

Thank you speech for Volunteers Tea Party

This tea party has been arranged to say 'Thank you' to everyone who has volunteered help to raise the money needed for the restoration of the Willis Pipe organ in St Mary and St Giles Church.

I would like to propose a special vote of thanks to Nina May for kindly hosting our party in the garden she and Bernard created and to Lesley Salter who organised the catering. I would also like us to raise a glass in memory of Sylvia Lovesey who invented the Golden Spot Tombola and the Sing-along-alorra-songs events. We miss both Sylvia and Bernard who were great supporters of the organ.

[toast here]

In 2006 when we started fundraising our target seemed almost impossible to achieve, yet we got started anyway. The original pipe organ restoration appeal group came together enthusiastically with ideas, energy and commitment. We organised garden parties, concerts, Sunday lunches, Musical Bite Coffee mornings, choral workshops, tombolas and raffles. We raised £5,000 to buy the grand piano to help with our fundraising concerts and provide backup for worship music. We set up the original appeal website and pipe sponsorship scheme, we produced posters and leaflets and we encouraged others to help us via the 'Just One thing' campaign.

Many times in the past 9 years we have wondered if we would ever realise the dream of restoring the organ but by sheer hard work and teamwork we have shown each other just what we can achieve together. We have proved that fundraising can be fun, flexible and fulfilling for everyone involved.

We have organised over 200 events and have raised over £95,000 during these years via events, donations and pipe sponsorship. This is an incredible achievement.

In 2013-14 our grant application bid team worked hard on a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and HLF chose to recognise and support our work in restoration and outreach with a grant of £82,700, so that a much wider community can find out about and enjoy our organ. This has enabled us to commission the main organ restoration work, research its history, build the Music for all at SMSG programme and develop new publicity materials and a fresh new website.

You will all now know that the restoration work will now be completed by the end of November and the testing by the Diocesan Organ Advisor by end March, later than planned. We have had to extend the project timescale so that we can deliver the full year's music and education programme that we are committed to in the bid. This gives us more time to plan and prepare, and new opportunities, for example contribute to the Milton Keynes 50th anniversary celebrations in January 2017 as part of our Heritage Lottery Fund project. So there are still exciting times ahead!

In the long term Music for All @ SMSG will continue looking after the instruments at St Mary and St Giles and build a reputation for excellent music for worship and entertainment. We have a great opportunity to help others less fortunate than ourselves via our music making with charitable fundraising, nurturing new musicians and providing opportunities for people to learn about the organ and its history.

Today I would like to thank every single one of you for your help, encouragement and enthusiasm. Let's drink a toast to Music for All @ SMSG!

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