



HLF OH-12-12352
St Mary & St Giles Stony Stratford
Willis Pipe Organ Restoration and Reach-out project

Quarterly evaluation report for Q10 Jul-Sep 2016

Project overview

Date/ Project element	Jul- Sep 2016	Oct- Dec 2016	Jan- Mar 2017
1. Restore organ& trial	Done		
2. Research & record organ history	Done		
3. Produce learning resources incl DCD			
4. Train volunteer guides			
5. Community Music Programme + organ			
6. Education/Visits Programme			
PLUS Fundraising for non-heritage items			

Below we report against each of the active strands of the project on the amended schedule reported last quarter (approved timescale extensions shown in blue).

Element 1. Restore organ

Our international organ soloists at the Festival were impressed by the restored Willis organ:

“A super restoration -- impressive presence and a wonderful blaze of sound.” (Roger Sayer)

“Fabulous! The jewel in the crown of the church and of Stony Stratford.” (Donald MacKenzie)

Feedback from Festival audiences was very positive for all events, for example:

"I liked the wide range of varied sounds coming from the organ, especially the imaginative choice of stops for the works of Duruflé, Vierne and Jongen" (Roger Sayer Classic Masterworks Recital, Organ Festival 2016)

"Fantastic - unbeatable. Not only does Jonathan Kingston play superbly, his introductions are a performance in their own right. He gives you something to listen for and notice in every piece." (Jonathan Kingston Recital, Organ Festival 2016)

"The introduction to the organ was fascinating, Jonathan made everything much clearer although the intricacies of the instrument seemed endless! A truly informative and enjoyable talk." (Get to know our Willis, Organ Festival 2016)

"I liked the fact that the children were allowed to play the organ" (Teddy Bears' Picnic, Organ Festival 2016)

Only small teething problems have so far come to light and these have been resolved by Browne's on visits prior to events.

A BIOS registration application is still in development by the team, with help from John Page on technical questions.

Element 2. Research & record organ history

This element is effectively now complete, although the research will be added to on an ongoing basis as new material comes to light. We have recorded our findings online at www.musicforallsmg.org/history

There was an unexpected opportunity at the end of September to complete the Kirk Sessions Records research as Anna was able to spend a day in the National Archives in Scotland when visiting Edinburgh for work purposes.

Element3. Produce learning resources including DVD

Learning resource development has been on hold while we prepared to launch our first major Festival.

Volunteers

9 new volunteers were recruited this quarter, including 6 specifically for the Festival. 'Live' volunteers number 97, and 22 came to an end-July coffee morning to catch up on news and hear about Festival plans. Almost half (46) were involved in the Festival, undertaking 124 contributions to events in varying roles, and of these about half (22) were able to attend the Festival Review coffee morning, which brought lively debate about what had worked well and what we should improve next time.

Offering the opportunity to socialise over refreshments every 3-4 months seems to be a good way to cement commitment and encourage involvement as well as keep everyone updated.

We are beginning to acquire volunteers who are friends of established volunteers, whom they know from other circles - this is very pleasing!

We have had occasions where others at events, not planned volunteers, have offered to help on a one off basis because they have been at an event and wanted to help. There is much goodwill from audiences and many see a way in which they can help (especially clearing up after an event) and have done so without being asked.

Publicity

We experimented for the Festival with a wide range of media: advertising, posters/banners, flyers, social media, press releases. Analysis of online ticket buyers suggests that the media with most impact are: flyers 33%, followed by word of mouth 25%, other (possibly our emailings 17% and posters 10%. Advertising, press and social media only accounted for 5% of customers each).

Our online customer database shows that Stony Stratford accounts for 26% of customers, other MK city postcodes 30%, other MK postcodes (eg Bedford) 24%, Northampton 13% and further afield (eg Luton, St Albans) 8%. Tickets were mostly booked ahead for priced events, and it can be assumed that tickets bought on the door were more local to Stony Stratford. However, clearly online ticketing allows us to extend our reach well beyond the local patch and we are beginning to establish an audience within our planned 35-mile radius.

Project management

Project management The Project Team met once in September.

Risk register Many risks have now been zeroed as no longer relevant; 5 are in green 'keep an eye', 2 are in amber to make sure we actively complete on them (volunteer guides) and only 3 are red, but these do require attention to make our work sustainable: Lack of leaders and deputies, need to fundraise to pay for budget over runs, and the need for a long term vision and plan for MfA as the HLF project draws to a close.

Quarterly account The bulk of the project spend is now complete, with relatively small amounts still to be spent on publicity and materials and planned education and community music events in the final nine months.

Fundraising this quarter: £4,830 was raised this quarter, with major contributions to this total coming from the Festival (net £1,553) and advance sales for our popular November Come & Sing day.

Lessons learnt Key lessons learnt this quarter are:

- Advertising doesn't pay! But leafleting probably does.
- We need to make offers to different audiences stand out more clearly.
- Online ticketing is key to drawing in audiences from the full 35 mile radius.
- Volunteers enjoy attending optional **update and review socials** - **we need to keep these going**
- Our organ and venue does draw world class organists - all of whom are very complimentary
- Our first organ festival with the restored organ has taught us all so much and given us greater confidence for the future of MfA - it was our biggest 'team effort' so far and has brought many on the periphery of the volunteer group much closer together.
- Events advertised for 'families' really do need to be very child friendly in every respect, especially the music.
- It's harder than we thought to build large audiences for quality organ recitals; we need to give more thought and attention to this
- We need to book the dates in the church diary well in advance for the organ festival to avoid the possibility of a wedding booking during that weekend making the chair turning more complicated than necessary.

Events Programme (with organ) this quarter

We branded events from 23 April to 02 July under a restoration celebration banner, to help launch the restored organ to as wide a community as possible. The season ended with a bang with MK Sinfonia performing Poulenc Organ Concerto and Saint Saens Organ Symphony to a packed church. In August we held a Summer afternoon organ recital and the Third Thursday lunchtime music in August was also an organ concert.

Strand 1: SMSG Programme

We ran 5 of our own events: 3 'Third Thursday' drop ins, our ever-popular Bank Holiday Cream Teas Concert, and the first in an experimental series of family organ concerts. This had low attendance and we need to review timing and programming to see if we can boost audiences.

In the September TT@TT, the SMSG School Orchestra sat amongst Church Band and played to them and with them - a wonderful 'apprentice' experience and a joy for the adults in the audience and Band.

Strand 2: Use of venue by others

Four events were run by others in this period, raising valuable funds for MfA and in one case also for a music teaching charity.

Strand 3: Festival

We ran a very intensive but successful weekend led by Festival Director Jonathan Kingston, meeting our HLF target audiences of 800, and sharing a wide range of organ music with very positive overall feedback. Detailed festival feedback and results are documented elsewhere.

As part of the Festival, held on Heritage Open Days weekend, we mounted a small 'Stony Heritage' exhibition which was well received but requires more publicity in future.

Perhaps the most moving piece of feedback was from our final recitalist, Roger Sayer, who said afterwards:

"What you have here is very special - and I don't mean the organ. The people in this place are so welcoming, friendly, caring and considerate. You can feel it as you enter - and that is a rarity. Thank you so much."

Jonathan Kingston, the Festival Director, said that the number of people here who help, either newcomers for this weekend or over the last ten years, is astounding and he gives us hearty congratulations. He thoroughly enjoyed being part of this weekend.

One wonderful and unexpected result of the Festival was that he subsequently applied for the post of Director of Music at SMSG and has been appointed to that role from September 2017, which will help to secure the long term future of MfA.

Strand 5: Outreach

Church Band played at the local Calverton Fete on 4 September ("Last year was excellent but this year was even better"!))

SMSG Church Handbell Ringers played at a day centre for the partially sighted - one of the audience had heard about our restored organ from a friend!

The Handbell Ringers also learnt 'Toreador's Song', filmed and uploaded it to the BBC for the Virtual Orchestra at the Last Night of the Proms on 10th September!

At the end of the summer term, our Church School invited the residents of our 3 Stony Stratford sheltered housing schemes to lunch in the school dining room. They were served by Year 6 pupils and were then guests at the afternoon music concert given by 60 children from all year groups, who play instruments. The School Choir, Orchestra and Handbell Ringing Team also performed.

Fegans Music Group visited our Parish hall to put on a music concert of singing and Belleplate ringing at the end of September for their neighbours (in Fegans Court, a sheltered housing complex in Stony Stratford), families and friends. We go to their community room on a Monday afternoon for periods throughout the year to help with their singing and ringing. Their community room is very small and so they like to come to the Parish Hall on occasions to allow more guests to be invited.

Visits and learners programme

No schools or group visits took place in this period, but schools were invited to the Friday lunchtime organ recital in the Festival and 60 pupils from SMSG Junior School attended with 5 members of staff and clearly from their feedback enjoyed it)

“I loved the organ and liked the Louis Vierne the best, sometimes so loud, sometimes low that it made me feel like I was in a new world.”

“The music was amazing and I would listen to it all day! The music made me feel happy, but at some points sad. My favourite piece was the last one.”

“I thought the music was wonderful. My favourite piece was the Toccata. I would definitely come again.”

30 organ learner/practice sessions and 3 organ lessons took place this quarter. The building was also used for 3 sessions of clarinet practice by a university student.

Three more bookings for visits were made in the period, from our advertising the Festival, for visits to take place in October and November.

Events and Visits programmes - data for HLF report

Events results	Jul-Sep 2016	Total in HLF project
Total Music for all @ SMSG events	21	145
Performers involved	123	2779
(of which were school age - since October 2014)	8	491
Audience attendance	1216	8559
(of which were school age)	129	753
Helper attendance at events	181	707
Total people engaged	1520	12,045
Footfall (info for Stony businesses): monthly ave	506	366
New email mailing list addresses	39	187
Total net funds raised for non-heritage work	£4830	£52,692
Net funds raised for church restoration/other gps £	£120	£4,187
Volunteers recruited in addition to pre-existing 38	11	55
Social media: @SMSG_Organ: Twitter followers/Tweets sent to date	70 tweets, 50 new followers	2446 following, 472 tweets, 639 followers
School Visits this quarter	1	15
School pupils and teachers involved	26	360

Case studies and event comments

July: Milton Keynes Sinfonia

The first ever orchestral concert with the Willis pipe organ involved a 60 piece orchestra (Milton Keynes Sinfonia - a mixture of excellent amateur and professional musicians), a lot of furniture moving, plenty of rehearsal and a lot of planning. It was well worth all the effort and provided a very memorable concert which was a fitting way to end the 10 weeks of restoration celebration events. Our experience of organising and briefing teams of volunteers meant that each person who helped beforehand or on the day knew what they needed to do and did it very well which was particularly important in a concert involving so many performers and a large audience. Quite apart from the joy of hearing such iconic works for pipe organ and orchestra performed so well in our local parish church, the feedback received about the pull up banners detailing the organ, history of organs and Henry Willis and the organisation of the event was very positive. Feedback comments about the concert included: "Spectacular", "So good to hear the organ", "Sinfonia top notch" and "Wonderful concert last night, I'm still buzzing about the buzz of it all, quite apart from the music".

August: Organ TT@TT

The Third Thursday at Twelve Thirty Concert in August was an organ concert by Shanna Hart. Good publicity provided by lots of posters outside the church and the time of day during the week proved to be a winning combination as the audience included a lot of people who dropped in unexpectedly as well as the regular supporters of these lunchtime concerts and enjoyed 45 minutes of organ music. In addition, the programme of music chosen by Shanna provided the audience with a good impression of the diversity of sounds the organ can produce. The concert required few volunteers as the formula for front of house is one refreshment location with a couple of people serving and one or two people to welcome the audience.

September: The Organ Festival

The Organ Festival provided the stand out events in September with many memorable highlights over the 4 days, with events catering for all ages. The Festival involved a lot of volunteer help, months of meticulous planning, an extended publicity period which started 3 months before the festival, liaison with the organists regarding programmes, rehearsal times and concert arrangements, plenty of chair turning so the audience could face the organ (especially as a wedding on the Saturday meant that the church had to be returned to normal layout after the Friday night recital then put back to concert layout for the Saturday evening Silent Movie with organ then returned to normal layout for Sunday morning). The Festival took place over the National Heritage Open Days weekend so the free day time events were all publicised on the HOD website. The opening lunchtime recital by our young home grown talent Jacob was very well attended with 60 children from St Mary & St Giles School seeing the inspiring possibilities of organ music being played by a person not much older than themselves. A percussion workshop for pre-school aged children was held in the school because of the wedding. Opportunities for anyone to play the organ included the Beginners Guide workshop, the Teddy Bears' Picnic and Hands on our Willis organ. The Get to know our Willis talk proved illuminating for those who had never thought about how a pipe organ works. The three evening concerts provided an excellent range of organ music, with Friday night organ pops, Saturday night Silent Movie and Sunday night Classic Masterworks.

The quarter in pictures



Shanna Hart wows the lunchtime crowd at the August Third Thursday at Twelve Thirty concert



Children try the organ at the Teddy Bears' Picnic during the Organ Festival weekend



Donald Mackenzie gave an outstanding accompaniment performance for the Silent Movie 'Safety Last' which was immensely popular at the Organ Festival weekend.