

Extracts from “The Record” (Parish Magazine of All Hallows')

May 1914 “I do not think that many of us will quickly forget the crowded congregations assembled there [the crypt] during the early mornings of Holy Week, numbering close upon 400.

“Now all this led on to a beautiful Easter. Although shorn as it was of much of its external beauty, and deprived as we were of the organ, yet I am sure you will agree with me when I say that the choir did excellently, and the unaccompanied singing was so beautiful, that it is hoped that perhaps some times in the future, during either Advent or Lent, we may be given this privilege again.”

Gifts: £80 for new High Altar; Crucifix for High Altar (stood for 200 years on Altar of Turin Cathedral with two candlesticks which have been hitherto used as Standard Lights, but will now stand on the High Altar; Four new Candlesticks; Two standard candlesticks; Tabernacle for Good Shepherd Altar designed by G Gilbert Scott.

May 1915 “There is just one other matter that I must refer to, and that is the new organ. That we should possess a new organ is not a matter of choice, but of necessity: it is not a luxury that could be dispensed with, but an important need. Whilst we have been endeavouring to build and pay for the Chancel, we have said nothing about this, yet all the time those who have been in the know, have been upon tenter hooks, and somewhat doubtful if the old organ would stand being taken down and rebuilt. Few can realise the precarious condition the old instrument has presented for years. It is old, very old, how old nobody can say, because when it was purchased for the Church of the Good Shepherd, it was an old instrument, and since then it has been taken down and rebuilt many times, from time to time it has been renovated and enlarged, and now its wind chests, trunks and sound boards present a strange spectacle of additions, patches and elongations. When the Chancel was completed, and the old instrument was taken to pieces, it was doubtful if it could be reconstructed, however it was put together, tied up here with a piece of string, patched there with a piece of leather, just to carry us over, as the builder said, the consecration of the Chancel. The great wonder is that it has held together, and has not entirely collapsed. I do not profess to know much about the arrangements of our bodies, but I believe that I am right when I say, that if a physician pronounces that both lungs have a hole in them, this is a sure premonition of rapidly approaching death. The same may be said of our old organ, both its lungs are seriously affected, and it is impossible to patch them up, a new pair of bellows would cost more than the patched up mechanism would justify being spent upon them. There we were left with the problem, either to patch up the old, which would cost as much as a new organ, or to abandon the old and have an instrument in every way worthy of the Church. With such a Church we must have an organ worthy of it; with such a magnificent loft, it would be absurd to place in it such a tiny instrument, that would neither support the choir or add to the dignity of the service. Then came the magnificent offer of £1,000 towards a new organ which should in every way be worthy of the Church and its position in that wonderful loft prepared for its reception. We consulted Messrs. Hill and Son, one of the finest builders of our time, and they have drawn out the specification of a grand organ, which is to cost £1,800. So it comes to this, that All Hallows' will possess one of the finest organs in London, and it will cost us only £800, which is the price that an ordinary organ would have cost. Under any circumstances this problem must have been faced as soon as the building debt was discharged. And when the offer of £1,000 was made, the order was given, and we hope that during the next three months the new organ will be erected, and the balance of £800 we must endeavour to meet, and therefore, for the time being,

all birthday gifts and other subscriptions will go to the organ fund. And we trust that all will help us to respond to the donor who wishes All Hallows' to possess an organ worthy of the Church, and mark you, in every Church a good organ is one of the very best assets. So I ask you to help us to obtain this which will be worth £1,800, and will cost us only what a small ordinary organ would have cost. I shall hope to say more about this later on, but in the meantime, let us all put our best effort forward, and thereby show our appreciation to our munificent donor."

Jul 1915 [referring to movement on North side of Church] "However, to secure safety, and meet any further settlement should it take place, it was deemed advisable after consultation with the builders, that before the organ was erected, tie-rods should be placed, locking the inside piers to the outside buttresses, and thus give an added security to the arches and vaulting of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. I am assured by Mr. Scott that there is nothing to be alarmed about, and what has happened has been foreseen from the first. Before the building of the Chancel was commenced the foundations were examined, and were found to be sound, but being unfortunately placed upon clay, there would naturally be a tendency that the soil would shrink or expand until the whole building finally settled down upon its basis, which probably will take years.

We considered it safer that the work should be taken in hand at once, before the additional weight of the new organ, which will be about fifteen tons, be brought to bear upon the pillars and vaulting of the North Chapel. Effecting this necessary precaution has delayed considerably the erection of the organ, however, it has now been accomplished and the experts engaged upon it are quite satisfied, and therefore the organ builders will at once resume their work and we hope, will have finished by the end of July. I cannot say definitely when we shall be able to open and dedicate the organ, this depends upon much over which we have no control, including the scarcity of labour and fewness of skilled workmen in these days when it is the duty of all who are qualified, either to take their places in the Army, or the ranks of munition manufacturers-our country's need is indeed imperative, hence everything must give way to this, and we must wait patiently until we can realise the joy of hearing our new organ, which probably may not be now until after the holidays.

We are publishing in this number a specification of the new organ, this perhaps may not convey very much to many who will read it, and therefore let me say a word about it. It seems somewhat unkind to say hard things about an old friend, and therefore I hardly like to say anything disparaging about the old organ, which has done such stalwart service for so many years; as far as it went, poor patched up old thing, it had some very good points, and some very excellent stops, but it was so noisy, it had nothing deep or sonorous about it: for its size it was one of the most obtrusive instruments I ever heard-it always rather bellowed than sang, this of course was not its fault, but its misfortune; lacking length of pipe, it could produce no depth of tone, and consequently it had to make a noise, in order to be heard. Further it lacked variety, since it consisted only of a small pedal organ with about two stops, and a small great organ, and swell organ, each organ was for ever borrowing from the others, the result being there was an apparent lameness, and all that it possessed had at all times to be used, if it was to support the singing. Then like most of us who have grown old, its mechanism had become antiquated, you could hear its old bones rattling, and like an old man, it had to make an effort in order to produce an effect. But for all this, it possessed some excellent diapason work and one of the most beautiful clarionets I have ever heard.

Having consigned our old friend to the grave, let us look at our new friend. Here instead of three organs borrowing from each other, we shall have five independent and complete in themselves, Pedal, Great, Swell, Choir and Solo organs. Let me correct a mistake that many so often labour under. Most people imagine that a larger organ means a louder organ, this is a mistake. Of course it can be loud if required,

but a carefully designed organ such as ours will be, does not mean a loud organ, but a fuller, deeper organ that will produce that beautiful roll that is quite indescribable in such a building as All Hallows'. Besides, a larger organ means also variety which carries with it a restfulness, which a small instrument is unable to produce, since because of its size, it possesses more soft stops than a smaller instrument could possibly possess, and these have a qualifying effect, and tone down what otherwise would be harsh and loud. Anyhow, I doubt if our new organ will be as loud as the old; one thing I am sure about is that it will not be so brassy and screaming, but fuller and more satisfying.

Some people are sceptical about organ, and deem them to be unnecessary. Well, of course we may differ—Our Russian Allies allow no instrument in their services of any kind, neither do certain schools of Scotch Presbyterians. This is at variance with the usual custom of Western Christendom, which always from the Grand Cathedral Organ, down to the simple village orchestra, that a century or more ago found its place in the west gallery of our village Churches, uses instrumental music. To my mind a good organ is one of the very best assets of a Church, it generally means a good choir, and a good choir means an excellent lead to congregational singing, and further, it covers a multitude of failures in choral worship. And besides this, it seems to me that we should give to God the best we can, and I feel sure that if King David were with us, he would not be satisfied with anything but the best instrument that could be procured for leading the choral worship of God. Read the 150th Psalm.

We go to our Cathedral and are moved by the service, and when we come away we feel how important a part the Great Organ has played in the service and assisted our worship. Why should we who worship in Parish Churches be deprived of this help? A few years ago, on a Sunday afternoon, I was worshipping at a men's service in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris; we had sung the Psalms without accompaniment, when suddenly from the west end of the Nave the Great Organ burst forth. I shall never forget the effect, it was like a mighty wave of sound rolling up the Nave, and completed everything. I remember also once assisting at the "People's Mass" in Cologne, and, mark you, it was 9 a.m. On a week day, the Nave was fairly full of all sorts and conditions of people who sung throughout the service those exquisite German chorales, and between each verse the Great Organ pealed forth, and seemed to flood the whole Cathedral with a wondrous tribute of sound. I remember one morning in Rouen Cathedral attending the "Chapter Mass." I had done so years before, when a full Chapter was [next page removed... presumably with specification!]"

Oct 1915 "I must now pass on to speak of an event close at hand—the opening of the Organ. To those who are unacquainted with the circumstances of the case, it might seem strange that I should pass at once from speaking of retrenchment to this. However, as you know from what I have already written in a former letter, we should never have entered upon this enterprise had we known what the future had in store for us. Long before there were "rumours of war" the contract had been signed and sealed, and when war suddenly broke out, at once we endeavoured to obtain from the builders a delay in carrying it out, but it was too late, already the organ had been laid out and was in the course of construction, hence we were held to our contract, which of course from a business point of view we were bound to admit was just, and from a legal standpoint, by virtue of our contract, binding upon us. I have referred to this again because I am anxious to make it quite clear how it comes to pass that we are about to open our organ in this time of war. In the face of all this, I am sure that we all look forward to this event, and are proud and grateful to be the happy possessors of such an instrument, which in itself is always a great asset, and in this case; in addition to possessing one of the most beautiful Churches, I am told that we shall also possess one of the finest organs in London. During the long period of "voicing" I have had the opportunity of hearing many of the stops, separately and in combination, and as far as I am able to give an opinion, I feel certain that you will endorse the verdict of experts. All this must enhance our gratitude towards the initial donor, through whose generosity it has been made possible that we should

come into the possession of an organ that will add to the beauty of our choral services, and at the same time aid our devotion and worship. The tentative arrangements for the opening are as follows:- Thursday, October 21st at 8.30 p.m., Dedication of the Organ, followed by a Recital by Dr. Alcock. On the following Sunday evening, in place of the sermon, Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise," will be sung. Therefore if all goes well, the organ will be in use for the Festival, when we hope to sing Gounod's beautiful "Messe de Paques" at 11.15 a.m. On Sunday, Nov. 7th."

Dec 1915 "Writing on this, the festival of St. Cecilia, the Patroness of music, one is reminded of our beautiful Organ, which has now been dedicated and in use for the past six weeks, and further, I cannot fail to mention the two wonderful recitals we have enjoyed during this period. There is another in view on Dec. 16th., this will be one of unique and, alas, a pathetic interest. Mr. Wolstenholme, one of the best known of our English organists is coming to us on that date, and when I tell you that he is totally blind, you will understand why I have spoken of the forthcoming recital as I have"