



The Old Southendian Organ Society (OSOS)



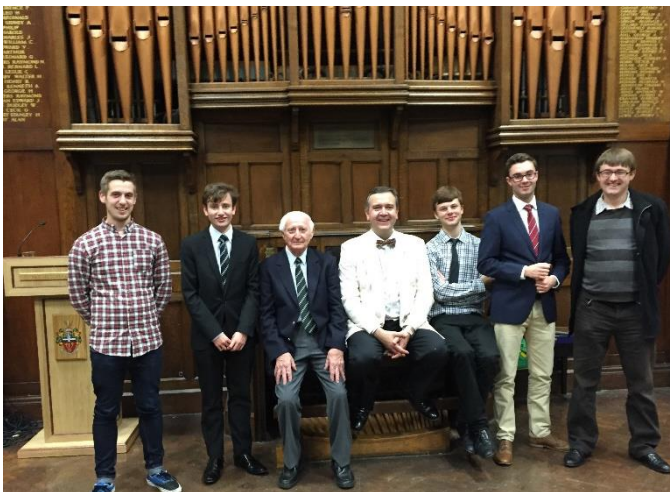
The Old Southendian Organ Society - One Year On

It's been a year since some of you may have read in this magazine [The Old Southendian] about the Old Southendian Organ Society, and in last year's report I claimed that the group was "not a society just for the keen musician or organist". This year, I am pleased to be able to return with proof of that fact, after a very productive and exciting twelve months engaging with a great cross section of the OSA membership, and others alike.

Just following the publication of the magazine last year, we held our first solo event: Adrian Lucas (Tuscany, 1972-79) performed a wonderful evening's *Organ Extravaganza*. The audience were treated to Adrian's virtuosic playing of a number of pieces from the 'traditional' organ repertoire and transcriptions (such as an arrangement of Elgar's *Deux Chansons*, and Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*), complemented with an assortment of other styles with transcriptions of Gershwin, movements from the fiendishly difficult *Fiesta* by Iain Farrington, and a fun rendition of *Mozart Changes* by Zsolt Gardonyi. The organ performed well too as it was pushed to its limits, with the recently expanded ranks of pipes being used to offer both more power with the Great Trumpet, and a more subtle range of tones for both accompaniment and solos with the Great and Pedal Dulciana, Wald Flute, and Sesquialtera.



Adrian Lucas at the SHSB organ once more.



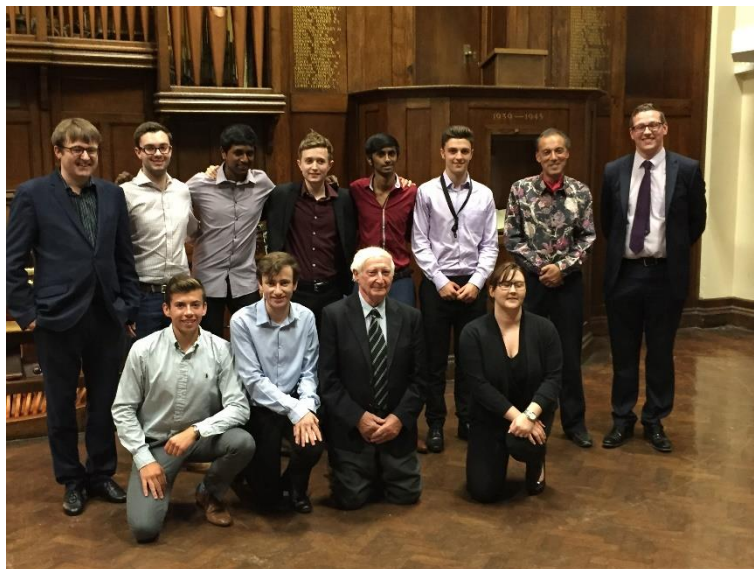
SHSB organists at the "Organ Extravaganza":
Jonathan Roberts, Joe Zammit, Gerald Usher, Adrian Lucas,
George Smith, Will Bonard, and Ashley Thompson.

Part way through, Adrian took a break from impressing everyone with his world-class performance skills to offer an organ lesson, and explained to the many non-organists (and indeed non-musicians) how the instrument works. Adrian demonstrated further, manually blowing spare examples of the different pipes to show the audience what is found in the depths of the organ chamber, and how the various pipes create such a range of sounds, which the organist combines to 'colour' the music. With the inside of the organ lit up to allow a view of the hundreds of pipes behind the casework, and some of the other organ mechanism, the music continued, finishing with Vierne's grand and famous *Final* from *Symphonie I*.

Following Adrian's recital, it was great to see that the interest in the organ shown by current pupils has continued. The school's Organ Club, run by teacher Warren Symes, continues to offer an opportunity to a larger group of pupils to learn about it and start to play, whilst senior pupils remain impressive in their ability to accompany important school occasions and weekly assemblies. Some students are also interested in finding out more of the maintenance side, helping with tuning the organ, and dealing with any mechanical issues.

Sadly, during the spring, organ playing and activity came to a halt as a more serious mechanical fault developed, preventing effective use of a couple of the most important ranks of pipes. After some months of investigation and adjustment of one of the soundboards by a team of current and ex-pupils, our organ sang clearly and happily once more, and normality resumed. During this period, it was very pleasing that the pupils were able to continue their practice on the electronic practice instrument, and that the school was even able to link this from the back of the hall to its sound system to continue the tradition with organ-led hymns and organ music during assemblies.

With the organ back on top form, thoughts turned to our next event: *An Evening's Entertainment* planned to deliver "an eclectic mix" of music (to include other instruments, singing, and - naturally - organ), and it certainly provided a uniquely varied and quality night's music, with performances of show music, traditional organ repertoire, jazz and contemporary music, violin, and a set of theatre-style organ music, in which Gerald Usher managed to squeeze every last bit of theatre sound out of the classically built instrument to the enjoyment of all in his tribute to BBC and Odeon theatre organist and SHSB music teacher Reginald Foxwell (1953-57). It was particularly great to have current students, ex-students, and current staff perform together in one concert, and once again to see such a good and varied turnout. Very many thanks to those of you who have supported the society and its events this year.



Performers at "An Evening's Entertainment".

Back row: Ashley Thompson, Will Bonard, Ruchi Perera, James Maltby, Sachi Perera, Andy Berry, Alan Gardner, Warren Symes.

Front row: Joe Palmer, Joe Zammit, Gerald Usher, Vikki Symes.

Looking ahead, planning continues for the recording of a CD of the organ (many requests have already been received to include the School Song!), with a brief hiatus for the noisy building works at the school being used to plan a disc which reflects the instrument's versatility, both in style and role. After the success of our latest concert, initial plans are also under way for an event in the first half of next year, offering the opportunity to display yet more of the OSA's musical talent. 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).

So, I hope I've managed to convince you all of last year's claim: we are a society with a growing membership, made up of a variety of people, offering attractive events to suit all (whether attending or participating), supporting the school with its organ pupils, enhancing and maintaining the organ, and seeing that this tradition continues, grows, and is made accessible to as wide a group as possible.

For lots more information about the organ, events and programmes past and future, and about becoming a member of the society, 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*