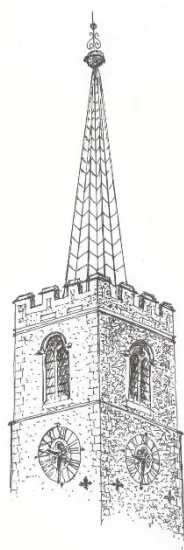


THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHESHAM



NEWSLETTER No. 43

NOVEMBER 2023

Annual General Meeting to be held in St Mary's Church, Chesham
Sunday 19th November 2023
4.00pm

The meeting will be followed by refreshments
and a little light musical entertainment

The following officers and committee members are standing for re-election again at the
Annual General Meeting

Officers and Committee – 2023/2024

President	Rev Canon Edward Bowes-Smith
Chairman and DCC nominated Member	Mr Martin Paxton 16 Lindo Close Chesham HP5 2JP
Secretary and DCC nominated Member	Miss Sarah How 77a Townsend Road Chesham Bucks HP5 2AA Secretaryfosmchesham@outlook.com
Treasurer	Mrs Rachel Edwards
Membership Sec and DCC nominated Member	Mr Richard Ogden 21 Brandon Mead Chesham HP5 2FQ
Publicity	- Vacant -
Additional members	Mrs Avril Sherratt Dr Ian Roche Mrs Susie Roche

There are vacancies on the committee and nominations may be proposed and seconded by any
member of the Friends of St Mary's. Nominations must be received in writing by the Secretary
prior to the AGM and signed by the person nominated,
the Proposer and Secunder

AGENDA

Sunday 19th November at 4.00pm

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of 2022 AGM
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Appointment of Independent Examiner
7. Election of Officers and Committee members
8. Members suggestions & questions

Chairman's Report 2023

The year got off to an excellent start with a Concert on 22 January given by Noel Tredinnick and Friends who included our own Greg Mitchell and Jo Bonner. It was a wonderful Concert - with around 90 people attending and raising £500 for FoSM funds.

Although historic buildings in Chesham were not opened as part of the National Heritage Celebrations this year St Mary's was opened during the afternoon of Sunday 10th September. There were the usual attractions of tours to the clock chamber, of the graffiti on the pillars, viewing of Parish Registers plus refreshments, with Cafe Africa. Whilst it was disappointing that organists were unable to provide background music (as the organ wasn't working) visitors appreciated what was on offer and it was an enjoyable afternoon.

This was closely followed by a Concert on Sunday 24th September performed by 'Second Wind', a group of wind instrument players, who last performed for us in 2019. It was a great pleasure to welcome them back. The group provided a varied programme of light music which was very much enjoyed by the audience of around 35 people.

It is sad to report that Gwenda Hudson and Wendy Powter passed away during the year. Gwenda and Wendy will be known to many Friends and both were faithful supporters during their years of membership.

We were very pleased to welcome three new members this year - Angela Holland and Keith and Sheila Pittman. We greatly appreciate the support of our new members and I thank Angela, Keith and Sheila for joining us.

As will be seen from the Treasurer's Report our finances remain healthy and I would like to thank Rachel Edwards for looking after our Accounts during the year and Colin Osbaldeston for examining them. The 20% of funds allocated to St Mary's (£2,033) this year will contribute to the work being undertaken to the repair and restoration of the Church windows.

As you will see elsewhere in this Newsletter, the AGM will be held in St Mary's Church on Sunday 19th November at 4.00pm. As well as our usual AGM business we are very pleased that Ian Roche, James Bowers and Kirstin MacDougall have very kindly offered to provide a concert afterwards at 5.00pm. Entitled 'The Genius of J S Bach' the Concert will comprise of flute sonatas, arias for tenor, flute and organ and the Brandenburg Concerto No 2.

Refreshments will be served between the AGM and the concert.

Finally, I would like, as ever, to thank you for your continuing membership of the Friends; it is greatly appreciated.

Martin Paxton

Chairman

Treasurer's Report 2023

This year we raised £2958 and had expenses of £462. We have been able to spend £1025 on new music books for the choir and organ as well as give a further £2033 to St Mary's to help towards repairing the windows. This leaves us with a deficit of £563 this year.

We now have £8130 in the bank, £48 in HSBC and the balance in CAF bank after transferring most of our funds from HSBC to CAF bank in preparation for closing the HSBC account.

Most of our income came from subscriptions, other significant sources of income were two concerts which raised £709 between them and a gift aid claim covering the last two years which brought in £513. We remain in a good position financially with funds ready to donate to any projects that may arise. Accounts will be circulated before the AGM once they have been audited.

Thank you to everyone who has moved their standing orders from HSBC to CAF bank. The HSBC account is being closed imminently so any remaining standing orders need to be moved by next October or paid by alternative means. We can take cash and cheques as well as bank transfers. As a reminder our bank account details are:

Account Name: The Friends of St Mary's Church Chesham

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account Number: 00030855

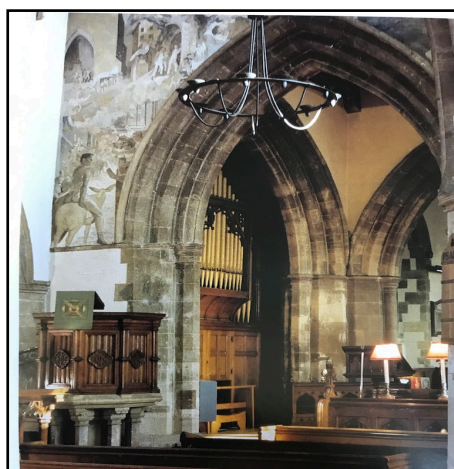
Thank you for your continued support.

**Rachel Edwards
Treasurer**

St Mary's Church, Chesham - Organists

A great deal is known about the magnificent organ that supports and leads so many of the services and musical events – Sundays, Easter, Christmas, weddings, funerals, concerts, recitals ... to name but a few, that take place at St Mary's Church, Chesham and, indeed have taken place for many, many, many decades.

Exactly when an "organ" was first installed in St Mary's Church is shrouded in the dim distant past that we loosely call "history", it is a mystery! Shirley and Clive Foxell in their book *St Mary's Church, Chesham – An Illustrated Short History*, (2004), suggested that in 1504 the Archdeacon's Court Book records "in the will of Robert Wedon, a sum of money to pay for a mass chaplain for the guild of St Mary, provided that he was honest and 'Knew how to "organise", and could sing well'. All then goes very quiet on the organ front until 1852, when a pipe organ is installed in the 'old' west gallery by the renowned organ builder William Hill.



The instrument remained in the gallery until 1869 when it was enlarged by another renowned organ building company R. H. Walker and Son, providing greater volume and power, and moved to the north transept where it remained until 1999.

In 1999, having been electronically enhanced, the instrument and part of the pipework case were moved back to a 'new' west gallery. The larger 3 manuals, now detached console, stand in the north transept.

The organ history is well documented and there are the stories of the 'ups-and-downs' of great services, delightful and not so delightful performances on the instrument, and even the time, that is now very well documented in an earlier article, when the instrument was almost destroyed, almost lost for ever by – to be cannibalised by, of all people, the vicar: The Revd Eric Arnold. All of this talk of pipe organs is, some would say, all very interesting ... but the instrument is nothing without the one ingredient that is often historically overlooked or forgotten, namely, the men and women who actually played the instrument, the St Mary's Church, Chesham organist.

Church organists come and go and often exist only in living memory, but the various local newspapers offer us a brief glimpse of those who have gone before us on the organ bench. . Organists often exist 'in situ' at the behest of the residing incumbent, which can, as the following shows, be a happy experience or, as the expression says, 'here one minute and gone the next'. In the 1960s, for example, this was a case in point.

The Revd Eric Arnold, in his campaign to replace the pipe organ with a Compton Electrone Model 357CS, no less, was not going to stand for any opposition to his plans and, as we know, when a vicar sets his or her mind on a course of action there is usually no way back. In the Revd Arnold's case, if the organ could go, so could the organist, regardless of the resulting chaos. As an eyewitness Fred Reynolds recalled:

"I kept a diary for the whole of 1965 and the entry for Thursday 13th May includes – in CAPITAL LETTERS! – that MR DEJEAN HAD BEEN SACKED. He (Max) was a "quite-highly-strung chap which didn't go down well with the vicar, the Rev. Eric Arnold and that was that. The day following my dramatic diary entry for 13th May 1965, the vicar himself took choir practice as well as explaining the dismissal; and things got very heated. The following Thursday [20th May] an electronic organ appeared in the church; and the vicar took choir practice next evening, which in my

diary says - lousy. At Sunday's morning service the electronic organ was – according to my diary – useless”.

As far as the vicar was concerned everything was moving forward according to his (and the PCC's) plan. The difficult organist was gone, the new electric organ was now installed and ready to be demonstrated by the “competent organist” (the highly experienced conductor and organist Max Dejean had already been vilified as incompetent by the Vicar to the Diocesan Organ Advisor) Mr Michael Foley. Questions were now being asked about the appointment of a new organist but the Revd Arnold preferred to wait, make his various changes, and then appoint a new organist ... and wait they did! Over the course of the next few months, Fred Reynolds, David Mayo and Martin Paxton's father, John Paxton, covered the organ-playing duties (Martin is of course a member of the current organist team, a brilliant tenor in the St Mary's choir and Chairman of the Friends of St Mary). The difficulty of the organist and choir situation was to last until the 6th May 1966, when Fred Reynolds recalls memories of the new vicar and the new organist, “he [the new vicar] came to discuss the organist situation; I remember it getting fairly lively. The following Friday, the new chap [organist] took the practice and I wrote in my diary: ‘not bad’, but for his performance on the Sunday it was ‘hopeless’! The following Friday practice was apparently awful and I decided to leave the choir.” What a tragedy!

Whom-so-ever plays the organ can have a huge impact upon the musical life of a church, but as the organist's mantra suggests, “beware the Vicar and the path that they tread!”. As the Revd Arnold and the choir found, it was obviously all very well having a pipe organ, or an electronic organ or both, but these instruments all need to be played. So, who did play the various pipe organs in St Mary's Church Chesham since 1852? Sadly, unlike the chart of Vicars, hanging on the wall outside the vestry, and the amazing archival work of Richard Ogden, organists are but fleeting vestiges of service, of whom only fainting glimpses or shadows can be seen.

Happily, social media is the answer, and in the 1890s, social media was in the form of newspapers such as the Buckinghamshire Examiner, the Bucks Chronicle and Bucks Gazette and the Bucks Herald. These publications have provided a wealth of insights into some of those organists who have gone before us, but by no means all.

Some of St Mary's organists - coming out of the shadows and are remembered:

Mr Thomas Groome – Organist in 1875

On the 20th February 1875, in the Bucks Herald:

Thomas Groome was obviously an accomplished and respected organist. In another earlier Bucks Herald article, Mr Groome is reported to have played extracts from Haydn's Creation, Handel's Messiah and a Coronation Anthem ...

“with his accustomed ability and precision, and the splendid rendering of these magnificent compositions was listening to with great pleasure by the congregation, which was an unusually large one ... On this occasion the careful training of the choir by the new organist, Mr Groome, was evidenced by the heartiness and unanimity with which the large assembly was able to join in the music portion of the service.”

The reporter on the 20th February 1875 was very clear as to why Mr Groome was moving on, the instrument at St Mary's did not really match his undoubted talent. Mr Groome was replaced by Mr Drinkwater RAM.

Mr Drinkwater - Organist 1875/1876

Whilst we hear no more of Mr Groome, Mr Drinkwater RAM, went on to be the conductor of the Chesham Choral Society. The society had been dormant for about three years and Mr Drinkwater

was spearheading the revival. Mr Drinkwater did not stay at St Mary's for very long, leaving in 1876 to become the organist at St Mary-in-the-Castle, Hastings. He did return to Chesham on the 21st November 1876 to conduct the church choir and play the pianoforte accompaniments in a concert at the Town Hall. His solos included a Chopin waltz and accompanied:

“the Rev. F. MacMurdo (curate of St Mary's Church) in “The Lay of the imprisoned huntsman” from the “Lady of the Lake” (encored) ... The programme was performed in a very satisfactory manner, reflecting credit upon all took part in the proceedings ... this entertainment was got up to raising funds on the basis of a library for the choir of St Mary's Church.”

Curates singing, choir fundraising to buy music for their library ... it could be 2023!

Mr J. Hodgson – Organist in 1879

15th November 1879 – Harvest thanksgiving services – Mr J. Hodgson (organist):

“the church was not decorated this year, it is being thought that to do so would be inappropriate, considering the season (advent). The choir and the organist, Mr Jesse Hodgson, proved themselves most efficient in the rendering of music, which was of a very suitable description”.

It is interesting in reading these reports that the language used is often a very straight forward narrative devoid of any hint of the reporter's 'opinion' ... as said, the choir and organist were 'efficient' and 'suitable'.

Mr Turnbull – organist in 1886

Mr Turnbull (organist) played for the wedding on Monday 2 January 1886 of Miss Emily Clare (daughter of Mr Daniel Clare – Churchwarden):

“Mr Turnbull, the organist, played several suitable voluntaries during the period of waiting, and Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March', and other appropriate music at the close of the service ... two suitable hymns was sung by the choir and congregation”.

Mendelssohn - Wedding March how little has changed as this was played in 2023! The wedding march was also relatively new as it had only been composed in 1842.

Mr James Hyatt – organist in 1884 and 1896

Mr J. Hyatt played for the wedding on Saturday 13 September 1884 of Miss Amelia Birch, sixth daughter of the late Mr Joseph Birch, of Chesham, with Mr Henry John Moore.

This entry in the Bucks Herald is especially interesting when Miss Birch was referred to as having for some years past:

“taken a prominent part in the musical entertainments here [Chesham] by playing the pianoforte accompaniments,”

more specifically:

Miss Amelia Birch – Organist pre-1884

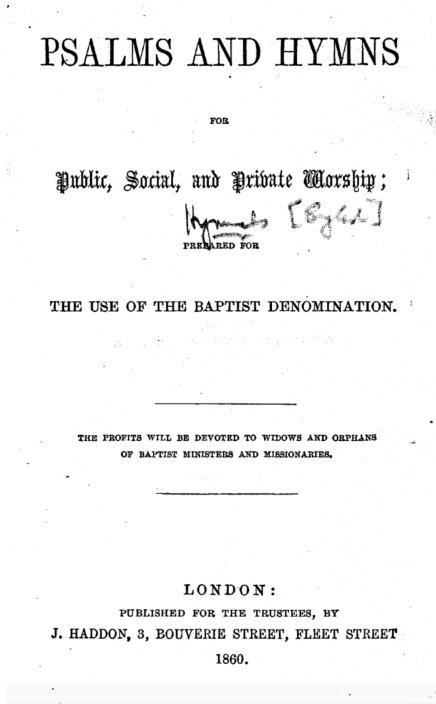
Miss Birch “was also for sometime organist of the Parish Church, has always been ready and willing to assist any useful undertaking, and by her amiable qualities has gained general esteem and regard.”

“The organist [James Hyatt] played a beautiful selection of music previous to the service, and the hymns sung were No. 396, 128th Psalm, Hymns 39 and 299 in 'Psalms and Hymns'. At the conclusion Mendelssohn's Wedding March was played [yes! another Mendelssohn's Wedding March]”.

In one brief article we are introduced to two organists, the first and only female organist to be accredited, so far, with the position of organist at the Parish Church of St Mary's, Chesham and the name of the Hymn book that they were using in 1884, 'Psalms and Hymns'.

Psalms and Hymns¹ originated as an amalgam of early hymn books created by the Baptist denomination. In this respect, Benjamin Keach (29 February 1640 -18 July 1704) is a very important hymnologist and theologian. Keach was an English Reformed Baptist preacher and author whose name was given to Keach's Catechism, the scriptural explanation of their Christian faith from the Baptist perspective. Keach introduced hymn singing to his church at Horsley Down in London in 1673, producing a book of 300 hymns, *Spiritual Melody*, in 1691, it being the first general hymn book to be used by any, establishment or dissident, congregation. Many more hymn books were to follow. In 1855 a Trust was formed with the intention of publishing a new hymnbook and, in 1858, *Psalms and Hymns* was agreed, being finally published in 1860.

Psalms and Hymns
Title page - 1860 edition



By 1876 nearly one million copies had been sold and at some point between 1876 and 1884, St Mary's Church was also singing from this book. Indeed, in 1962 fourteen churches were still using *Psalms and Hymns*.

In returning to Miss Amelia Birch's Wedding, hymn 299 was the blessing on the couple that would come from God's Word:

299 ^{8.7.4. Charles W. Carey}
God, that giveth the increase.—1 Cor. 3. 7.
1 COME, thou soul-transforming Spirit,
Bless the sower and the seed;
Let each heart Thy grace inherit,
Raise the weak, the hungry feed:
From the gospel
Now supply Thy people's need.
2 O may all enjoy the blessing,
Which Thy word's designed to give;
Let us all, Thy love possessing,
Joyfully the truth receive;
And for ever
To Thy praise and glory live!

¹ R. W. Thomson, "The Psalms and Hymns Trust and 'Praise for Today'," *Baptist Quarterly* 25.8 (October 1973): pp. 380-383

Hymn 39 was the great hymn of praise: Praise ye the Lord, immortal choir, a hymn exhorting every imaginable entity from the immortal heavenly choir, to the sun, the moon and all of the 'glistening stars of night', to the clouds, storms, birds, beasts and all of any age around the world to 'Him all praise be given' was written in 1853 by George Ranson (1807 – 1889)². Whilst it is unclear which hymn tune was used on this occasion, the hymn tune: St Matthew attributed to William Croft³, had long been associated with Ranson's words.

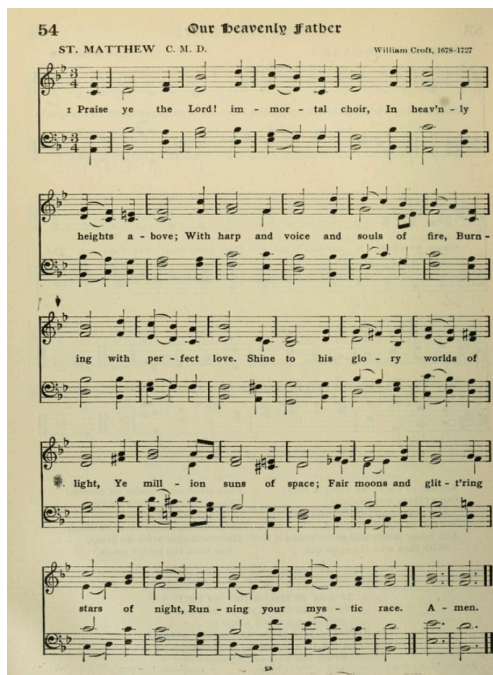
39 C.M. *All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord.—Ps. 145. 10*

1 **P**RAISE ye the Lord, immortal choir,
 In heavenly heights above,
 With harp, and voice, and souls of fire,
 Burning with perfect love.
 2 Shine to His glory, worlds of light,
 Ye million suns of space,
 Ye moons and glistening stars of night,
 Running your mystic race.
 3 Ye gorgeous clouds, that deck the sky
 With crystal, crimson, gold;
 And rainbow arches raised on high,
 The Light of light unfold.

4 Shout to Jehovah, surging main,
 In deep eternal roar:
 Let wave to wave resound the strain,
 And shore reply to shore.
 5 Storm, lightning, thunder, hail, and snow,
 Wild winds that keep His word,
 With the old mountains far below,
 Unite to bless the Lord.
 6 His name, ye forests, wave along:
 Whisper it, every flower:
 Birds, beasts, and insects, swell the song,
 That tells His love and power.
 7 And round the wide world let it roll,
 Whilst man shall lead it on;
 Join, every ransomed human soul,
 In glorious unison.
 8 Come, aged man, come, little-child,
 Youth, maiden, peasant, king;
 To God in Jesus reconciled,
 Your hallelujahs bring.
 9 The Omnipresent Deity!
 Maker of earth and heaven,
 The great Redeeming Majesty!
 To Him all praise be given.

George Ranson

Hymn tune St Matthew
 By Dr William Croft



² George Ranson was a solicitor practicing in Leeds. In 1853 he assisted the Congregational ministers of Leeds in the compilation of Psalms, Hymns, and Passages of Scriptures for Christian Worship, a volume commonly known as the Leeds Hymn-book. In 1858 he also assisted the Rev. Dr Green in the preparation of Psalms and Hymns.

³ William Croft Mus.Doc. (1677/8 – 1727) Composer; Organist to the Chapel Royal; Organist of Westminster Abbey;

Hymn 396 was written by Philip Doddridge⁴.

396 S.M.
Present your bodies a living sacrifice.—Rom. 12. 1.

- 1 **A**ND will the eternal King
So mean a gift reward?
That offering, Lord, with joy we bring
Which Thine own hand prepared.
- 2 We own Thy various claims,
And to Thine altar move,
The willing victims of Thy grace,
And bound with cords of love.
- 3 Descend, celestial fire,
The sacrifice inflame:
So shall a grateful odour rise
Through our Redeemer's name.

Philip Doddridge

The 128th Psalm was often chosen as a suitable wedding text as it blesses the bride in her role as a wife, as well as the children of that union.

Psalm 128 King James Version

128 Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

As with the many wonderful weddings that I have played for up to and including 2023, our organist, Miss Birch's wedding was also spectacular. The music was well considered and appropriate with both reflective as well as triumphant hymns, psalm and concluding voluntary. The Bride wore "grenât satin, trimmed with lace to match, white veil and orange blossoms. She was escorted by four bridesmaids – Misses Fanny and Lucy Birch, her sisters, and Misses Ethel and Kate Beale, nieces, who were dressed in cream dresses, trimmed with coffee coloured lace and grenât satin ribbons. ... each carried beautiful bouquets ... amongst the wedding presents were a handsome marble clock from Mr. Wm. Lowndes ... a chair from the St Mary's Church Choir (the afternoon choir)". A delightful wedding for any organist indeed!

Now, returning briefly to Mr Hyatt,

Mr J. Hyatt (organist) played for the Harvest Thanksgiving on Sunday 2nd October 1892:

"...In the afternoon there was a service for the young, the Vicar preaching. The choir Ladies rendered an anthem 'I will magnify Thee' unusually well, solo parts being taken by Miss Lily How (treble) and Miss A. Child (alto), both of them perform the task very creditably. To the organist (Mr J. Hyatt) praise is due for the general excellence of the musical portion of the service."

⁴ Philip Doddridge, D.D. – University of Aberdeen (1702 – 1751) was a non-conformist minister, educator and hymn writer. He was pastor at Kibworth. On of his most famous hymns include: Hark, the glad sound! The saviour comes;

Praise indeed for the Ladies choir, the soloists and the organist. On a side note, could the Miss Lily How be a relation of our own 2023 choir member Sarah How?

Mr J. Hyatt (organist) played for the wedding on Saturday 8 August 1896 of 'Mr H. M. Denham and Miss Lowndes.

“ ... the service was fully choral, the male and female choirs being present. Two hymns were sung – “O perfect love, all human thought transcending,” and “O Father, all creating.” The organist (Mr J. Hyatt) played appropriate voluntaries and Mendelssohn’s Wedding March at the close. [Yes!! another Mendelssohn’s Wedding March]”

Is there a musical pattern here as the Mendelssohn ‘Wedding March’ has retained its popularity as a St Mary’s Church wedding favourite even in 2023.

St Mary’s Church, Chesham had, in the 1890s, several choirs, the Men’s Choir (the morning choir), the Ladies Choir (the afternoon choir), of which Mr Hyatt was the afternoon choir organist. Mr Golding appears to be the St Mary’s organist, or were they all St Mary’s organists? Was there a hierarchy? Possibly, as Mr Hyatt is referred to as the afternoon choir organist – this being the Ladies choir.

Mr E. A. C. Golding

And so to Mr Golding, an organist whose name appears quite regularly in the newspapers. Ethelbert Arthur Clement Golding, headmaster of Germain Street School and St Mary’s organist



The year is 1925. The Reverends Theobald and Isherwood, St Mary’s vicar and curate, pose at the south door, flanked by a group of volunteers who are about to repair the gravel paths. Standing between the vicar and curate, shouldering a broom, is Ethelbert Arthur Clement Golding, headmaster of Germain Street school and St Mary’s organist. (Colin Seabright Collection)

Whilst the picture above was taken in 1925, Mr Golding is referred to in an article in the Buckinghamshire Examiner on Wednesday 1 January 1890.

Every year there was a choir tea, and 1890 was no exception.

“The party assembled for tea at five o’clock in the National Schoolrooms, and about 80 sat down. These included members of the morning and evening choir, the afternoon choir, and the choir at the mission room, New Town”.

The choir members were thanked and the vicar [The Revd C. E. Boulton] was very happy that:

“no scolding had to be done that evening. The vicar also thanked the organist for his kindness to the choir. They had got on very well with Mr Golding during the year, and he hoped that Gentleman would stay with them for many years to come. (Applause). Mr Golding ... said the members of the choirs had attended the practices quite as well as had any choir with which he had previous experience”.

Previously in the meeting, Mr Barnes had raised the issue of choir recruitment and church attendance. He said that:

“there were a number of persons who were formerly choir boys, and who were also at one time in the Sunday school, but who did not come to church now. He wished they could do something to keep the boys connected with the church when they left the choir and the Sunday School. (Applause). In relation to this, the vicar had asked Mr Golding to start a tonic-solfa class for those who had left the choir and for those who might like to join. The Revd Boulton hoped that this would provide the missing link for those who had left.”

It is wonderful to see how the Revd Boulton valued the services of the organist and the choir members and was looking for practical ways in which to support not only the choir members, but also to musically support those members who had left and to offer something that would encourage others to join the choirs in their valued service.

On Sunday 2nd October 1892 Harvest Thanksgiving, the Buckinghamshire Examiner reported that:

“In the evening the anthem was ‘The Lord is loving’ by Semper⁵, tuneful and pretty composition, which received adequate treatment at the hands of men and boys, who did their portion of the service throughout in good time and tune, reflecting credit upon themselves and Mr Golding, who skillfully presided at the organ.”

Praise indeed for Mr Golding, but for the choir ... I am not so sure? Still, 35 years later Mr Golding is immortalised in the photograph above, still serving as the organist.

St Mary's Church, Chesham has a long choir and organ musical tradition. Each of those organists mentioned, as well as the many who remain in the shadows, have played their part in supporting and developing this valued 'Musical', 'Spiritual' and 'Praising' Music Ministry tradition at St Mary's Church, Chesham and, long may it continue.

Dr Ian Roche OM(USA) GCStG honVCM BA MMus DMus honBMus (AICM) CT,FVCM FFCM FNCM ACP
Organist St Mary's Church, Chesham
Director of the Westminster Manuscript Research Project

Friends of St Mary's Church Chesham
Registered Charity No 296084

⁵ Caleb Semper, 12 September 1856 – 28 August 1942; Semper was a very popular 'modern composer' and, perhaps, gives us an idea of how musically 'with-it' St Mary's was at this time.