

Church Elliot Organ Review Sub-Committee Year End Report 2012/13

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).

The main issue outstanding is that the instrument was tuned to mean-temperament (Bermondsey) during the restoration and there has since been concern expressed that the sound is not pleasing to the modern ear when played in certain keys, and that accompanying other instruments would be difficult. The Heritage Lottey Fund and Goetze & Gwynn were consulted on the matter and have given the approval that the instrument can be re-tuned to Young's temperament, a mean-temperament much closer to even-temperament.

But because of repair work starting up on a separate restoration of the church building and tower, over the last couple of years, the organ has had to be covered to protect it against dust, and as a result the final re-tuning exercise has had to be delayed until the warmer weather in May of this year.

Organ rota and cover

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

Music lessons on the organ

No further progress has been made on promoting these subsidised music lessons during this last year, efforts being more directed towards other organ related events and helping along the church and building restoration project.

Special Services and events

Christmas Carol Service 2012

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 numbers attending and donations received last year exceeded expectations and it is hoped to be able to arrange another similar service at the end of this year.

The Alan Shaw Memorial concerts

As you may be aware, these concerts were set up in 1978 as a memorial tribute to Alan Shaw our organist of many years. Their son, Bryan was Head of Instrumental Studies at Leicester Grammar School and has organised pupils to play at memorial concerts in our church during March every year.

Bryan was diagnosed with lung cancer, operated on, leading to his early retirement. So after 22 years in 2012, we have finally arrived at a natural ending to these concerts. We give thanks to Bryan, all those teachers and pupils and others who gave their support over the many years.

Fiori Musicali concert

A Fiori Musicali concert titled Faure's Requiem was held in our church on 20th October 2012 with the Fiori Musicali choir, and James Parsons, from Oundle School, playing the organ.

The repertoire was unashamedly 19th-century, focussing on the 1870s when Fauré first composed his Requiem, not for huge orchestra, but originally for strings, chorus, soloist and organ. The programme was as follows:

Stanford *Te Deum in B flat* (choir + organ)
an organ piece
Stanford *Jubilate in B flat* (choir + organ)
Fauré *Cantique de Jean Racine* – (strings + choir)
Bloch *Jewish Prayer* (arr for solo cello and strings)
Stanford *Justorum animae* (choir)
Henri Mulet *Carillon-Sortie* (organ solo)
interval

Fauré *Requiem* (tutti)

Lent Organ Recitals

Organ recitals were arranged in Lent for the Wednesdays in Lent after the Holy Communion services. A number of organists, pianists and singers were invited to play at these recitals as last year.

Coventry Organists Association

This year we were able to arrange an organists' open day for the Coventry Organists Association to visit our church for another open day. This brings the total visits to three since the recent restoration (previously Northamptonshire and Leicestershire).

Retuning the organ to Young's temperament

As mentioned earlier because of repair work starting up on a separate restoration of the church building and tower, over the last couple of years, the organ has had to be covered to protect it against dust. At long last the cover has been removed after the completion of the first phase of the church and tower restoration. It is hoped to agree a date in May of this year for the re-tuning exercise.

Organ restoration project completion

After the retuning exercise has been completed we should be ready to schedule our final project closedown meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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

9th April 2013