

## Church Elliot Organ Review Sub-Committee Year End Report 2011/12

### Members:

Nigel Howard (Chairman/Project Manager)  
Alan Leach  
Martin Jackson

### **Background**

The general state of the Elliot organ in the care of St. Margaret's Church had been deteriorating over a number of years before the end of the last century. In late 2004 a project was prepared for a full restoration of the instrument.

In June 2007 our church was awarded a generous grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to cover the bulk of the cost of a full restoration of the organ.

Goetze & Gwynn were awarded the contract to undertake the restoration, and the organ was finally dismantled and taken away to the factory in July 2008 and returned in time for the (first) inaugural concert in October 2009, an organ recital by Andrew Reid (Peterborough Cathedral organist).

### **Outstanding issues from last year 2010/2011**

The main issue identified last year is the instrument was tuned to mean-temperament (Bermondsey) during the restoration and there has been concern expressed that this will need to be re-tuned back to even-temperament later on this year, primarily to allow for the need to accompany other instruments. The Heritage Lottey Fund and Goetze & Gwynn have been consulted on the matter and have given approval to have the instrument re-tuned.

### **Organ rota and cover**

As in the previous year, Nigel and Martin have been providing most of the cover for playing the organ in our services during the last year. But there has been, and will be, a need for additional cover, from time to time.

### **Music lessons on the organ**

Over the last couple of years seven people 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 villages as far away as Thornby.

Martin and Alan auditioned a number of these candidates last year, in order to ascertain their suitability for ongoing tuition. There have since been a number of auditions and a small number of lessons given to date. After having had a quieter period this year, we now have one further applicant in the pipeline.

## **Special services and events over the last year**

Nigel and Martin arranged for our choir, along with members from local churches and villages, to sing at our traditional Lessons and Carols Service at Christmas time last year. Martin played on the organ and Nigel conducted at this event.

The Alan Shaw Concert was very well received this year and brought in about £600 (including tax relief), up from last year. This will be put aside towards future tuning and maintenance costs. Many thanks are again offered to those who organised and performed at this annual event.

As in previous years, organ recitals were arranged in Lent for most of the five Wednesdays in Lent after the Holy Communion services. A number of organists, pianists and singers were invited to play at these recitals.

## **Mean-temperament Tuning**

All the committee members have had misgivings about the current tuning of the organ which they considered were down to the fact that the organ has been tuned to Bermondsey mean-temperament during the 2009 restoration.

The committee has been in correspondence with Nicholas Thistlethwaite, David Knight from the Council for the Care of Churches and Dominic Gwynn from Goetze & Gwynn about the matter and our wish to have the organ retuned back to equal-temperament (i.e. as it was before the restoration). Nicholas and Dominic were both of the opinion that, for historical reasons, our instrument should be tuned to mean-temperament as this was the most appropriate for the late nineteenth century.

Nevertheless one of the other aims of this project was to get a practical organ that can be played in modern times for the foreseeable future. Those two aims were clearly seen as being in direct conflict.

Goetze & Gwynn (G&G) suggested to the committee that as there are a number of variations of mean-temperament, they would be prepared to undertake a retune of the instrument to a temperament much closer to equal-temperament, such as Young's temperament. The cost of this retune would be an additional £800 to the project with a similar amount being funded by G&G themselves, as they would incorporate the work into the first year's maintenance service. This was somewhat higher than the previous unconfirmed estimate of £500 given to HLF. We hope this increased amount will still be acceptable to HLF

The organ in St. John's College, Oxford is tuned to Young's temperament; a visit was arranged for Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February; Nigel and Alan attended and checked out the organ. Time was spent trying out various pieces of music modulating through various keys, including Db and F# in particular. What was noticeable was these two keys in particular were noticeable off tune slightly, but nothing like to the extent of the Bermondsey tuning of the Crick organ (i.e. on a scale of 0-100, about 30).

Using the observations from the visit, the committee recommended proceeding with retuning the instrument to Young's temperament. The Heritage Lottery Fund and Goetze & Gwynn were consulted on the matter and have given approval to have the instrument re-tuned. It was planned that the organ would be retuned to Young's temperament in May 2012, but we have just been informed by G&G that this exercise will have to be delayed until the plastic cover can be removed – see next item.

### **Church building tower and windows restoration project**

The tuning has been delayed owing to the recent church restoration work (tower and windows). A plastic sheet cover was erected over the organ to protect it from dust. In January 2012 we were informed that the contractor has gone into receivership, and fresh negotiations are underway to pick the outstanding work. Once this has been accomplished, the plastic covering will be removed.

### **Fiori Musicali concert on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 with Andrew Reid**

A second inaugural concert, to celebrate the retuning of the instrument, was held in our church on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 with the Fiori Musicali choir, some singers from Crick, and Andrew Reid, from Peterborough Cathedral, playing the organ. Another, similar, concert is being arranged for the coming year.

### **Organ Restoration Web site**

For those of you with internet access, the St. Margaret's Organ Restoration web-site for up-to-date information can be found at the following link:

<http://www.crick.org.uk/crickorgan>

Nigel Howard

4<sup>th</sup> April 2012