

Organ Renovation Project

St Clement Danes Church





Message from the Resident Chaplain of St Clement Danes

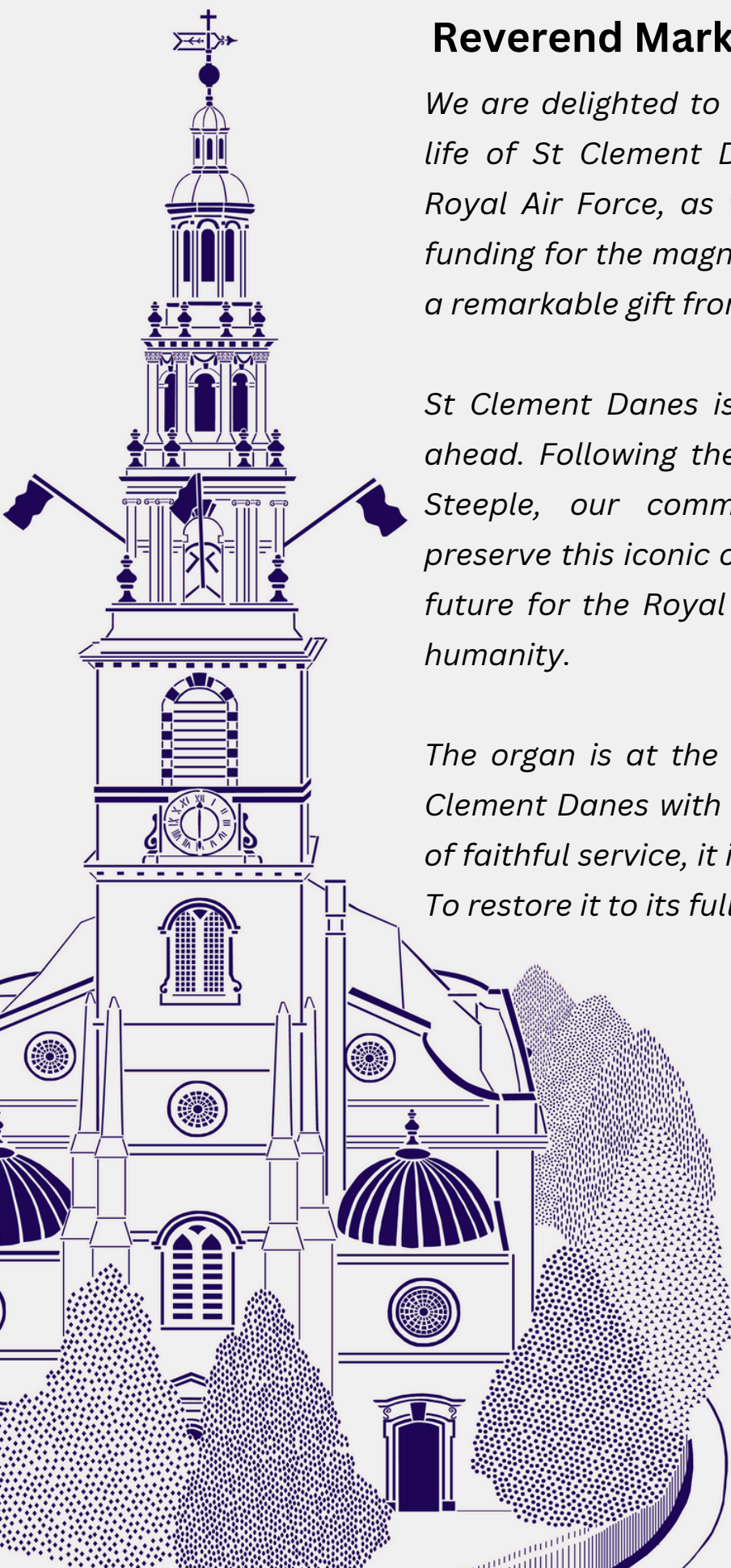
Reverend Mark Perry

We are delighted to reach this defining moment in the life of St Clement Danes, the Central Church of the Royal Air Force, as we turn our attention to securing funding for the magnificent Harrison & Harrison organ - a remarkable gift from the United States of America.

St Clement Danes is blossoming, with a bright future ahead. Following the historic restoration of the Gibbs Steeple, our commitment remains unwavering: to preserve this iconic church's heritage and safeguard its future for the Royal Air Force family, in all its diverse humanity.

The organ is at the heart of our community, filling St Clement Danes with its powerful voice. Yet, after years of faithful service, it is showing significant signs of wear. To restore it to its full glory, we need your support.

I hope this booklet speaks for itself, and I deeply appreciate your time in reading it. Most of all, I hope it inspires you to donate and be part of this vital restoration.



Organ Renovation Project

Following the commencement of the steeple restoration, the team here at St Clement Danes are turning our attention to fundraising for the renovation of the Harrison & Harrison organ, which was gifted to the church by the United States Air Force in 1956.

It is one of the best church organs in London, and is an instrument of particular historical interest and value, as it was made at a time when organ construction was undergoing a period of change.

It is a cherished instrument, and the beating heart of the church, leading the way during every Sunday service, wedding, funeral, Air Force service, rehearsal and concert alike.



The Funding Required

Arranging the repair work for the Great Organ at St Clement Danes now will allow it to continue to be played for years to come without deteriorating further. Dedicating time, energy, and funds towards this great source of value in the here and now, and thus and towards the community and church life, will prevent worsening of the organ's condition in the future. Significantly it will also prevent greater possible funding being required should this worsening occur.

Harrison & Harrison have quoted the cost of undertaking the work at £222,776 ex VAT. Therefore, the church can expect to pay around £45,000 in VAT. Overall, the church is looking to raise £300,000 for the renovation of the organ.



The Renovation: areas of work

Harrison & Harrison built the church organ in 1958, and in 1997 overhauled the console and renewed the electrical systems to modernise it. The work described below focuses on areas which have not received attention since the organ was built in 1958. Since 1997 the organ has not had any work; it now requires attention in the following areas:

Pipework:

The pipework has become dusty and requires specialist cleaning. A front pipe on the south return, and the Pedal Trombone require repair. The Swell Fagotto is unstable; the tongues would be re-set and the wedges made secure.

Console:

The keyboards require re-adjustment, cleaning and the touches re-setting. The thumb pistons too require cleaning and adjusting. The pedalboard is worn and needs to be taken apart, wear taken up and the contacts cleaned and re-set. As do the foot pistons.

Low-voltage electrical system:

Installation of new low-voltage power supplies is required, adjacent to the electronic control equipment inside the organ allowing the old wiring to be removed.

Soundboards:

The organ was greatly affected by an absence of heating from the church in the winter of 2018 and the soundboards were damaged due to low levels of humidity. Removal of the pipework for repair allows access to the soundboard. The internal calico would be sealed and the pallets recovered in new felt and leather.

Electro-pneumatic actions:

The action leatherwork is deteriorating markedly, including the power motors and main motors of the drawstop actions; the magnets too are in poor condition. All action leatherwork would be renewed and the magnets replaced.

Wind system:

Minor patching required and the leather on the tremulants would be overhauled.

A History Of Over 1000 Years

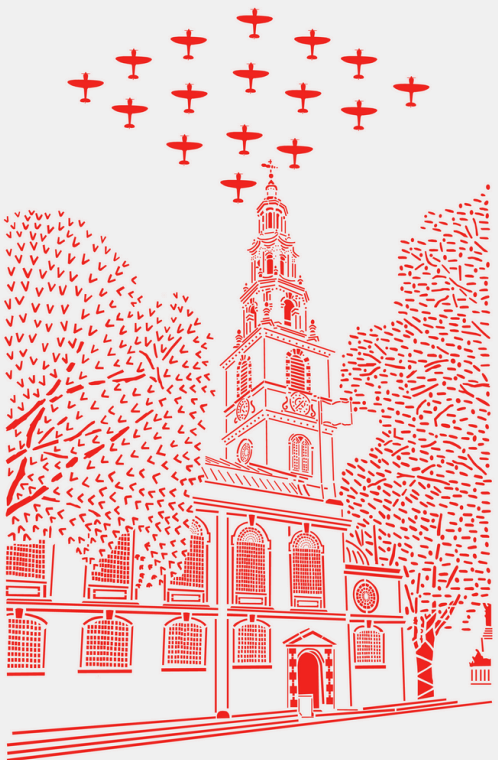


There has been a church on the site where St Clement Danes sits since the 9th century, when Danish settlers who had married English wives were allowed to settle in the area, founding a small church dedicated to St Clement, the patron saint of mariners. The church became known as ‘St-Clement-of-the-Danes’. William the Conqueror rebuilt the church in the 11th century but it was not kept in good order and was left to decay.



Although the Great Fire of London in 1666 did not reach St Clement Danes, the church was in poor condition and Christopher Wren was invited to rebuild it. It was completed in 1682 and the tower’s steeple was added in 1719 by James Gibbs.

On the night of the 10th May 1931, the church received a direct hit from an incendiary bomb which all but destroyed the church, leaving only the outer walls, bell tower and steeple standing. The church lay abandoned for over a decade.



In the 1950s, the RAF launched a worldwide fundraising appeal to restore and rebuild the church. This fundraising effort brought together over £250,000 to rebuild the church according to Sir Christopher Wren’s original designs, and the church was reconsecrated on the 19th October 1958 in the presence of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, as the Central Church of the Royal Air Force.

The Steeple Restoration

In 2021 St Clement Danes, the Central Church of the Royal Air Force and National Memorial of Remembrance, launched the 1941 Appeal in commemoration of the fearless members of the RAF and Allied nations, and to safeguard the future of St Clement Danes Church for generations to come.

In 2024 the RAF donated £2 million towards the first step of the appeal: the restoration of the 1719 James Gibbs gothic steeple. After the church was bombed in 1941 and during the blaze that followed, the bell tower and steeple acted as a chimney, funelling the flames hundreds of feet into the night sky. This intense heat caused unseen damage to the steeple, resulting in microscopic fissures in the Portland Stone. Over the last 80 years water has seeped into the stone, reaching deep inside the metal clamps holding the structure together. Over time, these clamps have rusted and expanded, causing the stone to crack and break up.

With the RAF's donation, we were able to commence building works on the steeple restoration project in July 2024, and as of December 2024 the works are commencing well. The restoration project is 73 weeks long and set for completion in December 2025.

