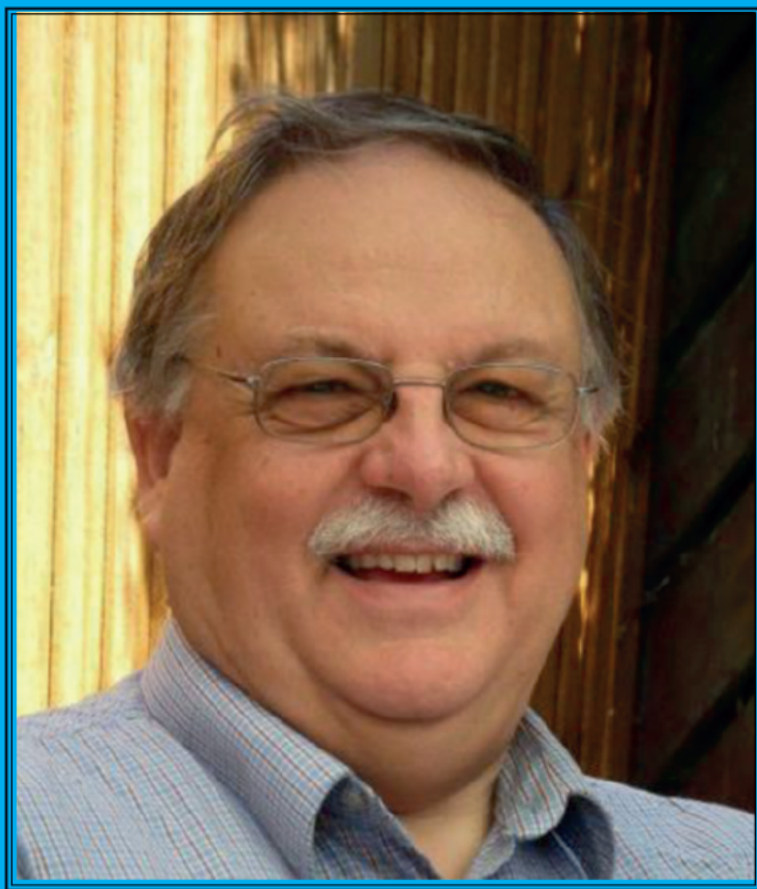
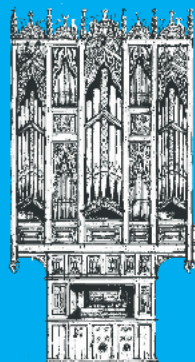


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THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF ORGAN STUDIES

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BIOS REPORTER

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Front cover: Richard Hird, longtime treasurer of BIOS and editor of the first BIOS website (see obituary on p. 40) (Photo: © BIOS)

Back cover: The van Leuven organ at the Dutch Church in London (see p. 45)
(Photo: Melanie Plumley)

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FROM THE CHAIR

I continue to be amazed at the extent of the work undertaken by individual BIOS council members on behalf of the Institute - and I take this opportunity to thank them for their labours. Much has been achieved in the last months - but there is more to do. At the next Council meeting we will be discussing a range of matters, including the BOA and the appointment of an archivist, membership matters, the PhD project with the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, how BIOS might highlight organs at risk beyond producing a register, as well as receiving the wonderful news of a further legacy from Richard Owen to be invested in the NPOR. Council is grateful to those who have remembered BIOS in their will.

Of significance amongst recent activities are the arrangements for forthcoming meetings, particularly the Golden Jubilee conference in 2026. Before turning to the latter there are other meetings to note. The first of these offers the opportunity to learn more about the reconstruction by Goetze & Gwynn of the organ by George Pike England at St John's Church, 12 St John's Street, Chichester. This takes place on Saturday 7 June. St John's is a Georgian proprietary chapel which retains most of its early nineteenth-century features. Further details are to be found on p.55. This meeting looks to afford a most interesting day, with presentations by Rob Rowley (MD of Goetze & Gwynn), Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite, Jane Warner Jones (Conservation Projects Manager at the Churches Conservation Trust), and Dr David Knight, together with a celebrity recital by Margaret Phillips.

On Saturday 13 September Reading Borough Council presents a Heritage Open Day event at Reading Town Hall in which a number of organisations have come together to celebrate the 'Father' Willis organ in the Concert Hall. This is primarily an outreach event to promote interest in the organ, and is a collaboration between Berkshire Organists' Association, the Royal College of Organists' *Play the Organ Year*, BIOS, the IBO, SWO and IAO. There will be a series of talks, plus a recital and masterclass with concert organist Tom Bell who will look at music and editions by W.T. Best. There will be a presentation by Bruce Buchanan, who will explore the extraordinary family dynamic of the Willis organbuilding enterprise; Andrew Scott (MD of Harrison & Harrison Ltd) will talk about problematic decisions in restoration work; and our former Chair, Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite (former project monitor to the Heritage Lottery Foundation for the organ's

1999 restoration) will ask whether understanding the history of an organ matters.

This free event is an opportunity for BIOS to reach out to potential new members; I encourage you to support it and to consider bringing a prospective member to what promises to be a special event. Full details can be found at <https://www.readingtownhall.co.uk/whats-on/reading-town-hall-organ-heritage-open-day>, with additional information appearing on the BIOS website in due course.

A further activity follows on Saturday 25th October with the Cambridge Academy of Organ Studies (CAOS). BIOS members are cordially invited to a study day in Cambridge organised by CAOS. This is the first of three annual events celebrating the legacy of another former BIOS Chair, Professor Peter Williams, who was such an influential figure in both organisations. The theme this year will be 'The English Organ' and guest teachers and speakers will include Margaret Phillips, John Mander, with myself presenting the Peter Williams memorial lecture. More details soon from the CAOS (www.cambridgeorganacademy.org) and the BIOS website.

In addition to the usual BBE Conference in Birmingham early in 2026, BIOS will be celebrating 50 years since its inception. A residential conference is planned, based at Wadham College, Oxford between 9th and 11th April 2026; it offers an opportunity to look in detail at the English organ in a global context. This focus includes not only British organ culture and its influence around the world, but also that of imported instruments.

Taking a broader view of organs in England, it is possible to see many periods in history when foreign influence had a marked effect on English music and organbuilding. Prior to the Restoration of the Monarchy there must have been European ideas which found their way into organ design, although the lack of surviving material makes this difficult to discern. Was there an influence through the courtiers and musicians who came with Catherine of Aragon? When Goetze & Gwynn undertook the construction of the Tudor organs, they looked to Iberian instruments to solve certain technical questions.¹ Later, in the sixteenth century, when Mary I married Philip II of Spain in 1554, Antonio de Cabezón ('El ciego de Burgos') spent time in England. One of Cabezón's roles was to play a portative to Prince

¹ <https://www.goetzegwynn.co.uk/reports/>; see the Wingfield report, No. 40, 2.

Felipe as he journeyed around Europe. As a result, the blind organist was extremely well travelled and is known to have visited Italy, the Netherlands and Germany prior to his sojourn in England between 1554 and 1556. Apart from his skills as a composer and virtuoso player, these experiences surely make him one of the most interesting figures in European music of the period. English keyboard musicians must have seen him perform. His 'diferencias' (or variations) are thought to have had a marked influence on the music of Byrd and Tallis who enjoyed writing such pieces. Were divided keyboards and stops native to England, or imported ideas?

In recent times William Whitehead has drawn our attention to the music of John Luge (1580-1647/55) and speculates what organ resources the composer had at his disposal at Exeter Cathedral following his appointment as organist from 1603.² In the seventeenth century, some English organs were developed with two keyboards and double cases. If Luge played the Playssher instrument of 1513, how many manuals did it have? Whitehead suggests that Luge's free pieces might represent the first examples of the double voluntary, a format we associate more readily with Purcell and Blow. When considering how to play the music of composers such as Luge and Cabezón, there is clearly more to understand in respect of what organologist Gustav Fock called 'the chicken and egg question': which came first, the music or the organs?³

The effects of imported organbuilding talent after the Restoration are well known to us - and the pages of almost 50 years of BIOS Journals pay tribute to the interesting and detailed research undertaken into the returning Dallams and the revolutionary organs of Smith and Harris. These influences eventually settled into an English organbuilding style which is perhaps best illustrated in Bridge's magnum opus for Christ Church Spitalfields in 1735. There is a good deal of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English music now available in print, but no champion to piece together the fusion of Italian, French, Dutch and English influences which form the English voluntary of this period, its performance practice and its relationship to the instruments.

In the eighteenth century it was not long before further European influence came to bear, this time in the form of Snetzler. Like Robert Dallam and his

² Whitehead, William, 'John Luge and his Forbidden Fruit', *Organists' Review* (June 2025), 78-82, 82.

³ Fock, Gustav, *Hamburg's Role in Northern European Organ Building* (Hamburg, 1939) tr. and ed. by Lynn Edwards and Edward C. Pepe (Westfield Center: Westfield Center Publications, 1993), foreword, x

Frenchified ideas offered to New College Oxford, some of Snetzler's central-European idiom did not find favour - but, of course, others did. His ideas certainly influenced Samuel Green, who was perhaps the first organ-builder to experiment with varying the pipe-scale in the mid range of the compass. Wickens thought such adjustments were undertaken whilst working on site when installing the instruments.⁴ Why did Green rescale pipes? What musical function was he trying to serve?

European imports in the nineteenth century, especially from Germany after the 1851 Great Exhibition (i.e., the work of the Schulze firm) had a profound and lasting effect on English organbuilders who were anxious to incorporate (if not emulate) the new flue-scaling and voicing styles. French influence (in the form of Cavallé-Coll's work) was, in a curious way, a return to our shores of some radically revised English ideas which had been exported to France when John Abbey went to work in Paris with Érard in the 1820s. At the BBE conference in Birmingham in February, Drew Cantrill-Fenwick reconnected us with some of these observations: that Abbey's style helped replace more conventional French organbuilding practice (suspended action gave way to balanced actions, the Swell box was introduced, toe-pedals affecting the stop combinations were provided, etc.). What we learn from such research and through re-evaluation is that England exported organbuilding ideas, as well as receiving them.

From the mid-nineteenth century several English organbuilders emigrated to Australia, including George Fincham. I have been fortunate to visit Australia on several occasions and seen some of the remarkable survivals of not only exported Victorian English instruments but also examples of organs built there. English influence on antipodean organ culture was and remains significant. Our partner institute, the Organ Historical Trust of Australia (OHTA) has a most interesting website (<https://ohta.org.au>) which provides detailed technical information about many of these imported instruments, some of which remain in almost original condition.

There is a surprising number of surviving English organs exported to many countries around the world, not just through colonial links. Whilst in England we have lost examples of the work of some organbuilders, it is still possible to find almost intact instruments in far-flung places. I recently saw photographs of a three-manual Hill organ built in 1855 and exported to

⁴ Wickens, David, C., *Aspects of English Organ Pipe Scaling* (Oxford: Positif Press, 2004), Part 3, Level 1, 18.

Chennai Cathedral in India. This is not an isolated example of a mid-nineteenth-century English organ found abroad, another being the large Benjamin Flight & Son organ of 1849 in the Cathedral at Santiago de Chile. Both have been altered slightly but offer valuable insights into the work at that period not only of these organbuilders but also of the music the instruments served. Whilst visiting Taiping some years ago I came across an organ provided for All Saints' Church by James Andrew Riddell, a Liverpudlian who, from 1925, worked in what was then Malaya.⁵ A somewhat obscure organbuilding character, he had a workshop in Kuala Lumpur from where he supplied tropicalised pianos and organs. One wonders how many English musical instrument makers were living and working abroad in this way.

The twentieth century saw significant cross-fertilisation between English and foreign organbuilders. After prompting a revolution in English organ design, Robert Hope-Jones emigrated to America to escape prosecution and soon provided a seminal influence in the development of the American organ, notably through the Wurlitzer company. Henry Willis III deepened the exchange of ideas and G. Donald Harrison ('GDH' - a former Willis employee) became a figure central to the development of the American Classic Organ.

Whilst the arrival of the Organ Reform movement heralded a new era in Britain, there was, in fact, through GDH, a return of at least a few English ideas which were honed during his time in America. His influence on Ralph Downes was significant. An example being the notion that mixturework on different manuals should not break at the same points in the compass, with a variety of break points used instead of the more common Victorian breaks at, for example, c25. This was, I think, a feature of Willis's ideas in the 1920s and one which returned to England in the carefully crafted mixturework by Harrison & Harrison at London's Royal Festival Hall.

We are now in a period in which English organbuilding has made a revisionist return to an earlier style - but incorporating at least some ideas from the Reform alongside stronger Romantic tendencies. The use of non-standard pipescales, varied pipe-types, different sorts of reed shallots, carefully structured mixture choruses and breaks were common ideas in the Classical Revival. Such technical considerations have been incorporated alongside

⁵ See <http://clacklinevalleyolives.com.au/Pipeorgan/Malaysia/Riddell.html>.

others from before the Reform, including varied wind pressures, terraced dynamics of foundation registers, a slower voicing style, and the rehabilitation of Casson's Pedal extensions alongside the once-scorned leathered diapason. Where Reform instruments survive in near original condition, we must value them for what they are rather than try to mould them to a modern aesthetic.

These ideas are explored in greater detail in my forthcoming book, which I hope will be published in time for BIOS's Golden Jubilee. There are examples of English organbuilding in nearly every generation which either informed the music of these shores or were vehicles for it. At the present time some of the more complex music of the decades which followed the 1950s has been sidelined in favour of new and revived orchestral arrangements alongside film scores.

I hope that this editorial provides food for thought for those wishing to respond to the Call for Papers for BIOS's Golden Jubilee Conference in April 2026 (see BIOS website).

William McVicker

Chair of BIOS

FROM THE SECRETARY

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at The Dutch Church 7 Austin Friars, London EC2N 2HA on Saturday 12 April 2025 at 14.00 hours. 31 members were present.

The list of members who had died since the last AGM was read as follows: Martin Ball, Philip Carter, Gordon Curtis, J M Emmerson, Dominic Gwynn, Richard Hird, Dr Christopher Kent, Dr Julian Litten, John Norman, Barbara Owen, Dr Alan Seymour, Dr Christopher Storr, Peter Taylor, David Welch, David Wickens and Peter Wood.

The Chair highlighted aspects of his Report to the Meeting. In summary he noted

- A Brainstorming Session had taken at a meeting of Council wherein the Institute's progress across a range of our activities was reviewed. Of the follow-up actions, progress had been made on various fronts and with new initiatives.
- A new Website had been launched in November 2024 the outcome of a great deal of work by a sub-committee and Matt Dixon of Codeveloped Ltd who designed the new site,
- An album of ephemera relating to the work and life of the organ builder G M Holdich had been acquired for the British Organ Archive.
- A PhD studentship at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC) had been agreed in principle relating to the English Organ and its repertoire.
- Provisional costings had been obtained for digitising items in the British Organ Archive in order to make them accessible online, and to release additional space for new acquisitions (by placing digitised items in long-term, off-site storage). However, an archivist was needed review the archive and compile a complete catalogue.
- The publications team had been developed in order to share the considerable workload, as well as looking at ways of developing BIOS's digital presence.
- Progress had been made in joining forces with other groups. There had been recent joint activities and autumn 2025 would see more e.g. BIOS was joining with Reading Borough Council on 13 September 2025 for its annual Heritage Open Day, linked this year with the RCO's *Play the Organ Year*, and presented in collaboration with the IAO, IBO, SWO and Berkshire OA.
- Collaborating with groups in the heritage sector provided an interesting challenge and required further development work.

- The general loss of pipe organs was of great concern to BIOS. In the coming years BIOS might consider regional presentations in respect of organs under threat, in order to heighten local and national awareness of the problem.
- BIOS needed to monitor the effect of casework intervention, to explore potential for further coverage in the listing of historic organs and making NPOR coverage more proactive to update and improve information.
- BIOS's Golden Jubilee Year (2026) promised to be a major celebration with a range of new publications and a Residential Conference in Oxford featuring international speakers.
- Earlier editions of *BIOS Reporter* often carried a column entitled 'Notes and Queries' written by the Revd Bernard Edmonds and it would be of interest to hear what BIOS members were researching. Please could BIOS members send details of their own research (solved or unsolved) to the Editor of the *Reporter*.
- The Chair had written a number of letters on behalf of BIOS, including to his own MP and to the DCMS in respect of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS). A further letter was written to the new owners of Adlington Hall emphasising that they own an important organ and heritage asset.
- Correspondence with *Positif Press* in respect of the residual stock of Journals had continued with a resolution to the issue believed now to be in sight.
- A number of BIOS members have died in recent times (as noted at the start of the Meeting), including a former Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Formal obituaries would appear in the *Journal*.
- The Chair was conscious that BIOS generated a huge range of activity and he was grateful to every individual who fulfil the various roles within the organisation.

The Treasurer in his Report to the Meeting presented accounts for the period ended 31 December 2024 drew attention to a number of salient points:

- Net incoming resources for the year were £5,124 and the balance carried forward was a healthy £113,481.
- The most significant expenditure was from the NPOR Fund, an amount of £10,739. This fund was supported by donors with a net incoming resource of £2k routinely transferred each year from Unrestricted Funds.
- An amount of £7,457 had been expended on front loading a number of significant forthcoming publications. Previous publications had achieved a surplus and it was to be hoped that the new ones when they appear would achieve the same result.
- Total Funds as at 31 December 2024 were £168,936. Assets were shown as £6,000 (i.e. the cost of purchasing the Holdich book).
- During the year we were notified that BIOS was a residuary legatee to the estate of a deceased member, Gary Rant. Since this involved sale of property at year end it was not possible to measure reliably the full amount of the legacy which initially was estimated to be around £135k.

Jonathan Hunt, our Independent Examiner, was not seeking to be reappointed this year and he was thanked for the number of years over which he had discharged this role. Council had not yet identified a suitable candidate and the Meeting agreed that an appointment might be made by Council in due course.

From the remaining Reports from Officers (and other portfolio holders) the Meeting noted the following:

- There was an upward trend in membership currently which the Chair hoped to reinforce with a recruitment campaign later in the year.
- JBIOS was not yet available to Members digitally although pdf copies could be requested from the Publications Officer.

- If an urgent need arose to consider an application for Listing, then mechanisms existed to deal with any such request.
- It was not clear when organs were removed from the Historic Organs at Risk Register List whether this was for a negative or positive reason.

The Chair was thanked by the Meeting for the leadership he had provided and the manner in which BIOS was moving forward.

In accordance with the Constitution, the following elections were made:

Membership Secretary: Melanie Plumley

Publications Officer: Katharine Pardee

Casework Officer: Nigel Stark

Ordinary Members of Council: David Shuker, Paul Tindall and Mark Venning

HISTORIC ORGANS AT RISK REGISTER

The organ in St Erth Methodist Chapel (by Forster and Andrews 1864, K00170) was added to the Register in October 2024.

There are currently nine organs on the Register:

Cambridge, St Andrew	April 2017
Devizes St Mary	May 2018
Tollington Park, St Mark	June 2019
Ipswich, St Clement's Congregational church	October 2019
Edge Hill, St Mary/All Saints	September 2020
Cornholme, St Michael and all Angels	January 2022
South Pickenham, All Saints	April 2024
Kelton Church	September 2024
St Erth Methodist Chapel	October 2024

Jonathan Goodchild

OBITUARY - RICHARD HIRD

Richard D. Hird MA MRTPI LTCL was the son of Yorkshire organist and BIOS member David Hird FRCO and although Durham was his home for much of his life, Richard was brought up in Yorkshire, attending Batley Grammar School. He gained his MA from St Peter's College, Oxford before continuing his studies at Leeds School of Town Planning. He became a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and it was as a chartered town planner with Durham County Council that he spent the major part of his working life.

I first met Richard in the late 1960s when we were both members of the Darlington & District Organists' & Choirmasters' Association. Our mutual associations with NE England, and then later with BIOS, made our connection a very long lasting one. Richard was the BIOS Treasurer for many years and he also built and managed the BIOS website that was used until 2012. After the early death of his wife Marilyn, Richard decided to attend the 2008 Conference of the Organ Historical Society of the USA, held that summer in Seattle and Tacoma. I was at that time working in the USA and we attended together before travelling into Canada meeting with friends of his in Vancouver before taking a two day train trip through the Rocky Mountains to stay then with his relatives in Calgary.

Richard's work in the organ world included working as Diocesan Organ Advisor for Durham, membership of the Council for the Care of Churches Organs Committee, and he also wrote extensively on the history of the organs of Durham Cathedral and elsewhere, drawing on a wide ranging knowledge of the organs of his city and much further afield. He was an editor for the NPOR and worked hard to provide rapid updates to its data.

Richard was a committee member of the Darlington and District Organists' Association maintaining their website and frequently posting on their social media. He was a guest speaker about organs for organisations outside the organ world and had future speaking engagements scheduled. We were in contact only two days before his February death which I suspect was as much a surprise to him as a shock to the rest of us. Richard leaves two daughters, three grandchildren and his close companion, Barbara.

All who knew him are hugely saddened by his death. May he rest in peace.

Melanie Plumley, March 2025

MEETING REPORT

Bernard Edmonds Recent Research Conference

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Saturday 22 February 2025

DAVID SHUKER

This second recent research conference to be hosted by the organ department of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire was well attended with 36 delegates treated to a wide range of subjects.

William McVicker described the contents of the recently acquired volume that provides a unique insight into the early career of G.M.Holdich. There are beautifully executed watercolours of the first 27 organs that he made (some images are absent or missing). Other contents include a handwritten list of his first 65 instruments built between 1838 and 1845, some information about his premises, adverts or descriptions of new organs (mostly early ones), invitations to the public to visit and hear organs completed in the workshop prior to delivery, 'circulars' listing his organs, a variety of pamphlets for the opening of new organs and miscellaneous documents. Much of this information was unavailable to the late Rodney Matthews when he published his biography of Holdich, *A Reluctant Convert*, in 2015. The book of watercolours was probably compiled as a portable advertising tool which could be shown prospective clients. The handwritten lists gave way to a variety of printed documents. There is still much to be discovered about the early career of Holdich.

The French horn as an organ stop has gone through various cycles of development and fashion over the past three centuries. The Georgian version of the stop extended the range of the imitative reed stops and was sufficiently distinctive for several examples of French horn voluntaries to have been composed. It is unclear how the pipes were constructed. An 'insular' version of the stop developed, probably choked in imitation of the use of the hand in the orchestral instrument, becoming popular during the early decades of the nineteenth century possibly due to the influence of Weber's music. **Owen Woods** suggested that the stop evolved into the cornopean and tuba later in the century. After a period of declining interest in horn stops, the Edwardian period saw a revival, again influenced by orchestral use, which resulted in some innovation and experimentation in pipe construction by a number of organ-builders (see also: Woods, O., "A Trifling and Vitiating Style of Performance":

A History of the French Horn Organ Stop', *Galpin Society Journal*, 77 [March 2024], 4-29).

In the hundred years after Luther's launch of the Reformation various disputes arose in Germany over liturgical practices (**Anna Steppler**). None more so than the 'Anhalt controversy' which melded music and politics. In March 1596 the citizens of Anhalt petitioned their Duke to restore music in the liturgy after it had been suppressed by Calvinist influence. Pamphlets were distributed and passions inflamed, and in some cases soldiers were sent in to enforce the preferences of the local ruler. Music came to assume a particular significance ('genius') in Lutheran liturgy, such as the preaching of 'organ sermons' when new instruments were installed or augmented (see also: Steppler, A., 'Reading organ specifications with Michael Praetorius', *Organists' Review*, [December 2024], 46-50).

Whilst the influence of foreign organbuilding on British practice is often noted, the reverse attracts little comment. **Drew Cantrill-Fenwick** drew attention to the influence that the English organbuilder John Abbey (1785-1859) had on French organbuilding in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Abbey went to Paris in 1826 at the invitation of Sebastien Érard to build on an organ that Érard had designed. Abbey's arrival in France coincided with a growing interest in the expressive potential of organs. Subsequently Abbey established his own business and introduced the compensating bellows, the swell box and composition pedals into French organbuilding. The business established by John Abbey was continued into the 20th century by his son and grandson.

As the need for organs in parish churches increased from the late eighteenth century onwards a number of organbuilders offered various designs of barrel organs. The barrel organ obviated the need for a skilled keyboard player and standardised construction methods meant that instruments could be purchased at modest cost by small village churches. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were probably more barrel organs in village churches than 'finger' organs (as traditional organs were usually described at the time). **Maggie Kilbey** has made a particular study of the factors influencing the acquisition and use of barrel organs in Hertfordshire churches (see also: the chapter on 'Church barrel organs' in Kilbey, M., *Music-Making in the Hertfordshire parish 1760-1870* [Hertford: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2020]). The use of church barrel organs declined rapidly from the 1860s onwards and became somewhat tainted by their association with street barrel organs which

were seen as a nuisance. Very few barrel organs remain in their original locations but many of those have been restored and their tunes recorded (see the website www.barrel-organs.co.uk for a comprehensive listing and recordings of surviving barrel organs).

Eaton Hall in Cheshire, the ancestral home of the Grosvenor family, has a long association with organs, both as chapel and domestic instruments. **David Shuker** revealed tantalising glimpses of musical life at Eaton Hall, including the fact that Lady Westminster played the organ at the christening of her granddaughter, Victoria Grosvenor, in 1836 as recorded in the diary of the young Princess Victoria. In later life the Honourable Victoria Grosvenor went on to become an organist herself, playing in public on various occasions. Recent evidence has come to light that the first organ at Eaton Hall was a secondhand Snetzler organ bought by the Earl of Wilton as a wedding present for his daughter, the future Lady Westminster, around 1800.

The passage of time means that everything becomes history faster than we might think. Organs that might have appeared quite ‘modern’ only a few decades ago should perhaps be considered as ‘historical’ instruments. **Martin Renshaw** began his talk by giving a few examples of twentieth-century organs of musical and architectural note that have been removed in recent years. Overall the rate of disappearance of organs has been dramatic - since the founding of BIOS almost 50 years ago when there were about 42,000 organs in the UK there now remain between 25-30,000 of which a third are still playable and with possibly only around 5,000 that are played regularly. Organists are in many cases the only champions of organs that are under threat (see also Renshaw, M., ‘What can organists do to help organs? A personal view’, *Organists’ Review* [March 2025], 40-44).

During the lunch break delegates were able to see and hear the new ‘Juliet’ organ in the RBC organ studio built by the William Drake workshop. This design of the organ was inspired by the British nineteenth-century organ tradition and complements the baroque organ on the opposite wall. There will eventually be eight organs at the RBC, all representing different organbuilding styles and traditions, that will allow students and researchers to explore a range of repertoires on appropriate instruments.

Both the attendance and range of subjects at the Birmingham conference were a heartening return to ‘normality’ in the post-Covid era and a sign of renewed vigour in BIOS with the imminent approach of its 50th anniversary.



BIOS delegates viewing the new 'Juliet' organ in the RBC organ studio

Photo: David Shuker

MEETING REPORT

Day Conference and Annual General Meeting 2025

The Dutch Church, 7 Austin Friars, London EC2N 2HA

RICHARD HOBSON

This year's AGM was held as part of a day conference at the Dutch Church, Austin Friars, in the City of London. The church of the Austin Friars was founded in 1253 but only the nave survived the Dissolution and was given in 1550 to the Dutch Protestants. A royal charter was granted on 24 July 1550 that allowed them to establish a 'Stranger Church' and this was incorporated by letters patent from King Edward VI. The church was restored in 1863-5 after fire damage and completely destroyed in an air raid in 1940.

The first organ used by the Dutch congregation was installed in 1799 by an unknown builder. This was destroyed by the fire in 1862 and was replaced in 1864 by a two manual organ of 16 speaking stops by William Hill. Hill enlarged it in 1885, moving it to a gallery at the east end. Further additions made in 1896 left it with two manuals and 30 speaking stops. The new post war church, designed by Arthur Bailey and completed in 1954. An organ by Willem van Leeuwen of Leiderdorp was installed in the new building with a specification by Dr M.A.Vente; this has Hoofdwerk, Rugwerk, Pedaal and 26 stops, mechanical key action and electric stop action. It has more recently been overhauled and revoiced by Flentrop.

The morning session began with a talk by the Minister, Ds Bertjan van de Lagemaat in the library. The church has a remarkable collection of theological books dating from the time of the congregation's establishment in London, maps and hymnals, and a copy of the first Bible printed in Dutch. This was followed by a tour of the church itself including the glass and other fittings.

William McVicker and Owen Woods then gave a talk entitled 'Wills, Willis and St Monica's Care Home, Westbury-on-Trym' which charted the history and technical detail of what was the Wills family house organ.

After an excellent lunch and the AGM Professor David Titterington, organist of the church and Head of Organ at the Royal Academy of Music spoke about the Van Leeuwen organ, and the afternoon ended with a brilliant recital of music by Buxtehude, Georg Muffat, Michael Praetorius, Nicolaus Bruhns and J.S.Bach by Jason Tang and Hamish Wagstaff, present and recent students of the RAM.

Thanks to Professor David Titterington for arranging our visit, and to Ds Bertjan van de Lagemaat and the Trustees of the Dutch Church.

PIPE ORGANS OF WIGAN

DANIEL CATTERALL

Currently, I am doing a project to catalogue pipe organs within churches around Wigan Town Centre, that have either closed or been demolished. My aim is to find out if they still exist. If they do, I research whether they were moved to other buildings or used for spare parts. Likewise, I'm also keen to find photos, plans and specifications for as many as I can find, as this can be the only way of representing organs that have since been lost.

Using the BIOS archival records has been key for my research. This has given me useful information so that I can significantly focus my research. For example, I recently requested the records for Wigan's King Street Baptist Church using BIOS archives, allowing me to find the specification, the organbuilder, and information on when the organ was first opened.

Ultimately, I intend to make this into a future article for the Wigan Buildings & Preservation Trust. I am also going to present my research in a presentation for Wigan Local History and Heritage Society to increase awareness of pipe organs in churches, concert halls and institutions. This highlights the relevance this subject has in our local and national history.

If you have information that you think may help me cover the history of church and other organs in Wigan contact me: dann.catterall@gmail.com

BOSTON OF RENN & BOSTON. A MISATTRIBUTION?

PAUL TINDALL

The late Michael Sayer's splendid book of 1974, *Samuel Renn, English Organ Builder* broke new ground in many ways. No one before had considered the way in which an organbuilding business was organised in Britain, nor had there been any previous recognition that any early nineteenth-century organ might be of some value, let alone one from Manchester. The father of James Kirtland, Renn's nephew and successor, was named James Sayer Kirtland so it seems that Michael was related in some way. There are details in the book which could only come from family sources, such as the portraits by John Raphael Siddal, which, fortunately, are well reproduced.

The early history of the firm is mainly well known. James Davis retired abruptly in 1822 on the death of his brother David, who was a partner in the instrument making and music-publishing firm of Clementi & Co, successors to Longman & Broderip, and left him £12 000. A new organ for St Mary, Stockport was in progress, and it was completed by Davis's employees Samuel Renn and John Boston in late 1823. According to Davis's obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 'Mr Bishop succeeds in all the church business,' so opportunity had to be sought elsewhere. The north-west was expanding at remarkable speed, so Renn & Boston set up for themselves in Stockport, moving to Dickinson Street in central Manchester by 1825.

Michael Sayer seems to have made an error regarding John Boston's identity. According to the book¹ he was baptised at Hackney on 16 May 1787, married a Jane Shakerley (1792-1871), of a Cheshire leather and tanning business, and moved to Moston near Sandbach, dying there in 1849. However, this John Boston married Jane Shakerley as early as 1821 in Warrington, Cheshire, and was a farmer at Moston in 1841 (born in Cheshire, not Middlesex), dying there in 1849 (at approximately the right age). It is clearly the wrong man.

The Renn & Boston partnership was dissolved in November 1831.² Why a successful and expanding partnership should break up is unknown, but according to the *Manchester Guardian* of 12 March 1831 one John Arthur Bostock (b. 1799) was convicted of robbery from Renn & Boston, having been a pipe maker for them eight or nine years. He was transported to New

¹ Sayer, Michael, *Samuel Renn. English Organ Builder*, (London & Chichester, Phillimore & Co. 1974), 5, 7, 15, and the fold-out family trees at the back

² *London Gazette* 11 November 1831

South Wales in September. Perhaps Renn had formed the view that Boston was in some way to blame?

A few weeks later, the sadly short-lived organ builder John Parkin of York (1808-1834) announced in the *Yorkshire Gazette* of 18 January 1832 that he had 'engaged Mr. Boston from Manchester, late of the firm of "Renn and Boston" '.

Moving back a few years, and given the coincidence that he should go to York in 1832, it seems quite plausible that 'Mr Boston from Manchester' was in fact the son of Robert Boston of York (c. 1767-1814), who was John Donaldson's foreman and successor. This John Boston was baptized in Newcastle on 22 November 1789, the year before his father moved to York with Donaldson. John Boston of the Parish of St. Helen, 'organ builder & bachelor' married Elizabeth Webster in York on 16 April 1810.³

At the end of March 1814 Robert Boston died, and John Ward of Caister (c.1777-1855) immediately claimed to be his successor;

YORK. JOHN WARD, ORGAN-BUILDER, Takes the earliest opportunity of informing his Friends and the Public in general, that he has succeeded the late ROBERT BOSTON in the above business, where he intends carrying it on in all its Branches. From the experience he has had, he flatters himself that, by an unremitting attention, he has no doubt of giving satisfaction to those who please to favour him with their commands. Two London Hands may have constant employment. All Letters, Post paid, will be daily attended to.⁴

John Boston attempted to remonstrate -

JOHN BOSTON, Son of the late Robert Boston, Organ-Builder, YORK, BEGS Leave to inform his late Father's Friends and the Public in general, that he intends to CARRY ON the above BUSINESS, and he has no Doubt of giving Satisfaction to those who please to favour him with their Commands. New Organ Barrels made, and Old Ones re-set, on the shortest Notice. N.B. An Advertisement having appeared in the York Herald of April 23rd, and likewise in the Leeds Mercury of April 30th, in which Mr. Ward, of Caster [*sic*], Lincolnshire, states that he is Successor of the deceased Mr. ROBERT BOSTON, Mr. J. B. feels himself called upon to declare that the said Mr. Ward is no Way authorised to style himself his late Father's successor.⁵

³ Cook, Robert Beilby (ed.), *The Parish Registers of St Martin, Coney Street, York 1557-1812*, (Publications of the York Parish Register Society Vol. XXXVI, Privately printed for the Society, 1909), 243

⁴ *York Herald*, 23 April 1814

but in the event Ward succeeded in establishing himself in York in his place, and by the 28th of May could advertise that he had opened a workshop in College Street. Robert Boston's stock-in-trade was auctioned on the 21 June.⁶ At this point John Boston disappears (temporarily) from the record in York, but further evidence of the connection is that Renn & Boston made repairs at Leeds Parish church in 1828, somewhat out of their usual area: an instrument worked on by Robert Boston in 1807.

John Parkin managed to build five known organs during his brief career, including one for Bridlington Priory, before dying of consumption late in 1834. How much assistance he received from John Boston is unclear: during 1834 Robert Postill was evidently working for Parkin, and he bought the business in 1835.⁷ Boston is not mentioned after the first announcement in January 1832, but from 1835 to 1838 he is listed as an organbuilder at 17 Epworth Street, Liverpool. The 1841 census contains (in Christian Street, close by) his wife Elizabeth Boston, a dressmaker with a daughter but without a husband, so John probably died in or shortly after 1838.⁸

A further fact worth noting is that Robert Boston had another son, by his second marriage to Judith Cheetham. Robert Boston junior was born on the 7th and baptized on the 9th June 1811, and the unusually informative Register of St Helen's church describes the child as 'Robert Boston son of Robert Boston Organ-builder son of William Boston linen weaver late of Edinburgh and Mary Black his wife,' and 'Judith daughter of William Cheetham of Halifax Weaver.' This informs us that the Bostons were of Scottish ancestry, as has also been strongly believed of John Donaldson. Robert Boston junior is found as an organ metal pipe maker in the 1851 census,⁹ visiting a Joseph Mangham, organbuilder, and a younger pipemaker named William Grant. They are in Sculcoates, Hull, so very likely working for Forster & Andrews.

Yet another person of the same name, but with no known connection, is William Boston. He is called an organ builder when marrying Hannah Jackson, both of Liverpool, at St. Nicholas, Liverpool 12 June 1822.¹⁰ A

⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, 21 May 1814

⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 11 June 1814

⁷ Elliott, Maximilian D. *'Thou shalt buzz no more': an examination of the organ-building industry in nineteenth-century York; its origins, growth and prominence* (PhD thesis, University of York 2019), 51-57

⁸ The daughter, Mary (born c. 1818) names 'John Boston Organ Builder' as her father when she married for the second time (as Mary Blaine, formerly Percival) in 1857. She was still in Christian Street.

⁹ HO 107/2361 f. 188 p. 21

daughter Mary Jackson Boston was baptized there 12 November 1826,¹¹ when they were said to be of Manchester.

The Renn Worklist

Sayer's list of Renn's works appears to be quite comprehensive, but there are, inevitably, a few organs which have come to light in the meantime:

Manchester, All Saints. Rebuilt and enlarged 1824 and 1839.¹² The church where Renn was buried.

Salford, Mr Ryder's Music Academy, at the Town Hall 1835¹³

Leek, Parish Church, rebuilt and enlarged, with pedal pipes and more stops 1841¹⁴

Salford, St Matthias 1843¹⁵

Knutsford, Parish Church, improved and enlarged 1843¹⁶

Salybridge, St George's Chapel 1843, 11/19 stops.¹⁷

This is presumably 'Old' St George's. re-opened in September 1843, after 'New' St George's, built in 1840, proved unpopular. Sayer's dates for both of 1838 (and Sperling's of 1837) are therefore unreliable. Renn's organ for St George's New Church (of which a photograph survives), must have been built in 1840: there was a performance of Messiah, with 'Mozart's additional accompaniments' in December 1840, and an organist is mentioned.

Mossley, New Connexion Chapel 1844¹⁸

Rawtenstall, Wesleyan Chapel, Longholme 1845¹⁹

After Samuel's death his wife Sarah Renn continued until she died in 1850. 'Kirtland and Jardine (late Renn)' first advertise as such in August 1850. These are the organs which appeared under her name:

¹⁰ Liverpool Record Office, 283 NIC/3/12

¹¹ Liverpool Record Office, Drl/2/99. Bishop's transcript

¹² *Manchester Courier (MC)* 15 January 1825, 7 December 1839

¹³ *MC* 4 July 1835

¹⁴ *Staffordshire Gazette*, 26 August 1841

¹⁵ *MC* 7 October 1843

¹⁶ *Manchester Times (MT)* 2 December 1843

¹⁷ *MC* 13 April 1844

¹⁸ *MC* 20 July 1844

¹⁹ *MT* 12 April 1845, 26 stops

Blackley, St Peter 1845²⁰

Oldham, St Peter 1847²¹ ‘repaired’ but for £200, so major work

Manchester, St John, Longsight 1847²²

Bolton, St Paul, Halliwell 1848²³

Radcliffe, St Thomas 1848, £295²⁴

Bredbury, St Mark 1849²⁵

Stretford 1849, II/15ss²⁶

Hayfield, St Matthew 1849²⁷

One of Renn’s largest and best surviving organs, at St Thomas, Stockport (1834) is now in danger. The church (listed Grade I) was closed in 2024.

²⁰ MC 15 November 1845

²¹ *Halifax Guardian* 27 March 1847

²² MC 13 November 1847

²³ MC 24 June 1848

²⁴ *Manchester Examiner* 16 September 1848

²⁵ Sayer, 113

²⁶ MC 14 April 1849

²⁷ MC 21 July 1849, and Sayer 113-114



Renn’s 1834 organ at
St Thomas’s
Stockport
(NPOR N01993)

(Photo: NPOR)

REVIEW

William Walond Six Voluntaries For Organ or Harpsichord Opus 1

William Walond Ten Voluntaries For Organ or Harpsichord Opus 2

Editor: Greg Lewin. Publisher: Greg Lewin Music OM 102 and OM 110

Available from www.greglewin.co.uk £10.00 each volume

Although these two modern editions were published over twenty years ago it is opportune to consider them in this, the probable 300th anniversary of Walond's birth, described as organist in Oxford on the title pages. Below there is a brief description of the contents of each volume.

The first set, published in 1752, is one of the earliest sets of Voluntaries published and contains six Voluntaries, each in two movements. The first five are examples of the First Voluntary, to be played between the Psalms and the Lessons. The first Voluntary, in E minor, opens with a short Largo for Diapasons. The second, quite lengthy, movement is for Cornet and Eccho, the opening ten bars being recapitulated to close the movement. The second Voluntary in G opens with an Adagio for Diapasons. The second movement, again quite lengthy, is an Allegro in cut C without a registration marked, but would be suitable for either Cornet or Flute, an option found in similar movements by other composers. The third Voluntary, in D minor, opens with a Siciliano in 6/8 marked Swell, clearly referring to the right hand, the single notes in the left hand to be played on either the Great or Choir Stopped Diapason. The second movement is for Cornet and Eccho, in cut C it is clearly a brisk Allegro, although no tempo is indicated. In the closing bars following a cadenza over a dominant pedal in the left hand a second voice is added to the right hand.

The fourth Voluntary opens with a long movement in D minor for Diapasons, marked Slow. The second movement, in D major, is an Allegro Moderato in binary form, headed Each strain the first time on the Cornet, the Second on the Flute, the piece being rounded off by three bars marked Cornet. The fifth Voluntary, in G, opens with a long Grave for Diapasons, followed by a lengthy movement for Cornet and Eccho; after four bars of cadenza over a dominant pedal a short phrase on the Cornet is followed by its repetition on the Eccho, the penultimate half bar is marked Adagio, Swell, indicating the use of the pedal (whereas the usual practice in Eccho Voluntaries was for it to remain closed throughout). The final Voluntary, in

D minor, is a fine example of a Second Voluntary to be played at the conclusion of the service, and is in the Italian Concerto style. The opening movement is marked Largo, Full Organ, with passages for right hand on Swell over Stop. Diapason, Choir Organ. It contains richly varied writing including full chords, some demisemiquaver tirades in the right hand, and in the passages for Swell the first printed inclusion of crescendo and diminuendo hairpins in English keyboard pieces, here printed as single sloping lines. The second movement, a lengthy double Fugue, is in cut C and marked A Tempo Ordinario. Mainly in minims and crotchets with some quaver passing notes before a section in quavers marked Chear (ie Choir) Organ Full introduces the second subject, which has scalar runs in the right hand over crotchets in the left hand. The Fugal writing marked Great Organ returns before a further passage for the Chear Organ, the piece concluding with the Fugal writing on the Great. Each opening movement concludes on the dominant and in the first five it is mainly in three voices, occasionally a fourth appears, even if briefly. The Cornet movements are in two voices, one in each hand, running semiquavers either conjunct or disjunct, flow relentlessly over a mainly quaver bass. Interestingly in number five there is the option in the left hand for two quavers at the end of an ascending run to be either middle C and D or for the tenor C and D, despite the falling major seventh. This would have been for when the movement was played with both hands on the Great, the left hand being the Stopped Diapason. Greg Lewin has also published a facsimile edition of this first set.

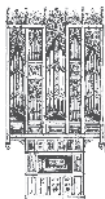
The second set, published in 1758, contains a greater variety of voluntaries, four being in one movement, the rest in two. The collection opens with a two-movement Voluntary in the unusual key of E major, the first movement marked Grave closing in the dominant, the following movement being for Cornet alternating with Flute. The second Voluntary is in B minor, opening with an Andante marked Swell in right hand over a bass marked Chair Organ, also closing in the dominant. Opportunities for short improvised cadenzas occur in the last few bars. The second movement is an Allegro Moderato upon the 2 Diapasons, Principal and Fifteenth, the writing in crotchets or quavers switching between one and two voices in the right hand, over a single note in the left hand, producing crotchets against quavers and quavers against crotchets. The third Voluntary, in G, is a single movement Andante Affetuoso with the right hand marked Swell over a left hand for Soft Bass, with interpolated passages for the Sesquialtera. Number four opens with a Grave in 3/2 in D minor marked Diapasons, mainly in

minims with two voices in the right hand over conjunct octaves in the left hand. The opening 12 bars are repeated after bar 39. The second movement is in D major for the Trumpet and Soft Bass, the first section having phrases for the Echo Trumpet, the middle section in the relative minor in semiquavers is for the Flute, the opening section being repeated after this. There are right hand passages in thirds. The final ten bars of the first section have right and left hand an octave apart, perhaps both on the Great for the Trumpet. Number five is a two movement Voluntary in C minor, an opening Andante for Diapasons in 3/2, mainly in minims with two voices in the right hand over a single note bass. This is followed by a dialogue between Swell Full and Vox Humana or Bassoon, over a Soft Bass. After the first nine bars the piece is repeated.

Numbers six to eight are single movement fugues, all in C time, lacking tempo (apart from number eight headed Allegro) and registration. In number six in G the short subject, mainly in quavers after a minim, appears in *stretto* in the opening bars, number seven in B flat commences with repeated crotchets with a beat before dropping an octave and gradually ascending to the dominant, and number eight in C, the only one with a tempo indication, Allegro, proceeds in minims and crotchets. Voluntary number nine in E flat is a two movement piece, opening with an Adagio. Not too Slow, marked for Diapasons or Full Organ, maybe an option to be considered for opening movements marked Diapasons included in these and in other composers' collections. It is marked with repeat dots. The second movement is an Allegro, another Fugue. The collection concludes with a two-movement Voluntary in A minor, the opening movement having the right hand marked Swell, omitted in my copy of this modern edition, the second movement being for the Flute. As with most of the first movements in the first set, those marked Adagio are in three voices as a rule.

The editions are clearly printed with six or seven systems to the page but there is very little editorial commentary, this being relegated to the back cover. Comments on the possible interpretation of ornaments and on the registrations specified would have been welcome. Many of these Voluntaries compare very well with the far better known ones by John Stanley and some movements, quite innovative for their time, offer challenges to the player. These Voluntaries deserve to be heard far more in concerts.

John Collins



The British Institute of Organ Studies

Saturday June 7th 2025 10.30 for 11.00

A G. P. England Organ Reconstructed

St John's Church, 12, St John's Street, Chichester PO19 1UU

Opened in 1813, St John's Chapel is a rare surviving example of a Georgian proprietary chapel retaining most of its original early nineteenth century features. Proprietary chapels were a solution to the problem of insufficient capacity within existing parish churches to meet the spiritual needs of a growing 18th and early 19th century urban population. The chapel is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and the Friends of St John's Chapel, and is used for concerts and a wide range of cultural events. An organ was provided by George Pike England when the chapel was opened, but after a number of 'rebuids' was eventually dismantled in 1980. It has now been reconstructed by Goetze and Gwynn with largely original pipework and a copy of the original case.

The day will include contributions from Dr Alan Thurlow on the history of the chapel and organ, Rob Balfour-Rowley of Goetze and Gwynn on the restoration and reconstruction of the organ, and the consultant Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite. Margaret Phillips will open the conference with music, and close the afternoon with a recital, and there will also be a more detailed demonstration of the instrument. The day will also include a contribution from Jane Warner Jones, Conservation Projects Manager at the Churches Conservation Trust who now look after St John's Chapel, and Dr David Knight, Deputy Director for Church Buildings, Church Commissioners, Cathedral and Church Buildings Department, who will be happy to answer questions about redundant churches and their organs.

BOOKING FORM
BRITISH INSTITUTE OF ORGAN STUDIES
DAY CONFERENCE

Saturday, 7 June 2025 10.30 for 11.00

A G.P.England Organ Reconstructed

St John's Church, 12, St John's Street, Chichester PO19 1UU

Please reserve a place for the BIOS Day Conference and AGM for £35.00 (including lunch).

There are two ways to book, by Monday, 2 June.

- a) By returning the form below to the Meetings Officer by post, accompanied by a cheque made payable to BIOS;
- b) By returning the form to the Meetings Officer by email and paying by BACS. Account: BIOS; sort code: 52-30-44; ac no: 05097169, please identify the payment as Chichester, and highlight option B before returning your form;

Please let the meetings officer know of any dietary requirements.
Contact details below.

Fill out a separate form for each person.

Name (including title).....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone.....(daytime and/or mobile)

Telephone.....(evening) e-mail.....

Note: Acknowledgements will be sent by e-mail. If you do not have an e-mail address, and require an acknowledgement, please send a SAE with your booking form.

[Redacted contact information]

[Redacted contact information] meetings@bios.org

Future Meetings

Saturday, 7 June 2025

A Day Conference at St John's Church, Chichester where Goetze & Gwynn have recently reconstructed the 1815 G.P England organ.

Thursday, 9 - Saturday, 11 April 2026

The Global British Organ

BIOS 50th Anniversary Residential Conference

Wadham College, Oxford



AIMS OF BIOS

To promote objective, scholarly research into the history of the organ and its music in all its aspects, and, in particular, into the organ and its music in Britain.

To conserve the sources and materials for the history of the organ in Britain, and to make them accessible to scholars.

To work for the preservation and, where necessary, the faithful restoration of historic organs in Britain and to encourage their use and appreciation.

To encourage an exchange of scholarship with similar bodies and individuals abroad, and to promote, in Britain, a greater appreciation of historical overseas schools of organ-building.