

Church Organ Review Sub-Committee Update October 2010

Members:

Martin Jackson
Alan Leach
Nigel Howard

A short meeting was convened at 3.30pm on Monday 25th October 2010 in the organ loft to review progress made since our last formal meeting in 2009.

Mean-temperament tuning

For over a year the committee members have had misgivings about the current tuning of the organ which they consider are mainly down to the fact the organ has been tuned to mean-temperament during the recent restoration.

The committee has been in correspondence with Nicholas Thistlethwaite about the matter and their wish to have the organ retuned back to equal-temperament. David Knight from the Council for the Care of Churches has been kept informed of these discussions.

Nicholas has consulted with Dominic and Martin from Goetze & Gwynn, who are of the opinion that for historical reasons mean-temperament is the most appropriate temperament to use during this restoration back to the late nineteenth century. One of the aims of this project has also been to get a practical organ that can be played in modern times for the foreseeable future. Those two aims seem to be in conflict at the moment.

Nigel has done some research on the subject of tuning of organs over the centuries and has discovered that mean-temperament tuning encompasses a number of variations which have evolved over time (e.g. well-temperament) to overcome the *wolf* or *wolfs* between one or more notes. Equal temperament is at the far end of the spectrum and is just one of these variations which happens to be in fashion.

For historical reasons, Goetze & Gwynn have chosen one of these mean-tuning variations (i.e. Bermondsey) for our church organ.

In equal-temperament the intervals from C to C are:

0, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, 1000, 1100, 1200 cents.

In the Bermondsey variation the intervals from C to C are:

0, 86, 195, 300, 390, 502, 586, 698, 788, 893, 1002, 1088, 1200 cents.

One of the well-temperament variations increases the number of playable in-tune keys from 6 to 11. In this case the intervals from C to C are approximately:

0, 91, 193, 294, 385, 498, 589, 690, 793, 895, 996, 1087, 1200 cents.

Nigel has recently contacted Martin Goetze at Goetze & Gwynn to follow up on our correspondence with Nicholas on the matter. Martin said that they had been thinking on similar lines and were considering whether a different variation of mean-temperament tuning might satisfy our needs better. The tuning variation G&G had in mind is called Young's-temperament is quite close to well-temperament listed above.

Martin Goetze said that he would discuss this further with Dominic and try to locate the nearest church with an organ tuned to Young's-temperament. He suggested that it would be best if we could go and visit the church and try out the organ for ourselves.

Martin also mentioned that if subsequently, a complete retune were to be undertaken, the best time for this to be done from G&G's point of view would be in May next year. Nigel mentioned about the proposed Fiori concert on 21st May and Martin responded that the retune could be completed in time for that concert, and that G&G might like to be around at the time of the concert.

Next maintenance tuning visit due

In the course of the conversation with Martin Goetze he mentioned that our organ was due for its next annual tuning, which the committee had also been aware of. As our church is still hoping to arrange a Carol Concert (or possibly a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols) on 19th December, scheduling a time for tuning before that time would be ideal. Martin said he would get back to us on confirming a date in November or December for the next tuning.

Music lessons on the organ

So far, there have been seven people who have applied to take advantage of the subsidised music lessons being offered in our restoration project. Some of these people are local and some from nearby villages such as Thornby. In spite of the marketing efforts the committee were disappointed not to have received any response at all from any of the local secondary schools.

Clearly there are too many applicants for Martin to be able to tutor single-handedly and therefore as originally planned for, it will be necessary to search our local organ tutors to assist in this work. The Incorporated Society of Musicians do offer names and contact details for tutors but as this list is sparse, other avenues need to be explored as well.

In the meantime it was agreed that Martin Jackson would be prepared to set aside a weekend in the near future to devote to auditioning each of the applicants in turn. Martin suggested that it would be beneficial to have Alan or Nigel present to offer a second opinion when deciding the merits and potential of each and every candidate. Afterwards the auditioning session a list will be drawn up with those who will be taken on by Martin (maximum of two), and those who will be referred to another tutor and those who we consider are not suitable for taking up tutoring lessons at this stage.

The organ restoration committee is prepared to offer up to ten lessons free of charge to suitably qualified musicians with potential. After that time though any further tutoring will be at the expense of the candidates themselves. The cost of employing one or more music tutors to supplement Martin's generous efforts will need to be paid for out of project funds.

While Martin is on holiday for the next week, Nigel will contact each of the applicants to check their availability over the next few weekends before Christmas.

Fiori Village choir Mattins service

A Sung Mattins service was held on 5th October with the Fiori village choir in conjunction with our church choir. Martin Jackson was playing on the organ. The feedback was very good from those who attended.

An invitation was sent to Jeremy Fenn of the Heritage Lottery Fund. He thanked our committee but he said that he was sorry that he would be unable to attend. But Sara Crofts, one of the HLF Committee members, attended the service on his behalf.

Carol Concert/Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on 19th December

The date and time of the Carol service at Crick for this year had been arranged for 3pm on the Sunday 19th December in order to have the best chance of incorporating one of two visiting choirs who had performed before in the church.

Unfortunately due to differing circumstances both the Penhros choir and the Collage choir cannot sing as whole choirs at this service due to other commitments and rehearsals.

A number of ideas were discussed for providing some sort of choir support but the general view was not optimistic, mainly because of the time and effort required to organise and rehearse a choir up to a performance standard in time.

Martin did however offer to play the organ at that service whatever was decided.

Nigel will look into whether any additional singers could be found who would be prepared to join our choir members for the service and attend two rehearsals beforehand. This approach of course will severely limit the choice of carols that could be sung by the choir only to just a few well known ones, not requiring a lot of note bashing.

According to the response received the service can be adapted to include one or more carols to be sung by the choir only, and in the worse case none at all, in which case the music will consist of carol/hymns that the choir can sing along with the congregation, as was the case last year.

Next Fiori Musicali concert with Andrew Reid

Preliminary discussions have been held with Fiori Musicali with respect to arranging a concert in our church next year with Andrew Reid, from Peterborough Cathedral,

playing the organ. Two dates were put forward by Andrew, namely the 21st May or 19th June 2011.

Sue and Michael Fraser-Allen had been planning to put on a musical concert at St.Margaret's at the end of April next year. Sue had considered that our 21st May date might be too close to the date for their concert, and Alan had also mentioned that the June date might clash with a possible Yelvertoft Ladies Choir concert date.

However it has transpired that Sue and Michael have now decided to cancel their concert, citing scheduling difficulties with the musicians involved. The committee have since learned that Michael will no longer be attending St.Margaret's, and the committee were all deeply shocked and saddened to hear about this. Michael has contributed much to our church over all the years and will be greatly missed by many of our church members.

The proposed date for the Fiori concert next year is 21st May 2011, subject to confirmation.

Open day with Council for the Care of Churches

It now looks likely that the organ may be retuned to a different variation of mean-temperament in May 2011, it is therefore proposed that the Open Day in conjunction with the Council for the Care of Churches be arranged for sometime later on next year.

Meeting with David/Lorraine to choose hymns for next year

A meeting has been arranged with Lorraine and Nigel and David Lake to choose the hymns for the first Sundays in each month of next year.

As Nigel may not be available that day and as Martin is now regularly playing at those services each month, it would be preferable and more appropriate if Martin attended in place of Nigel. Martin will consider this request.

Music cupboards in the organ loft

Two new music cupboards have been installed in the organ loft for the storage of music.

Signalling for organ/vestry/main door

There is some outstanding work in the organ loft for the installation of signalling equipment for the organist from the vestry and main door area. The organ restoration electrician needs to be contacted for completing this work.

Any Other Business

None

Nigel Howard

26th October 2010