



WILLIS PIPEORGAN FESTIVAL

PRESS RELEASE

From Joe Laredo, Publicity Officer, Willis Pipe Organ Festival events@musicforallsmg.org

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Find out how a pipe organ works!

Pipe Organ Restoration Open Day, Saturday 12th September 2015, St Mary and St Giles Church, Stony Stratford

This event provides a unique opportunity to see inside a magnificent Willis pipe organ and find out how it works before its restoration is completed.

Blow your own organ pipe, learn the difference between flue pipes and reed pipes and find out how they make their sounds when keys are pressed on the manuals.

There are activities for children, an exhibition on the history of the organ, a gallery of restoration photos and talks on the 18-month restoration project, and the restorers themselves will be on hand to answer your questions and explain what has been done and what is left to do.

Climb up to the gallery and inspect the 1,900 pipes, 'sound chests' and 'sliders' that need to be reassembled in time for the Celebration Concert.

The Open Day takes place on Saturday 12th September from 10:00am to 3:30pm as part of National Heritage Open Days weekend.

The organ restorers, F. H. Browne & Sons and members of the Music for All @ SMSG volunteer team will be on hand throughout the day to explain and demonstrate the workings of the organ, which was first built in 1882 by the famous Victorian organ builder 'Father' Willis for the church of St George's, Charlotte Square, in Edinburgh and extended and improved over the following fifty years by the next three generations of the Willis organ building family.

Tea/coffee and homemade cake will be on sale throughout the day, with a soup and roll lunch available in the Parish Hall from 12 noon to 1:30 pm.

Activities for Children and Adults

There'll be plenty for children to do with a special activities corner and a history timeline to study and help complete. A history exhibition will tell the tale of how the organ came to Stony Stratford almost fifty years ago, and a gallery of restoration photos will reveal the work that has taken place to restore the instrument and add new features that were planned but never built in the 1930s. At 11:00 am and 2:30 pm there will be a half-hour illustrated talk about the history and restoration of this lovely Willis Pipe Organ by Anna Page, Organ Restoration Project Leader.

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Stony residents are invited to walk down memory lane with photos and records of the organ in the parish since 1967 and an open invitation to all to bring and share photos of special moments at St Mary and St Giles and in particular times when the organ has been in use.

The project has been funded by community fundraising and by a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has just £14,000 left to raise to complete all work on the organ and its new casework. There is the opportunity to sponsor a pipe to celebrate a special event or in memory person.

The church will also be open to welcome cyclists and walkers taking part in the annual Buckinghamshire Historic Churches Trust Ride & Stride event.

Stony Stratford Story Stroll, Sunday 13th September 2015

Relive the colourful history of Stony Stratford in stories and poetry.

On Sunday 13th September at 3:30pm the Music for All @ SMSG team are putting on a Stony Stratford Story Stroll - an hour's stroll around the town enlivened by tales both true and apocryphal, presented by professional storyteller Red Phoenix and poet Richard Frost.

This entertaining tour, which will appeal to people of all ages, begins and ends at St Mary and St Giles Church in the High Street, where tea/coffee and homemade cake will be available afterwards.

If you haven't already seen the church and organ, come along at 3:00 pm, when Anna Page, leader of the organ restoration project, will introduce you to the magnificent Willis Pipe Organ and this lovely Grade 2* listed building.

The Story Stroll is free but booking essential as places limited to 30. Book your place in advance online at www.musicforallsmg.org, at the Open Day or at the door on the day.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

About St Mary and St Giles Church and Music for All @SMSG

The Church of St Mary & St Giles exists to worship Almighty God and to serve the people of the Parish and further afield, whether they worship or not. See <http://parishstonystratfordcalverton.com>. Music for all @SMSG is an increasingly important part of the church's regular activities, being one of the ways in which it serves the wider community.

Music for All @ SMSG promotes access to a wide range of music performed by a broad range of talent, with an emphasis on performance opportunities for young, developing and local musicians.

Founded in 2006 and originally called the Pipe Organ Restoration Action Group, the group has run over 200 events and raised over £90,000 towards the organ restoration, with widespread support from the local and music communities in Milton Keynes and beyond.

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Other local musical groups are also encouraged to make use of the church because of its good acoustic and lovely setting. For more information see www.musicforallsmg.org.

Music for All @ SMSG's Willis Pipe Organ Restoration & Reach-out Project is led by volunteers from the local community. The project runs from April 2014 to March 2017. It focuses on restoring the three-manual Willis Pipe Organ, researching and interpreting its history, producing audio-visual, print and online learning resources to enable exploration of the organ and its history, creating and delivering a 12-month Education Programme, recruiting and training volunteer organ guides, and delivering a Community Music Programme using the organ from April 2016. A generous Heritage Lottery Fund grant has funded the education and outreach activities of the project and enabled the commissioning of the work on the organ. For more information see www.musicforallsmg.org.

For further information, images and interviews, please contact Joe Laredo, Publicity Officer
events@musicforallsmg.org.

Anna Page, Music for All @SMSG HLF Project Leader is available for interviews by arrangement:
anna@johnpage.co.uk.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, HLF invests in every part of the UK's diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.3bn across the UK. For more information, visit www.hlf.org.uk.

About Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days celebrate England's fantastic architecture and culture by offering free access to places that are usually closed to the public or normally charge for admission. Every year on four days in September, buildings of every age, style and function throw open their doors. It is a once-a-year chance to discover architectural treasures and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities that bring local history and culture to life. See more at www.heritageopendays.org.uk.

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Photos (plus captions and credits)



Photo 1: L-R: Young Organist Jacob Collins, Project leader Anna Page, Events leader David Scrutton, Volunteer Dave King and Organ builder apprentice Richard Goldup of FH Browne & Sons hold a pipe from the Willis organ at SMSG (photo: John Page)

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Photo 2: Steve and Sam of FH Browne & Sons dismantling the Willis organ in July 2014(Photo: Anna Page)



Photo 3: Sam of FH Browne & Sons showing young children the organ pipes in September 2014(Photo: Anna Page)



Photo 4: Blowing a pipe at the September 2014 organ open day helped by Steve Bayley of FH Browne & Sons(Photo: Anna Page)

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Photo 5: St Mary and St Giles school pupil aged 8 standing on the Great soundboard at the organ open morning June 2015 with Steve Bayley of FH Browne & Sons(Photo: Anna Page)

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