

LEEDS ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION NOVEMBER 2018 UPDATE

Photos from our events can be seen on the LOA website Gallery
(<http://leedsorganists.wixsite.com/loaweb>)

Richard Ian Darke (1945-2018)

BA MLitt ARCO(CHM) PGCE ARSCM

It was very sad to learn of the death of Richard on 15th October 2018, who served as LOA President 1989-90; and had been a LOA member for many years. A Bradfordian, Richard entered the world of church music at an early age. Apparently becoming the youngest ever chorister at Great Horton S. John at age 6! The serious business of musical education started at school with Keith Rhodes who was, at the time, also organist of Bradford Cathedral. After school he attended Bristol University reading Music and Theology. This was followed by his appointment to Roundhay S. Edmund in Leeds, where he did wonderful work for many years. Next came the Bradford Choristers who eventually, with his help, returned to the cathedral. During this period he was also Director of Music at Knaresborough S. John Baptist from 1994 to 2016 (later Emeritus), again producing a fine and loyal choir. Shortly before retirement he was appointed an Associate of the RSCM in recognition of his services to church music. Truly a life dedicated to the church and music, described as 'endearingly eccentric', his many pupils benefitting from his devoted teaching.



On Saturday 3rd November 2018 a Requiem Mass was held at S. John's which was attended by a very large congregation, including many LOA members, showing how widely-known and respected Richard was. The service was conducted by the Precentor Emeritus of Ripon Cathedral, the Reverend Canon Paul Greenwell who also gave the Homily. He was assisted by the Rector of the church, the Reverend Garry Hinchcliffe. Under the direction of Dr Simon Lindley, a large choir had been formed to provide the splendid music, which included compositions by Richard and Byrd/Bairstow/Howells. After the service refreshments were provided in the church hall. The LOA send their sincere condolences to Bethie and family at this saddest of times.

'O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded'

Leeds Minster

Saturday 22nd September 2018

Resuming our activities following the August break, the purpose of this evening visit was to explore the musical fortunes of the Edwardian period within the English tradition. This was in the format of an illustrated talk entitled 'An Edwardian Perspective' by our good friend, Dr Simon Lindley, Organist Emeritus of the Minster.

On arrival we were warmly welcomed by the staff at the Minster and provided with tea and biscuits!! During this time members took the opportunity to 'explore' the Minster organ.

In his own characteristic style full of anecdotes, Simon discussed what is regarded as Victorian and what we now refer to as 20th century music. In practice what composers like Howells, Ireland, Buck and others enriched the repertoire. This also includes the Edwardian organ, where Leeds has fine examples in the instruments at Roundhay S. Edmund (1909) and Far Headingley S. Chad (1911). After a tea break, Simon played typical pieces from the period on the Minster organ, many of these are within the capabilities of the 'modest' player. The following composers were represented: Butterworth/Cocker/Elgar/Howells/Parry/Thalben-Ball.

On behalf of the many members present, Dr Wilby expressed our grateful thanks to Dr Lindley for a fascinating evening. Thanks also go to the authorities for the use of the Minster, and especially the staff who made us so welcome with the refreshments.

Visit to Manchester

Saturday 13th October 2018

This was the opportunity on a fine autumn day for members to cross the border into the Red Rose county, to visit two city centre churches in what was known as 'Cottonopolis' now better known as Manchester!!

After lunch the first church visited was S. Ann at the southern side of the bustling S. Ann's Square. Described by John Betjeman as 'A fine city church of 1709-12 in the style of Wren'. Inevitably sympathetic changes have been made over the years.

On arrival we were made most welcome particularly by the present organist, Simon Passmore. Well-known musicians have served here over the years; perhaps many will remember William Hardwick and Ronald Frost of recent times. Simon began by welcoming members and then proceeded to give a thorough and interesting talk on the history of this fine large organ. The story of the present instrument starts in the 1930's, with subsequent work in 1954, 1980's and 1996. Situated on the gallery at the east end of the north aisle in two fine cases; the four-manual console is opposite the pulpit on the south side adjacent to the choir stalls. To demonstrate the resources of the organ Simon then played two contrasting pieces: Fantasia in G (BWV 572) JSB and 'Joie et Clarte des Corps glorieux' Messiaen. Members were then allowed to explore the organ at their pleasure. The Rector the Reverend Canon Nigel Ashworth kindly said a few words of welcome with Dr Wilby responding on our behalf with thanks for the kind hospitality.

We then made our way through the very busy streets to The Cathedral & Collegiate Church of S. Mary, S. Denys & S. George, to quote the full title! Our visit was to see and learn of the new four manual organ by the late Kenneth Tickell. The instrument was dedicated at a Service with a Recital by Thomas Trotter in 2017. After he had read Evening Prayer in the Quire the Dean, the Very Reverend Rogers Govender, came and said how welcome we were, and hoped that our visit would be most enjoyable. Dr Wilby expressed our thanks for his kind remarks. Then the Director of Music, Christopher Stokes, made us most welcome and, from the nave console, explained how the instrument came to fruition, and then demonstrated the various resources available. Members were generously allowed to play the organ. In appearance the splendid cases prominently placed on the quire screen, dominate the interior of the cathedral. In the guide book there is a quotation 'Once a large parish church in a small market town, now a small cathedral of a great city', one could now say 'a small cathedral with a GREAT organ'!! On our behalf Dr Wilby expressed thanks to Christopher for spending time with us, the warm hospitality and being allowed free access to play the instrument. Some were kindly allowed to see the console on the screen. We then departed for the journey home, maybe a little weary, but having thoroughly enjoyed the visit.

[An excellent article on the organ by Paul Hale is contained in the BIOS annual periodical 'Organ Building' volume 17 entitled 'Manchester Cathedral – There and Back Again']

The final event of the season took place at this lovely church on a Saturday morning. The meeting was a seminar on composition and improvisation entitled 'Writing it down or making it up'. The event was arranged by and in the very capable hands of our President-Elect, Dr Philip Wilby. He also provided music upon which the exercises were based and the illustrations.

The first part was a talk by Philip about the structure of composition with illustrations on the organ played by Alana Brook. The 2 pieces used were from the suite 'Organ Hours' written for the organist of Wells cathedral and his house organ. We were delighted and grateful that S. Peter's church choir joined us to sing the lovely anthem written for the choir 'God be in my head' (1984). It was beautifully given under the direction of their choirmaster, David Lindley with Dr Wilby at the organ. The final illustration was a performance of a much more substantial anthem 'The earth is the Lord's' (2002). Written for and recorded by Canterbury Cathedral choir.

We then retired to the Parish Centre for a convivial break for tea and biscuits which were much appreciated.

Following this we returned to the church to approach the skills of improvisation. By way of demonstration Dr Wilby asked for a theme for Mike Walters to work his magic. The plainsong melody 'Urbs beata' was suggested and proved to be most suitable for an extended improvisation. A number of members had kindly volunteered to participate in simple improvisation exercises. 'Templates' were provided in different styles; these could then be used as a basis to develop brief extensions at the end of a hymn. The hymn tune 'Westminster Abbey' by Henry Purcell was chosen for this purpose. The results were quite commendable, showing what could be done and much appreciated by other members. We were left in no doubt that this ability is so necessary in the organists' toolkit.

So ended what proved to be a most interesting and valuable event. Our grateful thanks to Philip for making the arrangements and the detailed musical work. This was a well-attended event where the church made us most welcome. It was most commendable that the church choir came and sang for our benefit, a hearty thanks to them, to the church authorities for the use of their excellent facilities, and certainly not least to the intrepid participants in the improvisation session.

Special thanks: Dr Philip Wilby & David Wilks

The programme of events was approved at the 2018 AGM but almost immediately afterwards came the sad loss of Gordon, our President, who had been so involved in the planning. The task of implementing each event was taken in hand by Philip and David. That the programme has been so successful is because of the hard work involved by them. It is only right that our grateful thanks be expressed by the membership for their dedication.

Philip will assume the office of President at the AGM, but members should remember that David had expressed his intention to stand down, but he has carried on much to our benefit.

Events 2019

Work on planning next year's programme by the officials and committee is making good progress. Firmer details will, of course, be given at the AGM on Saturday 9th February.

Membership

It is always encouraging to see new members, particularly to welcome our youngest recruit Ethan Kendrick who has been a keen regular attender at our meetings.

On the other hand, we have suffered the loss of the President, two committee members, and two former Presidents.

This has proved a difficult year, certainly 'a wake-up call' for us to seek new members. And the need for members to undertake the various official positions for the administration of the Association.

Let us therefore, look forward to a productive AGM!!

Recitals – Near & Far

The season is in full flow and as many members will know, full details are readily available on organrecitals.com

NEXT MEETING

Saturday 9th February 2019 at 11pm
Sand Moor Golf Club AGM & luncheon
Final details will be circulated to members