



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



COMMITTEE REPORTS TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

27 October 2020

Chairman's Report

Thanks to the (undeserved!) luxury of a super-efficient committee – whose current reports cover, in forensic detail, just about everything you need to know about the Society's activities and achievements over the past year – there is little I need to add other than an expression of gratitude to our officers for not only maintaining forward momentum but communicating it with such lucidity. OSOS runs on magnificently well-oiled wheels which enable a chairman to carry out his assigned role correctly rather than egotistically snatching the tiller from the hands of those designated to operate it. A dream team indeed! We offer our grateful thanks for the work of George Cobby, who steps down from the role of Membership Secretary to focus on his studies after over three years of service to the Society. Brian Fletcher, as Secretary, will now take on responsibility for membership issues.

It only remains for me to thank everyone who has contributed towards yet another year of success: performers, members, supporters, ancillary helpers and, above all, the School – our cordial relationship with which has been the catalyst propelling our aims and aspirations to such magnificent fruition. When the pandemic restrictions ease I have not the slightest doubt that our treasured instrument will be singing to perfection once again and involving an even wider world of players and listeners.

Gerald Usher

Treasurer's Report

Income

Over the year from April 2019 to March 2020, donations received amounted to £6,774, which is our highest total to date (excluding the fundraising for the restoration in 2017 – 2018). The majority of this income is from one major donor and also the largest single sum received by the Society outside of fundraising for the restoration. The additional funds received from all other donors have exceeded last year's total, which has given us a stable and reliable income. The total of donations since fundraising began in 2014 is now close to £60k.

A successful programme of three events in the last twelve months has given the Society a healthy income, although lower than last year.

Expenses

There have been zero expenses in the last twelve months relating to works and maintenance on the organ. The Society has plans going forwards for tuning, tonal finishing and painting of the case pipework.

Additional expenses relating to events, including marketing and venue hire, are detailed separately. In summary, the spend per event remains in a similar position and the return on investment is consistent.

The Society were pleased to donate £100 to the School for the purchase of organ music.

Summary

2019 – 2020 has resulted in an operating profit of £7,653. It continues to be important that we retain appropriate funds in the account to be able to support any future emergency maintenance. However, there are sufficient funds to put towards suggested works and there is no reason financially that these cannot take place as soon as possible.

Although below the official income threshold, we will continue to have our accounts reviewed by a third party and submit them to the Charities Commission.

The accounts are healthy and the ongoing fundraising from donations and events has continued to successfully fund the work of the Society. Based on the Society's achievements to date, I would recommend a minimum income target (donations and events) of £4,000 for the financial year 2020 – 2021.

Jon Roberts

**OLD SOUTHENDIAN ORGAN SOCIETY
BALANCE SHEET**

Income	19-20	18-19	17-18	16-17	15-16	TOTAL
Membership	90.00	110.00	210.00	260.00	250.00	920.00
Donations	6683.35	1561.82	39289.26	4425.00	4150.00	57942.77
Events	1656.60	2060.60	425.00	426.84	290.00	4859.04
HMRC	-	137.85	-	-	-	137.85
Total Income	<u>8429.95</u>	<u>3870.27</u>	<u>39924.26</u>	<u>5111.84</u>	<u>4690.00</u>	<u>63859.66</u>
Expenses						
Maintenance	-	4611.00	38190.47	1580.52	219.99	44804.38
Trips/Music	100.00	-	-	100.00	-	200.00
Marketing	374.88	332.38	305.49	93.99	-	1106.74
Equipment Hire	-	284.72	-	-	-	284.72
Venue Hire	229.00	172.50	130.00	135.00	135.00	801.50
Gifts & Donations	73.37	102.58	-	-	-	175.95
Total Expenses	<u>777.25</u>	<u>5503.18</u>	<u>38625.96</u>	<u>1909.51</u>	<u>354.99</u>	<u>47373.29</u>
NET INCOME	<u><u>7652.70</u></u>	<u><u>-1632.91</u></u>	<u><u>1298.30</u></u>	<u><u>3202.33</u></u>	<u><u>4335.01</u></u>	<u><u>16486.37</u></u>

Secretary's Report

Committee meetings

Since last year's AGM, there have been six meetings of the OSOS committee, each with at least four members of the committee in attendance; the most recent of these have taken place online due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions. In addition, an online update to members was presented in lieu of the AGM scheduled for 29th April and the committee and President were pleased to speak to members from a variety of locations in the UK and beyond. I would like to thank Gerald Usher, Joe Zammit and Warren Symes for their kind hospitality when it was possible for the committee to meet in person. At the committee meeting held in September 2019, we were pleased to contribute to the celebrations of the eightieth birthday of our chairman, Gerald Usher, with a buffet meal and cake in his honour.

The main items for discussion have included: the ongoing work on the enhancement and maintenance of the School Organ; planning and reviewing OSOS events; ways in which organists at the School are supported; and ways in which OSOS can improve its recruitment and retention of members. Certain items, largely concerning plans for recording the organ, have been retained on the agenda for each meeting but cannot progress until all work on the organ (in particular, the tonal finishing) has been satisfactorily completed. In addition, the Society's finances have been reviewed at each meeting and policies have been put in place for safeguarding and financial controls. Over recent months, significant attention has been given to ways in which the Society can adapt to the present circumstances and find alternative means of offering concerts and other opportunities for our supporters to engage with our work and enjoy the magnificent sound of the School Organ.

At each meeting, every member of the committee gives a report on their activities on the Society's behalf during the preceding months. The minutes of committee meetings give a clear indication of the actions to be taken by the committee to further the work of the Society and these are reviewed at the following meeting. The committee also remain in regular contact by email between meetings to ensure that all trustees remain fully apprised of significant developments in the Society's work.

Membership

At the committee meeting held on Sunday 26 January 2020, the committee were given formal notification of George Cobby's decision to stand down as Membership Secretary due to pressure of his work and study commitments. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank George for his dedication to the role since he undertook it in October 2016. As the Society's membership is relatively small, it was felt that there should not be a need for a dedicated Membership Secretary, so I was asked to add this responsibility to my remit on a trial basis, to be reviewed at general and committee meetings in the future.

George reported a year ago that support for the Old Southendian Organ Society is high and this continues to be the case. The Society's membership currently stands at 79, including eight life members

and five honorary members. In addition, the Society has received donations from 50 people who have either not become or not remained members and there are a further 67 non-members currently on our mailing list.

The generosity of our supporters has been crucial to the success of the Society to date, enabling a major renovation and expansion of the School's Memorial Organ to take place only a few years after the Society was founded. However, in order to fulfil the Society's aims of preserving and promoting the instrument, as well as to develop the work of the Society in nurturing talented organists at the School, it is essential to maintain a reliable source of revenue from year to year and therefore retaining and enlarging our membership is a key priority for the next twelve months.

The committee has already discussed some of the issues concerning membership and these include:

- retaining members who choose not to renew their subscription after the first year has elapsed
- offering appropriate incentives to encourage school organists, musicians and other interested students to join the Society on leaving SHSB
- recruiting more former school organists to the Society
- encouraging members to pay membership fees by standing order so that renewal payments do not get forgotten.

In addition, the committee resolved to use the Society's events more proactively to recruit new members by ensuring that a committee member was available to discuss and set up membership with anyone interested.

We look forward to another successful year for the Society and hope that it will not be too long before public events are once more possible, allowing further opportunities for us to celebrate the remarkable War Memorial Organ of Southend High School for Boys.

Brian Fletcher

Publicity and Communication Officer's Report

Following my report last year on a period which saw the organ at Southend High School for Boys showcased in its rebuilt form, we have enjoyed yet another full year in the life of the society, with a trio of well-supported and well-received events.

The first such event was the concert with Jeremy Blandford (former pupil of the school from the 1960s) in July 2019. It was a treat to have his skilful touch at the console, with classics such as the Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor and the Introduction and Fugue from Reubke's Sonate on the 94th Psalm interspersed with both interesting insights into the music and its composer's world, and reminiscences of time spent as a pupil at the School. Jeremy's registrations made good use of the extra stops provided in the rebuilt organ, and he seemed well at home back at the console, having travelled over from Norway for the occasion! It was super to see many contemporaries come back especially for the concert – some travelling quite some distance, but with much good reward as a result.

To follow the recital, refreshments were offered while successive groups of people were given an exclusive tour of the organ chamber. Each group was talked through the various innards of the organ (from massive 16 foot mitred pedal pipes, to tiny pipes the size of a pencil, plus all the electronics, air trunking, Swell box and more!), while Gerald Usher provided an increasing crescendo of music to demonstrate the organ at work. Health and Safety naturally precluded tours of parts of the organ accessed by ladder, but photos were projected in the Main Hall of all aspects of the instrument for everyone to see. All in all, the whole event proved to be an educational and musical success, and our thanks again to Jeremy for his wonderful performance.

Our second event of the year was another of our Showcase concerts in October, which once again featured a full variety of styles of music and mix of instruments, presented by a mix of current and previous students, staff of the school and local musicians. We were treated to a rare performance of OSOS Chairman Gerald Usher's Rondo for Clarinet and Piano, skilfully executed by Alex Usher (of no relation!) and Oliver Cuttriss, alongside music from the present School Organist, Ben Perryman (performing Three 'Short Preludes' by J. S. Bach, and an arrangement of Satie's Gymnopédie No.1), saxophone sounds from Beth Cooper, and singing from Ellie Worth, Lucy Williams, Sasha Sumption, and Saffy Williams. Warren Symes and William Bonard presented items on the organ and piano respectively, and Ruchi Perera's trumpet-based offering of Herbie Hancock's Cantaloupe Island and Clarke's Trumpet Tune highlighted the breadth of styles on offer. Our grateful thanks to those who performed and accompanied, and to our audience for supporting the event.

The final event of the year was the Christmas Concert by Cantare, a well-known and much-loved choir formed of ladies from the Southend area. Their programme featured a feast of music for winter and Christmas from both Cantare and the Chamber Choir from Southend High School for Boys, who also performed. The sound of the organ was enjoyed by the audience, with School Organist Ben Perryman performing solo. Warren Symes offered accompaniments on the organ to some of the choral items, plus Rawsthorne's "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" as a great payout. Ellie Worth and Sasha Sumption also featured again, this time with some wonderful renditions of favourite songs: "The Little Road to

Bethlehem” and “Have yourself a merry little Christmas”. Thanks to our readers, Eleanor Sumner and Joseph Taylor-Livesey; Rachel Worth, for directing the Chamber Choir; and also to the Parents’ Association, who provided much-enjoyed refreshments in the interval. The singing of traditional carols “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” and “O Come All Ye Faithful” in the second half, accompanied by the organ, definitely left the audience “ready for Christmas”. Our thanks to Elizabeth Elliott, Andrew Palmer, and the choir for preparing such a wonderful programme.

Away from the events themselves, our website, Facebook page, entries in the local “Music in Essex” publication, and mailshots to our email list (which now has approximately 170 recipients) continue to help us communicate with our regular followers, the wider community, and anyone else who finds us online. We are very grateful for all who support us, via our concerts and events, through membership, or indeed through donations to the Society.

Since our online update, held during the strict lockdown restrictions in April to keep members fully up-to-date in place of our April AGM and evening concert with local choir “Voces Novae”, our members and the wider community have enjoyed a series of live recordings made on the organ by Warren Symes. The recordings featured music by J.S. Bach, Karg-Elert, Handel, Lefébure-Wély, and John Dixon. We are greatly appreciative of Warren's efforts to continue to share music out to people's homes in this way, and to Jonathan Roberts for his work to record and edit these items. We hope to add to this collection going forward.

Looking ahead, it is slightly less clear what the next period will hold. We were hoping to hold a concert in July with John Dixon (ex-student from the school, Tuscany, 1968-75), showcasing his compositions for the organ and the piano; however, this has been postponed as the Coronavirus continues to disrupt our everyday lives. We remain committed to offering more high quality events for our supporters, as soon as it is possible to provide them safely, and are looking at options for broadcasting a showcase event online. We will continue to use technology to connect with our membership and the wider public in a safe manner, as we are doing for this AGM. Stay tuned via our website, mailing list and Facebook for more on the Society’s activities for 2020 and 2021.

Joe Zammit

School Liaison Officer's Report

Prior to the national lockdown in March of this year, I am pleased to report that the School Organ was played at all school assemblies, prize-giving events and concerts. As the School Liaison Officer, I taught the School Organist, recruited students to perform at concerts, liaised with the organ builders, and facilitated lines of communication between the Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS) and the school. However, since returning to school in September, the organ has, unsurprisingly, faded into the background of school life. With whole-school assemblies and the usual annual cycle of events no longer taking place, it will be important to continue to pursue novel approaches to ensure the organ remains relevant with students and members of OSOS.

School Organist

I started teaching Ben Perryman in January 2019. He was determined to learn the organ and secure the role of School Organist for the academic year 2019 – 2020. From our first lesson, I was impressed with his attitude: he was very inquisitive and welcomed constructive criticism. After Easter, he started to deputise for Mia Wells (School Organist, 2018 – 2019).

By the end of the academic year (2018 – 2019), he had established himself as an extremely competent player, and the main forerunner in the race to secure the role of School Organist. Indeed, members of staff and students were impressed by the level of proficiency that he had achieved in just a few months.

Throughout his time as School Organist, Ben regularly performed voluntaries at the end of assemblies. In our lessons, I worked with Ben on the art of improvisation, as he initially found the idea of creating music on the spot very daunting. As the year progressed, the skill of improvising became one of his greatest strengths, with many members of staff commenting on his level of proficiency.

There were so many highlights to Ben's tenure as School Organist. He performed four pieces of music at the OSOS Autumn Showcase, a voluntary at the end of the Annual Service of Remembrance and a thoroughly enjoyable arrangement of "Jingle Bells" at the end-of-term assembly in December.

It is such a shame that Ben's time as School Organist was cut short, due to the national lockdown. His dedication to the role and his commitment to undertake regular and sustained practice are qualities I value and admire, beyond that of mere proficiency. It was the opinion of many within the school community that he was one of the most competent organists that the school has seen in recent years.

Electronic Organ

The electronic organ, located in a room at the back of the Main Hall, continues to be used by the students to practise. Although it is over 20 years old, it continues to provide reliable service to students,

without disturbing the administrative staff in the Main Office, or other members of staff using the Main Hall.

The Hitchcock Library

I received a large donation of piano and organ sheet music kindly given by Helen Sutherland. I distributed several pieces to a small cadre of students and asked the librarians to catalogue the remainder of the sheet music in the library.

Organ Maintenance and Tuning

As the member of staff responsible for the organ, I continue to facilitate visits for tuning and maintenance by the Organ Builder, Sheppard & Cross Pipe Organ Services. Moreover, I have encouraged the students to report faults in the maintenance book, which is located at the organ console. During the summer holidays, Sheppard & Cross Pipe Organ Services, undertook a week of tonal finishing. This much needed work has made a notable improvement to the sound quality of individual ranks of pipes, but also to the overall quality of the blend the Great principal chorus.

OSOS Events

I contributed to the organisation of the three events in 2019 (Jeremy Blandford, July 2019; Autumn Showcase, October 2019; Christmas with Cantare, December 2019). In each case, I have liaised with the facilities team, the Office Manager, reprographics, the Music Department, the Organ Builders and members of the OSOS Committee. These events raise much-needed funding, thereby safeguarding the instrument for future generations. However, they also act as “outreach” both for the School and the Society, thereby helping to raise the profile of the School, the Memorial Organ and the role of OSOS in the local area.

During the national lockdown, I recorded a number of pieces of music on the organ, which have since been published on the OSOS website and YouTube Channel. For the year ahead, I intend to recruit and record other musicians to perform with the organ, in order to increase the variety of the content available on the OSOS website and YouTube Channel, and to re-connect with the OSOS members.

Warren Symes