

Tayside Organists' Society

Fifty five years as an Organist

Talk by Ian McLagan, Treasurer of TOS

Stobswell Trinity Church Hall, Dundee

Monday 30th September 2024

Review by Bryan Weir and Peter Thornton

The first event in Tayside Organists' Society's 2024–25 programme was held on Monday 30th September in Stobswell Trinity Church Hall. A good number of Society members and some church members were treated to a look back with our treasurer, Ian McLagan, on his 50 plus years as a church organist. Ian spoke in his inimitable style, with plenty of humorous anecdotes. For every church he had chosen a hymn that had an association for him, and we had the opportunity to sing a few verses of each, ably accompanied by Ron Oliver on the piano.

We were taken on a nostalgic journey beginning in Kilmany, Fife, where Ian's great aunt played the organ from 1919 until her death in 1972. We joined in a hymn from his baptism in Wallacetown Church, Dundee: *A little child the Saviour came*. The tour then took in Dundee, Perthshire and Fife churches where Ian had held organist's posts. He told us that, as Sunday School accompanist at Mains Church, Dundee he received an unusual request: *What a friend we have in Jesus* – to the tune of *The carnival is over*, something of a test for our scratch choir! Our next test of mental agility was to sing a wedding hymn associated with St Rule's Church, Monifieth: *I've found a friend, O such a friend* – to the tune of *Edelweiss*. Another challenge from Dundee's Craigiebank Parish Church was to sing *To God be the glory* to the tune *Joanna*, usually associated with *Immortal, invisible, God only wise*. We then travelled via Dundee's Fairmuir Parish Church and Coupar Angus Abbey linked with Bendochy, each with an associated hymn, to Ian's current post at Cupar St John's united with Dairsie. The talk ended with a tail piece referring to playing at St James's Church, Broughty Ferry, its association with RNLI, and *Eternal Father, strong to save*.

Of Ian's many tales, the one that stands out was the story of a minister who was fond of a cigarette and who regularly used a small silver dish in the church vestry as an ashtray. Someone said to him that perhaps he shouldn't use the dish as it could be valuable, but the minister dismissed the suggestion. It turned out the dish had been gifted by Mary Queen of Scots and was valued at £40,000!

All in all, and with refreshments at the end, this was a very enjoyable evening.