

Chapter 17

MUSIC AT ST MICHAEL'S

MUSIC has always played an important role in the lives of those who have worshipped in St Michael's. They have been blessed with many fine musicians – organists, choir masters and choristers – as well as generous benefactors. One of the greatest, and best loved, was Edward (Ted) Rowland Smith (Fig. 17-1) who died in April 1986. Apart from periods spent teaching at country schools, Ted spent his whole life in Mitcham. He joined the choir as a nine-year-old boy soprano in 1922, and his fine tenor voice was heard until ill health forced his retirement late in his life. It was not until after the death of his wife Melva Estelle Smith in December 1991 that the full extent of their benefaction became known. Their only child, David, predeceased both parents, and at the Annual Vestry in 1992 it was announced that Melva and Ted had left the whole of the residue of their joint estate to the Parish for the enhancement of its music and for building maintenance. The original bequest of \$262,000 (see page 301) was lodged in a special Synodal Trust fund, and in 1994 over \$91,000 was released for the refurbishment of the Bishop & Son organ.

Ted's love of God, of traditional Anglican church music, and of his fellow men shines forth in the many extracts quoted in this chapter which are taken from a recorded interview made several months before he died. Mrs Mollie Bowen, Archdeacon Clampett's daughter who was born in the old Rectory in 1896, was also present when the interview was taped. She made the comment that whenever she heard Ted's fine tenor voice, she could hear her father. This was not surprising since Clampett "trained Ted the boy and Ted the man".

MUSIC IN THE COLONIAL YEARS

Amongst the items of expenditure listed in the back of the first Minute Book were four repayments to William Bartley for an organ. Between 1st January and the end of March 1854 these payments amounted to nearly £69. In addition, James Bragg, the verger, was paid £3 3s 0d for making an organ seat. During this same period an organist, Mr J. S. Green, was receiving a salary of £5 per quarter. Presumably it was a small pipe organ as there are later references to men being paid "for blowing"; also for "Choir alterations and the construction of an organ platform", for which Robert Nesbitt was paid £10 5s 0d. This was a relatively large sum of money, and one authority suggests that by elevating a pipe organ on a platform, not only would it 'speak' and sound better, but it would also have the effect of increasing the volume of a very small instrument.¹

In 1864 a Mr Thomas was to be approached regarding playing the organ, and "should he be unable to take the



Fig. 17-1
Ted Smith,
chorister and
benefactor.
(Courtesy
Ruth Dibben)

office, the Churchwardens were instructed to advertize". Whether he took the job is not recorded. Several years later Charles Webb is named as the organist. His name first appears as a Vestryman in November 1866, at which stage he was one of the Parish auditors. As well as being the organist, Webb was the Headmaster of the Mitcham School.

There is no mention of a choir until March 1869 by which time Reverend Henry Read (the fourth incumbent) had arrived. In their report to Vestry the Wardens recorded that: "The Choir alterations have improved the interior appearance of the Church, and the Choristers have greatly advanced in their singing and chanting." At the same Vestry it was moved: "That the Hymns now in use, called *Ancient and Modern* be discontinued, and that they be replaced by the old book called *Hall's Collection*." This led to a lengthy debate, with the opponents demanding that a written poll of the whole congregation be taken "so that the question might be settled by a majority of the Seat-holders". The result was an overwhelming endorsement of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* which gained thirty-four votes (including Charles Webb's), with only sixteen in favour of returning to *Hall's Collection*.

The Bishop & Son Organ Purchased

Henry Read was incumbent of St Michael's from January 1869 to June 1878, and it was towards the end of this period that the decision was made to purchase a new organ – in spite of the fact that the Church required extensive repairs, if not rebuilding! At the 1877 Annual Vestry it was determined that Mrs Read, who was visiting her family in Worthing, England, should be "required to take steps to procure a suitable organ". In November an order was placed with Bishop & Son, a London firm of organ builders which had been established in 1795. A search of the company's records in 1994 revealed that the organ cost £225 with a further £25 for "packing and delivery at docks".²

In 1978 Dr Lyndon Murray, who was then organist at St Michael's, prepared some historical notes on the 'Music at St Michael's' in which he said:

From the mid-1850s there was a massive increase in the building of organs and of their acquisition by thousands of churches throughout Britain and the Colonies. Organ exhibitions were held and countless innovations of a mechanical and electrical kind devised. Obtaining an organ for the church was extremely fashionable and pursued quite uncritically in the main. Organ builders produced what might now be called job-lots or 'models' of a fairly stereotyped kind... It was no coincidence that Bishop provided 3 organs for Adelaide at the same time; namely for St Peter's Cathedral (now much altered in St Augustine's, Unley), St Peter's College Chapel (rebuilt in 1977), and the St Michael's organ. What of course is by no means sure is that the organ in St Michael's was ever built for that church. It is perfectly possible that, as is still the case in the present day, a builder makes an organ for exhibition or other temporary use which is then sold to a buyer looking for an instrument subsequently. We must presume that Mrs Read described the church to Mr Bishop and told him something of its musical tradition and that the builder then provided what he thought might be suitable...

A 'New Organ Fund' subscription list was opened following the 1877 Vestry, and when the remittance of \$250 was sent to London the following January only some £170 had been subscribed, requiring a Bank overdraft of £80. In order to pay the balance of the accounts due on the new organ it was resolved in July to offer the old organ to the parish of Glen Osmond for £50, and if they declined it was to be advertised and sold for the best price obtainable.

By the time the new organ arrived aboard the *Argonaut* on 10th June a crisis had erupted resulting in Read's sudden forced resignation (see page 28). The problem was compounded by the fact that a contract had been signed for repairs to the Church costing £200, and the organ could not be erected in its permanent position against the eastern wall until the work was complete and a special platform constructed upon which it was to be placed. The valuable pipe-organ was brought up to the Church, some seats removed so that it could be unpacked and examined by Mr MacKenzie, a local organ-builder, then stored in a corner until the dust and debris had settled.

The first reference to the Bishop organ (Fig. 17-2) being used comes from a note in the *Register* of Saturday, 5th October 1878 advising that the new incumbent, Reverend J.F. Hocter, would commence his duties at St Michael's Church, Mitcham, on the following day: "Morning service at 11 a.m. and Holy Communion. Evening at 6.30 p.m. when Mr Boulton at the Organ and the Cathedral Choir of Boys will conduct the Musical part of the Service." Mr Boulton was the organist at St Peter's Cathedral.

Over the next decade there are frequent items of expenditure for tuning and "putting the organ in thorough repair". In 1887 it was moved to the south wall as recorded in the minutes for 21st September:

Since the last meeting the organ had been moved & repaired according to contract entered into with MacKenzie & E. Warhurst ... the sum agreed upon had been paid, & Mr E. Warhurst had agreed to keep the organ in order for six months, on condition that the whole sum should be paid at once instead of £5 being left for the 6 months. Mr E. Warhurst had also promised to send in an estimate of the sum for which he would keep it in tune for the year.

The incumbent informed the meeting that Mr F. Warhurst had resigned his position of organist, & Miss Playford had consented to take the organ for 6 or perhaps 9 months at the rate of £30 per annum, in hopes that by the end of that time the salary might be again raised to £40, but her position was merely a temporary arrangement.

This reduction in wages coincided with a period of severe depression throughout the Colony which lasted for most of the 1880s. It would appear that Edward Warhurst's contract was not renewed at the end of the twelve-month period, because a report in the minutes of June 1888 notes that a letter had been received from Messrs Fincham & Hobday (prominent Australian organ builders) mentioning what repairs they considered necessary. It is possible that the organ may have been damaged when it was moved to the south wall, for they go on to say that they could complete the repairs for the sum of £45 on condition that they "had

Fig. 17-2 The Bishop & Son organ in St Michael's Church, Mitcham. (Lucy Cheesman, 1995)



the tuning of the instrument for 10 guineas a year". Their offer to "guarantee to keep it in good condition for 5 years" was accepted.

The Warhurst men – Edward, Francis and Abel – played a major role in the musical life of St Michael's for many years. In October 1890 the Annual Friendly Societies' Service was held in the Church at which "Hans Bertram and Mr E. J. Warhurst acted as organists and succeeded in bringing out the great merits of our instrument, which for its full rich tones and sweetness, is not surpassed in the Colony". Edward's son, Abel, who was organist at St Michael's for thirty-six years, was a "Piano and Organ Tuner and Repairer" with business premises in Hindley Street and at Princes Road, Mitcham (Fig. 17-3).

For a number of years Parish life in Mitcham had moved at a sedate pace, keeping in time with two elderly incumbents, George Henry Farr and Alfred Sells, but in July 1888 a forceful young minister, Reverend Frederick Samwell, arrived in Mitcham. He had a fine singing voice and was rather scathing about the abilities of the choir. In his Annual Report to the 1889 Vestry he wrote:

The "Divine Art of Music" does not seem to have been bestowed upon Mitcham in any very lavish manner, and what I forethought would have been my easiest task, has proved the most difficult. The Choir needs much strengthening in numbers, but the present members are deserving of high praise for the interest they have taken, and for their regular attendances at the services and practices.

Two years later he was trying to organise "a good Drum and Fife Band for the youths of the Parish", but there appeared to be great difficulty in obtaining a competent Instructor:

The great expense attaching to the purchase of instruments stands in the way of starting a brass band, but if a few of our wealthy people would like to come forward with a portion of the cost, there would be no difficulty about providing the bandmaster and the players.

There is no further mention of a band until 1902 by which time Reverend Albert Wyndham Clampett had been Rector of Mitcham for nearly a decade.

THE CLAMPETT ERA (1893–1939)

During Clampett's long incumbency of forty-six years the musical life of the Parish flourished. Both he and his wife, Alice, had beautiful singing voices and frequently performed at concerts. Many of these were held in the St Michael's Day School Hall which had been opened on 30th July 1890 when "a large audience, a splendid concert, a brilliantly lighted new room, all combined to give eclat to the occasion". During the Clampett years the Hall was in constant use, not only for meetings, but also for numerous social functions – most of which were accompanied by music. By 1903 a 'St Michael's Choral Society' had been formed under the baton of the organist, Abel Warhurst:

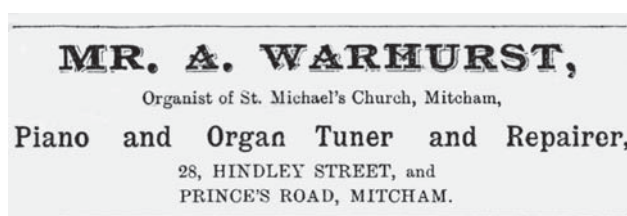


Fig. 17-3 Advertisement placed in the Parish magazine by Abel Warhurst in October 1901.

It opened in June with twenty-seven members and rehearsals are held weekly in the Hall. On Monday evening, 25th July, they gave a most creditable performance of Root's very attractive cantata The Haymakers in the Institute, the voices being supported by a small orchestra, all under the conductorship of Mr Warhurst. A small charge of one shilling ensured a large crowd was in attendance. The proceeds of £7 are to be devoted to providing St Michael's Hall with stage fittings to obviate the necessity of hiring the Institute when anything requiring scenery is performed.

The Choir

Within months of his arrival in Mitcham, Clampett "desired to have the opinion of the Vestry as to the desirability of the members of the choir adopting a uniform dress – the ladies black hats and dresses with white collars and cuffs, the gentlemen surplices". Although it was unanimously agreed that such a change "would be most desirable", it was to be another four years before his wish became a reality. The surpliced choir made its first appearance at Michalmas 1898, the cassocks and surplices being "the outcome of a gift made by Mrs Barr Smith to the Rector". As a result of special collections made during the services that day a fund was opened to build a vestry in which to store the new garments. Building work commenced towards the end of the year and the new choir vestry was opened on Sexagesima Sunday 1899. [In 1980 when the new Parish Hall was built this was converted into the narthex.]

Writing in the parish magazine about that time, the Rector noted that Mr John Dalby Boorman had been in the choir for nearly forty years "which must be an unequalled record in the history of any choir in the Diocese". He always occupied the same corner seat, and his presence there "could guarantee that the vocal portions of the service are, so far as one man can do it, removed from risk and uncertainty". His son, Laurie, also a chorister, sang many solo parts over the years. A family member commented recently that "Old John Dalby Boorman never had a smile on his face, and had the young ones petrified". Had the family been able to afford singing lessons for Laurie, it was felt that he could have been "as good a baritone as Peter Dawson", who was about four years older than Laurie.³

The choir boys were frequent visitors to the rambling old Rectory where Clampett delighted in teaching them to play cricket. In May 1901 it was recorded that the choir boys of St Michael's "have formed themselves into a cricket club, and played their first match against the choir boys of St Paul's, Port Adelaide, on 26th January".

During 1912 St Michael's received many gifts in connection with the Diamond Jubilee of the Church.



Fig. 17-4 St Michael's choir at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, Michaelmas 1912. (Back row) John Wood, Abel Warhurst (organist), William Warhurst, William Symonds, John Warhurst, Harry Snell. (Centre row) E. Holton, H. Wallbridge, Mrs Kitty Ogden, Mrs Dorothy Evans (née Warhurst) Reverend A.W. Clampett, Miss Ethel Playford, Miss Trixie Snell, W. Noels, Ken Playford. (Front row) Arthur Buscombe, E. Harris, Joe Butler, W. Gilham, G. Harris, W. Smith, Sam Butler. (Petts & Rawling, 1912)

Fig. 17-5
Elsie Bradey,
aged thirteen,
proudly wearing
her new choir
cap and gown.
(MPA)



By far the largest donation – £100 – came from Robert Barr Smith for the “renovation of the organ”. With the balance, plus other monies received, the Rector ordered from London new cassocks and surplices for the choir, their old ones having been in constant use for fourteen years (Fig. 17-4). It had been an understanding for some time that when there were at least six ladies in the choir, then they too would be robed. It was not until the following January that the ladies first appeared in cap and gown. One of them was young Elsie Bradey (later Mrs Godat, see page 134) who was accepted into the choir when she was only thirteen – possibly to boost the numbers to the required six before Clampett would let the ladies wear cap and gown (Fig. 17-5).

The Organ: Hydraulic Power Installed

As mentioned above, one of the gifts received during the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 1912 was a donation of £100 from Robert Barr Smith “for renovation of the organ”. This, no doubt, was in response to Clampett's article which appeared in the parish magazine in March that year suggesting that the Jubilee Year would be a good time to overhaul the organ:

Mr Dodd, the organ builder, reports the sounding boards are worn out and need re-making. The cost of dismantling the pipes, removing the sound boards, and placing in new ones, connecting up the action and generally regulating, he estimates would cost £42 10s 0d.. I would like to see HYDRAULIC POWER introduced for blowing. The complete estimate for this is £68 5s 0d ... a total outlay of £110 15s 0d.

By March 1913 he was able to report that: “As this copy is being written men are working hard in St Michael's installing the hydraulic blowing power, mounting the new sounding boards, and generally overhauling and toning up the organ.” Four months later it was announced that Mr Alfred Wilkinson, who was in England at the time of the Jubilee Celebrations, “has expressed a desire to be associated with the movement. He has, at the Rector's suggestion, agreed to add to the organ another stop – the tremulant – which will be a great acquisition. The cost will be from £10 to £12”.

Although electricity was connected to the Church in 1919, the organ continued to be worked by an hydraulic pumping mechanism until 1945. The device was connected to the water supply, and this ran a turbine that in turn ran a fan, which supplied air to the bellows. The water was discharged through waste pipes, flowing out to a drain and

down Church Road to Brownhill Creek. Much of it ended up under the floor of the Church causing considerable damage to the southern wall. Wanda Williams remembers that the sight of water running down Church Road meant that the organ was working. The system worked well when the water pressure was reasonably high, but a sudden drop left the organ without power. One church in England had to abandon this method because a large number of townspeople took their baths on Sunday morning.⁴

Ted Smith remembers Sunday evenings as being the time most likely for St Michael's hydraulic system to fail, particularly on hot summer nights when the locals were watering their gardens:

During the time it was operated by water there was much building going on in the area - drains and mains increased - and often at Evensong there was not enough pressure to operate the hydraulic pump, where upon the organist would get behind the organ with a giant pair of footprints and disconnect the mechanism from the pump. Then one of the choir boys would go around the back and pump with an old handle. This handle is covered by carvings of boys names who had pumped the organ. My father was one of the boys who got his few pence for pumping the organ in the old days!

When Abel Warhurst died in January 1935, Clamptett wrote in the Vestry Record Book: "Funeral of A. Warhurst organist for 36 years – A faithful colleague". It had been a long association between priest and organist, encompassing all but the first six years of Clamptett's incumbency to that time. The new organist appointed was a Welshman by the name of John Tudor (then organist at St Wilfrid's) who, according to Ted Smith, was "a magnificent sight-reader".

THE PEARMAN ERA (1939–1962)

Like Clamptett, Reverend Reginald Pearman was Rector and choir master. During the First World War he was often absent for a month at a time when called upon to do his spell of duty as a chaplain at the Army Camp at Woodside. The role of choir master then fell upon the organist.

John Tudor was organist from 1935 to 1942, and following his resignation Frederick Harman was appointed – a position he held for the next nineteen years. His daughter, Mrs Judith Arndt, recalls that John Tudor invited his work mate, Frederick Harman, to succeed him:

Fred was a bass chorister at St Chad's, Fullarton, and their organist Audrey Cain gave him lessons. What he may have lacked in talent he certainly compensated with enthusiasm and dedication. During wartime petrol rationing he caught a tram to Springfield for Friday night practices and Sunday Evensongs, using his car only on Sunday mornings to collect various lady members of the choir and drive them up to the Church.

There was also room for two choir boys to sit on the luggage carrier at the back of the car. Brian Crisp remembers those rides as being an "exciting experience, the roads being somewhat bumpy".



Fig. 17-6
Reverend
Reginald
Pearman and
chorister
Judith Harman
(later Arndt)
in 1949.
She was the
daughter of
the organist,
Frederick
Harman.
(Courtesy
Judith Arndt)

The Choir

Judith Arndt (Fig. 17-6) has provided much of the following information. It paints a delightful word picture of the people involved in the musical life of the Parish during the 1940s and 1950s.

Rector, Reg Pearman, had a beautiful tenor voice, and his superb rendition of solo parts, particularly Stainer's The Story of the Cross is well remembered. Reg was a very able choir master and brought out the best in those voices he had to work with...

A well-known identity, with grey hair plaited into two buns, was Amy Gamlen... Amy was also sacristan and a faithful chorister. Her soprano voice was far from sweet, but strong enough to lead the congregation on her own... Kitty Ogden's contralto voice was an asset to the choir. Its richness used to feature in the solo of a Harvest Cantata sung in those days. Kitty [see Fig. 6-11] also laundered the altar linen.

A notable character was Ernest Rollitt, who lived alone in West Mitcham. He rode a push bike to church and was a dedicated choir member. He wore old-fashioned clothes and celluloid collars, and he covered his bald head with a lady's hairnet. His hearing aid often offended everyone with a high-pitched shrill during the sermon. A note would be hastily written and passed to old Mr Rollitt. His broad accent identified him as a former West Country Englishman. Although he appeared eccentric he loved his Lord.

Other choir members were youthful: Maurice and Betty Neck, Quinton Young, Barbara and Gwen Nurse, Jill Barnett and her brother, and Helen Kinnear; Frank Hurren, a good tenor, and his sister Rosalie; Leon Coker; Jan and Val Robins whose brothers Nicol and Donnell sometimes read lessons at Evensong; Colin Crisp, John Pearman, Elizabeth and Rosemary Lambert, Janice and Elaine Greeneklee. At the time of the Centenary the organist's wife, Jessie, sons Lewis and Raymond and daughter Judith were all choristers.

During the war years there were times when the choir outnumbered the congregation. Lay readers used to conduct Matins and alternate Evensongs when the Rector was at St Wilfrid's or in camp... For a few years in the 1940s a choir attendance book was kept and one penny for every practice and service was credited to the children to

encourage them. Maximum attendance amounted to 3/9d per quarter. The ladies always wore hats to choir practice, as it was held in church [see Fig.6-3]. Knitted beanies or berets were fashionable for the young girls.

In those years the English Parish Psalter was used and the choir knew all the canticles by heart. When practising Psalms there would be several 'knock knocks' on the front pew by Reg Pearman's baton (a turned wooden spindle from an old chair) as the singers learnt to fit the words to the chant. (Speech rhythm was introduced around 1960.) The joyful Festal responses were used throughout the year, except during Lent when the plain Ferial ones were chanted...

When the Bishop visited for Confirmation, Reg Pearman put in extra effort to ensure his choir was thoroughly prepared: tempo had to be kept exact and mouths fully opened for best tone and plenty of light and shade to illustrate the words. As the choir formed up behind the crucifer at the tower door in freshly-laundered robes, Reg would be mopping his brow with his handkerchief. The large number of candidates occupied the front seats. Boys wore their best grey suits – some in their first pair of long trousers – all admonished not to wear any of the fashionable hair oil. The Bishop always confirmed the boys last as he did not want to lay oily hands on the girls' pristine veils.

Friends of St Michael's Choir

As mentioned by Judith Arndt, her father instigated a scheme to encourage the children of the choir by awarding them points and money for attendance. The money was raised by a group known as 'The Friends of St Michael's Choir', with each member giving a quarterly donation of at least 1/6d. When it began in 1945, the Rector hoped that "according to support given to the scheme, we have other ideas such as the awarding of singing or music scholarships, but that is not part of the scheme to begin with".

Farr House Girls

During the War a number of girls from Farr House sang in the choir. In May 1940 the Rector advised that "with the kind co-operation of the matron of the Girls' Home I have recently drafted about fifteen of the bigger girls into the choir". The cost of outfitting them with some sort of uniform was a problem (clothing was rationed) and he appealed for parishioners to contribute to a fund to purchase "white overalls, such as is worn by nurses, with a white or blue veil is all that is required ... approximate cost of £10 for material". The money was raised by the Guild at a Bridge afternoon, and the Farr House girls wore their new robes for the first time at the Patronal Festival. In December members of the St Michael's Ladies Guild also made some heavy curtains which were used "to divide the Rector's vestry to make a robing vestry for the choir men and boys, so that the women and girls have the present choir vestry to themselves". Up until then the girls had been robing at the Rectory.

[Present-day clergy, servers and sacristans who have worked in the confines and chaos of that small priest's vestry must find it hard to image now how any extra people could be fitted into such a small room!]

Five years later, following some unfortunate incidents, the Rector advised angrily that:

Owing to the action of the Girls' Home Committee in taking the girls from the choir, as a result of which I have felt obliged to resign the chaplaincy of the Home, we are now thrown back on the resources of the Mitcham end of the Parish to build up once more a choir worthy of the Parish Church. The direct result of this action of the Committee is that special choral work in connection with our Easter and Harvest Festivals, Whitsuntide and Ascension has had to be abandoned until such time as the choir has been reorganized and we again have a strong soprano lead...

Since I came to the Parish it has been one of my aims to get young people doing something for God and the Church... For these reasons it is more regretted that the girls of a 'Diocesan Church Home' in the parish and almost opposite the Church are denied the great privilege of an active share in the services and worship of their Parish Church. Lay Readers who came to take services at St Michael's often spoke eulogistically of the sweet singing of the choir girls...

In September 1960 it was announced that "after over nineteen years service at St Michael's as organist, Mr F. E. Harman has resigned". He was presented with a cheque with which he bought a silver tray – suitably inscribed and engraved. During all that time he had only had two Sundays away! As well as his duties as organist, he frequently acted as choir master when the Rector was away in camp. He was usually the bell ringer and sometimes had to take Matins or Evensong if the Lay Reader did not turn up.

The Organ: Electric Power Installed

Writing in the *Parish Messenger* in November 1943 the Rector advised:

Until the last few weeks the organ has been operated by water power ... and at long last the mechanism of the pump has broken down. It has always been fairly expensive – the account for excess water each year is very high and the time has come when money has got to be raised and spent. The dampness around and under the organ through the hydraulic system encourages white ants, and last year we had evidence that they had been at work in some of the woodwork. The organ itself is in a bad state of repair through long service. Because of the breakdown of the hydraulic mechanism the organ now has to be pumped by hand, a heavy job for anyone – and especially for a boy in the approaching summer months. My purpose here is to launch an appeal for £200. This will enable us to install an electric blower and to thoroughly renovate the organ, which has got to be completely pulled down in any case before a blower can be installed... The tone of the old organ is excellent and the organ can be made as good as new. A fund has already been started, but no work will be commenced until the job can be done properly.

Judith Arndt recalls that her father, Fred Harman, began the organ fund with a shilling, and that her mother worked

diligently making jewellery out of bread dough and selling it to parishioners and friends.

During August and September 1944 two Special Vestries were held to approve quotations supplied by J.E. Dodd & Sons for the installation of an electric motor. It was reported that Canon Finnis, organist of St Peter's Cathedral, had inspected the Church and organ and "had favoured a suggestion that the organ be moved to the eastern wall from the southern". The reasons given were that it would permit a more effective arrangement of the choir from the organist's viewpoint and greater convenience to the organist. He also expressed concern about the damage the water was doing to the southern wall.

According to Ted Smith the work was done by one of Dodd's employees, Bill Henderson, who lived in the Parish and whose family was attached to the Church:

Bill looked after organs at the Cathedral, Scots Church, Stow Church, St Augustine's at Unley, and Saint's chapel. He was a very skilled tradesman and had been sent out as the representative of an English organ building firm. The pipe work needed restoration, which he did. He also cleaned the organ and re-installed it on the east wall. An electric motor was installed in a housing outside the Church, and air brought in by a trunk main.

Something unforeseen happened. There was a great plantation of enormous pine trees extending from the west gate almost up to the Church [see Fig. 10-5]. These cast a shadow on the west window, shielding the organ from the direct rays of the sun. These pine trees were cut down and grubbed out prior to the construction of the Centenary Memorial Terrace. From then on for many years we had severe troubles with the organ. It got very hot and the leathers used to dry out, and as soon as the power was turned on a series of squeaks and squawks, known as ciphers, occurred. On many occasions the organist and the Rector had to get into the back of the organ and use a fine spray of water. Bowls of water were left inside to try and keep up the humidity so that the problem wouldn't go on.

J. E. Dodd & Sons

As well as Dodd & Sons, mention has been made of another firm of organ builders called Fincham and Hobday who repaired and tuned the Bishop organ in the late 1880s. Josiah Eustace Dodd, who was born in Victoria, served his apprenticeship with Fincham and Hobday in Melbourne before being sent to Adelaide in 1881 as co-manager with Arthur Hobday to establish a branch of the business here. Although Dodd was only twenty-five years old, George Fincham regarded him as one of the finest tradesmen in this field in Australia. As well as being an excellent craftsman, he had a flair for business, and in 1888 Hobday returned to Melbourne leaving Dodd in charge. In 1894 Dodd purchased the Adelaide business and began trading under his own name.

By 1905 he was employing twenty men and had to move to larger premises. His two sons, Ebenezer and Eustace both became organ builders. Some of his staff broke away and formed another firm called 'Gunstar Organ Works' which specialised in electric and pneumatic actions. Following the Second World War

the two firms amalgamated to form 'J. E. Dodd & Sons – Gunstar Organ Works'.⁵

THE MacDONALD ERA (1962–1976)

The firm of 'J. E. Dodd & Sons – Gunstar Organ Works' continued to care for the organ, and in March 1969 it provided a detailed report on its condition in response to a request by Fred Finlay, the organist:

Considering its age the instrument is in very good condition, all pipes are speaking and the action is all connected and working correctly.

During the last ninety years there has, of course, been a slow deterioration and to restore it to its original condition, as nearly as possible, would mean dismantling the instrument and to go through it thoroughly, replacing worn felts and leathers, recovering the keys, rebushing keys and all other moving parts.

This would cost about \$3,000 and as it may not be practicable I have itemised the main points.

- 1. Notes whispering, that is partly sounding when they should not be sounding. This occurs only during the very hot weather and is due to pallets or valves twisting and warping as a result of the heat. The remedy is to remove the soundboards, replane the surfaces and the pallet faces and then to cover the bedding surfaces with felt and leather.*
- 2. Several of the front pipes were damaged at the time the arch was being repaired and they should be straightened. This does not affect the performance of the organ but it would look better if repaired.*
- 3. Bellows (Air reservoir). This is showing the effects of age, the leather is perished and worn and this causes minor air leaks. It is still serviceable but will need to be releathered within the next few years.*
- 4. The pedal action is very noisy, this is due to wear over the years and can be greatly improved by rebushing the eyes at the end of the pedal keys.*
- 5. Swell Pedal. This is the old type hitching pedal which is inconvenient as well as very noisy. The Swell shutters can be refitted and felted and a balanced Swell pedal installed but only in the position of the present hitch pedal and not in the centre of the pedal board as is usual.*

The approximate cost of these five main items were as follows: Item 1, \$450; Item 2, \$6; Item 3, \$290; Item 4, \$68; Item 5, \$130; a total of \$944. On 11th March 1970 approval was given for J. E. Dodd & Sons – Gunstar Organ Works to carry out Items 1,2 and 4 at a cost of \$524.

Frederick Finlay (organist 1963-1977)

Following Fred Harman's retirement in 1960 a new organist, Miss R. Everton, was appointed. She was a science student at the University who had had "over six years study of organ work". Ted Smith recalled:

For a while we had several very talented musicians, conservatorium students, who came in and played for us for a matter of weeks or months, but the job was too demanding and the reward very, very small as Parish

Fig. 17-7

Frederick Finlay
at the Bishop &
Son organ.
(Courtesy Bob
and Dick Finlay)

**Fig. 17-8**

Boy choristers
practising
with the rector,
Reverend James
MacDonald,
in the 1960s.
(Courtesy Bob
and Dick Finlay)



finances were poor. Finally we had the good fortune to get the services of Frederick Finlay. Now Fred was a very talented musician in his own right, one of the finest organists in Adelaide. Fred was a dear man, a very cultured man. His command of the language was wonderful. His spoken word and his written word were a joy to hear and read. Fred was steeped in the old cathedral traditions of all male choirs, but this was the time when there were fewer and fewer boys available for choral activity – one of those low periods – and much against his will Fred had to give in and admit girls to the choir. A number of girls from Farr House, together with other girls from the Parish, came and sang in the choir and made a very joyous sound. Fred played on until towards the end of his life and made a wonderful contribution to St Michael's.

Fred Finlay held the position of organist at St Michael's from 1963 to 1977. He came to Mitcham at the invitation of Reverend James MacDonald whom he had known as a curate at North Adelaide (Figs 17-7 and 17-8). The happy relationship formed there endured for almost the entire period of the MacDonald era. When the Rector announced at the 1976 Annual Vestry that he intended to retire on 31st August that year, Fred Finlay also announced that he would retire as organist and choirmaster as from 31st December. In paying tribute, the Rector wrote:

Mr Finlay has carried out his duties with loyal and devoted service and has provided us with a consistent high standard of good music. His resignation will be softened by the knowledge that he hopes to be able to continue as a member of St Michael's congregation. We have been most fortunate to have had the services of this sensitive and disciplined musician since 1963. Frederick Finlay has sought willingly and gladly to offer his music in worship to the Glory of God. The 'Musical Hour' programmes which he arranged over several years gave an added richness to the musical experience in St Michael's.

The 'Musical Hour' programmes arranged by Fred Finlay comprised a series of musical recitals held at 3 p.m. in St Michael's on Sunday afternoons during the winters of 1971 to 1976. Amongst the performers was Mary MacDonald, daughter of the Rector, who studied violin



at the Elder Conservatorium and went on to play with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra for a number of years.

Fred Finlay performed his last official duty as organist of St Michael's on Sunday, 30th January 1977, and as a token of their appreciation parishioners presented him with a watch after Matins on 27th February. But time was running out for Fred, and he died suddenly on 24th March.

THE CHEESMAN ERA (1976–2001)

Fr Andrew Cheesman was inducted as Rector in November 1976, and the aging Fred Finlay retired three months later. Murdo Morgan acted as temporary organist for about five months, then in August Lyndon Murray was appointed the Parish's first 'Director of Music', a position he held for the next eleven years. The arrival of these two energetic, younger men – both in their early forties – ushered in a period of dramatic change and growth in the musical life of St Michael's.

Organists & Choristers

Dr Lyndon Murray (Fig. 17-9) an Adelaide psychiatrist, had recently returned from Scotland where he had been assistant organist and choir master at Old St Paul's Church in Edinburgh. Writing in the *Herald* in October 1977, Fr Andrew said:

With the appointment of Dr Lyndon Murray as permanent Director of Music at St Michael's, our sense of desolation at the death of Mr Finlay has at last been alleviated. Those who worshipped at the family Eucharist in August felt the warmth of a new fire stirred by the musical initiative of Dr Murray. That was but the foretaste of good things to come. He returns to S.A. fresh from the experience of eight years active involvement in some of the best music being offered in the English tradition in parish life today.

In an article by Lyndon Murray in the same edition of the *Herald* he deplored the virtual demise of English church music saying that, although there was available "almost 500 years of accumulated music for every aspect of the Church's liturgy", to hear any of it, apart from concert performances, "you have to go to the Cathedral or maybe to Crafers (with its boys' choir)". He envisaged



Fig. 17-9
Dr Lyndon
Murray, c.1979.
(Neil Patterson)

developing two choirs at St Michael's. One would be a "stalls choir in the English tradition", for which he required at least 14 boys, 6 basses, 4 tenors and 4 altos. The boys would be paid and grouped into choristers, singing boys and probationers with the senior boys formally admitted and invested with their badges. They would become affiliated members of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). The second group would be a "congregational" choir made up of both men and women:

An exciting vision of the only all-male parish choir in South Australia plus a congregational and reserve choir, with the potential for oratorio and cantata work... Haydn Masses with organ and string quartet; music for voices, organ and brass; sensitive psalm singing; anthems by Purcell and Wesley; unaccompanied Masses by Byrd, Palestrina and Vittoria; Candle-light nine lesson and Carol Services at Christmas, music from the tower and churchyard at dawn on Ascensiontide. The possibilities are with us to bring life and colour into Church Music in an Adelaide parish again.

In spite of lengthy reports to Vestry, articles in parish magazines and advertising, the dream of an all-male

choir failed to materialise. Instead a group of dedicated and talented parishioners evolved – boys, girls, men and women – and within a few years Lyndon had built up the choral tradition at St Michael's to the point where the choir was considered one of the best in the Diocese. On a number of occasions they were invited to sing at the Cathedral, the first being for the Ordination Service in February 1982.

Within weeks of his appointment Lyndon had persuaded the Parish Council to have *English Hymnal* as the standard book in St Michael's, and 250 copies were in use by October. He generously offered to donate his monthly salary to a music fund to cover the cost of music and choir expenses.

His next project was to provide new robes for the choir, the existing ones having been purchased in 1912-13 as part of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations! There was an insufficient number of robes and "the choir had such a woebegone look" that he had been "too ashamed to allow them to take part in the RSCM Festival at the Cathedral". In April 1980 it was announced that:

A most generous bequest, to continue for several years and providing almost \$500 annually, has been promised the choir at St Michael's. The intention of the donor is to equip every choir member with a professionally made cassock and surplice.

The estimated cost was \$100 per robe to have them made locally (or \$200 if they were imported from England) and by November half the required amount of some \$3,000 had been promised. As well as the anonymous donation of \$500 mentioned above, another \$200 had been donated and the Rector and Wardens had agreed to also place the Pobjoy Bequest of \$1,000 into the fund to purchase the robes. About this time 'The Mitcham Parish Church Music Group' was formed, and with their support thirty-nine cassocks "in a fine quality royal crimson material" and twenty-seven surplices were blessed and worn for the first time on 25th October 1981 (Fig. 17-10). It was noted that they had been made by Sister Jemma of Cabra Convent,



Fig. 17-10
St Michael's choir
photographed in October
1981 in their new robes.
Christa Rumsey is on the
extreme left of the group.
(Meg Nicholls)

“assisted by Elizabeth Mackinnon and her team (including Kath Kelly and Rosalie Tonkin) who have worked so long and hard to have the garments ready”.

Cupboards were refitted and additional hanging space to house “the splendid new choir robes” was provided in the storage room of the new Parish Hall. This carpentry was carried out by Harold Thomas and Ted Smith.

Mitcham Parish Church Music Group

With the opening of the Hall on 30th November 1980, Parish life in Mitcham took a great leap forward. One of the first groups to use the new facility was the Parish Church Music Group which held its inaugural meeting on 2nd December. The Objects were, firstly, to assist in the promotion of Church music in the Parish; secondly, to sponsor fund-raising concerts and social musical gatherings within the Parish family; and thirdly, as an immediate aim, to strengthen and support the St Michael's choir by the provision of adult singing scholarships in 1981. (The Group is often referred to as the ‘Music Support Group’.)

The driving force behind the establishment of the Group was Elizabeth Mackinnon (Fig. 17-11), wife of Jock Mackinnon, the Headmaster of Pulteney Grammar School (PGS). One of the first functions arranged by the Group was a recital in the Parish Hall on 13th May 1981 given by the Pulteney Wind Quintet. A capacity crowd attended and \$250 was raised. The Quintet – flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon – comprised an informal group of musicians drawn from pupils, staff, parents and friends who met regularly to play music for its own pleasure. The “Associate Artist” was David Lunniss, the School Chaplain and a former Mitcham curate!

The strong association with Pulteney continued for the next few years with the proceeds of the opening-night performances of various light musicals donated to the Parish Church Music Group. These shows were put on at PGS and included *Trial by Jury* and *A Victorian Melodrama* in July 1981 (when \$350 was raised towards a new piano for the Hall). Writing in the *Pew Bulletin*, the Rector noted that local talent was evident in both costuming and stage performances: “The Parish has its own comic ‘giant killer’ in the form of David Bradley! A wealth of talent was displayed throughout an hilarious evening which, due to the generosity of the Headmaster, will aid our Music Support Fund.” In June 1982 it was *Me and My Girl*, when there were “familiar faces everywhere” including David Bradley (star of the show), John Drake (Director of Music and Producer of the play) and Jock Mackinnon (Headmaster). The following year part of the proceeds of *Pirates of Penzance* was donated to the Music Group.

Jock Mackinnon left Pulteney in July 1983 to be Headmaster of Radford College, Canberra, and his wife Elizabeth and family followed at the end of that year. In farewelling the family, Fr Andrew said:

With the exception of the Director of Music no one has done more for choir and music in the Parish than Elizabeth Mackinnon. Her devotion to duty, high standards in all things (culminating in the handsome red cassocks) and delight in good music have helped choir and congregation attain heights of excellence previously undreamt of.

Fig. 17-11
Elizabeth
Mackinnon
visiting
St Michael's
in 2002.
(Pamela Oborn)



Fundraising by the Music Group also helped to provide sheet music for the choir. In November 1981 it was noted that “the days of photocopying are over and that in future ALL our music will have to be purchased”. As a rough guide, a Holy Communion setting would cost about \$30; a collection of motets or anthems about \$180; and things like Handel's *Messiah* or the Bach *St Matthew Passion* about \$500!

An unexpected source of income came from the sales of the Parish recipe book *Feasts and Festivals*, launched in November 1981, which was co-edited by Lyndon Murray's wife, Helen, and Meg Nicholls (see page 256).

Choral Scholarships

Part of the funds raised by the Parish Church Music Group was used to fund a number of Choral Scholarships. Writing in the *Herald* in November 1981, Lyndon Murray reported that:

Joan Claring-Bould (who used to teach music at Walford and Immanuel Colleges, and is now studying at St Barnabas' College) holds a full scholarship. New half scholarships to provide singing and instrumental tuition fees have been recently awarded. Sandy Mackinnon who a few years ago was Head Chorister has found himself the possessor of a splendid bass voice well deserving of professional training. Jerome van der Linden is currently Head Chorister and shows a high level of musicianship, not only in singing but also for keyboard and recorder. He is now studying organ with Ashleigh Tobin. Both Sandy and Jerome have been offered half scholarships as an expression of faith in their future roles in church music...

Joan Claring-Bould – one of the first women ordained to the diaconate in 1987 – began a Children's Choir in late 1983. They gave their first performance at the Advent Carol Service and provided some of the music for ‘Mission 84’ (see page 126).

Links with Flinders Street School of Music

In the same article Dr Murray noted the strong links between the Parish and the Flinders Street School of Music, where he was a visiting lecturer for the Certificate of Church Music Course (covering such topics as ‘Music and the English Liturgy’, ‘Church Choir Management’ and ‘Contemporary Issues in Church Music’). Two other members of staff, Audrey Moulds (Lecturer in Pianoforte) and Christa Rumsey (Lecturer in Organ) also sang in the St Michael's choir (see Fig. 17-10):

Audrey is a professional musician. A former recitalist, she now concentrates on teaching while retaining an interest in accompaniment and chamber music... Audrey's professional name is Audrey White.

Christa is recognised as one of Australia's foremost organists. This year she played at the Melbourne International Organ and Harpsichord Festival... She has only recently returned from a month's recital tour of Austria, Switzerland and Germany. In her home city of Vienna her evening recital in St Stephen's Cathedral attracted an audience of 1,500 people.

Death of Ted Smith

Edward Roland Smith, Lay Reader, chorister and Warden, died at Mary Potter Hospice on 5th April 1986 after a long battle with cancer. Following his requiem Fr Andrew Cheesman wrote:

St Michael's was filled to overflowing, as were our hearts, for the funeral this week of one of our most loved members, Ted Smith. Trained by Archdeacon Clampett and a member of the Parish choir from boyhood, Ted was affectionately accorded the honour of a full choir and a superbly sung requiem. His procession to the lychgate, led by the Headmaster of Unley High and crucifer, Don Wilkinson, was a sight which will long be remembered. Throughout all, as stressed by the preacher, Bishop Renfrey, ran a note of thanksgiving for a life faithfully lived and joyfully offered to God.

In an interview taped shortly before his death, Ted summed up the musical life of St Michael's under Lyndon Murray's leadership:

Lyndon was a student under the late Dr Jack Peters, and learnt a great deal from him. He has, in his own right, some of Peters' flair for extemporising the free harmonies etc. Like Peters, he is a great lover of the liturgy; he is very well versed in it. He has built up a choral tradition here which, at present time, is one of the best in the Diocese...

We have a very large repertoire: there are something well over twenty masses from which we can choose for Sunday services – motets and so forth, work from the 16th century to moderns. Lyndon plans all the music for all of the services, and with his knowledge and love of the liturgy, everything is ready and appropriately chosen for the season and the occasion. This has enriched the life and that side of the Church activity.

We have a big group of young people, young girls and boys, most of whom in their own right, even at the age of thirteen-minus, are good little musicians. They read very well, they have tremendous musical sense, and it is possible to give them a piece of music which they, with perhaps one rehearsal, are able to perform quite well. This has given great joy to all of the choir, and I am sure there are many in the congregation who appreciate this.

Arrival of Stuart Carter & David Lowe

In an article written in February 1987, Lyndon Murray expressed his sorrow at the loss of Ted Smith whose fine tenor voice had been the linchpin of the choir. For a while it had seemed that the very survival of the choir in its present form was in doubt unless more male voices could be found. Spurred on by Douglas Stott (then Headmaster of St Peter's Girls' School), an adventurous programme was planned for 1987 in the hope that it would attract some more men to join the choir. It did! Not only were they choristers, but they were also competent organists. Amongst them were Tony Cox – “a splendid chorus tenor who can sight-read a line in the dark” – a very experienced church musician who taught music full-time at St Peter's Girls' School; David Lowe, a bass, who had been organist at St John's Church, Halifax Street and at St Augustine's Church, Unley; Graham Bell, a tenor, who was choirmaster and organist at Tynte Street Baptist Church; and Stuart Carter (Fig. 17-12) a bass, who had looked after the music at Christ Church, Mt Gambier.

At the end of 1987, after ten years continuous service, Lyndon Murray took several months furlough. Upon his return in May 1988 he announced that, because of



Fig. 17-12

St Michael's choir c.1991. (Back row) Fr Andrew Cheesman, Judith ??, Peter Nicholls, Hugh Gilmore, David Lowe, Roger Dyer (curate), Rolf Sherwin. (Centre row) Julie Lowe, Alison Carter, Stuart Carter (organist), Helen Irving, Jacqui Moran. (Front row) Althea Walker, Mabelle Dunstone, Julian Carter, Nathaniel Ritter, Tara Dunstone. (MPA)

increasing work in his medical practice, he would be unable to devote the necessary time to music and the choir, and had accepted the less-demanding position of assistant organist and choirmaster at St George's, Goodwood.

In June 1988 Stuart Carter (seen in Fig. 17-12) who had had oversight of the choir whilst Lyndon was away, accepted the appointment of organist at St Michael's. In mid-1993 Fr Andrew announced: "We are shortly to lose the services of our organist and choirmaster, Stuart Carter, who has served so faithfully and well over six years. The family will shortly move to Golden Grove where he is now Director of Music at Pedare College."

When Stuart resigned, another of Lyndon Murray's recruits, David Lowe (seen in Fig. 17-12) was appointed Director of Music in July 1993 – a position he still holds in 2002. As mentioned above he had formerly served as organist at both St John's in Halifax Street and at St Augustine's, Unley. When he joined the choir in January 1987 it was noted that he had been active in Church music for many years and was the newly-appointed chairman of the South Australian branch of the Royal School of Church Music. An accountant by profession, he also served as treasurer of the Organ Music Society.

Finding and retaining good choristers has been an on-going problem for many years. Today, the number of people in the choir at St Michael's varies between six and ten each Sunday morning, supplemented by 'congregational' singers for special occasions. In his 1994 report David Lowe commented on the "faithful experience of our longer serving members – Douglas Stott, Peter Nicholls, Helen Irving and Julie Lowe". They still form the backbone of the choir; together with "our ever reliable Jacqui Moran, providing a much-valued alto line". Since early 1996 Jacqui has contributed a regular series of articles for the *Herald* detailing the various choral items sung by the choir. Following Fr Andrew Cheesman's retirement in March 2001, Jacqui kindly proffered these comments:

Music was one of Fr Andrew's strong points over the past years – whether it was leading Sunday worship or his ongoing support of the choir, the Musical Director or his assistant organists. For a few years at Evensong at St Michael's, when there was no organist available, he used to lead the hymns and responses unaccompanied, taking his own note to start. This will be sadly missed.

Assistant Organists

Jacqui Moran also included some notes about the current assistant organists, John Drake, Denis Nettleton and Greg Crawford. Greg was "infamous for altered harmonics on the last verses of hymns", and known for "playing a little 'payout' for the gospel which the others lack". During celebrations connected with the 250th anniversary of Bach's death, "he made a point of playing a Bach prelude and/or fugue each month".

Other organists listed by Jacqui include: John Niederer (Evensong at St Michael's and the Thursday Friendship Services); Ivan Blanchard (Evensong); Don Slater (Thursday Friendship Service); Maurice Paternoster (January deputy) and Tony Cox.

Lindisfarne Musical Scholarship

The Mitcham Parish Church Music Group continued to support the musical development of the Parish in many ways, and became known simply as the 'Music Support Group'. In October 1988 it was noted that the balance of funds, approximately \$5,000, held by the Group "was to be paid into the Parish Account for 'musical purposes', namely extraordinary organ repairs, maintenance of robes and the music library, any choir scholarships etc". Much of it had been raised from sale of *Feasts and Festivals*.

Unlike the adult Choral Scholarships awarded during the early 1980s under Lyndon Murray, the new ones proposed by Stuart Carter in 1990 were to be for children aged seven years and over. Initially two scholarships were to be offered to Parish families who wished to send a child to Lindisfarne School (see page 271). They were to be known as the 'Lindisfarne Musical Scholarships'. Eligible children would be subject to a vocal audition and have some instrumental ability (preferably having tuition or be willing to begin). They would be expected to join one of the Parish choirs and be regular attendants at Sunday services and choir practices, and to become involved in the RSCM Chorister Training Scheme. Stuart Carter saw this as a means of increasing the musical interaction between the School and the Parish, but felt it would only succeed if it was part of a development of a junior choir (boys and girls aged seven to thirteen) as he "would not wish to throw a child into the lion's den of an adult choir".

In August 1990 it was announced that the first Lindisfarne Musical Scholarship had been offered to Nathaniel Ritter (seen in Figure 17-12) who had recently joined the choir of St Michael's. This was the only Lindisfarne Musical Scholarship awarded.

Family & Contemporary Youth Services

Sadly the ranks of choir boys and girls singing traditional English church music have now disappeared. Instead, the children are encouraged to sing-along at Family Services where the emphasis is on informal worship and story-telling accompanied by the joyous sounds of hand-clapping to music played on a digital piano or guitar!

A mini whirlwind in the form of Reverend Lyndon Sulzberger, the new curate, arrived at the start of 1999. Described as an "outgoing person with a range of gifts which promise to enrich the Parish ministry", he was also a pianist and organist, played the guitar and had been running a monthly contemporary service for young people at St James, Mile End (where he was also the organist). This led to the establishment of monthly Contemporary Youth Outreach Services at 7 p.m. on the third Sunday in the month. These services were held jointly with the Parish of Colonel Light Gardens. Fr Lyndon described them as "another missionary opportunity. We need to invite and encourage young people, teenagers and up, to come and experience the good music, the simple and telling messages, and the fellowship and pizza afterwards". January 2000 saw the introduction of weekly Family Services at 9 a.m. resulting in the closure of the Sunday School. With the appointment (part time) of Ruth Butler as a Lay Family Worker, she and Fr Lyndon were largely responsible for the planning of the Family Service and its music.

REFURBISHMENT OF THE BISHOP & SON ORGAN (1993–1995)

When David Lowe was appointed as Mitcham's Director of Music in July 1993, it was noted that he "would have charge of the music over the period of restoration of the organ".

In the detailed report on the condition of the organ prepared by the firm of J. E. Dodd & Sons – Gunstar Organ Works in March 1969 it was noted that, although in reasonably good condition, there had been a slow deterioration over a period of ninety years, and that to restore it to its original condition would cost about \$3,000. At the time that amount of money was not available, and only minor repairs and adjustments were done.

Ten years later, under Dr Lyndon Murray's dynamic leadership, it was announced that "the proceeds of the Trinity Concert Series, together with gifts from some choir members, towards the restoration of the Bishop organ amounted to \$320, and that the Organ Fund now stands at almost \$500". Much to the embarrassment of all concerned, the organ broke down during an important Civic Service attended by members of the Mitcham Council, the Dean of Adelaide and other dignitaries on 27th April 1980 "highlighting the urgency of the appeal for funds for its restoration".

Following the formation of the Music Support Group at the end of 1980, and the launch of the Parish recipe book *Feasts and Festivals* a year later, the Organ Fund was the recipient of a number of donations. In June 1986 it was reported:

Now, via the offices of the Music Support Group, Feasts and Festivals has most generously provided money to meet the full \$1,725 for renewal of the rotten organ bellows at St Michael's. The work was completed by George Stephens last week and the wind supply is now quiet, plentiful and steady for the first time in more than ten years. The Organ Historical Trust who recommended this restoration in 1980 will be happy, but no-one will be more appreciative than our organists...

Ted & Melva Smith Trust

The Edward R. Smith Bequest made provision for the money to be used to purchase a new pipe organ. After lengthy discussions and debates, and on the advice of the Executors of the Estate, the 1992 Annual Vestry made the decision to seek permission to utilise the funds to restore and upgrade the Bishop organ rather than purchase a new one. The matter was referred to Diocesan Council and formal approval was granted by order of the Supreme Court. It was not a popular decision amongst some in the organ fraternity, and aroused passionate debate!

In October 1993 Parish Council authorised the signing of a contract with George Stephens Organ Builder Pty Ltd for the restoration of the organ and for the addition of three stops to complete the organ to the specification of similar instruments built by J. C. Bishop (see David Lowe's article below). Work commenced on 1st February 1994 (see Fig. 17-14). The project was supervised by heritage architect Roger Lewis (overseer and technical consultant for the St Peter's Cathedral organ) and Dr David Swale, Principal Organist at the Cathedral. The total cost, including legal fees for the appeal to the Supreme Court, was \$91,685. A new base for the organ was also constructed by sinking four concrete piers approximately 2m below the Church floor. A steel-reinforced base now supports the organ independently from the Church floor and walls.

During the ten-month absence of the Bishop organ a one-manual 'Fincham' organ was hired from the Conservatorium. The Bishop organ was re-assembled and tuned, and played for the first time at a service held on 26th November. Unfortunately for David Lowe, who had been so involved in the whole project, he was knocked off his bicycle on his way to work and sustained a severe wrist fracture, and the honours of playing it for the first time went to one of the assistant organists, Maurice Paternoster!

The organ was re-dedicated by Bishop Stuart Smith at the 10 a.m. Eucharist on 26th February 1995, and the first of four recitals was given that afternoon by Dr David Swale, who wrote: "Magnificent restoration of a fine old instrument" (Fig. 17-13).

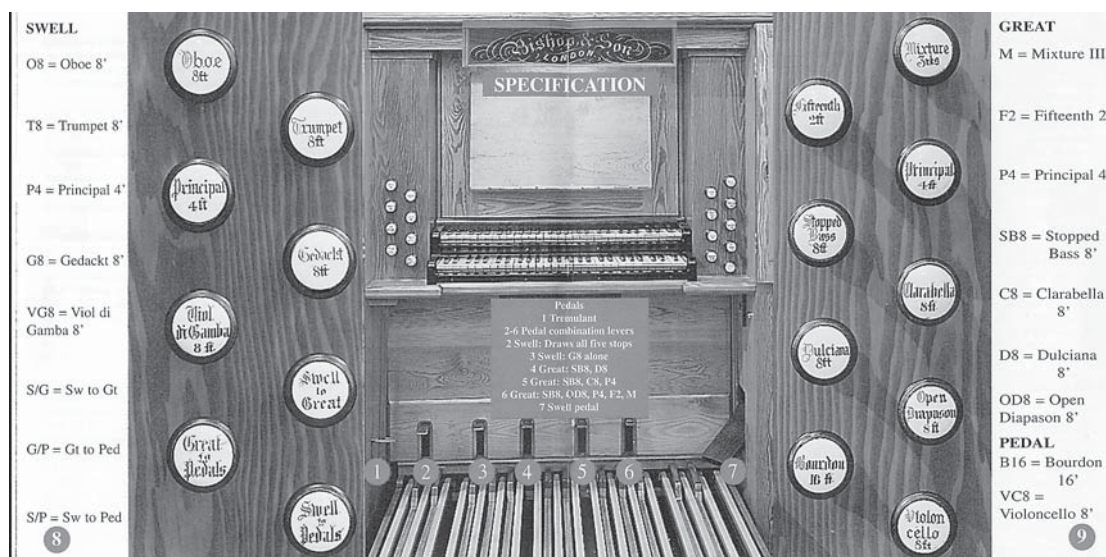


Fig. 17-13
New specification of the keyboard and pedal layout of the Bishop & Son organ. (Reproduced from the sleeve notes accompanying 'Pipe Organs of Adelaide, Vol. 4' Academy Music (AMCD 9694) recorded in St Michael's in September 1996. Organist Dr Harold Fabrikant)

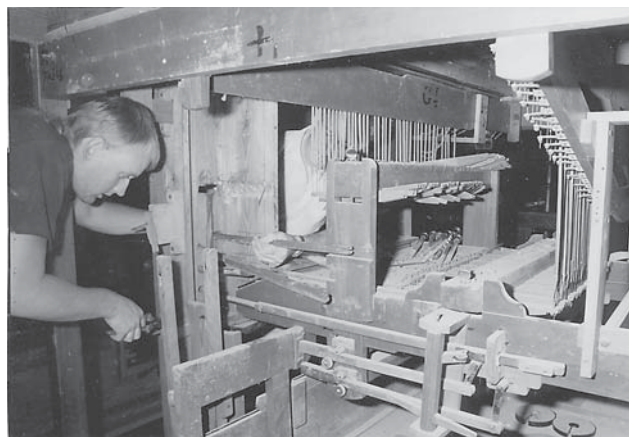


Fig. 17-14 Refurbishment of the Bishop & Son Organ 1993–1995

(Top left) Interior framework underneath Swell and Great chests.

(Centre left) Southern aspect with panelling removed showing “C Sharp” side of Pedal pipes. Note the infill plywood board to the right of the frame. This was replaced by new solid timber casework installed to accommodate additional ranks of pipes. Compare with Fig. 17-2 which shows the fully-refurbished organ.

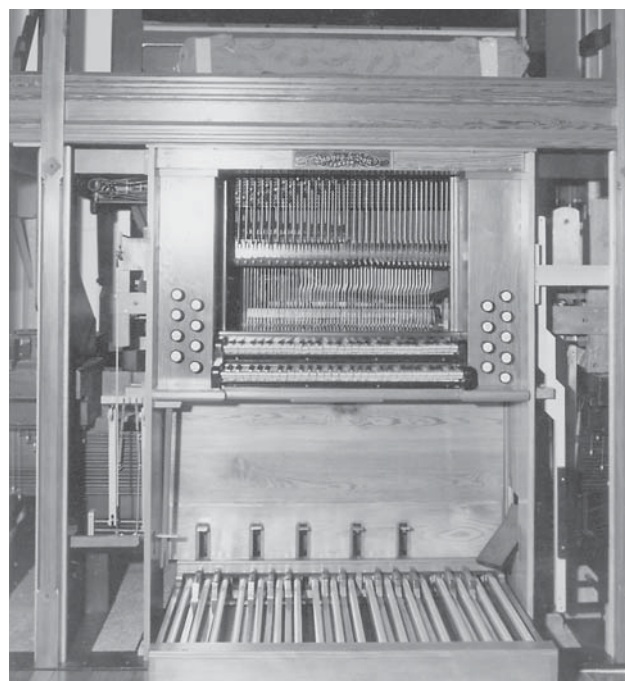
(Bottom left) Organ builder, George Stephens, holding Swell Oboe pipes which had been bent to fit in 1913.

(Centre right) Front showing the old Manual action and Pedal rollerboard.

(Bottom right) Front showing restored Manual and Pedal board with the front panels and music desk removed.

(see also Figure 17-13)

(All photographs by Lucy Cheesman)



REVIEW OF THE BISHOP & SON ORGAN (1878–1993)

David Lowe has supplied the following information regarding repairs and additions made to the Bishop organ over past decades. He also supplied a schedule of work done during 1994 plus the current specifications of the instrument. These can be found in Appendix 7:

Bishop & Son of London record the receipt of £250 in January 1878 from the Reverend Professor Read of Worthing, for the purchase of an organ for St Michael's Church, Mitcham.

The Stop list recorded in the firm's order book [Fig. 17-15] shows that the Great was to contain 5 ranks, 4 ranks of which were supplied, the 5th (Dulciana), only prepared for. The Swell was to contain 4 stops, 3 supplied with the order and the 4th prepared for. The Pedal to contain 1 wooden stop.

The instrument was shipped early in 1878, and installed later that year at Mitcham by MacKenzie. MacKenzie must have encountered difficulties with the first attempt at installation, because markings inside the organ indicate that he and his wife re-installed the organ two years later.

Further work is recorded as being undertaken in 1913 by J. E. Dodd and Sons of Adelaide. At that time, it would appear that Dodd added a Tremulant, and installed the Dulciana on the Great, and the Oboe on the Swell, which were omitted from Bishop's shipment. Further work appears to have been undertaken on the windchest tops.

The organ had been originally hand-blown, but was converted in 1913 to a water-driven blowing system. Finally, an electric blower was added in 1946, at which time the instrument was moved to its present position in the Church.

In 1962 new pallets were fitted and the tension of the springs raised to try to prevent further wind leakage problems.

In the late 1970s, the Director of Music provided a detailed report on the history and present condition of the organ, making recommendations that the Vestry approve in principle a proposal to rebuild the Bishop organ. At that time, a substantial change in the style and size of the organ was proposed, whilst retaining much of the original instrument. The proposal was not acted upon, and apart from regular maintenance and the installation of a new blower, the organ continued to remain unaltered until the early 1990s.

The Will of the late Edward Smith, who died on 5th April 1986, provided funds to be used towards the acquisition and installation of a new pipe organ for St. Michael's Church, but upon advice of the Executors, the Parish Council and the Vestry, it was resolved to apply for a Supreme Court order that the funds from the Estate be directed towards refurbishment of the Bishop & Son organ.

Having sought a report from George Stephens Organ Builder Pty Ltd of Adelaide, Australian Pipe Organs Pty Ltd of Victoria, and Dr David Swale (organist St Peter's Cathedral), it was resolved by the Vestry in March 1992 to refurbish the instrument. At this time, a range of views by interested parties concerning these proposals was expressed in correspondence with the Rector, the

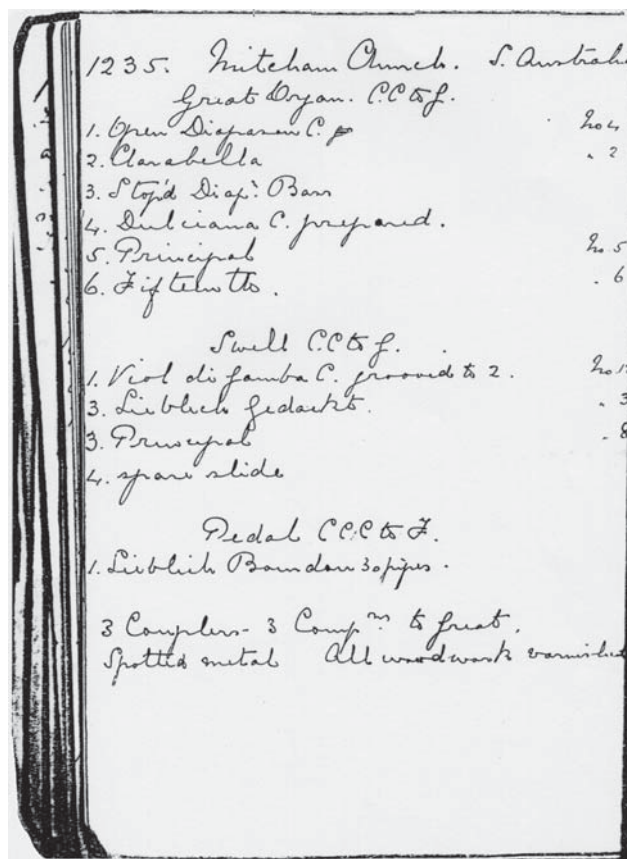


Fig. 17-15 Copy of the relevant page of the 'works in hand' book relating to the purchase of the Bishop & Son organ in 1878. (Courtesy Bishop & Son, 58 Beethoven Street, London, letter dated 20th October 1994)

Archbishop, and in the media. The Organ Historical Trust of Australia argued strongly for the retention, in its original unaltered state, of the Bishop & Son instrument. Other advice expressed the view that the original intention of the Testator for a new instrument be pursued.

Since its refurbishment, the Bishop organ has featured in many recitals and received most favourable reviews. In 1996 it was selected by Academy Music of Lenswood, South Australia, to be one of ten organs in Adelaide to be recorded, the organist for each recording being Dr Harold Fabrikant of Melbourne. The recording is available from Academy Music (AMCD 9694). Reviews of this recording were received from as far afield as Preston, Lancashire, UK, where Dr. Gerald Sumner wrote: "The characteristic late Bishop sound is plainly audible on the record and the variously contrasted music gives a very thorough overall impression of the organ." Herbert L. Huestis, of Ladner Village, British Columbia, Canada, wrote in *The Diapason*: "It is a compelling and interesting sound, unique in its ability to speak in a relatively dry acoustic. It is a rare opportunity to hear an organ so carefully restored with such pains taken to preserve its tonal integrity."

The organ continues to successfully serve its principal function of accompanying the regular worship at St Michael's Church, and the occasional use as a recital and concert instrument.

[David Lowe, 2001]

OTHER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

As well as the Bishop organ, the Parish has several other musical instruments which add variety to the musical life of the Church. Details of the organ at St Wilfrid's can be found in Chapter 13.

Tucked away behind the choir stalls at St Michael's is the little Estey 'organ', perhaps better described as an harmonium (Fig.17-16). In November 1901 it was announced that: "Members of the G.F.S. [Girls' Friendly Society] have undertaken to place an American organ in St Michael's Hall instead of the somewhat antiquated harmonium." On the front of the Estey is the inscription: "Presented by St Michael's Branch of the G.F.S., November, 1901." Generations of children attending Sunday School classes in the old St Michael's Day School and Hall learnt their first hymns to the accompaniment of the Estey. Following the sale of the old Hall in 1979, the instrument was brought up to St Michael's and repaired by Harold Thomas. The restored Estey was used for the first time at the 10 a.m. service on 13th April 1980.

Within the new Parish Hall are two pianos. In January 1989, Fr Andrew Cheesman reported that:

A handsome Steinbach piano was delivered to the Hall this week. Its purchase was made possible by a fine trade-in

piano, the gift of Mary Thomas, and by part of the residue of funds raised over the years by the Music Support Group. The original piano, a gift of Mr Hardy of 'Springfield' 100 years ago, remains for everyday use, but the new one will be kept locked and covered to be used for choir and recital work only.

In August 1999 a digital piano, an anonymous gift, was presented to St Michael's. It is played during the Family Services.

* * *

As we enter the twenty-first century, the Parish of Mitcham is well-endowed with quality musical instruments. In the past it has had a rich tradition of English church music – both choral and keyboard – but "the times, they are a changing" and many of today's young families are more at home with the sounds of a digital piano than of a glorious pipe organ. We are indeed blessed to have the choice of instruments which add so much variety to the musical life of our Church. Thank God for the lives of Ted and Melva Smith: without their love of fine music and bounteous generosity, the work of refurbishing the historic Bishop & Son organ to its present high standard would not have been possible.



Fig. 17-16 The Estey organ "Presented by St Michael's Branch of the G.F.S., November, 1901" (Ben Oborn, 2002)