



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

Quarterly evaluation report for Q9Apr-Jun 2016

Project overview

Date/ Project element	Apr- Jun 2016	Jul- Sep 2016	Oct- Dec 2016	Jan- Mar 2017
1. Restore organ& trial	Done			
2. Research & record organ history				
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

Feedback from organists, performers and audience at the inaugural concerts on 23 and 30 April was very positive:

"How wonderful to hear the organ with the brass (and percussion and choir) all playing at the same pitch." (23 April 2016 concert)

"Magnificent Widor which I remember listening to regularly on an LP which my brother bought many years ago - Marcel Dupre at St Sulpice. Lovely to hear all the different colours." (23 April 2016 concert)

"The restoration has given the instrument back its vigour, its life. It is very exciting to play and the new stops complete the tonal palette beautifully. It's absolutely first class." (Jonathan Kingston, recitalist 30 April 2016)

The words 'awesome', 'magnificent', and 'wonderful' were just some of the descriptions of the evening - and so it was! (30 April 2016 concert)

On Sunday, 1st May the Bishop of Ebbsfleet blessed the restored organ at morning Mass, 9.30am. 120 people were in the congregation; the Parish Singers sang the Psalm and Anthem for the occasion and two organists (John Neal and Jacob Collins) played. Fr Ross asked for the banners to be left up from the concert for the blessing at this service.

BIOS registration is still under investigation by the team, with help from John Page on technical questions.

Element 2. Research & record organ history

Very little research was carried out during this period, however the website was updated with information which has been discovered during research. A small amount of follow up research will be carried out later in the year.

Element 3. Produce learning resources including DVD

The five new banners and DVD were launched at a volunteer coffee morning in April, to great interest. Learning resource development is now on hold for six months while we roll out the Restoration Celebration and Festival programmes.

Volunteers

Some people who have performed in the past have now become volunteers.

Thanking volunteers at an event just for them (for example when showing them the DVD first) is appreciated and helps to draw more people in as volunteers for future events.

Our volunteer family has been swelled by some who usually attend All Saints Church in the parish at Calverton, and certainly having SMSG Church Band playing regularly there has made the musical link stronger and a chance to communicate face to face.

Volunteers inviting their friends to join in has had a significant, favourable impact on the numbers in our volunteer teams. We have been able to train new people and to make them feel at home and valued, as well as encouraging them to come and hear some great music!

The 'wow' factor of hearing the restored organ has fired up enthusiasm again for being part of what we can offer.

Publicity

We are getting positive feedback on the new design of monthly e-news.

We undertook a review of online ticketing services and chose to switch from Eventbrite to Little Box Office plus a Stripe account for card purchases, in order to minimise booking costs and provide an easy online experience. We investigated the possibility of a telephone service for booking via The Stable, but are waiting to see whether this option is needed (it will add costs for purchasers).

Lesley Salter went to the AGM of Stony Stratford Business Association and renewed MfA membership for this coming year. She received comments that our music programme is supportive of Stony businesses, that we are a good presence in the High Street. It was particularly liked that we offered drop in events and showcased a great variety of musicians at all stages of musical development and styles.

Project management

Project management The Project Team met once in May.

Risk register Informally reviewed. Now the organ is back in such fine form there is a clear impetus to volunteer recruitment and engagement, with more people taking part and fundraising highly energetic as we seek to complete fundraising for the organ work overspend and if possible all the non-heritage elements by the end of the project.

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: £4,257 was raised this quarter, with a major contribution to this total coming from our inaugural organ events to celebrate the restoration.

Lessons learnt Key lessons learnt this quarter are:

- The DVD has had a big impact in terms of raising knowledge and appreciation of the restoration among volunteers and general public alike.
- The acquisition of a small team willing and able to turn the church chairs through 90 degrees for organ concerts has been momentous.
- The children so enjoy being able to have a go on the piano and the Belleplates - 'hands on' is definitely a winner.
- Being able to see inside or get inside the organ has a 'wow' factor.
- We have had children aged 4 to 14 years on visits now and the same basic formula, obviously adjusted to age and understanding, has worked every time.
- We need to train up some other presenters for visits, to avoid one person running two activities.
- That success breeds renewed enthusiasm and has captured the interest of newer members and reinvigorated the long-standing volunteers!
- Gaining significant advanced bookings, even with online facilities, is a struggle.
- However, online booking definitely brings in people from the wider 30 mile radius that we cannot reach by local publicity and word of mouth along.

Events Programme (with organ) this quarter

We branded events from 23 April to 02 July under a restoration banner, to help launch the restored organ to as wide a community as possible.

Strand 1: SMSG Programme

We ran 8 events in Strand 1: 3 'Third Thursday' drop ins, 2 organ recitals - our 'Organ Spectacular' opening celebration concert and a family recital, and 3 free fundraising events for church restoration as part of 'Stony Live' music celebrations.

Strand 2: Use of venue by others

Three events were offered by others within our programme, including the OU choir's restoration celebration concert with a wonderful programme that spanned the life and times of our Willis organ.

We have evolved a two-option tariff system and a target of 12 concerts by others under this system, to help us ensure that every year Music for All @ SMSG is able to raise our target £3000 to ensure future maintenance of the organ.

Strand 5: Outreach

SMSG Church Handbell Ringers and SMSG Church Band were both invited to play at Northampton Music Appreciation Society during this quarter. We were given a great welcome and votes of thanks and a total of £70 for the Organ Fund.

The relationship between the SMSG School choir and Fegans Music Group continues and on Monday 27 June the choirs sang to each other and with each other. One Year 5 clarinetist played and then played again while everyone sang along. This involved 20 Fegans folk, 35 children in choir + 2 teachers.

Schools/visits/learners programme

Friday, 15th April saw our first secondary school visit. 16 Year 9 students, 1 Music Teachers and 2 TAs from The Radcliffe School. They were so delighted that they have booked for Year 10 to come in June.

Thursday, 12th May 6.15-7.15pm saw a visit from Towcester American Beavers for 15 6-8 year olds and 5 adults. There were one or two older and younger siblings in the party too. We started by singing 'Kumbaya' together, as it was a song known to all of the children, accompanied on the piano. The group was halved and then worked around our 4 core activities and joined in them all with great enthusiasm. Even a four year old could play very successfully on the Belleplates - and sing at the same time! Feedback from leader: "The children just didn't stop talking about their visit. They enjoyed it all and said it was the best trip they had been on, even better than archery or rock climbing."

Queen Eleanor Primary School has started a Boomwhacker Club and over the summer term have been practising 'Boomwhacker bagatelle', whilst SMSG Junior School Orchestra has been learning the orchestral part. After one rehearsal together it was performed at the June TT@TT, with great success!

Monday, 11th April saw our first request from a learner to use organ for practice; he has booked a regular hour slot on Monday mornings. He was delighted and said it is a splendid instrument. He is giving a gift-aided donation to the organ fund for each practice. Second practice slot filled this day also.

From April to June the organ has been used for 11 learner one-hour practice slots, 2 one-hour lessons, and 9 rehearsal sessions (sometimes as long as 3 hours) by organists for upcoming performances.

Events and Visits programmes - data for HLF report

Events results	Apr - Jun 2016	Total in HLF project
Total Music for all @ SMSG events	11	124
Performers involved	325	2656
(of which were school age - since October 2014)	140	483
Audience attendance	930	7343
(of which were school age)	75	624
Helper attendance at events	93	526
Total people engaged	1348	10,525
Footfall (info for Stony businesses): monthly ave	310	307
New email mailing list addresses	15	148
Total net funds raised for non-heritage work	£4,257	£47,862
Net funds raised for church restoration/other gps £	£897	£4,067
Volunteers recruited in addition to pre-existing 38	11	55
Social media: @SMSG_Organ: Twitter followers/Tweets sent to date		2262 following, 402 tweets, 565 followers
School Visits this quarter	4	15
School pupils and teachers involved	107	360

Case studies and event comments

23 April 2016: First Restoration Celebration concert by the Open University Choir

The Open University choir returned to sing with the restored organ, six years after it sang to help raise funds. The choir was placed just in front of the gallery and all the chairs turned so the organ was just behind the choir, which worked very well; the concert involved brass and percussion too.

Programming resulted from the research work into the history of the organ. The conductor chose a distinctively Scottish programme focusing on music which would have been familiar to the congregation of St George's Church in Edinburgh, along with music associated with The Open University (by John Rutter, Liz Lane and Bill Strang). It was a complex concert to arrange and stage, but it was a huge success with a wonderful celebratory atmosphere.

08 June: Taking part in StonyLive! with the restored organ

Playing our part in local festivals, and working with our local school, is an important part of what we do as Music for All @ SMSG. On 08 June the SMSG Handbell Ringers gave a concert in the afternoon as part of the StonyLive! programme. An arrangement of the hymn tune 'Aurelia' was played with the organ for the first time. Jacob Collins was at the organ console for this premier performance. The concert also featured the SMSG Junior School Handbell Ringing Team.

12 June 2016: Flower festival for the Queen

We started with the organ and band playing together, for only the second time ever, as it was never possible for band to play with the organ before it was tuned to concert pitch as part of the restoration. It was very moving to play *God Save the Queen* with the organ as it gave a really strong bass to the band sound. We chose not to announce every piece as this was a 'drop in' style concert, with people moving around looking at the flowers all the time, however we announced *Highland Cathedral* which we had chosen to arrange as an organ and band piece for this concert as the Queen loves the Scottish highlands. This was a good example of us using the organ for something we could not do before its restoration and a great opportunity for a young musician to extend their music arranging skills for band and organ.

The quarter in pictures



23 April coffee morning for volunteers with the new banners



23 April Inaugural Choral concert with The Open University Choir, Willis organ, brass and percussion.



8 and 12 June 2016 SMSG church band and the Willis organ - first performance in Stony Stratford of *Highland Cathedral* (band and organ) with Jacob Collins at the console. 12 June concert done as part of the celebrations of the Queen's 90th birthday. (photo from 12 June event)
