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

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Newsletter – August 2026

Dear Member,

The summer holidays are with us already! We wish all our members happy travels if you have the chance to get away, and a happy staycation to those remaining at home. We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter for some holiday reading either way and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming meetings when we restart in September.

Request from your new Publications Officer

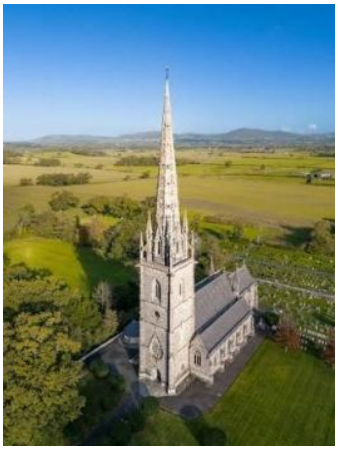
Following Iain Stinson's over five years of outstanding work as Publications Officer since 2021 (thank you Iain!), Emily Burgess is taking over as Publications Officer with Ralph Burgess assisting with the website. As by far the least experienced organists of CNEWOCA, we need your help and support!

We will do our very best to provide you with an interesting newsletter, but we would really appreciate it if you could please consider writing an occasional article. Alternatively (or in addition…), we are planning to have some upcoming themed issues which will hopefully contain a selection of CNEWOCA members' contributions and expertise – a brief paragraph would be perfect for these. Please see Emily's details for submissions at the end of the newsletter. To give you some ideas, these are our upcoming plans:

Newsletter month (submit by 1st of the month please)	**Theme**	**Ideas for a paragraph (but we'd love to receive anything, in theme or not!)**
September	Back to school *and* Pedagogy	Memories of your first organ lesson Teaching tips (organ or voice) Recommendations for straight forward but beautiful repertoire
October	Autumn *and* Remembrance	Favourite autumnal anthems and voluntaries (and why) Favourite quiet voluntary suggestions for Remembrance Sunday
November	Advent	Favourite advent preludes (and why)
December	Christmas	Favourite carol or descants or final verses (and why) Tips for surviving the intense festive season of playing/singing

Please do submit upcoming concerts and recitals for inclusion (up to the end of 2026) – submission by 1st of the month please for publication in that month's newsletter. Please do also submit any personal news that you would like included – we would love to celebrate your organ or choir (or other!) achievements.

Upcoming meetings



August: No meeting (summer break)

5th September 1.30pm: Organ crawl!
On 5th September we meet at St Margaret, Bodelwyddan LL18 5UR (NPOR H01055) at 1.30pm to hear and play the historic Laycock organ moved in 2000 from the redundant Cowling Hill Baptist Church near Skipton. We will then move on to St Mary, Rhuddlan LL18 2YA (NPOR H00082) where we will enjoy a cup of tea and play the newly cleaned and overhauled Blackett & Howden (1915). Both churches have a toilet, but we are advised to dress warmly for St Margaret's.



10th October time TBC: Organ crawl again (hopefully!)
On 10th October we plan to visit St John the Baptist, Alford CH3 6JE (NPOR K00425) and possibly the neighbouring church of St Mary, Bruera (NPOR N04354). There is some uncertainty about road closures.

November: TBC

Previous meeting report: July

We were made extremely welcome at our visit on Saturday, 25th July to Christ Church, Gloucester Street, Chester with its beautiful Brindley & Foster two manual organ (specification at NPOR N04295).



CNEWOCA has a personal link with Christ Church – our Vice-Chair John's parents were married here in 1941!

We enjoyed a very interesting talk by Tonya Chirgwin, a demonstration of the stops by Andrew Love followed by a lovely rendition of Herbert Howells' Psalm Prelude 1, Set 1. Please see Tonya's informative article below. Thank you very much to all at Christ Church for a wonderful visit prior to our summer break!

Christ Church and its organ
Written by Tonya Chirgwin, Organist at Christ Church, Chester

On 25 July Organists Tonya Chirgwin and Andrew Love were delighted to welcome CNEWOCA to Christ Church. Tonya and Andrew have shared the organ bench here for 20 years and provided a short introduction to the history of the church and its organ, as well as a demonstration of some of its capabilities, before declaring the organ bench 'open' for everyone to have a go. Refreshments were served by Stella Kilfoyle, a member of the Christ Church Hospitality Team.

In common with many places of worship, Christ Church, stands on the site of an earlier building. The original church was built in 1838 to serve the spiritual needs of the railway workers who lived in the



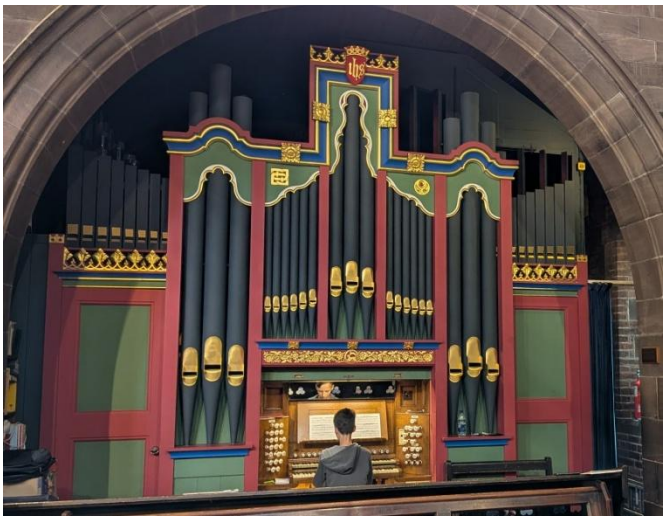
surrounding terraces that even today form the basis of Newtown. The new build was done by John Douglas and took place in several stages, starting with the chancel in 1893 and with the last addition, the northwest baptistry, being completed in 1904. A steeple was originally planned but was never built, the porch being added instead in 1936. The style is very obviously Gothic Revival throughout, and much of the interior design was carried out by no less a person than Sir Charles Nicholson, with the Lady Chapel reredos being designed by Edward Kemp.

The organ is very much of a piece with the rest of the church – it was included in Nicholson's scheme and has formed an integral part of the furnishings ever since. The painted panels on the front of the case were added by Gertrude Siddal in 1910. However, most importantly, the instrument itself was designed and built by Brindley and Foster, being installed in 1909.



Brindley and Foster were in the forefront of UK organ development and were known for their forward- looking and innovative approach to mechanics. In fact, they patented a number of devices which later became standard – chief amongst these is 2 the sliderless soundboard, which enables the transformer system to function in such a way that only a comparatively small console is needed to control the power and voicing of quite a large-scale instrument. This system is in full working order here at Christ Church, and it accounts for the large expressive range of what is in terms of floor space a fairly compact instrument.

The other Brindley and Foster innovation that features on the Christ Church organ is a Bringradus system, thanks to which a few pistons and an extra pedal are all that's needed to produce a general orchestral crescendo from triple piano to triple fortissimo, and extra effects can be added by use of some of the transformers at the same time.



The organ's specifications are as follows:

- 2 manuals and a full-size pedal board
- 27 speaking stops
- Swell tremulant
- 5 couplers (Swell to Great, Swell to Pedal, Swell Octave, Swell Suboctave and Great to Pedal)
- Transformers
- Bringradus crescendo
- 9 combination pedals (5 under the right foot for selecting stops on the great and pedal organs, and 4 under the left foot to control stops on the swell, progressing outwards from the quietest to loudest combinations)

A cleaning and a bit of an overhaul were undertaken by Woods of Huddersfield in 1990-91, but since then there has been need for very little except the usual maintenance work to keep it functioning…which means that it's in pretty much in its original 1909 state: if Mr. Brindley or Mr. Foster were to walk in today they would completely recognise every aspect of it its workings! This makes it a very rare example of an important part of organ-building history, and the team at Christ Church is justifiably proud of it and keen to preserve it for as long possible.

Concert review: David Holroyd's Organ Recital at Chester Cathedral, 30th July 2026

The Thursday organ recitals in Chester Cathedral are always very enjoyable (see details in Live Music later in the newsletter). We reached out to David Holroyd prior to his recital on 30th July with a few interview questions and he very generously invited our youngest member Ralph to attend his pre-recital practice on the Wednesday evening to learn more about the process of choosing registrations and to have a play on the organ! Ralph then attended the recital the next day to listen to the final results. Thank you so much David for your kind support for the next generation of organists.



David Holroyd: Biography

Until summer 2019, David was Director of Music at Merchant Taylors' School in Crosby. He studied organ and choir-training at the Royal Northern College of Music with Ronald Frost, Gillian Weir and John Bertalot.

David's musical career began at the age of 7 as a choirboy at St Hilary's Church Wallasey, where in due course he became Organist and Choirmaster. He spent a time as Assistant Organist at Chester Cathedral before moving to Merchant Taylors' School. He formed Amadeus: the Chamber Choir in 2000, and also conducts Birkenhead Choral Society, and Formby Choral Society, and is Organist at St Peter's Church, Formby.

Review of the recital

Written by Ralph Burgess, CNEWOCA member

David Holroyd played a varied and enjoyable organ recital in Chester Cathedral on Thursday 30th July. It started with J.S. Bach's exciting Prelude and Fugue in A minor (BWV 543) which was played with loud reeds and mixtures throughout. He followed with a very different piece, 'Le Coucou' by Louis Claude Daquin, and this was played with a variety of flutes on all the different manuals, creating a strong 'cuckoo' effect by different pipes sounding from different distances. Then there was Meditation on Brother James' Air by Harold Darke which showed the full power of the organ in both louder and quiet areas, especially the soft 32-foot pedal stop.

Next there was Christopher Tambling's Fanfare on Shine, Jesus, Shine, a very unusual take on the famous modern hymn that cleverly disguised small sections of said hymn in it, with pedals being the main theme. After that there was 'Spade and Bucket Polka' by Percy Whitlock which was transcribed for organ by David Holroyd himself, which featured louder stops with the swell and solo boxes shut to create a more distant and faraway sound. Finally, David ended the concert with a finale of Grand-Choeur in D by Alexandre Guilmant. This piece tested the endurance of the reed stops with lots of trumpets and mixtures featuring strongly, with the Zimblestern making an appearance at the end, and rounding off a very cheerful and enjoyable concert.

Interview with David Holroyd
David also kindly answered a few questions on his preparation for the recital.

When you sit down to plan a cathedral recital programme, where do you start?
I mostly choose pieces I fancy playing, which might include pieces I've not played for a while, pieces I really like, and pieces I think the audience will enjoy and find interesting to listen to. With this being a summer recital, there may be tourists in attendance who are not familiar with organ music, so it's particularly important to have a balance of masterworks and lighter music. I think a recital should be fun and not too serious! I'm very familiar with the organ in Chester as I used to be Assistant Organist here so I really can play anything here.

How do you turn your choices into a coherent programme?
I think a good rule is to look for variety and flow through the programme, so I typically start with something loud to capture the audience's attention, so here for example I've gone with Bach's famous Prelude and Fugue in A minor with it's tricky off beat changing note and challenging articulation. Then I would move onto something quieter and more simple in style – here with Daquin's Le Coucou which was originally written for harpsichord.

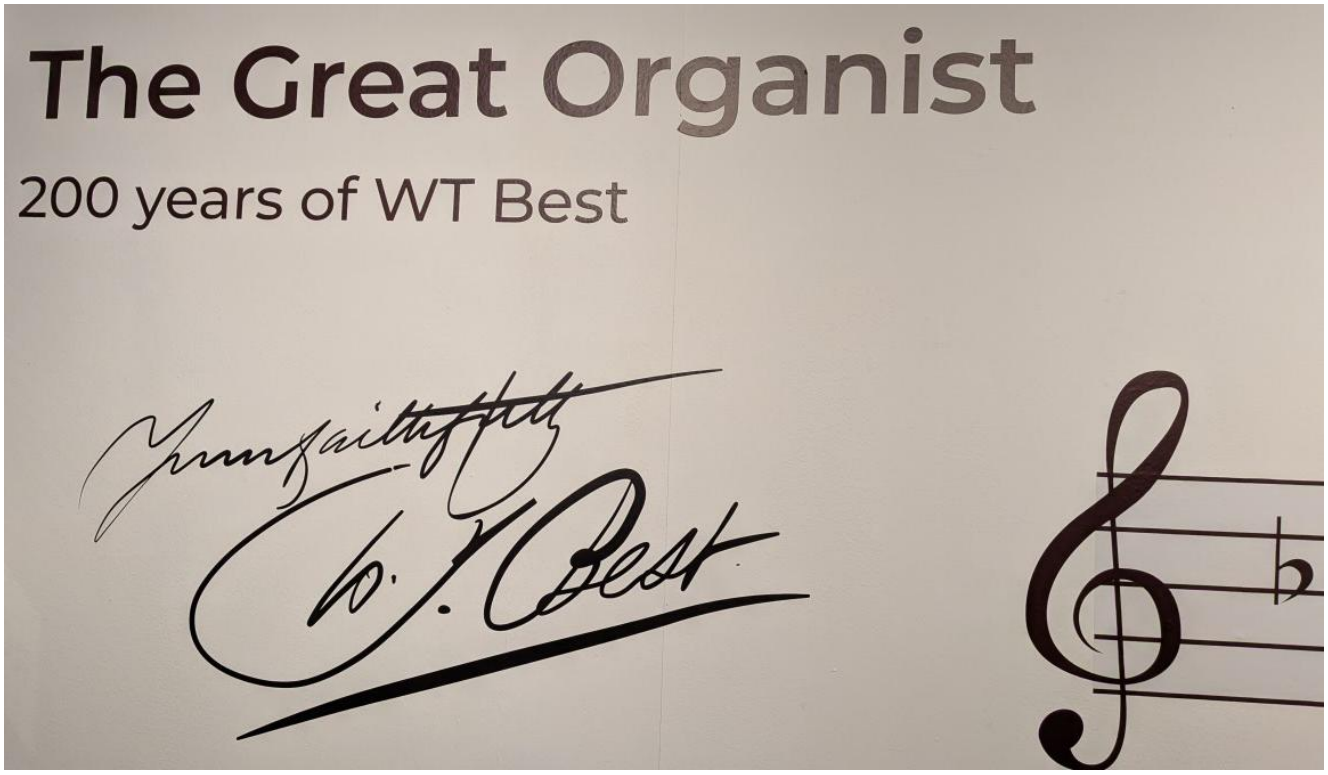
Then I would play something more contemplative with plenty of colour - Darke's Meditation on Brother James' Air nicely demonstrates a more orchestral side of organ repertoire, and the varied stops at Chester. Here the challenge is in ensuring smooth crescendos and decrescendos by using both the swell pedal and a progression of stops. My familiarity with the organ at Chester allows me to play with more spontaneity than I might at a less familiar organ, enabling me to vary stops as I feel during the performance without rigid planning for every section.

Then for the second half of the recital, to pick up the momentum I chose a somewhat brash piece with Tambling's Fanfare on Shine, Jesus, Shine which is available in the rather lovely Oxford Book of Lent and Easter Organ Music. I then moved on to light music with Whitlock's Spade and Bucket Polka which I transcribed, before finishing with a showstopper to really round off the recital – here I've chosen the Grand-Choeur in D by Guilmant.

This method can also be adapted for shorter recitals – for example, for a 15-minute recital I would choose a loud, quiet, loud succession to bring flow. Loud pieces need not use every stop – clever use of the different colours of an organ can really bring variety to a programme.

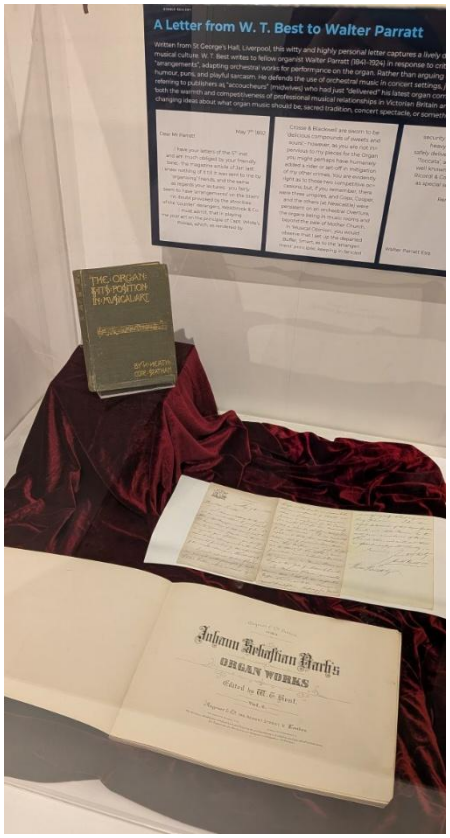
How do you prepare for a cathedral recital?
I've been an organist for many years now, and so I have a large repertoire at my disposal, and my familiarity with Chester enables me to choose without restriction and also choose stops with some spontaneity in certain pieces. In addition to practice and planning registration the night before, I played some of these pieces at my recital on 7th July at St. Mary's Clitheroe and I used a number of them as preludes at St. Peter's Church, Formby where I am Director of Music. For an unfamiliar organ, planning out registrations would take longer and I would need to be more structured as I adapt my musical choices to that particular organ.

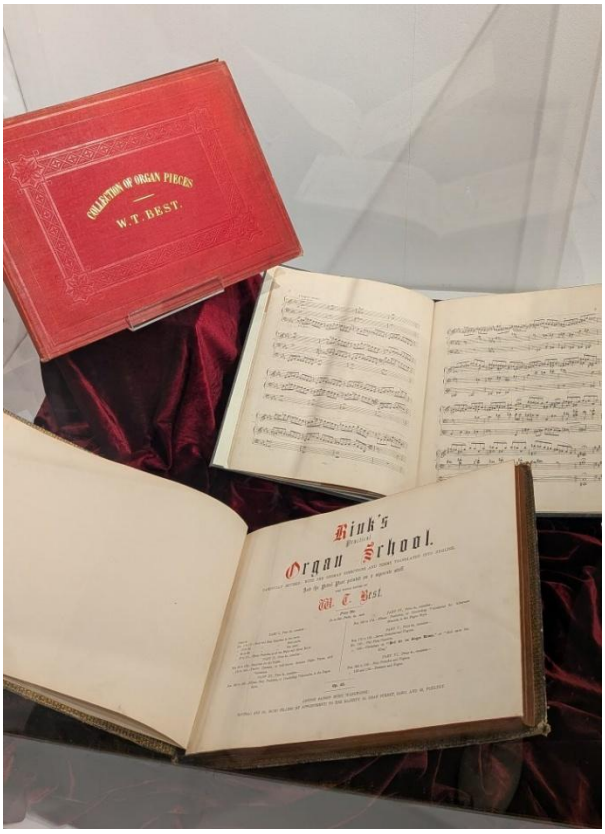
You can see David in his upcoming concerts conducting Birkenhead Choral Society (Saturday 14th November, Verdi - Requiem), and Formby Choral Society (Saturday 8th November, Nunes Garcia – Missa Pastoril, and Fauré – Cantique de Jean Racine, and Requiem).



This free exhibition on W.T. Best is running daily until 2nd September 2026, 0930-1630 in St George's Hall, Liverpool. The exhibition itself is rather small, but you can also visit the Minton Tiles Reveal at the same time for a small fee (guided tours nearly all sold out but self-guided tours available) for a chance to see the Victorian floor which is only revealed every three years.

The exhibition includes information boards, the chance to view some of Best's scores and publications, and (the highlight) a film of Liverpool's famous organist Ian Tracey recounting some rather lovely anecdotes about Best.





Upcoming live music for organ and choir

Chester Cathedral
Organ recitals: Thursdays 1.10pm, suggested donation: £5

13 August	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
20 August	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
27 August, 6.45pm	Battle of the Organs (Philip Rushforth, Alexander Lanigan-Palotai, Daniel Mathieson and Graham Eccles): £20

Kelsborrow Choir
70th Anniversary Gala Concert
Jonathan Scott (International Concert Organist)
St John the Baptist's Church, Chester, CH1 1QX
Saturday 12 September 2026, 7.30pm
Tickets are available:

- via the Choir's Ticket Tailor webpage
- via Jonathan Scott's concert webpage
- by contacting John Evans on 07939 645688 or angiejohnevans@gmail.com for paper tickets

22nd August, 7.30pm	St John the Evangelist Parish Church, Ashton Hayes CH3 8AB. Raising funds for the church, £12 including refreshments
9th October, 7pm	St. Mary's Without-the-Walls, Handbridge, Chester
5th December, time TBC	As part of "Together in Song" celebrating the 20th anniversary of The Joshua Tree, Chester Cathedral
13th December, 3pm	Christmas Concert, Tarvin Community Centre

Wesley Church Centre, St. John Street, Chester, CH1 1DA
Saturday organ recitals, 12.45-1.35pm, retiring collection

19th September	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
17th October	Christopher Enston (St. Asaph Cathedral)
21st November, 10.30am-2.30pm	"Organ Day" Recitals Sequence
19th December	Christmas Music Concert (Claire, Jeremy and Brian Heald)

Hoole Methodist Church, Hamilton Street, Hoole, Chester

Sunday 23rd August, 3-3.45pm	Organ recital with Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
Sunday 20th September, 3-3.45pm	Eira Lynn Jones (harp)

St. John's Chester
Wednesdays 1pm, refreshments available

2nd September	Organ recital, John Evans

Neston Parish Church, CH64 9TZ
Organ recitals 10.45-11.30am, Coffee and homemade cakes from 10am!
All with Daniel Wakefield (Neston Parish Church)

Friday 7th August	Coffee, Cakes and Classics
Friday 21st August	Bach, Lemmens, Rutter and Tracey
Sunday 18th October	Annual organ recital (including Bach, Handel, Shostakovich and Walters)

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

Tuesday 22nd December, 1pm	A Christmas Organ Treat: £18 Ian Tracey (Organist to the City of Liverpool)

Liverpool Cathedral

Saturday 26th September, 6pm	2026 Centenary Organ Recitals, £15 James Orford (St Paul's Cathedral)
Saturday 17th October, 3pm	Festival Evensong and 100th Anniversary Recital, £15 Ian Tracey (Organist to the City of Liverpool)
Saturday 7th November, 6pm	2026 Centenary Organ Recitals, £15 Isabelle Demers (Quebec, Canada)

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

Sundays, 2-2.45pm

9th August	Daniel Mansfield (Liverpool/Southport)
16th August	Ivan Linford (Oakham)
23rd August	Alan McGuinness (Llandudno)
30th August	Simon Leach (Edinburgh)

St. George's Hall, Liverpool

Organ recitals with Ian Tracey (Organist to the City of Liverpool), £10, 12.45-1.30pm

Tuesday 29th September
Tuesday 13th October
Tuesday 17th November
Tuesday 8th December

Your 2026-2027 Committee

Chair	Tony Warren (ndtl3@yahoo.co.uk)
Vice-Chair	John Evans (angiejohnevans@gmail.com)
General Secretary	Katriona Moulton (secretary@cnewoca.org.uk)
Membership Secretary	Angela Evans (angiejohnevans@gmail.com)
Treasurer	Raymond Moulton (treasurer@cnewoca.org.uk)
Committee Member	Nigel James (organo3112@gmail.com)

Publications Officer Emily Burgess

Submissions for the newsletter by 1st of month for publication that month to:

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