

## Church Organ Review Sub-Committee Update Summary February 2011

Members:

Martin Jackson  
Alan Leach  
Nigel Howard

A meeting was convened at 10.00am on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011 at the home of Nigel Howard to review progress made since our last formal meeting in October 2010.

### **Maintenance visit requested before 16<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

During the last few weeks there have been a number of problems encountered with the organ (i.e. a number of sticking notes on the Swell and Great along with a cypher on the top E pedal note). Goetze & Gwynn were duly notified about these problems. But shortly afterwards it was clear that these had become so serious that immediate action was called for.

Nigel investigated and found that the wire that ran from the top E pedal back to a joint and then up into a sound box had become very sticky. Careful massaging of the wire that ran vertically up into the sound box did overcome the cyphering (at least for the time being). Also the sticking keys on the Great and Swell were cured (at least temporarily) by lifting up the trackers, cleaning them and putting them back again.

Meanwhile John Winn had contacted Nigel to ask whether any tuning or maintenance needed to be done before the Alan Shaw concert on 18<sup>th</sup> March. Nigel confirmed that he would be contacting G&G shortly because there were a number of points that needed addressing anyway, and that the committee would be asking for a maintenance visit from G&G before the concert.

Nigel contacted Dominic (G&G) to follow up the letter and update them on the remedial action that he had taken to temporarily solve the most urgent problems. The committee needed to get confirmation that our remedial action would not invalidate any maintenance agreement we have with G&G. Dominic did assure Nigel that this was OK as far as they were concerned.

Dominic agreed to get back to the committee however to confirm exactly when he and Martin (G&G) could make a visit to Crick to fully check out any outstanding (and temporarily fixed) problems and before 16<sup>th</sup> March (the date of the first organ recital in Lent).

### **Organ Recitals during Lent this year**

David Lake wants to put on a series of organ recitals during lunch after Holy Communion on Wednesdays in Lent, and has asked whether we could provide organists on each of those Wednesdays. These recitals have been scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> March, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 6<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

Nigel has been in contact with a musician friend, Deborah Simmons, who has kindly agreed to play at one of the organ recital slots during Lent (on the 13<sup>th</sup> April). Deborah will need to visit our church beforehand in order to familiarise herself with the characteristics of our Elliot organ.

Martin and Nigel have volunteered to take up one recital each; Martin will confirm which one after checking his diary. David Lake will arrange organists for the remaining Wednesdays.

### **Fiori Village choir Mattins service**

Unfortunately this year Fiori Village Choir are not available to sing with us on the first Sunday Mattins service in October, as they did last year. We need to see whether they could sing at one of our other Mattins services, or if not, perhaps a BCP communion service, or an Evensong instead. Nigel will progress this.

### **Fiori Musicali concert with Andrew Reid**

Preliminary discussions had been held with Fiori Musicali with respect to arranging a concert in our church in May of this year with Andrew Reid, from Peterborough Cathedral, playing the organ.

Daventry District Council are organising a number of events during a special week in May to which they have invited Fiori Musicali to perform. Unfortunately, as the date clashes with the provisional date that we had in mind, we have had to postpone the concert in May. A new date in the latter half of October this year is under consideration by Andrew, Fiori and our church. Nigel will progress this.

### **Carol Service at St.Margaret's Church on 11<sup>th</sup> December**

The date and time of the Carol service at St. Margaret's, Crick for this year had been arranged for 6pm on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December (a week before the last Sunday before Christmas) in order not to clash with carol services at the other two churches in the Benefice on the following Sunday.

Martin indicated that the time of 6pm would clash with Sunday service times of Penhros choir members, so it will not be possible for Penhros choir members to sing in our carol service after all. Nevertheless, Martin did suggest that they might be amenable to sing in their own concert in our church during the following week. Martin will progress this.

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

As mentioned in the previous meeting, 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 as far away as Thornby.

Martin and Alan have auditioned a number of these candidates in order to ascertain their suitability for ongoing tuition. The current progress status on each of the

candidates has been recorded in the detailed minutes. Generally speaking there have been a number of auditions and a small number of lessons given to date. This remains an ongoing activity.

At the moment there are not too many applicants for Martin to be able audition and tutor single-handedly, so it will not be necessary to sub-contract to other local organ tutors to assist in this work. Nigel has located a local tutor based in Lutterworth, should the need arise at some time in the future.

### **Mean-temperament Tuning**

As mentioned in previous minutes 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 mean-temperament during the 2009 restoration.

The committee had 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 is 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.

Information was obtained from Goetze & Gwynn documentation about Bermondsey tuning as well as from articles about *mean tuning*, and Young's tuning in particular, and this is reproduced here for comparison purposes only. Each octave is divided into 1200 units defined as cents and the table shows each of the settings for equal temperament, along with Bermondsey and Young's mean-tuning temperaments.

Note	Equal	Bermondsey	Young's
C	0	0	0
C#	100	86	94
D	200	195	196
E <sup>b</sup>	300	300	298
E	400	390	392
F	500	502	500
F#	600	586	592
G	700	698	698
A <sup>b</sup>	800	788	796
A	900	893	894
B <sup>b</sup>	1000	1002	1000
B	1100	1088	1092
C	1200	1200	1200

Martin and Dominic (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 is 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 happens to be tuned to Young's temperament; a visit was arranged for Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February; Alan and Nigel attended and checked out the organ. Unfortunately the organ scholar Richard Moore was still recovering from flu and could not attend after all, but the 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). This subject view was reinforced by the observed figures in the above table that illustrate how much closer Young's temperament is to equal temperament than is Bermondsey.

Using the observations from the visit, the committee looked at all the evidence and explored all three options for moving forward:

1. Leave the organ as it is tuned to Bermondsey temperament and work around or avoid any of the bad sounds that can occur in playing music written for some keys.
2. Continue to argue the case for retuning the instrument back to equal temperament, as it was before the restoration.
3. Agree to proceed with retuning the instrument to Young's temperament, as at the very least, a step in the right direction.

Option 1 was not favoured by any of the committee members as the current state is not satisfactory for a number of reasons as discussed in previous minutes.

Option 2 would have ideal from the point of view of the committee, but not as far as Nicholas and G&G are concerned, and will therefore involve further prolonged discussions and arguments with the eventual outcome still in doubt.

Option 3 would be a positive move in the right direction, albeit not quite to the full extent. Nevertheless a move to equal temperament might still be considered at a later date, if it was shown that the tuning turns out not to be good enough for our general use.

The committee agreed unanimously to proceed with Option 3.

### **Any Other Business**

None

Nigel Howard

26<sup>th</sup> February 2011