

Tayside Organists' Society

Visit to the house organ of Alison Malcolm

25 March 2023

Review by Kevin Veal

The March meeting of the Society was an afternoon meeting in the home of our member, Mrs Alison Malcolm, in Auchterhouse, north of Dundee.

Installed in her home is a 300 pipe 1883 Father Willis instrument. It was originally in a Working Men's Club in Folkestone, Kent, before being installed in Cheriton Baptist Church, in Cheriton, near Folkestone. When the church decided to "move on" musically, Alison acquired the organ in 1997, and she subsequently brought it to Scotland, when she moved here a few years ago.

The original pipe work and voicing by Father Willis is intact and unchanged, as is the 2-manual console. The pedal board is modern (21st century), and is a Mander Pedal Board. The original Willis Pedal Board has been retained, and is in Alison's possession, and can be viewed. A facility for blowing the wind into the instrument by hand is available.

The specification of the organ is:

Swell Cornopean 8

Gemshorn 4

Open Diapason 8

Great Fifteenth 2

Principal 4

Lieblich Gedact 8

Couplers

Swell to Great

Swell to Pedal

Great to Pedal

Great Octave

Pedal Bourdon 16

The organ has a truly magnificent range of colours, and it is a living tribute to the skill and brilliance of Father Willis and his voicers from the 19th century. These organ colours were ably and amply demonstrated by Alison, when she played the programme to her guests.

Society President, Ron Oliver, in his welcome remarks, thanked those who had attended. Particular thanks were due to Alison, who had very willingly invited the Society to hold one of their meetings at her home. In addition, she had also prepared soft drinks and refreshments to be enjoyed by her guests at the end of the afternoon.

Alison then played the following: -

Trumpet Voluntary from Suite for Organ in D (John Stanley)

Prelude and Fugue in G major BWV 541 (J S Bach)

Prelude, Fugue and Variation (César Franck)

Adagio in E major from 3 pieces for organ (Frank Bridge)

Claire de Lune (Louis Vierne)

No.6 of Six Short Preludes and Postludes for organ (C V Stanford)

Prelude on "Brother James' Air" (Searle Wright)

Fantaisie for organ (Camille Saint-Saëns)

The varied programme demonstrated the wide range of tones available to the organist, and both the vibrant and the mellow tones of the instrument were clearly displayed.

At the conclusion of the recital, which was warmly received and much appreciated and enjoyed by all present, the Society's Vice President, George Bell, expressed eloquent thanks to Alison for opening her home to the members of the Society, and for her generous hospitality to all present.

The 11 members present were invited to play the organ, and most present did avail themselves of this opportunity. All players expressed delight in so doing, and having this opportunity to play this instrument which had been "saved" from joining so many others which have ended up on a scrap heap.

During the consumption of the refreshments, members were joined by Ebony, (Alison's black Labrador), who was happy to enjoy any crumbs which found their way to the floor! Otherwise, Ebony was extremely well behaved and added an unusual dimension to the afternoon's proceedings!

Alison had generously donated her honorarium for this occasion to the local Food Bank, and all donations made by members were given to the same charity.

