

SOCA Devon Visit. 12th April, 2022

10 SOCA members, plus one wife, enjoyed a recent visit to Devon, where we met up first at St. Peter's Church, Budleigh Salterton. The organist, Stephen Tanner, gave a brief history of the instrument. Now just over 30 years old, it was constructed by Michael Farley, using components of the previous organ, and some pipework from the redundant nave organ of Worcester Cathedral. Great, swell and pedal divisions are in a gallery above the North choir, and in the North aisle is the choir division, standing separately from the main instrument, yet near enough to blend with it.

Stephen gave a detailed account of the stops of each manual, showing the strong personality and individualism of many of its voices. By way of demonstration of the organ's practice, he played a set of variations on "Lasst Uns Erfreuen" by the Canadian organist, Denis Bédard: a tour de force of dance rhythms and chromaticism, played with great aplomb. SOCA members then took the opportunity to play this fine instrument for themselves.

Following a lunch break, (I had mine sitting on a bench overlooking the sea on a warm day), we re-convened at the workshop of Michael Farley, to look at his current projects. Chief among these is a total rebuild of the organ from Nairobi Cathedral. Michael and Ashley, one of his colleagues, had gone to Kenya in the Autumn to dismantle the instrument, which took 88 days to come by container vessel to England. Care is being taken in the rebuild to use, where possible, materials which will not be subject to the vagaries of high temperatures and humidity. Interestingly, since Nairobi is nearly 6,000 feet above sea level, the blower will have to be more powerful to deal with the rarified atmosphere at that height. Also in the workshop was the case façade of an organ which will eventually be rebuilt in Malta. In addition, there is a Walker 2 manual and pedal extension organ on a mobile platform, which is for sale.

We were able to watch some of the skills necessary in organ building and maintenance, with Michael and his staff willing to answer questions. Our thanks to Michael and his team for their hospitality.

The next planned SOCA visit is to Downside Abbey on Saturday, 7th May: a great opportunity to hear and to play the huge Compton organ.



Stephen Tanner at the console.



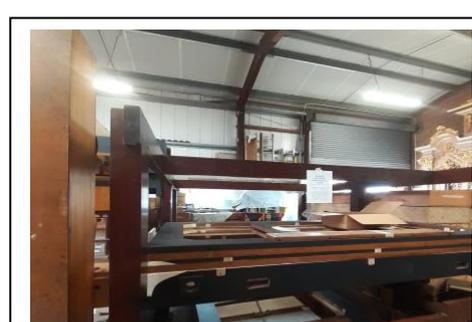
Hilarv and Andrew.



Stephen Bell.



Ashley working on the Nairobi organ.



The main frame of the Nairobi organ.



Organ case from Malta.