

Columns

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THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST CHURCH SPITALFIELDS
REGISTERED CHARITY NO 276056

The newsletter of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields who are leading the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's church, one of the most important Baroque churches in Europe.

Please support us by subscribing or making a donation: use the form with this issue, or telephone the Friends' office, 020 7247 4270, or visit our website: www.christchurchspitalfields.org

Quintadena installed Full stop!

The Friends are enormously grateful for Supporters' generosity which has enabled William Drake Ltd to install the organ's final rank: the Quintadena. The completion of this work, along with the installation of the very necessary pump and

dedicated water supply to the new humidifier, means that the restoration of the magnificent 1735 Richard Bridge organ is now complete. William McVicker, co-consultant to the organ restoration project, describes the work overleaf.



GEORGE FUEST

*View from Crispin Street
The demolition in the spring of 2016 of the former Fruit & Wool Exchange between Brushfield Street and White's Row temporarily opened up new aspects of Christ Church including this view of*

Hawksmoor's magnificent composition of nave, porch, tower and steeple, and the juxtaposition of the west end with the fine south elevation. (Thanks to long term Supporter Piers Barclay of Steamship Mutual for providing access to take this picture.)

‘The only one of its kind in England’

As the restoration of the magnificent 1735 Richard Bridge organ entered its final stages, one puzzling detail remained unsolved. A document known as the *Leffler Manuscript* recorded that the Choir Organ (the lowest keyboard of the three) included a stop apparently labelled ‘Flute to C Faut’. The compiler of the manuscript was Henry Leffler, who was said to be ‘organist of the Collegiate Church of St Katherine’s by the Tower from the close of the eighteenth century to 1819’. He saw the Spitalfields organ in 1804 and recorded the list of stops. But what was this ‘Flute to C Faut’? Once restoration was under way it had become clear that the pipes had been located on the Choir Organ soundboard next to the reeds, suggesting that it was a solo stop with a short compass – the pipes only commencing from tenor c (hence ‘Faut’). Much discussion ensued between the organ builder and consultants, who diligently searched through the surviving documentary evidence to try to put together the jigsaw pieces. Research revealed that there was nothing like this stop known in English organs before the nineteenth century. The organ builders commissioned a set of pipes which were duly installed in the instrument. A good deal of time was spent listening to these pipes and experimenting with the scale and treatment of them to see if a satisfactory answer could be reached. All agreed that we had not found the solution. Out of the blue, researcher Paul Tindall came across a note in Sir John Hawkins’s *General history of the science and practice of music*, a five-volume history of music, published in London in 1776. In volume 2, page 615, there was a cryptic footnote:

In the organ of Spitalfields church, made by Bridge, is a stop which he improperly, as it would seem, called a Quintadena, the pitch of it being only a fifth above the diapason. However, it is the only one of its kind in England.

After further excited discussion, and in the absence of additional evidence, the consultants and organ builder agreed that this probably referred to the ‘Flute to C Faut’.

But what exactly is a Quintadena, and what precedents were there for its inclusion in the restoration of the Bridge organ? This type of stop was common in Europe – especially in Dutch organs of similar and earlier periods but, as Hawkins recorded, it was ‘the only one of its kind’. It is constructed with the mouth



The characteristically low cut-ups from which the Quintadena pipes get their unusual sound.



The Quintadena pipes with soldered tops and tuning ears

of the pipe deliberately kept low in order to encourage the so-called ‘twelfth’, the second component in the harmonic series. The result is a tone in which the fundamental note is eroded at the expense of developing this harmonic. There are effectively two pronounced pitches in the sound of each pipe and the sound is both quirky and intriguing to the ear; as said: ‘these narrow pipes let the twelfth be distinctly heard at the same time as the prime tone; and have hence been called *Quintaten* (*quintam tenentes*)’. Documentary evidence suggests that the Dutch organ builder ‘Father’ Bernard Smith had installed such a stop at St Paul’s Cathedral in the Chayre Organ in 1695–7. The stop did not survive subsequent rebuilding work.

We can’t be certain that this was the stop which Leffler noted in his manuscript – but the evidence suggests that it might well have been. As a result, a new Quintadena rank was commissioned from William Drake Ltd and installed in place of the ‘Flute to C Faut’. On Thursday February 4th this year a group assembled in Christ Church to hear the finished pipes and to marvel at this stop’s extraordinary contribution to the possible combinations. The curious sound works well as a gentle solo colour and combines well with a remarkable number of stops in the Choir Organ, adding an unusual but balanced nuance to the registrations.

One mystery remains: why might Bridge have included such a Dutch stop in an organ which seems so overtly to point to an otherwise pronouncedly French character? The answer to this is probably that this magnificent instrument was Bridge’s *magnum opus* and the organ builder was probably determined to match the number of ranks in other large organs in England, such as Harris’s instrument constructed in 1710 at Salisbury Cathedral. Larger instruments from this period often included fancy stops – why should Richard Bridge have not tried his hand at such an effect, in an organ designed to be filled with an extraordinary range of tonal colours?

William McVicker

Philip Vracas 1959–2016

The Friends suffered a grievous and unexpected loss with the sudden death on April 25th of our much-loved Honorary Treasurer, Philip Vracas, at the early age of fifty-seven. Philip had come to school in England, from Nigeria, where his father was posted, and read classics at Trinity College, Oxford. A City career in securities and investment banking had led him to the position of Treasurer at Saint Bartholomew the Great, where a fellow member of the congregation reintroduced him to the practice of bell-ringing which he had first learnt at school at Oundle. (The initial impetus was ringing for the Millennium: typically, having protested he had no time, he rapidly immersed himself in it.) This led to a close engagement in both ringing and financial affairs in a number of churches, ranging from St Augustine's, Kilburn to St Matthew's, Bethnal Green, where he led the refurbishment of the bells and organised special occasions. He also occupied increasingly senior positions in the mca (the bell-ringers' association), culminating in its presidency from 2014 onwards.

Philip had moved in 1999 to an eighteenth-century house in Hanbury Street in Spitalfields and it was natural that he should take an immediate interest in Christ Church and its ongoing restoration. He became a Trustee of the Friends and Honorary Treasurer in December 2000, in which role he was quite simply invaluable to the continuing work: both through his financial acumen and assiduity, and through the musical talents which so inspired his involvement.

Philip had presented himself at the ringing-room doorway when Christ Church re-opened in 2004 and became a regular member of the tower team. An organist himself, his interest in and detailed knowledge of the intricacies of organ construction were an essential element in the commissioning and oversight of the most recent project of the Friends, the restoration of the stupendous eighteenth century Richard Bridge organ. Unplayable since 1960 and much altered down the years, as readers will know it returned to life in close to its original state with a grand recital just one year ago.

Spitalfields had become a major part of his life and he played a notable part in the life of the community, not least as Parish Clerk and a member of the Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, and as Treasurer also of the Spitalfields Society. He was a founder member of the Spitalfields Neighbourhood Planning Forum and passionate about preserving the distinctive heritage of the neighbourhood.

The most convivial and hospitable of men, he would host gatherings of bellringers on high days and holidays or after first Sunday morning service at which his excellent traditional cooking skills – and libations – were savoured. Another local venue was, and is, *Blessing's Bar*, next to the churchyard, which he opened a few years ago and where he was a sociable host (though protesting that he himself was not sufficiently trusted to stand behind the bar). If *Blessing's* has a somewhat Italianate character, his Greek heritage was all-important to him and he paid frequent visits to the country, particularly to his small estate at Kardamyli in the southern Peloponnese

where he was building a house and whose olive oil he would bring back and share with friends.

His funeral was at Christ Church on May 20th, with a packed congregation and followed by refreshments both in the church and at *Blessing's*. Bach on our magnificent organ; well-loved hymns and the metrical Psalm 23; Stanford's motet *Beati Quorum Via*; and readings and tributes from family and friends including the Rev. Canon Bimbi Abayomi-Cole: all made for a moving and traditional service, the Rector officiating. The Christ Church bells hardly ceased ringing all that day and weekend, with peals rung both by the church ringers and representatives of other organisations.

The most cultured and civilised of men, Philip was both incisive and practical yet amiable and entertaining. Irreplaceable though he is, we owe him an immense debt for leaving the affairs of the Friends in such good order for his successor. His premature demise is an incalculable loss to the ongoing work of the Friends, even more to his neighbours, colleagues and friends, and above all to his family.

Dugald Barr, Trustee of the Friends

Travel Bursary

The money raised at the organ's opening recital given by the late John Scott a year ago enabled the Friends to establish a Travel Bursary for organ builders to encourage excellence and research in organ building. The grant is intended to support a period of workshop training or academic research related to any practical aspect of organ building and covers travel costs, subsistence and any fees.

Applications for the first award were received from around the world. The Friends are pleased to announce that the recipient for the 2015–16 award is Mateusz Jabłoński from Kraków, Poland.

He will be serving a year's apprenticeship at William Drake's workshop in Buckfastleigh, Devon, specialists in the restoration and reconstruction of historic organs as well as the building of new organs in an historically inspired house-style. Their high profile projects include work for Her Majesty the Queen, St Paul's Cathedral and The Palace of Westminster as well as the flagship restoration of the Bridge organ in Christ Church Spitalfields. Mateusz's training will cover all aspects of organ building.

Next year's bursary will be advertised in the autumn.

For your diary

Forthcoming organ recitals in Christ Church

Monday 26th September: *Margaret Phillips*

Monday 24th October: *David Titterton*

Monday 28th November: *Gerard Brooks*

Admission £10 by programme on the door

For more details visit: www.organrecitals.com

Thank you

The Friends are grateful for the generosity of the many individuals and organisations who support the Restoration and Organ Appeals.

We have run two major projects, the restorations of the church and the organ with a small part-time staff and a number of volunteers. This help has been crucial to our success.

Thank you to our volunteers who help both in the office and at special events. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed so generously to the Quintadena stop, those who prefer to remain anonymous and those who give by standing order, thereby saving on administrative costs.

We would also like to thank the following for their recent donations:



S R B HUMPHREYS

The organ: bellows with motor switched on

Gifts of £30 and over

Primrose Arnander
John Bowles*
Revd Robin Burgess
Sylvia Butler
Ian Caldwell*
Stephen Carey* *In memory of
my great-grandparents
Richard Thomas Carey and
Eliza Ann Whetstone who
were married in Christ
Church on 23 March 1887*
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Elizabeth Griffin*
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David Lawson*
*In memory of my dad, T R
Lawson*

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Dr J G Holdcroft*
Allan Murray-Jones*
Sue Prickett*
Mrs M Summerson*

Gift of £750

The Leathersellers Company
Charitable Fund*

Gift of £1,500

Gerald Bland

Gift of £10,000

Hamish Parker*

**partly or fully for the Richard Bridge
Organ Appeal*

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How to support the Friends

To become an acknowledged Supporter of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields please make a minimum annual donation of £30 (£35 for overseas). You can contribute towards the restoration of Christ Church or the Richard Bridge organ. Supporters receive the Friends' newsletter *Columns* and advance notice of tours, lectures and other special events that the Friends organise.

You can give money in several ways:

- with a credit or **debit card** or **PayPal** through our web site.
- by payroll giving through **Give As You Earn**

Or, by completing the appropriate parts of this page:

- by standing order helping us plan ahead and keep down administrative costs
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- ☐ Christ Church Spitalfields
☐ The Richard Bridge Organ

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The Friends would like to acknowledge gifts of £30 or more in *Columns*, but if you wish to remain anonymous please tick the box below:

- ☐ Please do not print my name in *Columns*

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