

Past Events

Visit to the vintage Hill organ at St John's, Hyde Park Thursday 14th June

On June 14th a small group of members — just 4, others being unable to come at the last minute — met at Prezzo near Marble Arch prior to visiting St John's Church, Hyde Park Crescent. Our walk from the restaurant to the church was through a noticeably affluent area.



The nave of St John's, looking east

Photo: Rosemary Knight

The church was consecrated in 1832 as St John's Chapel and the parish was established in 1859. It is hard to imagine now, but in the early 1960s the church and the surrounding area were impoverished, and the church was closed for a time. It was the Rev Cuthbert Scott who from 1965 drew in local members of the community, including Richard Branson whose company occupied the crypt under the Chapel to the Virgin. The church now flourishes as a focus of the community and hosts numerous events.

In 2011 the church was reordered. The pews were replaced by light coloured chairs, the rood screen moved to the west end and a new floor was put in. The effect is to make the building very light and uplifting. The 1865/1880 William Hill organ 'Betty' was rebuilt and refurbished in 2015 by Nicholson & Co. Peter Smith has described the organ in the June issue of the Newsletter.



'Betty' the organ, with Peter Smith at the console, and Nick Miller standing by

Photo: Rosemary Knight



Michael Hennin at the console, with Nick Miller

Photo: Rosemary Knight

Music for services at the church is provided by the Director of Music, Robert Greenhill (who was once one of Peter Smith's choirboys), the Organist Nick Miller and 8 choral scholars. Robert Greenhill started the evening off by speaking to us about the church and the organ, and then Nick Miller played for us, to demonstrate the organ's many fine sounds. After that the four of us each had a turn to play, and Nick was on hand to advise about stops if required. The music played included pieces by Böhm, Bach, Rheinberger and Stanford and everything, not just the Romantic pieces, came over well.

We are grateful to Robert Greenhill and Nick Miller for providing an enjoyable and informative evening at their church, and to Peter Smith for arranging the visit.

Rosemary Knight