

Press Release

HERITAGE HANDOUT PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS FOR ORGAN RESTORATION

Those Northamptonshire brides of the future who are to be married at Crick Parish Church can look forward to walking up the aisle to the much-improved stately sounds of the wedding march, thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) award which will restore the organ and help some budding young organists to be trained as part of a larger restoration plan.

The traditional skill of organ playing is in short supply, but the recent £184,000 award to St Margaret of Antioch Church in the small village of Crick will see local talented musicians receive free organ lessons to encourage them to take up the instrument.

The bulk of the funds will be used to restore the nationally significant Thomas Elliot-built organ which is in urgent need of repair. The organ has a fascinating history, having first been built in 1819 by Elliot for the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace. However it was actually condemned in 1834 by one of Elliot's critics, who described it as "being extremely harsh and unmusical" and "a source of unceasing annoyance to the choir and organists."

The sound of the organ was improved by alterations and moved to Leamington Spa before being sent in 1841 via the Grand Union Canal to Crick, where it was presented by John Clarke, a blind organist who was born in the village.

HLF's Regional Manager Emma Sale said, "This organ is a wonderful survivor from its time and place. Thomas Elliot was one of the finest organ builders of his age, and this is a rare example to survive intact from the pre-Victorian age."

She added, "Talented musicians of all ages will have the opportunity to learn and play on this magnificent organ, hopefully going some way to reverse this dying art. The church plans to pull out all the stops to get more people inspired to play so we will still hear the unique sound resounding into the future."

Ex-Church warden Nigel Howard explained, "The organ is in urgent need of repair to bring it back to its 1841 standard. It's becoming more and more difficult for organists to play but this money will allow us to preserve the historic organ and make it a more playable instrument to the benefit of future generations of musicians and congregations.

We intend to arrange more musical concerts, and start subsidised music lessons using the restored organ. We will be actively encouraging children and adults with musical ability to listen to, and in some cases play in, these musical concerts. Our next musical concert is on Friday 20th July at 7.30pm in the church - no charge for admission"

Notes to editors The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since its conception, HLF has supported 22,500 projects allocating over £3.6 billion across the UK.

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