



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



2017 - A TRANSFORMATIONAL YEAR

This year has been transformational in the world of the Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS) - maybe you are reading our article for the first time as the attached photo caught your eye? Do not worry, the exciting news is that the War Memorial Organ at the school is being professionally rebuilt, expanded and modernised. Work is in full swing, as the other photos later in this article show...



The organ case in an unusual state, with casework pipes removed for repainting, half the organ pipework removed, and the organ console (where the organist sits) dismantled

Since last year's report, OSOS was formally affiliated to the OSA in the 2016 AGM, and in the same month we held another successful concert with our *Winter Showcase* on Saturday 19th November. This provided an entertaining programme from current and past pupils with a variety of musical styles and instruments, from J.S. Bach (with Thomas Stanford, current pupil, playing an Allemande unaccompanied on the recorder), through well-known organ music (Joe Zammit kicking off the evening with Jeremiah Clarke's Prince of Denmark's March), up to the modern day (with Saffron Williams singing Michael Jackson and Anastasia). It was also great to have the School Organist, Keenan Ngo, taking to the console with Yon's playful Toccata for Flute. An entertaining evening was had by all - do look out for our events and ensure you don't miss out by emailing info@osos.org.uk to be added to our mailing list. See www.osos.org.uk/events for future events (and the programmes and photos from past concerts to see what you may have missed!).



*The performers joined by the OSOS Chairman at the Winter Showcase in November 2016:
Thomas Stanford, Brian Fletcher, Saffron Williams, Joe Zammit,
Joe Palmer, Gerald Usher, Leon Yu, and Keenan Ngo*

The Society's attentions soon turned in the new year to the organ itself. In the first week of the spring term, loud grinding noises emanating from the under-stairs cupboard in the foyer during an organ lesson soon led to the revelation that the organ's blower (an electric motor and fan assembly which provides wind to the instrument) had failed badly. With no wind, the organ couldn't make a sound, but thanks to the efforts of the school's premises team and the attentions of professional organ builders and organ blower specialists, a solution was identified: the old blower (parts of it believed to originate from 1923!) would be completely overhauled.

Knowing that this would take some time (certainly until the summer holidays), we took the opportunity to review the rest of the organ. Some parts of the original mechanism had started to become unreliable, and those of you who read the 2016 magazine will know OSOS were starting to gather funding over the next 5 years to have the old mechanism of the organ renewed and attended to professionally. After much consultation, and thanks to the much appreciated donations from individual Old Southendians and other friends who had both previously supported OSOS and also given generously in light of the blower fault (not least the Very Old Boys group), in May we were pleased to recommend to the school a programme of works to the organ. These began at the end of the same month, and will see the recent additions made during Gerald Usher's stewardship of the organ since the late nineties incorporated and expanded upon to provide an instrument with triple the number of stops as compared with the original instrument gifted to the school in 1923. We hope the work will be completed by Christmas - the inaugural recital early next year will be an event not to miss, with Adrian Lucas (Tuscany, 1972-79) back to explore the newly rebuilt instrument and perform in his unique virtuosic style.

Of course, funding this work to the blower and the organ is not cheap, but thankfully we are doing very well in our appeal to raise £50K for this icon and treasured centrepiece of the war memorial - both to complete the current project, and sustain the organ and organist activities at the school

in the years to come. Since we announced the work in June, many of you have sponsored a pipe in the organ from £20 and received a personalised certificate with a named pipe, some of you have joined us as a member for £10 a year, and others have supported us at our concerts. However you've helped and supported the appeal, we're very grateful and want to say a public "thank you". If you would like to contribute to the appeal, thanks to technology slightly more modern than the organ(!), you can do this in seconds at www.osos.org.uk/appeal - or contact me at info@osos.org.uk for more information. We would be very grateful for your support.

The fruits of the work are already evident, with regular updates being posted on our website, and a fraction of those photos follow. It's particularly fantastic that the pupil "organ squad" will be able to see first hand the rebuilding of the organ, and actively help with the process. The trio, made up of year elevens Lewis Whybrow, Will Harman and Freddie Clarke, will be responsible (under the watchful eyes of Warren Symes and members of the school's Design and Technology department) for repainting the front pipes brilliant gold - a lasting legacy.



Work in progress on the organ console in the workshop, with its panelling and pedalboard beautifully restored, and Lewis Whybrow stands with the result of the initial experiments to spray the front pipes gold



Keenan Ngo receives the cup at the Essex Organists' Association Competition



During this time we were also glad to see the electronic practice organ kindly donated a few years ago by Tony Hill (Sparta, 1942-49) come to the rescue and sustain the music in assemblies since the original fault in January. We were also elated that School Organist Keenan Ngo took on the challenge of the Essex Organists' Association competition in March and came away victorious. This is, of course, just the tip of the iceberg of the work put in with the top class musical education on offer at the school, not least on the organ front by Mr Symes who runs the organ club and teaches the pupils. A report from Keenan on the experience may be found on our website at www.osos.org.uk/news

Moving ahead to our next events, we hope some of you will have joined us for our evening of music at St Augustine's, Thorpe Bay on 23rd September - preparations are going well at time of writing and a report will follow next year. We look forward greatly to the return of the organ and hope you will share our excitement at having (almost!) realised our fundraising goal set out just a year ago and be close to completing the work to the organ in the next few months. All of this progress represents a lot of hard work on the part of the OSOS committee, the school and its management and staff, the OSA committee and membership, and the organ builders (The Village Workshop). Adrian's recital next year will bring a celebration of this - do look out for details when they are released.

We will continue to showcase the musical talent of the OSA in our future events. If anyone is at all interested in being involved in our events, or with anything else, please do not hesitate to contact me (email info@osos.org.uk).

For lots more information about the appeal and project progress, our events, and reports do see our website (www.osos.org.uk). Follow us on Facebook (search Old Southendian Organ Society), and please do not hesitate to get in contact. We'd be very pleased to hear from you!

Joseph Zammit (Tuscany, 2004-11)
OSOS Publicity and Communications