

Past Events

- **Visit to All Saints, Hertford**
- **“At home” with Ruth Lewis**

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Visit to All Saints', Hertford Saturday, 23rd October

Eleven members had a most enjoyable day in All Saints' Church, Hertford on 23rd October under the guidance of committee member Martin Penny, who is the Director of Music there.

The theme of the day was *Music for manuals only*, making the case that there is nothing to be ashamed of in not using pedals. The day began with various players trying out the two instruments - the three-manual Father Willis which has recently been restored and then a 3-stop box organ, which lives in the choir between the two sides.



The console of the Father Willis organ

A meal is of course always part of a gathering and we moved across the busy main road, mercifully via the subway, into the nearest pub, the Salisbury Arms. The staff were very accommodating and provided us with an excellent meal in the courtyard.

During the afternoon, Martin gave performances of much of the music that he had researched for manuals. There was a tremendous variety of mood and style, including works by composers whose names are perhaps not very familiar.



Robin playing the box organ

Martin also talked about how music was printed and thus gave guidance on how the earliest music should be played. I think we all felt that we returned home much better informed.

Our thanks to Martin for hosting a most enjoyable musical and social event.

Ruth Lewis

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**“At home” with Ruth Lewis
Thursday November 11th**

Ruth Lewis kindly invited members to her house again for a musical evening and supper. The theme - 'Fireworks and Fire' - occasioned by the proximity of Bonfire Night - seemed daunting, but in fact led to some surprising and entertaining choices of music. 'Music for the Royal Fireworks' did not even get a look-in.

Our hostess began the evening by playing a recording of the third movement from Alan Ridout's *Canticle Of The Rose*, entitled 'Fire'. It was played by our former president Andrew Parnell at St Albans Cathedral. The work was inspired by the Rose Window at the Cathedral. This was followed by something else of local interest: Oliver Knussen's *Flourish with Fireworks* recorded by the Purcell School.

Singers will immediately recognise the words '*Dum veneris judicare saeculum per ignem.*' Of course they come from the '*Libera Me*' movement of the Requiem Mass, and Pavlos brought a recording of this part of the Mozart Requiem, but not the version completed by Süßmayr; instead it was the version by Sigismund Neukomm.

We then saw in Youtube a canzonet by Morley, *Fire and Lightning* performed by Carly Ann Worden (voice) and Alan Futterman (recorders and lute), with suitable fiery sound effects.

Terence spoke about the words of two hymns, in particular about the line 'With inextinguishable blaze' which occurs in 'O thou who camest from above'. The word 'inextinguishable' was thought at one time to be unsingable and the line was replaced by 'With ever-bright, undying blaze' and even 'Unquenched, undimmed, in darkest days'. We also heard 'Come Down, O love divine' sung to William Harris's *North Petherton*, instead of the more usual *Down Ampney*.

Our newest member, retired cathedral organist Jonathan, brought an excerpt from a recording of *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, an English music drama with music composed by Benjamin Britten to a libretto by William Plomer. This included an interesting commentary on the production.

Ruth had promised us bangers and mash to suit the occasion, but she laid on a veritable feast including celeriac, red cabbage, fruit, cheese and cake, as well as wine and other drinks. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, and I think most of us ended the evening more knowledgeable than we began it.