

Alexander (Sandy) F. Edmonstone

A tribute by Sheriff Kevin A Veal, President of Tayside Organists' Society

The members of Tayside Organists' Society were saddened to learn of the death of Sandy Edmonstone, a long-standing member and past President of the Society, and a noted Organ Builder, on 23 January 2022.

Sandy, who was 68 years of age, was born and brought up in Aberdeen, his parents being Sandy senior (Alexander) and Catherine Jean. His father worked with pianos, and his business interests covered not only the City of Aberdeen, but also the County of Aberdeenshire and beyond. In time, the family moved to Elgin, where his father – who was a very skilled and competent organist – was the organist of St Giles' Church.

At an early age, Sandy was introduced by his father to the world of the King of Instruments, and he trained with J W Walker, organ builders, Ruislip, and became particularly skilled in the voicing of pipes. Thereafter, he worked initially with companies in the North of England, and particularly with Wood, Wordsworth, Organ Builders, Leeds.

In the fulness of time, Sandy decided to work on his own, and he developed a formidable reputation as an organ builder and organ restorer of great ability and talent, his services being eagerly sought after by many churches and congregations across the whole length of Scotland from the Orkney Isles in the north to Dumfries and Galloway in the south. He operated as an independent organ builder from the early 1980's, and ran his business from his workshop in Forteviot, Perthshire.



Sandy Edmonstone (fifth from right) with a group of Society members in 2008 at Auchterarder Parish Church where he had rebuilt the organ in 2004.

Of the very many restorations, overhauls, and rebuilding of organs and historic organs that he carried out throughout his years as an organ builder, mention may properly be made of the organs in St Ninians's Episcopal Cathedral, Perth; Blackhall St Columba's Church in Edinburgh; Auchterarder Parish Church; St Andrew's Parish Church, Dundee; Dunkeld Cathedral; St Thomas' RC Church, Arbroath (the restoration of the historic organ by Postill of York); and St John the Baptist Episcopal Church, Dundee, (the restoration of an historic Bevington organ). His final major restoration was at Stenhouse and Carron Parish Church, Stenhousemuir, this work being completed in 2012. In addition, he carried out many cleanings and overhauls of organs in Scotland, and these many instruments – and the glorious sounds and music now emanating from them – will be his personal contribution and lasting legacy to the preservation of the pipe organ tradition in this country.



Sandy Edmonstone with a group of Society members at St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth in 2017, describing his 1996 rebuild of the organ.

He continued to work until ill health forced his early retirement some 8 or 9 years ago. Following his retirement, he was awarded Honorary Life Membership of Tayside Organists' Society. Though physically incapacitated, he continued to support the Society, and was a regular attender at Society meetings and gatherings, where he was always welcome.

Sandy was happily married to Carol, a Primary School Teacher, and he was a very proud father to his two sons, Malcolm and Alastair. He also took great delight in his grandchildren. Carol cared for him so well in his declining years. He was a faithful member of this society for many years, and he leaves a special and enduring legacy. It was our privilege to have known him and to have benefitted from his great musical and organ knowledge and talent.