

SPRING MEETING 2012

YORK

England

The "Spring Meeting" of the European Chapter was held from April 9th to April 12th and was attended by 29 members and friends from 5 European countries and 3 US States. Mike Irvine and Yorkshire natives John Falkingham and John Swindells arranged a wonderful tour of Yorkshire organs in a variety of settings to see, hear, and play. Headquartered in York at the Queens Hotel next to the River Ouse, the tour began in the walled city of York at St. George's R.C. Church and the tour's oldest organ (1800), a James Davis (IIP/14) restored by Kenneth Tickell in 2004. Demonstrated by John Swindells, this instrument had 61 keys on the Great and 54 keys on the Swell. The renowned Bank's Music Shop provided a welcome respite from a rain shower on the way to the 11th century St. Olave's Church, a piece of England's Viking heritage. Ben Bloor, AGO European Chapter 2011 Quimby Competition winner, played an exquisite recital on the IIP/43 J. W. Walker 1907, 1978, 1996, 2004 instrument. Steve Aston, incumbent organist, demonstrated the IIP/15 Forster & Andrews/Principal Pipe Organs at All Saints Church, North Street. The day ended with Evensong at York Minster, sung by St. John's College Chapel Choir, Southsea, and a demonstration of the IVP/84, most recently restored and added to by Principal Pipe Organs in 1993, by Robert Sharpe, organist and master of the music.

The second day began with a visit to York University's Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall where Professor of Music Peter Seymour demonstrated the only neoclassical mechanical action instrument on the tour, a IIP/31 1969 Grant, Degens and Bradbeer which has since been updated by J. W. Walker and Principal Pipe Organs. The rest of the day was spent near the east coast in the vicinity of Beverley and Hull. At Beverley Minster (now an Anglican Parish Church), organist and master of the music Robert Poyser demonstrated IVP/72 instrument, most recently rebuilt in 1995. John Pemberton, Organ Curator at the Hull City Hall demonstrated the Forster & Andrews, Compton instrument (IVP/140) there. Serena Derrett hosted the group both at Holy Trinity Church, Hull, and afterwards for tea at her home. Mark Keith demonstrated the Forster & Andrews, Compton instrument (IVP/104) at Holy Trinity where William Wilberforce, leader of the British movement to abolish the slave trade, was baptized. Concert organist Paul Derrett gave a short recital on his home-assembled (and very much a work in progress!) residence organ, which is housed in a barn.

Day 3 took the tour in a westerly direction first to the city of Leeds. Organist Tony Norcliffe demonstrated the IIP/39 1910 Norman and Beard at the Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel, one of whose previous ministers was Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen. At the beautifully renovated Leeds R.C. Cathedral organist Ben Saunders demonstrated the 2009 IVP/57 Klais, the newest instrument on the tour. It comprises two organs, a two-division in the chancel and a three-division in the nave, both of which are playable from a four-manual console in a gallery. At St. Bartholomew's Church, Armley, organist Graham Barber offered pew cushions (suggested usage – 1 cushion per expected ½ hour + extra bonus cushion if the programme is all Bach!) on which to sit during his demonstration recital. The day concluded with a visit to the lovely Ripon Cathedral with a demonstration of the updated 1926 IV/59 Harrison & Harrison by Andrew Bryden, organist and master of the music.

The last day of the tour was to the north and provided even more variety. Paul Derrett was again the demonstrator, this time of the 1961 IVP/104 J.W. Walker instrument in the beautifully simple (but with an occasional mouse carved into the woodwork!) chapel at Ampleforth Abbey, home to a community of Benedictine monks. The next stop was at Bridlington Priory, formerly an Augustinian priory and then home to a parish church since the Reformation. John Swindells demonstrated the 2006 IVP/76 Nicholson rebuild of an instrument that started out in 1889 as a IIP/41 Charles Anneesens (Belgium).

Following tea and scones at Sledmere House, the lovely Georgian home of Sir Tatton Sykes, John Ridgeway-Wood demonstrated the house organ with theatre-style console, most recently enlarged in 1984 to IIP/51 by Principal Pipe Organs.

A late evening gathering back at the Queens Hotel was the occasion for thanking tour organizers John Swindells, Mike and Joy Irvine, and John and Liz Folkingham and Dean Judy Riefel-Lindel for a wonderful taste of Yorkshire and its beautiful organs, buildings, and countryside.

Barbara Gulick

