

ALTON ORGAN SOCIETY

Cyril Diplock, who was organist for over 45 years at St Lawrence Parish Church Alton, established the Society soon after the organ was rebuilt in 1966. Cyril retired as organist in July 2006 and continued to be associated with the Organ Society until his sad death after a long illness on 21st August 2016. The Society is proud to share that over 400 organ concerts have been given on this fine instrument by recitalists of the highest international acclaim. It is reputed to be one of the longest running organ societies in existence.

The late distinguished international concert organist and teacher David Sanger gave an annual concert at St Lawrence for over 30 years. He also most kindly agreed in 2000 to be the first Patron of the Society. Francis Jackson CBE, who at the time was organist at York Minster, gave the first concert in December 1966. He performed again on the 9th November 1999 and 7th January 2003. Francis also very kindly accepted our invitation to become a Patron of the Society. We are humbled to also have Dame Gillian Weir DBE as a Patron, and her remarkable career was outlined by Ivan Hewitt who wrote in the Daily Telegraph: 'There is no organist in the world quite so starry and honoured as Gillian Weir'. Dr David Hill MBE, widely known as one of the leading choral directors in the UK has been involved with the Society for many years. In an article he wrote for our brochure which was put together for our 50th season, David Hill said 'I never cease to be amazed at the dedication of the Society in promoting evening events, showcasing major repertoire and inviting world class organists'. As our chairman Peter Ashworth steps down after nearly 50 years of service to the Society, and to thank him for his dedication and commitment, the committee invited Peter to become a Patron. We are delighted that he accepted. Peter and his wife Maureen entertain all our visiting organists from far and wide. Their hospitality leaves no stone unturned and it underlines the welcoming atmosphere that is synonymous with the Society.

Today, the Alton Organ Society is in its 53rd season and holds monthly concerts between October and May each year. Olivier Latry, Thomas Trotter, David Hill, Philip Scriven, Richard Pearce, Dame Gillian Weir, Ourania Gassiou, Katherine Dienes-Williams, Martin Baker, Sarah Baldock are just some of the organists who have brought a high standard of musicianship to the Society. We also love to encourage younger organists to come and perform for our Society and we are constantly amazed by their masterful playing and the interesting anecdotes they bring with them. James Tett and Laurence Long have both given powerful

performances and we hope they will give return performances in the future.

Our monthly audience is made up of regular attendees, some of whom play the organ and some who just have a love of music. Certainly in the last few years we find our numbers increasing as new people come along to listen and enjoy a new pastime, fulfilling the aim of the charity to bring music to everyone, whether or not they have experienced organ music before.