



PROTECTING HERITAGE. PRESERVING HISTORY. PRODUCING HARMONY



ST PETER'S CHURCH ORGAN RESTORATION APPEAL

HERITAGE, HISTORY, HELP!

The “**HERITAGE**” is St Peter’s Church, Wolverhampton - the very heart of the community which was once the heartland of industry and manufacturing achievement.

The “**HISTORY**” is the part which the church has played in the proud life of the City of Wolverhampton - from the 16th Century. The Church was built on the highest focal point of land, where in the 10th Century, the hamlet of ‘Heantun’ was reigned over by Lady Wulfruna.

The “**HELP**” is for which I am appealing! We need £350,000 to save, refurbish and re-build St Peter’s famous Father Willis Organ - without which the soul of the Church just would not exist!



Great organ music has filled the high arches of St Peter’s and the emotive sounds have warmed and thrilled the hearts of our Community for many years. Choral masterpieces, recitals and daily services; None of these uplifting sounds would enrich our lives without the “backing” of the once splendid Church organ.

Sadly, now, that very organ is almost drawing its last breath. Please help us reach the desperately needed target. As a Wulfrunian born and bred, I will pull out all the stops (pun FULLY intended!) to save this part of the heritage of our City and our Church.

BARONESS HEYHOE FLINT OBE
President of The St Peter’s Organ Appeal

Why should **YOU** care?

Located on the highest and oldest developed site in Wolverhampton, St Peter’s Church is open to all, seven days a week; a place of peace and sanctity, of occasions both joyful and solemn, of worship, and of music.

The land on which St Peter’s was built has been a place of religious contemplation for over a thousand years. The land, “Heantun” (Saxon for high place), was granted by a Royal Charter by King Aethelred to Wolverhampton’s Founding Mother, Lady Wulfruna in the 10th century. A devoted fan of the Lady, the King listed in the Charter a variety of hellish torments lying in wait for anyone who tried to take the land from her.

In the event no one did take her land. Of her own free will, Wulfruna granted it to build a monastery at Heantun so that “mass may be chanted there for evermore”. This event was documented in the Saxon Chronicles as “Wulfruna’s Heantun” – Wolver-Hampton - and so was born the City we know today!

On this historic ground, St Peter’s has stood for many hundreds of years and the oldest part of the present building dates from the 13th century. At its centre, high on a gallery and below the third oldest complete ring of twelve bells in the world, is the magnificent Father Willis Pipe Organ.

It is old and suffering. Unless significant funds are raised to finance a vast refurbishment the Organ will become **SILENT!**

Literally and figuratively,
St Peter's Church is central to
Wolverhampton's great history.

Central to the church is the Father Willis Pipe Organ

It was designed and built by Henry Willis, the finest Organ maker of the Victorian Age.

He was nicknamed 'Father' Willis because of his mastery of the art and science of organ building and also to distinguish him from his sons who later joined the business.

Father Willis was acclaimed at the Great Exhibition of 1851, where his ground-breaking Organ won a gold medal. The renowned organist W.T. Best gave his seal of approval when he demonstrated how he could uniquely play the Willis without the help of assistants and thanks to thumb pistons and an 'Improved Pneumatic Action' which offered the player a revolutionary lightness of touch.

Commissions flooded in from across the nation as Victorian industrialists and philanthropists competed to secure Willis's services. His exceptional creations, with their uniquely British sound, began to fill churches and cathedrals throughout the country and the world.



He was later to build organs in the greatest buildings and places of worship in England, among them St Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Albert Hall. But before that, in 1860, Willis had arrived in Wolverhampton and installed a "Father Willis Pipe Organ" in its leading Church, a confirmation of the City's wealth and standing.

St Peter's Church is open every day. Go in, look around. Then look up. What you see will fill you with wonder – the Father Willis Organ.

What you can hear may fill you with awe – but the Organ now has a limited life!

Father Willis's Organ has served St Peter's loyally and with huge distinction, but it is over 150 years old and last restored in 1970, it is desperately in need of complete restoration.

It's uniquely positioned in a gallery above a tower arch 'speaking' directly into the nave. It is a breathtaking sight. However, this makes maintenance near impossible.

When parts fail they have to be closed off. This causes disruption, inconvenience and a diminished sound that would pain the ears of Henry Willis.



What **NEEDS** to be done?

Falling grit from the church tower when the bells are rung means much of the Organ's original leather, electrical and woodwork suffers constantly.

In short.....the organ needs to be dismantled and completely re-furbished.

Once it has been sympathetically reassembled, using computer aided design technology, any future maintenance can be carried out effectively and cost efficiently.

With the care it needs and deserves, the instrument will play for at least another one hundred and fifty years.





Robert Plant CBE

Legendary musician and patron of the Appeal arrives at St Peter's Church



Baroness Rachael Heyhoe Flint

President of the Appeal speaking at St. Peter's



Choristers

Rehearsing for the 2010 Elgar Concert



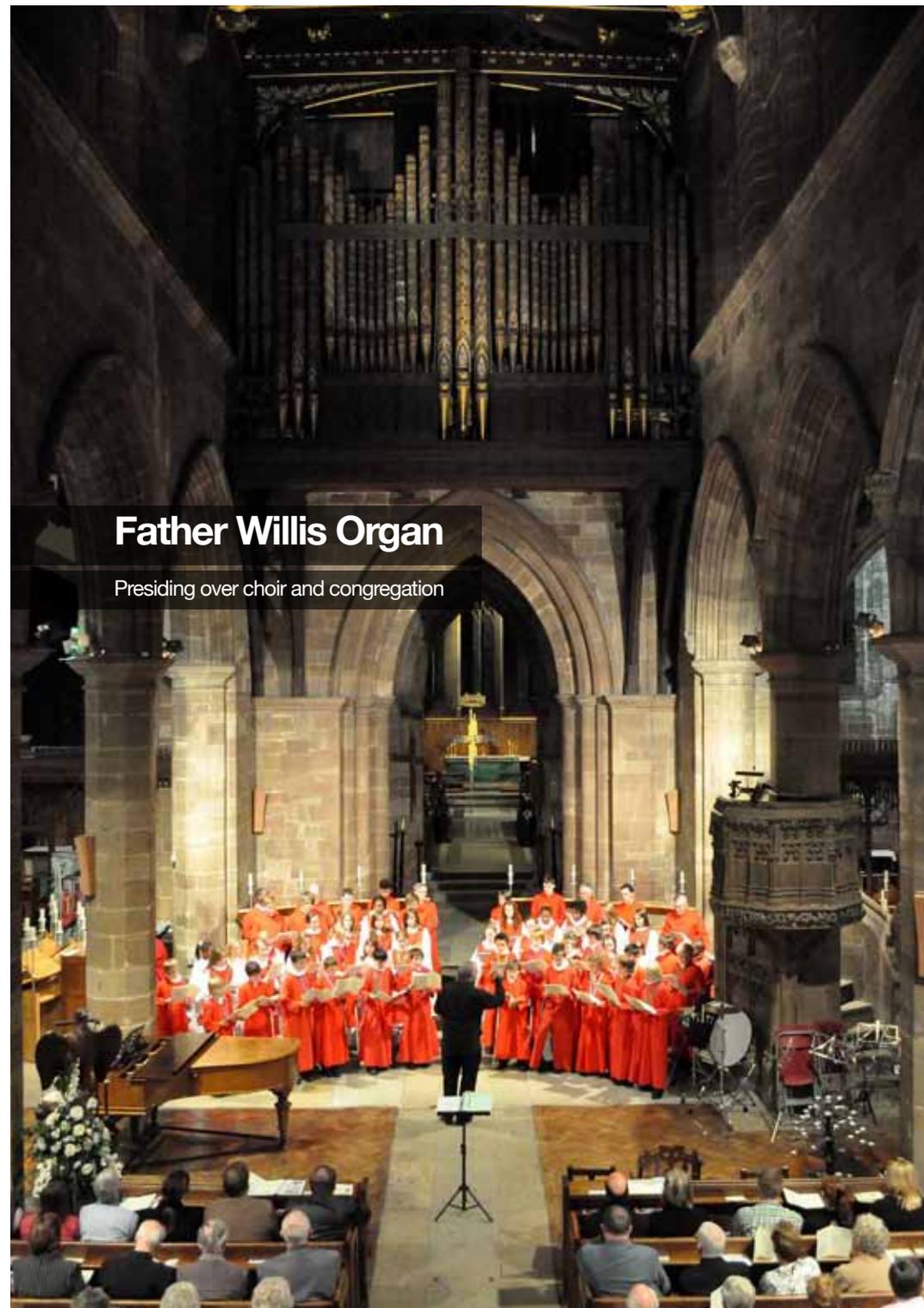
Wolverhampton City Symphony Orchestra

With conductor Peter Morris



Final Rehearsal

For TV appearance



Father Willis Organ

Presiding over choir and congregation

St Peter's Church has a strong musical heritage in keeping with the English choral tradition with the choir having been an essential part of the very fabric of the Church for centuries.

The Choir's reputation is such that, each summer the choristers deputise for the choirs of other Cathedrals. In summer 2011 they were honoured to sing in Canterbury Cathedral.



The junior choir currently comprises of local boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 17, and is one of the largest traditional choirs in the country.

The musical, educational and religious experiences on offer to children of every faith are immense, and integral to it all is the Father Willis Pipe Organ.

Through St Peter's outreach programme, hundreds of children each year learn about, and experience, the sounds of this unique instrument, encouraging them to explore wider musical fields.

Many aspiring and successful church organists have learnt their craft at St Peter's. A yearly free Scholarship allows a school or university student to learn the organ, which helps the training of choristers and playing at services. Free organ lessons are also given to local youngsters.

For the church, the Organ is essential to maintain choral services, extensive repertoire, prestigious standards and civic status.

The encouragement of music and singing of any kind has been proven to help emotional and physical wellbeing. Undoubtedly music at some point will have emotionally moved all generations.

The music of the Father Willis Organ is a lasting reminder of the greatness and history of Wolverhampton and what it means to everyone today in the City

For the sake of generations to come, for music, and for the pride of the children of the City, the Organ must never be silent.

What CAN YOU do to help?

The fundraising is a challenge, but essential.

The cost of restoring this historic and magnificent instrument is £350,000.

Any donation you are able to give, however small, will help us on our way and we would be grateful if you could fill in the form overleaf, detach it and send it to us at the given address with your gift.

Please do remember that if you are a UK tax payer your gift is worth another 25p in the pound to the Appeal as long as you fill in the Gift Aid section of the form.

To clarify the following refurbishment requirements, a pipe is where the distinctive Willis sound comes from. There are 2,500 pipes in total. A Stop controls the opening and closing of the pipes. Each Stop controls approximately sixty one pipes with similar musical characteristics. In total there are 43 Stops. In addition there are 14 coupling Stops which control the three tiers of the keyboard.

If you would like to make a larger donation we have the following sponsorship opportunities.

Preserve a pipe:	£100 each
For the thirty-two smaller but visible pipes:	£500 each
For the visible three large front pipes:	£1,000 each
Adopt a Stop:	£1,000 each
For the refurbishment of the Swell Box	£6,000
<small>(The swell box houses one third of the Organ's pipes. The organist opens/closes the boxes doors to make the sound louder/softer):</small>	
For the bellows which provide the wind for the famed English sound of the Father Willis Organ:	£18,000
For a new three-tier keyboard console:	£29,000



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How to help...

There are various ways to offer your support...

- Make a one-off donation
- Make a regular donation via direct debit
- Sponsor a pipe or a Stop
- Become a fundraising volunteer

Alternatively you could send a donation cheque made payable to 'St. Peter's Collegiate Church (Organ Appeal)' to:

St Peter's Church Organ Restoration Appeal
St Peter's House
4 Exchange Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 1TS

For more information please visit
www.stpeterswolverhamptonchoir.co.uk
Or call the Church office on 01902 422642

Charity number: 1130297