 2⅔ft, Fifteenth 2ft, Mixture IV, Sesquialtera II, Posaune 16ft, Trumpet 8ft, and Clarion 4ft. The Swell was equally substantial, with a full chorus from Open Diapason through to Mixture, a Cornopean, Oboe, and the characteristic Hill Vox Humana. A Solo organ provided a powerful Tuba alongside softer solo voices including Harmonic Flute and Clarinet, and the Pedal ran to thirty-two pipes on the Open Wood 32ft. It was an instrument of considerable power and dignity, well matched to its grand surroundings.

The substantial instrument at Peterborough Cathedral (1882) similarly demonstrates Thomas's approach: a large four-manual organ in which the Choir division was given unusual prominence, reflecting the growing importance of the surpliced choir movement and the need for refined accompaniment alongside full congregational support. Here the Choir encompassed a Lieblich Gedact, Dulciana, Viol d'Orchestre, Lieblich Flute, and Piccolo alongside more conventional stops — a palette suited to the nuanced demands of daily choral services, and one that shows the lasting legacy of Schulze's influence on the firm's approach to the softer and more colourful registers.


Peterborough Cathedral

Thomas also invested in developing the firm's mechanical standards, producing increasingly reliable and responsive tracker actions at a time when pneumatic technology was beginning to challenge traditional direct mechanical linkage between key and pipe. He engaged seriously too with the emerging influence of the organ reform movement, responding to growing interest in classical principles of flue scaling and chorus balance. Though the firm never fully embraced the extremes of the so-called "Tuba organ" school, it retained a loyal following among cathedral organists who valued musical refinement over mere spectacle.

Into the Twentieth Century

On Thomas's death in 1893, leadership passed to his nephew Arthur George Hill, who maintained the firm's cathedral connections while navigating the transition from tracker to tubular-pneumatic and eventually electro-pneumatic action — changes that transformed the mechanics of organ building across the industry. The adoption of pneumatic action allowed consoles to be detached from the organ case and positioned more conveniently for the player, and enabled the construction of instruments of greater size and complexity than tracker mechanisms could practically achieve.


Beverley Minster, 1916
Last case designed by Arthur G Hill

Notable late Hill instruments from this period include significant work at Canterbury Cathedral, where the firm undertook a major rebuild introducing tubular-pneumatic action to the pedal and providing a new and enlarged Solo organ, and at Southwark Cathedral, where Hill's characteristic tonal blend of warm diapasons and well-regulated reeds remained much in evidence. The firm also

built a fine four-manual instrument for Trinity College, Cambridge (1870, rebuilt 1908), and undertook important work at St Dominic's Priory, London, where the organ — originally built by William Hill in 1867 — received successive enlargements that illustrate the firm's continuity of approach across generations.

By the early twentieth century, however, the commercial pressures of a consolidating industry were mounting. In 1916 the firm merged with the Norwich-based builders Norman & Beard, forming Hill, Norman & Beard — a name that continued trading, with distinction, for much of the rest of the century. The Hill lineage thus endured, its founding principles of tonal integrity and fine craftsmanship carrying forward into a new era of organ building.

St John the Evangelist, Great Sutton, Cheshire

An **Organfest** will take place on Saturday 18th July between noon and 4pm.
The afternoon will be divided into 30-minute slots.
Performers will play for around twenty minutes including a hymn (of their choice) for the audience/attendees to sing.
There will then be about a ten-minute pause between sets so that refreshments can be enjoyed during the break.
Nigel James, the organist at the church, is looking for volunteers to play for some of the slots. Please contact Nigel by email *organo3112@gmail.com* for further information and to volunteer to play.



Do come along to the event on 18th July and enjoy some fine music and singing!

Details of the organ can be found on the NPOR N04438. It is an Alex Young & Sons (Manchester) organ built in 1907.
Great: 8,8,8,4; Swell: 8,8,8,8,4,8,8; Pedal: 16: Sw-Grt, Sw-Ped, Grt-Ped, Swell suboctave.

Live music!

Chester Cathedral organ recitals

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

4th June	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
11th June	Freddy Harvey (Liverpool Cathedral)
18th June	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
25th June	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
2nd July	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
9th July	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
16th July	Christopher Herrick (London)
23 July	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
30th July	David Holroyd (St Peter's Formby)

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)

Music at Wesley

Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester

Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts

12.45pm – 1.35 pm

Retiring collection

2nd June	Leora Cohen (violin), Ariel Lanyi (piano)
9th June	Laura Jellicoe (flute), Harvey Davies (piano)
16th June	Juanjo Blazquez (piano)
23rd June	Imogen Garner (mezzo-soprano), John Gough (piano)
30th June	Lionel Clarke (cello), Brian Heald (piano)
7th July	William Green (piano)
14th July	Jeremy Heald (piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals 12.45pm – 1.35 pm

Retiring Collection

20th June Paul Carr (Birmingham)

Organ Centenary Recital July 2026 marks the centenary of the opening of Wesley, Chester's Binns organ. The opening recital was on 10th July 1926.
Philip Rushforth has very kindly agreed to give a one-hour ***Organ Recital at Wesley at 2pm on Saturday July 11th 2026*** to celebrate this anniversary and will conclude it by playing the whole of Widor's 5th Symphony.
It will be a free concert with a retiring collection and tea and cake afterwards for the audience.

Details of all concerts from https://www.wesleychester.co.uk/whats-on/music-wesley/
Details of the Binns organ in the Wesley Centre are at the NPOR D04853.

Liverpool Cathedral

The 2026 Centenary Recital Series celebrating the centenary of Liverpool Cathedral's magnificent Willis Organ continues.

Saturday 6th June 2026 – Nathan Laube (Rochester, U.S.A.)

Saturday 26th September 2026 – James Orford (St Paul's Cathedral, London)

Saturday 17th October 2026 – Professor Ian Tracey. 100th Anniversary Evensong & Recital.

Saturday 7th November 2026 – Isabelle Demers (Quebec, Canada)

Tickets £15.68 per recital. You can book online here. All recitals begin at 6pm except the recital on 17 October which follows evensong at 3:00pm. Booking is advised and aim to arrive early!

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.)

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.

2nd June, 5th September, 20th October, 17th November, 8th December..

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

Music at Blackburn Cathedral

Wednesday Concerts

3rd June	Eira Lynn Jones (Harp)
10th June	Stonyhurst Stars (Pupils from Stonyhurst College)
17th June	Lucy Farrimond (Soprano)
24th June	Shaun Ward
1st July	Alessandro Bianchi
8th July	Jonny Vaughan

***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 Monday 31st August: Maria Gajraj (Tickets £10 at the door).

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 John's the Baptist, Chester

Wednesday at One

3rd June	Adam Parish, Piano
10th June	Kell Wind Trio, Wind Instruments
17th June	Madeleine Brown, Piano
24th June	Nina Savicevic, Piano
1st July	Kelsborow Choir, Choir
8th July	John Richards, Guitar
15th July	Alison Loram, Violin
22nd July	William Smith, Tenor
29th July	Friedhelm Flamme, Organ

1:00pm Wednesdays Admission Free, Refreshments Available

Details of the organ in may be found on the NPOR N04296

St Asaph Cathedral

Wednesdays at 7:30pm. Retiring Collection.

3rd June	Gordon Stewart (Concert Organist)
1st July	Christopher Enston (St Asaph Cathedral)
5th August `	Paul Carr (Birmingham)

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

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

Hoole Methodist Church, Hamilton Street, Hoole, Chester

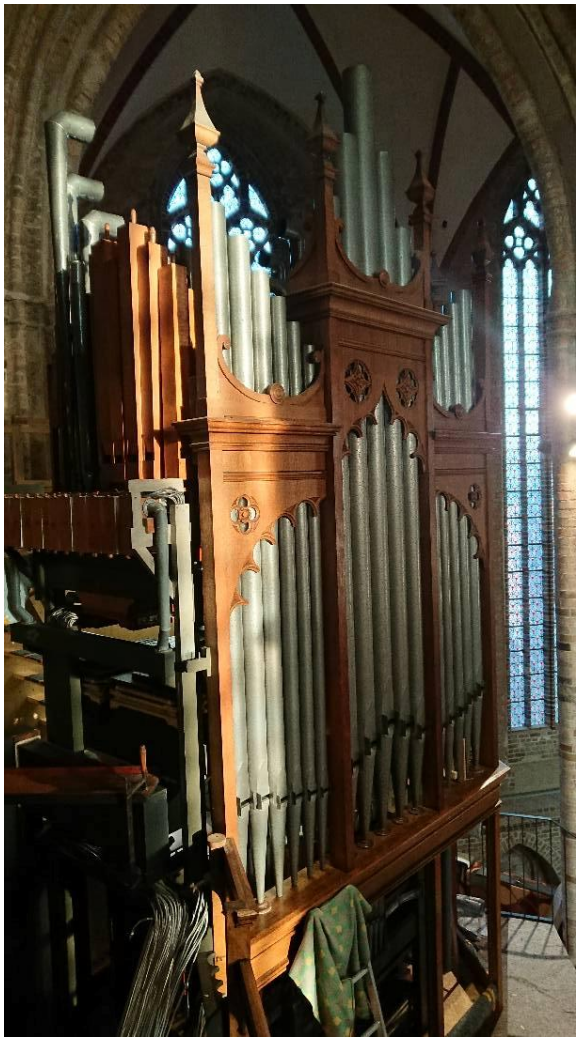
Sundays at 3pm. Suggested donation £5 (including refreshments)

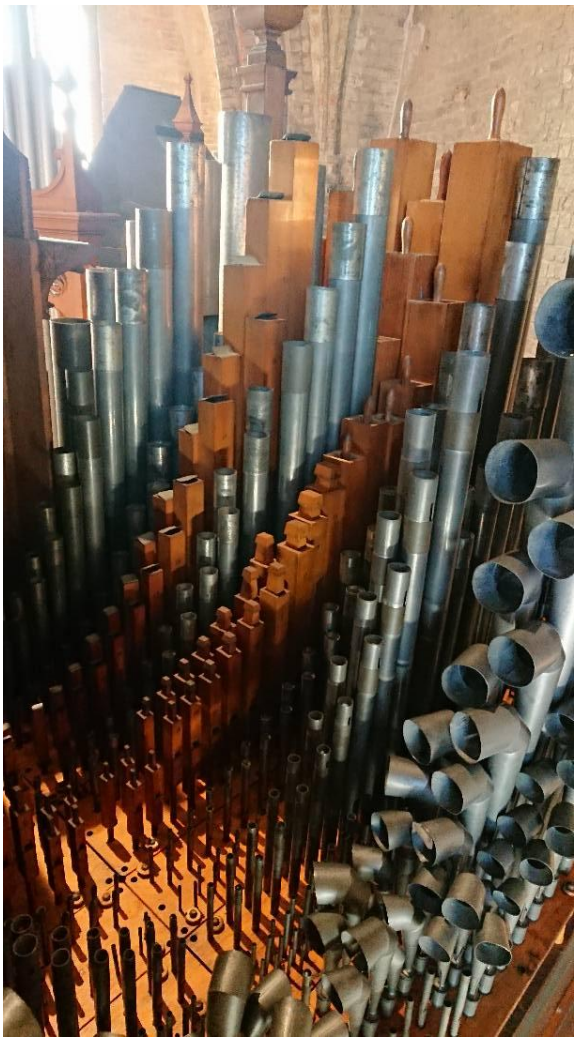
21st June	Jeremy Heald (piano & organ)
19th July	*"Show Songs & Solos"* Kelsborrow Choir

Kelsborrow Choir

Wednesday 1st July 1:00pm	St John The Baptist's Church, Chester City Centre Free admission – donations welcome
Sunday 19th July 3pm	"Show Songs & Solos" Hoole Methodist Church Suggested donation £5 (including refreshments)
Saturday 22nd August 7:30pm	St John The Evangelist Parish Church, Ashton Hayes Raising funds for the Church Tickets: £10 including refreshments
Saturday 12th September 7:30pm	***Kelsborrow Choir 70th Anniversary Concert*** with Jonathan Scott (International Concert Organist) Raising funds for The Joshua Tree (children's cancer charity) Tickets: £20 including refreshments Further details and tickets: angiejohnevans@gmail.com
Friday 9th October 7:00pm	St Mary's Without The Walls, Handbridge, Chester Free admission – including refreshments Donations welcome - raising funds for Choral Scholarship Fund.

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





Prenzlau, St Marien, 1904 Hill & Son