

The Cornopean

April 2026

EXETER & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION



St John the Baptist Parish Church, Cirencester

Inside this magnificent church there is a fine H&H organ 1V/63



EDOA Newsletter

April 2026

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Forthcoming Events

Saturday 11th April: Broadclyst Church EX5 3EL at 12 Noon, AGM followed by lunch at the pub

Saturday May 9 – BRISTOL: St Monica's Chapel, Nr Clifton at 10am
Clifton RC Cathedral at 11.30am, Bristol Cathedral at 3-5pm

Wednesday 10th June: EAST DEVON

Choral Workshop – THE FLEXIBLE CHOIR at St Andrew's Colyton led by Nicholas Brown
Nick will introduce and rehearse music for choirs with limited resources. Members are encouraged to take part in the choir and bring along their choir members. 7-8pm workshop with tea/coffee break at 8pm
8.30-9pm short Act of Worship led by Rev Steven Martin, Rector of Colyton and former President of EDOA

Sunday 12th July TOPSHAM President's Event

Choral evensong at St Margaret's Topsham, 4.00pm Rehearsal. 6.00pm. Event followed by tea and coffee

Saturday 26th September GLOUCESTER

10.30am coffee and cakes at St James, Dursley

11am recital by Andrew Millington then members try the organ

1pm lunch in Dursley then travel to GLOUCESTER

Afternoon – chance to look around the Cathedral. 3.30pm tea/coffee in the Monks Kitchen at the Cathedral
4.30pm Choral evensong followed by demonstration on the new organ by Jonathan Hope, Assistant Director of Music, after which members can try the organ (4 manual Nicholson)

The EDOA Committee

Tony Yates (President), Michael Farley (Vice-President),
Paula Taylor (Secretary), Peter A Johnson (Treasurer), Nigel Guthrie (Past President),
Peter Johnstone (Membership Secretary, corresponding member only),
Penelope Cowman (Minute Secretary), Geoffrey Boulton (Webmaster, corresponding member only),
Iain Morison (Newsletter Editor), Gerald Hird, Kaye Van Der Wijngaard

The EDOA Website:

<http://www.exeterorganists.net>

Administrator Geoffrey Boulton. The website includes EDOA events, Find an Organist, Newsletters, Gallery, Links, Opportunities, Contact Us, Committee. The administrator is always looking for new content, including text and photos.

TRIP TO GOZO and VALETTA, MALTA January 2026

We have recently returned from a visit to Malta. By happy coincidence Michael Farley was also there, working on some instruments that he has been involved with over the past few years.

We first met up with him on Gozo, a smaller island north of Malta where he had recently rebuilt the organ at St John the Baptist, Xewkija. It is a 3 manual instrument placed at the east end behind the high altar and has a fine case retained from the previous instrument by the church has a very large Dome reputed to be the third largest unsupported Dome in Europe. One result of this means that the reverberation period is nearly 14 seconds!



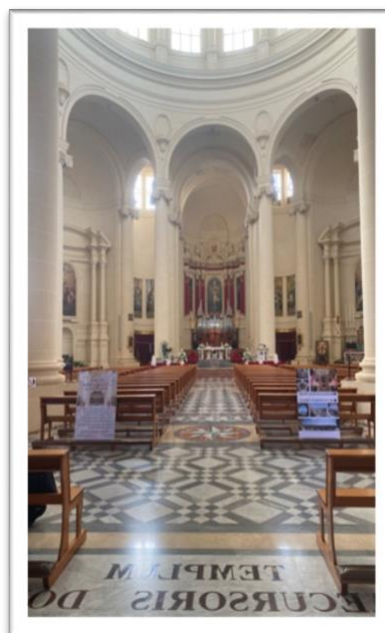
The instrument sounded well in the resonant acoustic and had plenty of upper work. The flutes, strings and foundation work sounded very well to my ears. The action is electric direct rather than the usual electro pneumatic and seemed positive and prompt. The swell pedal was good to use with an action that felt more like mechanical action and there is also a general crescendo pedal acting on the whole organ.



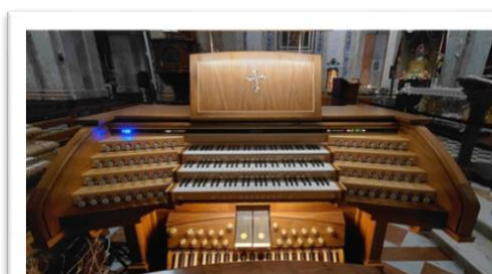
Michael then showed us inside the instrument. It is of high quality and it is not difficult to see why he has been involved with quite a few organs on Malta and Gozo.



Iain Morison



St Dominic's Cathedral, Valetta



This church has been recently restored having been unused for 400 years. The inside is lavish with fine frescos and a beautifully crafted marble floor. It has a notable decorated dome and the building has a fine acoustic with a reverberation period of several seconds – a gift to any organ and organ builder.

The organ is at the west end of the cathedral, high up with the visible part being the swell and pedal. The great and positive are on either side of the visible pipes.

It is virtually a new organ utilising pipe work from a church in Oxfordshire. Michael took us up a steep spiral staircase showing us the inside. It all looked of high quality and well finished. The detached console, like that of St John in Gozo is also made by Renatus of Bideford illustrating their high quality. It sounded very well in this resonant church with a good foundation and developed upper work. I particularly like the flutes and strings which were of English quality. Not sure about the great octave coupler and have not met one before. Perhaps needs careful use.

We attended its opening, the recital being given by a Maltese organist. I found his registration rather brash, too loud and for too long, at least for my ears! The lovely quieter stops, flutes and strings were really not covered which I think was a pity. In fact we left early, as did one nor two others as we had had enough!



Rich sounds by the sea - a visit of the Exeter and District Organists' Association to St Marychurch and Babbacombe in Torquay on Saturday 14th March 2026

Michael Farley organised a very rewarding day, visiting a number of organs in Torquay. We were met at the Anglican Church at St Marychurch by the Team Rector, Father Nick Debney and the organist Mr Rob Atkin. The church is an ancient one but was very badly damaged in wartime bombing. There is a moving memorial to the 21 children and teachers of the Sunday School who were killed in the chapel at the west end of the church on 30 May 1943.



The church was rebuilt after the war and was equipped with a four-manual Harrison and Harrison organ which was re-modelled by Ray Greaves in the 1980s and reduced to 3 manuals. A new four-manual console was provided and the organ was enlarged by Derry Thompson of Bridport over a ten-year period from around 2000.

But the scheme was left incomplete and the organ has been consolidated and moved towards completion by Michael Farley and his team in recent years. Although there are still parts to complete the organ currently has 95 stop registers over 4 manuals.



St Marychurch organ



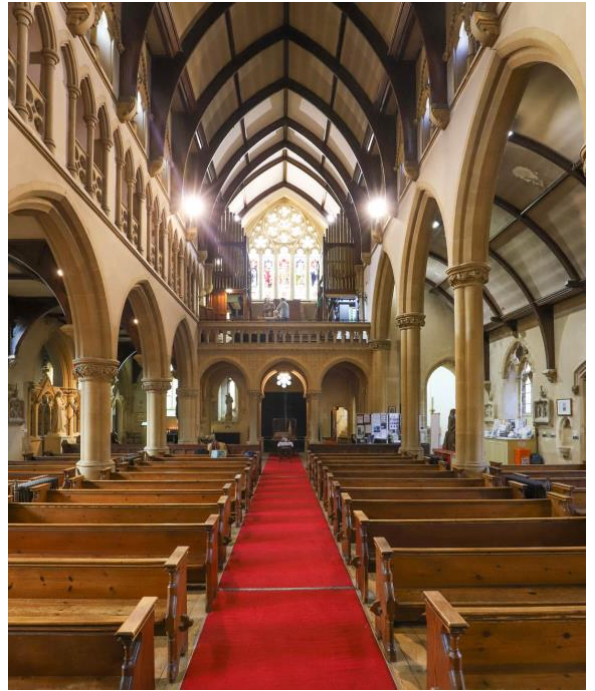
Marius Rudnick playing

A good number of members enjoyed playing the extensive instrument and the organ sound filled the spacious church very effectively with plenty of colour and power. It is now in better condition than it has been for many years and the enthusiasm of the present organist and parish priest have undoubtedly driven the improvements forward.



Roman Catholic Priory Church of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Denis

We then made the short walk to the nearby Roman Catholic Priory Church of Our Lady Help of Christians and St Denis, a Victorian gothic revival church with a graceful spire. Sadly, the community of sisters who used to live there closed some years ago and the Priory buildings await redevelopment. The church is unusual in that it has a deep early English style triforium on the south side of the church only, perhaps built to enable to sisters to move around without coming into the nave. Also, unusually, there are two pipe organs in the church. A four-manual Hill, dating from around 1882, is situated in the West Gallery and is currently in the process of being



Partially empty west end organ cases

restored due to age and water damage. The restored console was not yet in place, although due soon, but much of the organ was playable from a temporary keyboard which gave a good impression of the splendidly bold tone of the organ and showed some of the reed stops, including a Vox Humana. It was

especially interesting to see the internal pipework and action which are normally hidden behind panels. The current work is extensive, including re-leathering, and the provision of new bellows and winding system, restoration of the Hill pipework and soundboards, and restoration of the console with the original reverse coloured keys, ebony naturals and ivory sharps. Latin Stop names are being re-introduced as the original instrument had. It is hoped that the instrument will be fully playable for Easter.



Cor playing the west end organ from the temporary keyboard

A second instrument is situated on a gallery in the Nuns' Chapel at the East end of the Church. This is a delightful two-manual Gray and Davison. It has a modest but useful range of stops and beautifully crisp mechanical action which was a treat to play.

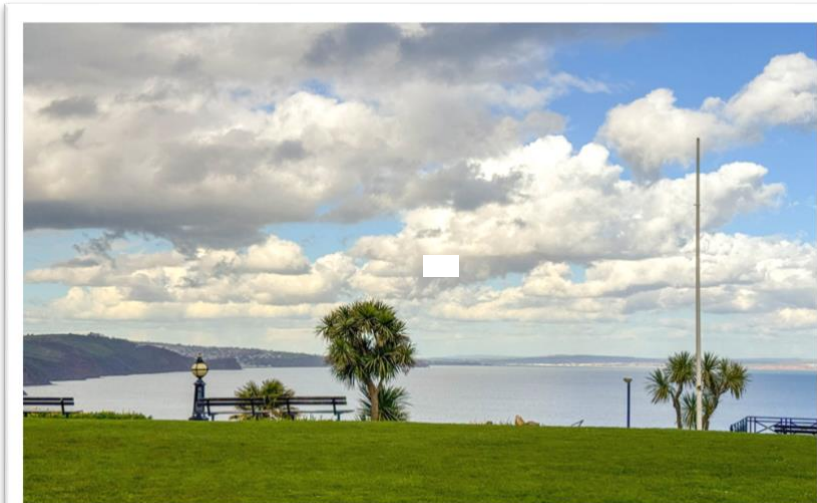


The Nun's Chapel in a south transept at the east end of the RC church, with its own 1883 Gray & Davison organ



EDOA President, Nigel, playing the Bach-Vivaldi Concerto in D minor on the Gray & Davison organ

The organist, Joseph Acton, kindly served tea, coffee and biscuits during the visit.



The sea view from the Babbacombe Inn



G&D nameplate



Lunch was enjoyed at The Babbacombe Inn which offers wonderful views across the bay





View westwards from the high altar, All Saints Babbacombe, organ on the R

After lunch we visited the remarkable Gothic Revival Church of All Saints, Babbacombe. One of William Butterfield's masterpieces, this church (1868-1874) featuring 'constructive polychromy' has one of the most spectacular fonts in Devon. The church is a riot of colour, using much polished marble. The high-quality mosaics behind the high altar are the work of Antonio Salviati.



The spectacular font at All Saints

The organ there started out life in 1873 as a four-manual Hill which was rebuilt and reduced in size to a three-manual by Nicholson in 1965. It was also moved from the south to the north of the chancel to allow for the creation of an additional chapel. But rather weirdly the pedal open wood was placed horizontally under the floor of the new chapel and unfortunately it barely functions. So, recently the organ was enlarged with electronic stops from Viscount. I don't think I was alone in feeling that the recent work might have been 'overdone' and the sound of the organ could be rather oppressive in the building. Although I can understand



Iain & Pip's patient dog

that some strengthening of the pedal division was needed

it seemed to me that what was left of the Hill organ could have been enhanced more subtly.

But a very rewarding and enjoyable day was shared by members of the Association. Particularly the first and last organs of the day showed the extent to which such instruments are always in transition over time. Great thanks are due to Michael Farley for his organisation and for sharing his expertise as we went on our tour.

Nigel Guthrie

(with due acknowledgment to Michael Farley for his notes which accompanied the day.)

Exeter and District Organist's Association AGM, 18th April 2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to all members of Exeter and District Organist's Association.

I would like to thank Andrew Millington for his excellent recital which showed off the lovely organ here so well.

I would also like to thank Angela Hird for serving refreshments before the recital which were much appreciated.

A particular welcome today to Nicholas Miller who is a Trustee of the Incorporated Association of Organists and their new South West Coordinator. We are delighted to welcome Nicholas and I would like to invite him to say a few words of introduction before our meeting.

Firstly, thank you for entrusting me with the presidency over the past year. It's been a privilege to serve with our dedicated committee and we've had a good year of varied activities.

On Wednesday 14th May last year Ian Curror led a useful evening workshop at St Margaret's Topsham on aspects of playing for a Sunday Eucharist. I think all of us learned something. But the attendance was small and we continue to look for the best times for such events.

On Saturday 21st June there was a visit to organs at Belstone, Bridford and Moretonhampstead kindly organised by Michael Farley.

And on Saturday 12th July the President's Event was hosted at Crediton Parish Church. I convened a small choir and, with my wife, Tina, put on a recital of music featuring the music of Orlando Gibbons who died 400 years ago last June. There was a decent audience and tea was served afterwards with donations towards the parish church, which were gratefully received.

On Saturday 20th September an Educational event was held at Buckfast Abbey in conjunction with PipeUp Devon. The event, led by David Davies gave some youngsters who already played the piano the opportunity to come along and learn to play the organ.

On Saturday 4th October there was a well-attended visit to Exmouth starting at the Point of View Chapel, taking in other organs in the town and including a good pub lunch.

A good number of members also attended our visit to Exeter Cathedral on Tuesday 13th January 2026. This had not been possible at the beginning of 2025 due to work on the organ. We had an enjoyable evening hosted by Michael Stephens-Jones, the Assistant Director of Music, and Michael D'Avanzo, the Organ Scholar.

Tony Yates hosted an enjoyable Quiz at the Bridge Inn at Topsham on Saturday 7th February 2026 and we were well looked after there with pasties and drinks.

And our last visit was on Saturday 14th March to Torquay where we explored the organs of Marychurch and Babbacombe which have all had recent or current work done on them. A lunch, with views of the Bay was enjoyed by members at the Babbacombe Inn.

The committee have worked to plan a programme well in advance and some exciting events are already lined up for the coming months including a visit to Bristol to see the rebuilt organ at the Cathedral on 16th May, a President's evensong at Topsham on 12th July and a visit to Gloucester Cathedral to see the rebuilt organ there on 26th September.

I would like to thank our hard-working committee for all the work they have done this year in planning activities and keeping our members informed. We have been exceptionally well served by our secretary Paula Taylor, who has dealt with our correspondence and sent out timely communications to our members. We have also been well supported by Penny Cowman who has taken minutes of our meetings. And Peter A Johnson has been a wonderfully straightforward and helpful treasurer, keeping our finances in good order. Peter Johnstone has served as our membership secretary giving regular updates on the membership.

I would like to record a special vote of thanks to Graham Wilson who has looked after our website for 15 years. The website was becoming increasingly expensive to maintain and we are most grateful to Geoffrey Boulton who has kindly taken over the running of the website and has reset it on a more affordable basis for us.

We were also looking over the past year for a new editor for the Cornopean newsletter. Piers Howell has done a magnificent job of editing Cornopean for many years and we were very grateful that Ian Morison and his wife, Pip had agreed to edit the newsletter for us. They overcame considerable technical challenges to produce a first edition with support from Piers in the new year.

I would like to thank all three of them for their efforts in keeping our membership well informed.

We were very sorry that two of our members, Brian Brown and John Harris died in the past year. I know that we were represented at John's funeral.

I'm delighted that our committee colleague, Tony Yates, has agreed to stand as President for the coming year, although I realise that you have yet to elect him. But I look forward, hopefully, to working with him and the committee in the coming year. We will be sorry to lose Andrew Millington from our committee who has served for many years and has come to the end of his term, but he has assured us that we can call upon his wide knowledge of the organs and organists of the south-west in future.

I hope that you feel that our organisation not only continues to promote organs and organ music in Exeter, Devon and the south-west, but also fosters a spirit of friendship and cooperation within our membership. Our members include enthusiastic amateurs and lovers of the organ as well as highly skilled professionals and I'm sure that this adds greatly to the strength of our organisation. We can't avoid the challenges that face many organs and organists with the closure of some churches and changes of musical tastes in worship. But I hope that together we can continue to ensure a thriving scene of organ and church music in Exeter and beyond and help to encourage a new generation of players and lovers of the instrument in our area. I would like to thank you all for your enthusiasm and support of our association over the past year.

Nigel Guthrie



Tony Yates, left, with Nigel Guthrie who is handing over the regalia