



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



THE SHSB MEMORIAL ORGAN IN 2014 AND THE NEW OLD SOUTHENDIAN ORGAN SOCIETY

The Southend High School for Boys Memorial Organ has been part of the School's tradition ever since it was installed 91 years ago by Messrs. Hill, Norman & Beard. Funded by donations raised through this Association, requested in order to provide a fitting memorial to those Old Boys and staff who gave their lives in the Great War, it stands (arguably) among the most memorable of features of the Prittlewell Chase site – the arches at the entrance, the driveway down to the flagpole, and the Hall with its magnificent organ and solid oak memorial boards either side.

Recalled by many, either for those (sometimes eccentrics) who played the instrument, or (occasionally) for the music it produced for assemblies, services, and concerts, it is extremely pleasing to note how the organ and organ activities continue to thrive, and not *just* on the playing front...

The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS) was conceived last September as a group of old and current organists of the School sought to further support all organ activities at the School, providing a number of connections to the musical world. Following strong support from the OSA, OSOS was formally constituted in April 2014, and we were particularly pleased to elect ex-cathedral organist and internationally acclaimed musician Adrian Lucas (Tuscany 1972-79) as our President in our first AGM, which was held at the School and attended by current and former pupils and staff. OSOS is *not* a society just for the keen musician or organist: we welcome all with fond memories of the organ and other supporters of our fine instrument and this tradition.



The Memorial Organ, September 2014

It is as a representative of OSOS that I would like to expand now on the great accomplishments of recent SHSB organ history and bring to your attention what we hope to achieve going forward.



Pipes for the new Sesquialtera rank (installed April 2014) in situ

Since about 2008, with the assistance and encouragement of former pupils, Gerald Usher (Athens 1951-58, Staff 1993-2005) has been working to expand the organ's resources, with 5 further ranks of pipes added, each bringing a different sound to the organ, and ultimately both greatly increasing its power and the variety of tones available. Further to this, work has been carried out to renovate the elderly mechanism of the organ (most of this dates back to 1923!), and for all of this work, the organ now sounds at the best it has been in recent years, as I hope those who attended the recent Arts Club Showcase in September may attest.

Particularly surprising to most at this occasion was the "entertainment" music provided by Gerald in the interval (he does like *to be beside the seaside*), making full use of the new stops and tremulant. Other music heard ranged from the Toccata from Boëllmann's Suite Gothique, highlighting the greater power and strength of sound from the organ, to the 2nd Movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, displaying the organ's lesser-heard abilities in accompaniment.

Thanks to the generosity of Tony Hill (Sparta 1942-49), a three-manual electronic organ is now also available to the 6 pupils currently learning the organ. This invaluable resource allows for concurrent practice and tuition sessions, and for practice to continue through busy periods of the school year where the Hall previously struggled to provide adequate time for such a great number of budding organists to rehearse. With teaching provided by current economics teacher and ex-cathedral organist Warren Symes alongside a lunchtime Organ Club, the opportunities for more students to become involved in learning about and playing the School's fine instrument are ever-increasing.

