



St. Margaret's Church

I P S W I C H

Music at St Margaret's Church Ipswich

The Organs – a brief history (More detail and specifications will be available shortly here on the website)

1529 – Margaret Hoo gave money for 'a pair of organs'.

1754 – A musicians' gallery was set up at the west end of the church in the tower using woodwork from Brightwell Hall. Music at St Margaret's was led by a couple of violins, a clarinet, and double bass.

1844 – A stone gallery replaced the wooden one. The organ upon it was built by Taylor and was later sold to Dennington Church in Suffolk where the case remains.

1846 – The gallery was removed 'it having been found a very objectionable structure in consequence to the irreverent conduct of the individuals who occupied it'.

1868 – Organ built by William Hill. An organ chamber was built in the North Transept, and this now serves as the Choir Vestry.

1871 – Organ enlarged by William Hill.

1906 – Organ considerably enlarged by J.J. Binns and removed to the South Transept.

1982 – The present organ was bought from Trinity Church, Bedford to replace the earlier William Hill instrument, and installed in the North Transept by Bishop and Son, Ipswich. It was originally built by J.W. Walker and Sons in 1859.

2013 – The Walker organ was completely restored by Bishop and Son, Ipswich. The sharper pitch of the 1859 instrument was lowered to A=440.

Choral music

The choir at St Margaret's has changed considerably over the past two and a half centuries. Information taken from East Anglian Daily Times 26.11.38 records that in 1754 and onwards, services were accompanied by a small group of musicians (reportedly a couple of violins, clarinet and double bass) in the tower gallery. In 1844, a choir under the direction of Mr Parker (organist during the mid-1800s) sang in the new stone gallery for organ and choir which replaced the smaller wooden one. From the Wodderspoon volumes of Ipswich History c.1845 it is said that

'At the west end of the church now filled by an organ is a gallery with a stone front of gothic character.' Also 'A portion of the rood screen stood in front of the organ, and another portion lay under a pew at the chancel end but was

destroyed when the church was supplied with open benches'. Records also show that in 1881, ladies were singing with the 'gentlemen voices' under the direction of Frederick Hunnibell, organist in the later 1800s.

Jonathan Job was organist during the earlier part of the twentieth century; precise dates are uncertain, though it is known that he was living close to this church in 1901, and certainly active here in 1922. He left St Margaret's in 1935. He was also conductor of the Ipswich Male Voice Choir and Borough Organist. He introduced boys into the choir. In 1906, when the organ was moved from the North to the South Transept, the choir stalls were enlarged. During Jonathan Job's time, he would take the choir out to give recitals in other churches, including Bury St Edmunds. From private correspondence, it is revealed that he took a "special' choir (he could draw from St Margaret's and other choirs) to the BBC Studios in London and conducted the broadcast music. From the same correspondence, Bernard Southgate 'had quite a large choir and would bring in from the Tower Church and Museum Street Church soloists and extra choir for Crucifixion and Messiah.' Furthermore, 'It was about 1944 that the Morning Service was broadcast from St Margaret's at 9.00 a.m. Mr Southgate worked very hard on accuracy and detail and this was the first broadcast from an Ipswich Church. Mr Edward Bugg was a pupil of Mr Job and would perform anthems, parts from Messiah etc.'

The choir continued with boys under successive organists, and became affiliated to the RSCM in 1957. In 1968, John Parry introduced girls into the choir.

The current choir (2018) of approximately twenty singers is well balanced in terms of numbers in each section. Repertoire is wide ranging, from the Renaissance to present day, and introits, service settings and anthems are prepared for the Sunday morning services on three Sundays in the month, and Choral Evensong on the fourth Sunday.

In the early 1990s, the organ and choral traditions of St Margaret's were supplemented by two new forms of music, which both continue to enhance worship in the church today, alongside the robed choir. The first was the "band"; an eclectic classical chamber orchestra, drawn from the instrumental talent available within the church membership and featuring instruments in various combinations over the years. Its repertoire spans hymns and songs from a range of eras, enriching the musical variety within worship.

The other new form of music in the 1990s was the "music group", which was primarily a response to the upsurge of more contemporary worship music that was taking place at the time. This group has always had guitars, keyboard and vocals at its core, but at various times has been augmented by a range of instruments and percussion. The formation of the music group enabled an alternative form of worship at St Margaret's, creating the opportunity for new service structures that tended to have a less formal feel than the previous tradition. It was also a means for younger members of the congregation to become more engaged in worship and church life, as well as an outlet for their musical talent. Originally featuring at just one service a month, plus youth group activities, the music group has matured into an integral part of mainstream weekly worship at St Margaret's, alongside other traditions.

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