

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH SHALFORD

Restoration of the Church organ

Work began on restoration of the organ at Shalford Church on Sunday 26th June 2016 and will continue for about 12 weeks. All 745 pipes will be removed from the organ chamber and reshaped as necessary with some of the work being undertaken at the Church and the remainder in the contractor's workshop. The cost is in the order of £11,600



Background

Back in the 1860s the congregation at St Andrew's church would probably have sung hymns to the tune of a barrel organ. At some time during that decade it was decided to install a pipe organ. Between 1871-72 restoration work was undertaken by CC Rolfe and as part of

the works the North Vestry and organ chamber were added but it was some years before the organ installation took place, no doubt for the time honoured reason of lack of finance.

However, the Marriott family of Abbots Hall generously rescued the situation by meeting the cost. The instrument installed at that time continues to serve the community in much the same state as it was then. It is considered to be of significance to the national heritage.

The organ was built by the world renowned firm of Hill & Son in 1881. Shortly after this time there is a record of Tanner a local builder altering the organ seat and repairing the case. Why this should have been necessary is unclear. The Tanner firm now George Tanner continues to be based in Shalford

There are two manuals (keyboards) with provision for a third but no space for this in the chamber. The pipes visible from the outside known as "open diaposons" are often assumed to be the total number of pipes but in all there are 745. From the outset the organ's blower had to be powered by operation of a handle and in 1909 a presentation was made to Sarah Johnson for doing this for 30 years. 40 years later at a cost of £98 an electric blower made this task redundant no doubt to the delight of those who undertook it. The instrument is regularly tuned and as would be expected it has been restored on several occasions with every effort having been made to maintain the original character. Fortunately pipe organs need to be overhauled perhaps only once in a generation but by 2010, 35 years after the

last overhaul further work had become pressing. Once again the church found itself without the necessary finance and the project was put on hold until 2013 when it was decided to explore the possibility of raising the required funds by application to grant making trusts and by seeking support from FOSTAC the Friends of Shalford Church. Tenders were sought and these were returned in the order of £11,600. Interestingly the previous restoration in 1976 cost £698 and was funded from the estate of the late Andrew Goodchild.

The project is being funded by generous grants from the Fowler Smith & Jones Trust, Essex Heritage Trust and the Braintree and Bocking Civic Society. Other donations were made by local residents in particular David and Margaret Smith and Neil Birks. A substantial donation was received from FOSTAC which allowed the project to be fully funded.

FOSTAC's donation has been found from a series of concerts and other activities which have been well supported by the villagers

The restoration works are to be undertaken by Andrew Stevens. The project has been managed by Frank Easton reporting to the PCC.

Rev Colin Wilson recently wrote in the Parish Magazine: "During July and August St Andrew's Church will be closed to the public while restoration work is carried out on the organ. Sunday services and our monthly Coffee Mornings will continue as normal. The organ is a living part of our heritage and is used almost every Sunday and for weddings, funerals, concerts, school services and more. Years of wear and tear have taken their toll and many of the old materials and mechanisms are wearing out and I would like to thank Frank Easton and others for all their hard work in raising most of the funds necessary to pay for this vital work.

A celebration is being planned for Sunday 11th September when visiting organists will come along to the church and give recitals, beginning at 3.00pm. The composer George Frederick Handel once described the organ as the "King of Instruments" and it is good to know that this fine instrument will be preserved to be experienced and enjoyed by future generations, and to serve the local community for many more years to come

More

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