

## [Summer outing 2015 to Harrogate region.](#)

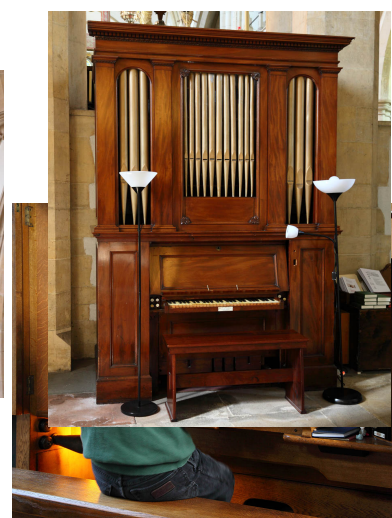
We were blessed with several things, but most of all that the weather was beautiful and that friends from the Sheffield and District Organists and Choirmasters Association joined us. Special thanks go to John Roch for producing an excellent 12-page booklet, which provided information about the places and churches where we visited, and specifications and histories of the organs we heard and played, being illustrated with colour photographs throughout.

[St. Wilfrid's Church in Harrogate](#) was our first stop, having taken a scenic and comfortable coach journey there. Despite initial appearances, St. Wilfrid's dates only from 1904 and was designed by Temple Lushington Moore, being considered his finest work. The entrance porch in the south transept is quite extraordinarily magnificent, and it is in this area that the Harrison organ of 1928 is situated.

It is quite a breathtaking experience on entering the church, being staggered by its cathedral-like proportions. I asked the very young-looking man who was making our refreshments who the organist was, to which he kindly told me that he was. Duh . . . if only people wore name badges! He gave the most dazzling improvisation on a hymn tune. When he began on a single diapason, I was convinced it was the Small Open Diapason on the Great Organ. But then he opened the swell box and it became louder still!

Despite the huge space and the large Lady Chapel (inside which stands a beautiful, old chamber organ), the sound level was colossal. It was tempting to think that Harrisons had been a little enthusiastic in providing sufficient volume, but I returned there a few days later to retrieve my music case when a choir of thirteen was rehearsing Rachmaninov vespers. Again, the sound level was extraordinary, even from the furthest away one could be. A friend attended a harpsichord recital there since and confirmed that even this instrument's sound filled the space. So it is clearly a quite extraordinary acoustic, a tenth of which would make many of us happy.

Whilst there were substantial donations and bequests for the church building and the remarkable church hall with its unique lamella roof, there was a shortage of funds for the organ and an organ case was never provided. The voicing by Arthur Harrison is acknowledged as one of the best preserved examples of his work and has thus received a Grade II\* listing from the British Institute of Organ Studies. Funding is



still being raised to complete the organ as per the original 1928 design. At present, though, it is a very substantial 3-manual instrument.

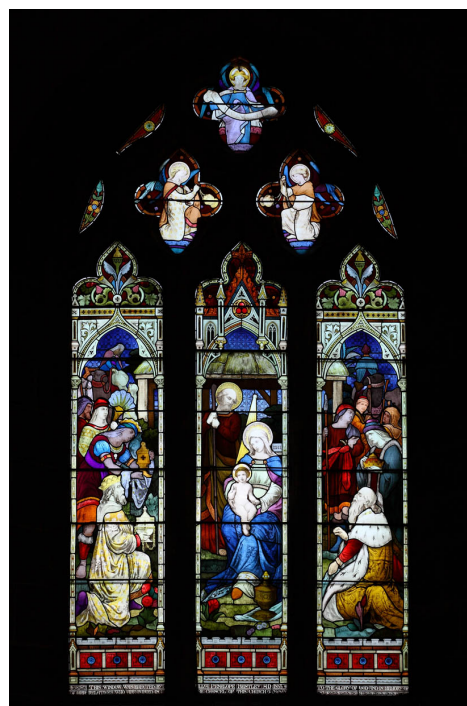
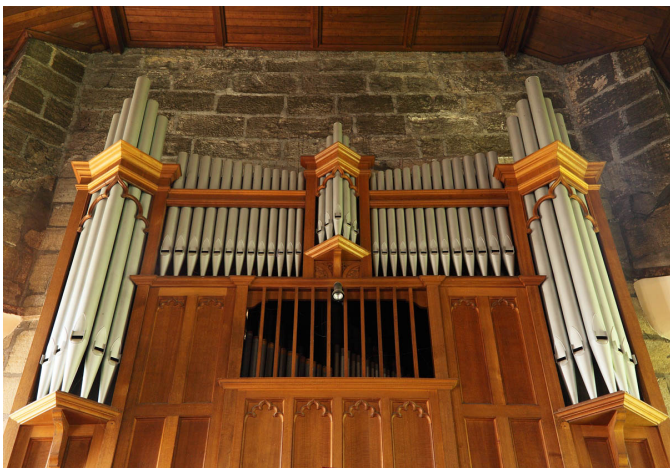
A slightly amusing event occurred next: trying to find [Hampsthwaite St. Thomas a Becket church](#) in its tiny village, a local was asked, who told us they thought there was a church here - somewhere! Oh dear. Church bells might help a little, I suppose.

The two-manual organ here is by Forster & Andrews of Hull, built in 1891 and at some recent time the key action was electrified and tonal changes made by Malcolm Spink of Leeds. Since the President had left his music at St. Wilfrid's, he was duly handed a copy of Whitlock's Five Short Pieces and told to get on with it! Thankfully, he was able to play to a couple of pieces to a reasonable degree. Access to the console, though, was for people below size 16 only! Otherwise, it was a delightful instrument that probably deserved more time to explore.

Excellent lunch was provided at the pub directly across the road from [St. Michael and All Angels in Beckwithshaw](#). The organ also was excellent, and this is one of two churches where our member Nigel Duce plays. Father Henry Willis built this in 1887: two manuals with more than adequate stop-list, but exceptional voicing and balance, even after so many years. The only thing not in its favour is that it is recessed into the north side behind an arch and so it cannot be seen from the nave.

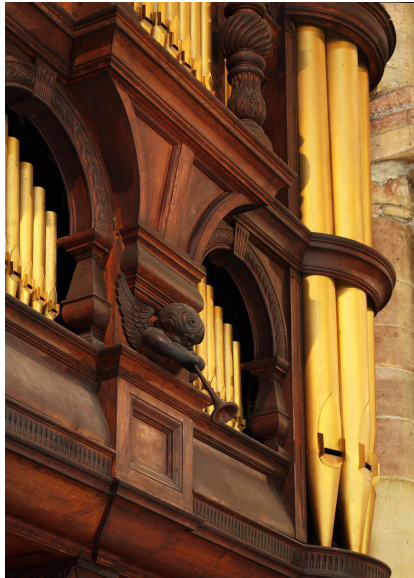


Nigel led us to [St. Robert of Knaresborough church at Pannal](#) where the other organ he plays is built on to the west wall. This two-manual organ with its console near the chancel was rebuilt by John T. Jackson in 1980 but its history prior to that is unknown. The specification is quite complete, with mixtures and reeds on both manuals, as well as a pedal trombone. Again, more time would have enabled us to explore the tonal resources better.



Our final visit of the day was to [Knaresborough St. John the Baptist](#), where Richard Darke is the organist and choirmaster. Richard is a former junior member of the Bradford and District Association of Organists and Choirmasters, our name before we voted in our current name. The weather was still lovely and some of our group ate tea in the shade beneath a tree beside the church, whilst others found a coffee shop in Knaresborough.

The organ is a remarkably large instrument for the size of the town, with 16ft flue pipes on all three manuals, as well as a full complement of chorus and solo reeds and mutations. Richard explained that the organ has suffered somewhat at the hands of builders who should have sought the organ's best but failed. Originally, it was a Binns and was rebuilt at some time by the firm of Harris of Bristol. In its present position it is raised up so that you can walk beneath it in the north transept. The console is unique as far as I'm aware in that the drawstop stop-knobs are coloured somewhere



between tan and orange. The inscription for couplers, however, is in red and, in artificial light these can be very difficult to read. Maybe they thought it would set a new scene, but sadly no (!).

Thanks to Sheila and Edward, we had an action-packed day with five organs to see, hear and play, in four delightful settings and with wonderful weather (no, Sheila can't take credit for that!), and good food and company. Nice coach too, but we learned that sat-navs don't work for churches very often.

John.