

**THE FUTURE OF
THE ORGAN CLUB**

**REPORT OF
AN INTERNAL CONSULTANCY
BY
PROFESSOR DAVID BAKER**

FEBRUARY 2017

THE FUTURE OF THE ORGAN CLUB

RECOMMENDATIONS

1: The Club should stabilise and increase the membership base through a co-ordinated marketing and public relations campaign to be led by the President and the Committee. The emphasis should be on attracting younger members. Collaboration with other cognate organisations should be considered. This work should be enshrined in a marketing and public relations strategy to be devised and implemented by the Committee. The role of the Organ Club's Student Organisation (OCSO) should be developed as part of this programme of work.

2: There should be a root and branch review of the attractiveness, geographical distribution, value and cost-effectiveness of the Club's programmes of events – visits, meetings, tours, lectures, classes – to ensure that maximum benefit is gained, considering current members' preferences and future marketing and public relations strategy as well as activities carried out by other cognate organisations. The newly-instigated competition held in December 2016 should form an integral part of the Club's future programme of events.

3: As part of the development of the marketing and public relations strategy the website and Facebook pages should be significantly developed as communication and recruitment tools, along with other social media, as deemed appropriate.

4: The central and vital role of the *Organ Club Journal* (OCJ) as the core member service should be recognised and reinforced. Additional resources should be allocated to ensure that the development of the OCJ as a professional standard publication continues. Content should be reviewed in the light of the survey responses.

5: The Newsletter (OCN) should continue to form a central part of the Club's communication with the membership. Its format should be reviewed in the light of the marketing and public relations strategy and the development of the website and other social media.

6: The Club should develop and implement a corporate house style for all its publications, both electronic and hardcopy.

7: The Club (through its Committee) should carry out a rigorous costings and budgeting exercise making it clear what each activity and operation costs so that future subscription rates can be determined effectively, having regard to the 'going rate' and the results of the member survey. It is proposed that: rates should in future rise in line with cost price inflation (CPI); 'junior' member rates should extend to those aged up to 30; by 2020 there should only be two rates of membership – standard and junior.

8: The Committee should present a full and detailed annual budget, broken down by proposed expenditure heads, to the Annual General Meeting, justifying its proposals through its in-year cost/benefit analysis of past, present and likely future activities and available resources.

9: Consideration should be given to sponsoring events, prizes and individuals, possibly in collaboration with other cognate organisations.

10: The incoming President should carry out a root and branch review of the organisation and effectiveness of the Committee to ensure that it best serves present and future needs and that it can implement the recommendations contained in this report, as agreed by the Annual General Meeting. Consideration should be given to changes to the status of the Club only if they bring significant financial benefit in the longer term.

THE FUTURE OF THE ORGAN CLUB

REPORT OF AN INTERNAL CONSULTANCY BY PROFESSOR DAVID BAKER

Introduction

1. This reports summarises the results of an internal consultancy carried out by Professor David Baker, President-Elect, concerning the future of the Organ Club. The work took the form of a mixture of desk research, interview and group discussion. The results were presented to the February meeting of the committee with agreed recommendations to be introduced at the 2017 annual general meeting. It is proposed that the implementation of any agreed programme of work will be overseen by the Committee.

Rationale for the Work

2. The Organ Club is one of several cognate membership organisations that is having to deal with loss of interest in the instrument and its music because of changing demographic, social and cultural change, leading to:
 - a. Falling membership
 - b. Reduced income and lack of annual budgets
 - c. Lower attendance at meetings and related events
 - d. Inability to attract people to undertake officer roles
 - e. Possible competition from other organisations
3. In addition, there are several policy, governance, and structural issues that would seem to require attention, including (but not solely):
 - a. A requirement to understand more accurately the needs of current and possible future members
 - b. The need to review focus and priorities, as for example in terms of balance of activities
 - c. A perceived lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities in some areas
 - d. An underlying unhappiness with the governance of the organisation

Terms of Reference

4. The consultancy had the following terms of reference, as agreed by the committee at its December 2016 meeting. The aims of the consultancy were to:
 - a. Analyse the current organisational effectiveness and efficiency of the Organ Club

- b. Identify and put into context current and likely future trends regarding membership organisations such as the Club
- c. Consider, compare, and contrast the Club with other cognate institutions¹
- d. Identify, analyse and summarise key needs and wants of the membership, both now and for the foreseeable future
- e. Make recommendations to the Committee in respect of points a-d under the key headings of Aims, Strategy, Financing, Organisation and Governance

Methodology

- 5. The work was carried out through a combination of desk research, interviews, and a questionnaire survey sent out to all members of the Club.² The work was largely carried out between December 2016 and January 2017.
- 6. Appendix 1 replicates the survey form. 531 forms were sent out and 107 completed and returned. This represents a reasonable 20% response rate. Given that this was a survey of the membership at large, the many views expressed are discussed in some detail. It should be noted that not every question was answered by all respondents though most were completed in full, often with useful qualitative information.
- 7. Committee members, trustees and a range of former office holders were also offered an opportunity to be interviewed for the work. Only one invitee did not respond. All others were asked to give their views, either at face-to-face meetings in London, or over the telephone. I must thank all who gave of their time so generously to help with the work. Their views are incorporated into the summary of the survey responses below.
- 8. All key documents relating to the work of the Club were analysed and summarised. Comparisons were made with a range of other organ/musical/non-musical interest groups. The results of this activity are incorporated into the analysis and commentary regarding the survey and interview work.
- 9. The following sections of the report focus on the results of the survey and interview work, supported by the analysis of documentation about the Club and other comparable organisations where appropriate. It is interesting to note that there is a good deal of consensus about the Organ Club, its aims, activities, services, future challenges and opportunities.

¹ Notably BIOS, IAO, RCO

² It should be noted that a survey of the Club's online activities was proposed in 2011, but I have no data from this work.

Membership

10. The bulk of the membership is based in the UK, with only 9% living overseas. There is an uneven geographical spread of members across the UK. 26% live in London and a further 20% in the South East.³ 15% live in the East of England⁴ and 9% in the South West.⁵ The remaining parts of the country have very few members: only 19 (4%) live in NW England and 9 (2%) in the NE; 17 (4%) are from Yorkshire and Humberside; 14 (3%) live in the East Midlands and 19 (4%) in the West Midlands; 10 (2%) live in Scotland; 3 (1%) are from Wales; 4 (1%) are in Northern Ireland and Eire.⁶
11. In common with many other organisations, over the last 10 years, membership of the Club has fallen by almost 17%. During the same period, numbers in the Royal College of Organists fell by almost 30%; membership of the British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS) reduced by 10%; in the Organ Historical Society of America, it was 12%.
12. The majority (78%) of the survey respondents stated that they were either retired or semi-retired with only 22 members stating that they were employed (1 declined to answer this question). There were no responses from members under 40, and 58% of the responses came from members over 70. From knowledge of the Club as well as the results of the survey, it would therefore be safe to assume that the membership demographic overall is represented by the survey. It is disappointing to note that, with the exception of an interview response from a committee member who is also part of OCSO, no responses were received from junior members. This in itself may point towards the fact that OCSO members are either disengaged from the Club itself, or they view OCSO as a separate organisation.⁷
13. Professional background and previous employment showed that there was not a 'typical' member – occupations noted ranged from directors and CEOs to doctors, teachers and other well respected professions to manual labouring professions with a small number (<8%) of professional musicians. Most respondents were educated to at least degree level or held a professional occupational qualification; just over 20% stated that they were held post-graduate degree qualifications. Just under half of the respondents stated that

³ The South East includes Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent

⁴ The East of England includes Herts, Beds, Peterborough etc

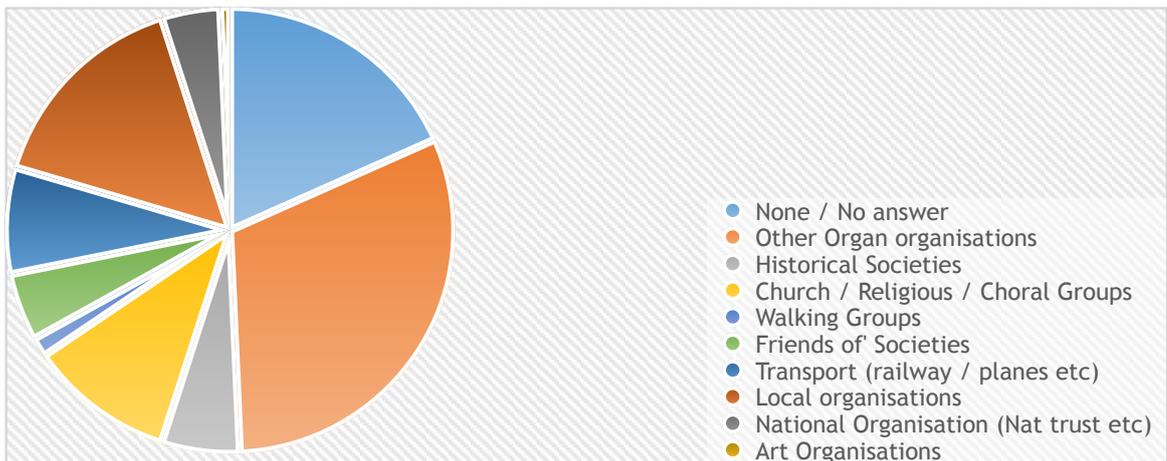
⁵ The South West is Gloucestershire, Dorset westward.

⁶ Information kindly supplied by the Membership Secretary

⁷ John Miley has carried out an informal survey of participants in the 2016 competition. This results will be further considered as the recommendations from this report are implemented.

they had no musical qualifications.⁸ Similarly, just under 50% of respondents stated that they were not involved in any recent musical appointments (such as organist, choirmaster etc).

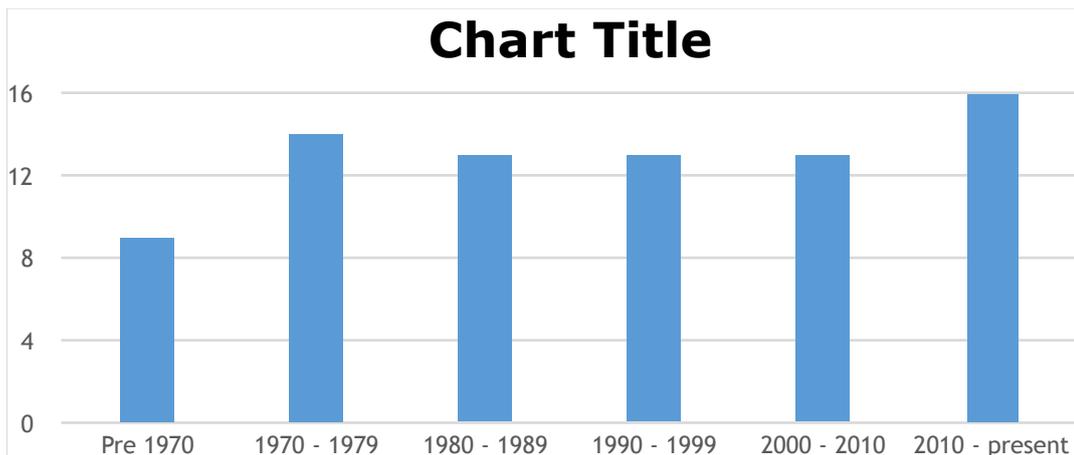
14. Most respondents are members of other organisations as well as the Organ Club, as noted in the pie chart below. Just under 60% of those were involved in other organ organisations (such as BIOS, IAO, Cinema Organ Society as well as local organ societies).



15. Some respondents were involved in church, choral or other religious groups. Local organisations (which did not fit into any other category) were also listed by many. Transport organisations featured heavily.

Recruitment

16. The bar chart below summarises recruitment date⁹ and hence length of membership.



⁸ This includes those that declined to answer this question, and its ambiguity, meant that some respondents may well have not regarded ABRSM or similar instrumental examinations as qualifications.

⁹ 21% of respondents did not provide a date for when they joined the organisation.

17. The majority of respondents joined either due to an interest in the organ or related matters (such as organ music). 10% joined the Club because it would allow them the opportunity to play organs that they would not otherwise be able to access. A few stated that it would allow them to network with like-minded individuals. Other members stated that they joined the organisation to participate in specific events. As the organisation has members who cannot easily travel or who are based abroad, obtaining the Journal and Newsletter was cited as a reason for joining. 22% of respondents stated that they joined through an invitation or recommendation of an existing member: recommendation and 'word of mouth' are powerful (and free!) recruitment tools.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Club should stabilise and increase the membership base through a co-ordinated marketing and public relations campaign to be led by the President and the Committee. The emphasis should be on attracting younger members. Collaboration with other cognate organisations should be considered. This work should be enshrined in a marketing strategy to be devised and implemented by the Committee. The role of the Organ Club's Student Organisation (OCSO) should be developed as part of this programme of work.

Activities

18. The Organ Club has long presented a lively and exciting programme of events and tours. This tried and tested formula is much appreciated by the current membership, as evinced by the survey and interview responses. Visits are especially popular, not least because they also provide 'social recreation' and an opportunity to exchange information and experiences about the organ and its music.¹⁰ Regular tours are also arranged.¹¹ These are similar in nature to monthly visits but accommodation is always arranged, flights may be booked by the Club/its officers, and with transport during the tour, if required – which it almost invariably is - is arranged.

19. However, half of the respondents advised that they had not taken part in any events over the past 12 months. The reasons given were varied, but notably, prior engagements and distance were cited. Weekend events were problematic for some, with weekday events being preferred; conversely

¹⁰ Some visits have taken the form of lectures on particular aspects of the Organ (e.g. Atlantic City Organ, life of Percy Whitlock), master-classes (e.g. playing French music on an English Organ at All Souls Langham Place, student members playing and being tutored by a well-known professional).

¹¹ The duration will be from 2 days to typically a week or 10 days up to a maximum of 2 weeks. There have occasionally been longer tours to more distant parts of the world (e.g. Australia, USA) because of the necessity to make the high cost of travel to the country/region appear justified to participants. It has normally been intended to alternate between an overseas tour one year and a UK tour the next but in recent years there have been more overseas than UK tours.

weekday events are not possible for those with work commitments. It was suggested that tours take place out of term time, not least because of cost.

20. Of the respondents who said they had participated in events, the majority stated that they had gone on visits. Nearly 40% of all respondents stated that they had attended meetings, but under 10% of the respondents stated that they had participated in recitals or masterclasses in the previous 12 months. Older respondents who did not attend masterclasses expressed their appreciation and their educational value within the survey noting that they did attend 'in their younger days'.
21. There is overlap in masterclasses between the Club and other organisations such as RCO. It was suggested that masterclasses should be abandoned and funds diverted to other activities, leaving other organisations to pick up the educational aspect. Counter to this were the statements that masterclasses were valuable and enjoyable. Similar suggestions were made, ranging from a 'formal tie-up' between cognate organisations (such as IAO and RCO) as well as 'tie-ups' with local organisations. The Young Organists Competition was mentioned in passing as being valuable both in terms of education, interest and supporting 'up and coming talent'. The event was also seen as potentially a valuable recruiting / advertising tool.
22. A recurring theme was the expense of tours (especially considering many members are retired and their financial liquidity may not be the best); the overall expense was cited by some respondents, cost of accommodation was mentioned by others. It was also noted by a respondent that meetings should be arranged around train times as open tickets can be expensive.
23. Some responses from members who played the organ (and a few who didn't) expressed frustration over visits to badly built or mass produced organs as well as member demonstrations which were perceived as 'badly played'. Equity in allocation of time to playing was also cited by a few. It should be noted that newer members have expressed their desire to be more involved in activities, as they currently feel left out. Other frustrations included the lack of organisation surrounding visits as well as the lack of contextual background around the organ / building on the visit in question. Conversely, a number of respondents advised that they felt there was no need for 'lectures' around the context and history of the organ. 5% of respondents felt events were too London - centric.
24. Suggestions to increase attendance were put forward: the return of Saturday afternoon visits gave time for members to arrive at the event, if it was possible to organise a visit with such a constraint. A few members suggested that there should be more events where organ music (especially 'popular music' as

opposed to improvisation) is played (either by members or professionals) as some members appreciate the musical aspect more than the actual organ or the venue itself.

25. The AGM and committee meetings were criticised, the consensus being that they over-ran, were poorly organised and mired in red tape: much talk and argument but not much resulting action.

26. Though not covered in the survey, it is clear from the significant increase in junior membership and the participation rates that the December 2016 competition at St Clement Danes proved eminently successful and has a clear role to play in the Club's future activities, even though other organisations hold similar events.

RECOMMENDATION 2: There should be a root and branch review of the attractiveness, geographical distribution, value and cost-effectiveness of the Club's programmes of events – visits, meetings, tours, lectures, classes – to ensure that maximum benefit is gained, considering current members' preferences and future marketing and public relations strategy as well as activities carried out by other cognate organisations. The newly-instigated competition held in December 2016 should form an integral part of the Club's future programme of events.

Communications

27. The Club communicates with its members in various ways. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on electronic communication, 'in the light of its own strategy for providing for its current members and for engaging new and younger members'.¹² The website was set up in 1999 and is used as a generic communication tool and repository. There is an accompanying Facebook page.

28. A minority of respondents felt it would be helpful to connect to other members remotely either through a social media page (such as Facebook) or indeed a forum. A few respondents were unaware of the Club's website and its social media presence. A review of the organisation's Facebook page reveals that there over 1000 people that have 'liked' and/or follow the page. Could some of these contacts be converted into fully fledged members?

RECOMMENDATION 3: As part of the development of the marketing and public relations strategy the website and Facebook pages should be significantly developed as communications and recruitment tools, along with other social media, as deemed appropriate.

¹² 'The Organ Club and the Internet: a proposal for a survey of the Club's online activities, 25 September 2011'.

29. The *Organ Club Journal (OCJ)* has been issued to members¹³ for many years and is currently produced three times a year. The Honorary Editor is responsible for the assembly, production and printing of the OCJ (3 issues per year: February, June and October). He also administers and provides regular postings to the Club's social media presence on Facebook (facebook.com/TheOrganClub) and contributes to the Club's website (organclub.org). Amongst other duties, the Honorary Editor manages the email account journal@organclub.org as the principal point of contact to receive correspondence about and contributions to the OCJ, including advertising and undertakes appropriate follow-up to ensure the timely receipt of content for the Journal as well as initiating the creation of new content.
30. The survey responses showed that the OCJ is unanimously well received, not least by those based overseas for whom, like the Newsletter, it is the only contact they have with the Organ world. It is enjoyable and informative, and content and presentation are in general excellent. The A4 format was deemed preferable by all but one respondent. 5% of respondents said that they wished to continue to receive the OCJ (and the Newsletter) through the post. Conversely, only 2% expressed a preference for electronic delivery.
31. Criticisms and suggested improvements were made: the (im)balance between text and illustrations; standard of proof reading on occasion; need for greater variety in writing styles; introduction of a 'letters to the editor' section; more features on organ music and composers; more on continental instruments. Continued improvement in the professionalism of the production would be welcomed by many.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The central and vital role of the *Organ Club Journal (OCJ)* as the core member service should be recognised and reinforced. Additional resources should be allocated to ensure that the development of the OCJ as a professional standard publication continues. Content should be reviewed in the light of the survey responses.

32. The *Newsletter (OCN)* started in 2003 and is published 6 times a year. It is mainly intended to advise members of forthcoming visits and important notices as well as providing a publicity outlet for members. It is available electronically as well as in hard copy. Survey responses showed that the OCN was generally well received, being 'fit for purpose' as a communication tool with the membership. A very small minority (2%) had concerns about the colour scheme and font. On occasion, it was noted that directions to venues for visits

¹³ Copies are also sent to the Legal Deposits Library and a small quantity sent to other organisations in the same field (e.g. the IAO) and some organ-builders. On visits, surplus copies are often given to the titular organist as an extra way of saying thank you for his/her recital but also to persuade them by the quality of the contents that it is worthwhile joining the Club. Copies are sometimes given away free at public events.

could have been better researched. An email version of the OCN could hyperlink maps and directions.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Newsletter (OCN) should continue to form a central part of the Club's communication with the membership. Its format should be reviewed in the light of the marketing and public relations strategy and the development of the website and other social media.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Club should develop and implement a corporate house style for all its publications, both electronic and print-on-paper.

Finances

33. The Club's main income stream is member subscriptions, though it also benefits from legacies. Grants are occasionally made from such funds. In recent years, the Club has made at best a modest surplus of a few hundred pounds and, primarily because of reducing numbers of members, is heading towards deficits.

34. 17% of respondents did not answer the question about subscription rates. Of the remaining responses, the majority (65%) said the current subscription rates (+/- £5) were adequate (although due to the demographic of the respondents, this related more to the senior rate, currently £25, than others). 15% thought that rates should increase with inflation, even though wages and pensions are either static (and have been for a while) or decreasing in real terms. Some nevertheless commented that if rates rise the Club will need to be perceived as providing a greater service than it does. The perceived value of the Club does vary between members – 8% of respondents stated that they would happily pay between £30 and £50 per annum to continue to receive the OCJ and the OCN alone. One respondent suggested two levels of membership dependent on whether printed or electronic material was required.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Club (through its Committee) should carry out a rigorous costings and budgeting exercise making it clear what each activity and operation costs so that future subscription rates can be determined effectively, having regard to the 'going rate' and the results of the member survey. It is proposed that: rates should in future rise in line with cost price inflation (CPI); 'junior' member rates should extend to those aged up to 30; by 2020 there should only be two rates of membership – standard and junior.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Committee should present a full and detailed annual budget, broken down by proposed expenditure heads, to the Annual General Meeting, justifying its proposals through its in-year cost/benefit analysis of past, present and likely future activities and available resources.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Consideration should be given to sponsoring events, prizes and individuals, possibly in collaboration with other cognate organisations.

Organisation, Governance, Status

35. The Organ Club relies heavily on the commitment and goodwill of volunteers who share the officer responsibilities between them. As one respondent noted, any change or increase in roles and responsibilities needs to be carefully considered. Minutes of committee meetings and discussions with officers show that (along with similar organisations) the Club does not always find it easy to fill officer roles or committee vacancies.
36. Central to the work of the Club is the Committee, chaired by the President, and including the key officers, representatives and elected members. The Committee oversees the work of the organisation. Changes have been made to its running recently, in the hope that a more strategic approach could be taken. Much valuable information and expertise is enshrined in individuals, on whom both Committee and Club rely. There is a perceived lack of clarity about relative roles and responsibilities and a persistent lack of information and data in certain aspects of the Club's administration.
37. There have been discussions about how best to organise visits and tours since 1995, when it was considered too onerous for one person to do all the work. Different options have been tried, including, most recently, a visits sub-committee.¹⁴ This does not seem to be working effectively, and visits are not always planned well in advance. As noted above, there are comments about the present effectiveness of the Committee which need to be tackled. The Club has previously been asked to consider charitable status. However, it has been felt thus far that this would require significant restructuring of the organisation and its activities so the proposal has not been pursued.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The incoming President should carry out a root and branch review of the organisation and effectiveness of the Committee to ensure that it best serves present and future needs and that it can implement the recommendations contained in this report, as agreed by the Annual

¹⁴ With the following remit:

- a) To formulate a programme with input from the committee and others
- b) To see to bookings and negotiate with organists, clergy, administrators etc.
- c) To produce a detailed programme for each visit, including travel arrangements, and to communicate them to the Newsletter Editor
- d) To ensure the availability of a console steward and someone to write a report if necessary.
- e) To ensure that visit notes are prepared.

General Meeting. Consideration should be given to changes to the status of the Club only if they bring significant financial benefit in the longer term.

End Note

38. As one respondent put it, 'The Organ Club must move forward into the 21st Century with hope, cost effectiveness, good advertising, good interesting meetings approached with enthusiasm and enterprise'. It is hoped that this report, its conclusions, recommendations and their speedy adoption and implementation will ensure that this happens.

Professor David Baker,

February, 2017

APPENDIX 1: ORGAN CLUB MEMBER SURVEY

1. What is your background?
 - a. Age (please circle the most appropriate category)
Under 18; 18-25; 26-30;31-40; 41-50; 51-60; 61-70; over 70
 - b. What is your occupation (if retired, please say retired and state previous occupation)?
 - c. Please state any academic and/or musical qualifications that you have, together with dates of award, as follows:

Musical qualifications

Non-musical qualifications
 - d. Please give details of any current or recent appointments as Organist/Choirmaster/Director of Music/Organ Teacher or similar
2. When and why did you join the OC?
3. Which activities have you taken part in over the last 12 months and why?
4. Which activities have you most/least enjoyed?

Most enjoyed:

Least enjoyed:
5. What do you think of the Organ Club Journal /the Newsletter? What are their best/worst features?

Organ Club Journal:

Newsletter:
6. What other organisations are you involved with? [Organ/Musical/Non-Musical/Professional] What could the OC learn from them?
7. Are there any other activities that you feel the OC should provide that would be of interest to you? What should the Club **stop** doing?
8. What do you think is a reasonable subscription for OC membership?
9. Anything else that you would like to add?
10. Are you prepared to be interviewed? If so, please complete the contact details below:

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email Address:

Telephone Number:

Best Times to Contact: