

**A HISTORY OF STAUNTON HAROLD
TRINITY CHURCH ORGAN THAT WAS
ORIGINALLY MADE FOR HENRY SHIRLEY**



A Harm Vellguth New Consort Organ in 17th Century style by Goetze and Gwynn, and commonly known as a Chamber Organ. It is based on the organ made for Sir Henry Shirley in about 1630, for his Staunton Harold dwelling house.

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - JANUARY 2022

COMPLIMENTARY READING

**A HISTORY STUDY ON THE ORIGINS AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STAUNTON HAROLD
ESTATE (INCLUDING A SUPPLEMENTARY HISTORY OF
THE RAGDALE & CHARTLEY CASTLE ESTATES)**

This can be found on the authors website samuelstewart.com under
subsection Houses and Gardens

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THE PRIVATE CHAPEL IN THE HALL (MANOR / DWELLING HOUSE), AND THE CONSORT ORGAN WHICH WAS MADE FOR HENRY SHIRLEY (SEE FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH)

Evidence of a private chapel still exists within Staunton Harold Hall and John Fox in his book entitled "Staunton Harold" which was published in 2001, tells us:- *Sir Henry Shirley the second Baronet who died in 1633, was a devout Roman Catholic and had a private chapel in the Hall. This chapel still exists and was clearly part of the old Hall. It has twelve portraits of saints, probably copies of works by Flemish artists who painted the originals between the 15th and 18th centuries: the copies may have been painted by a local artist around 1790. There is also a frieze of cherubs' heads, unique, except that the same design was used on Sir Henry's "high pew" of 1627 in Breedon Church. In 1614, Sir George Shirley was granted permission to hold Courts Leet (i.e. yearly or half yearly courts of record) in Leicestershire and Derbyshire, and at one time, this little chapel was used as the Justice Room, where the Earl would act in a magisterial capacity to settle matters concerning the estates and tenants.*



An old photograph showing the chapel as it was within the hall (Manor House)

The author has been in contact with Mr. Dominic Gwynn of Goetz and Gwynn, and he has given permission for the following paragraph and front cover photograph to be included in this publication:- *Goetze and Gwynn are makers and restorers of quality organs, and they show on their internet website "A Harm Vellguth New Consort Organ in 17th Century style" which they have made. This style of organ was originally made for playing with viols. The author has learnt from them that an organ of this style (commonly known as a chamber organ) was made for Sir Henry Shirley, 2nd baronet (c.1588-1633) for the above chapel in about 1630. He apparently employed the celebrated William Lawes (1602 – 1645) as his professional musician, who compiled "the Shirley Part Books" for the household's viol playing. This manuscript book, of his own and other people's music for viol consort, survives in the British Library still. It seems that this chamber organ was re-furbished and moved to the Chapel of the Holy Trinity probably early in the 1660's. It was later re-furbished in 1686 by one of two nephews of the celebrated organ maker Bernard Schmidt, either Christian or Gerard, with some new pipes and a case front with painted dummy front pipes. Most of the pipes and the windchest for this organ survive now in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity. The pipes are all made of pine, with oak blocks, tuning stoppers and caps.*

A "consort" is a small instrument ensemble for playing music composed before c.1700. Consorts of viols were found at courts as well as in homes from the early 16th century. Historically, the viol has many shapes and sizes, and while it is not a direct ancestor of the violin, there is some kinship between the two instrument families. The

viols were bowed instruments with frets and usually had six strings. They were usually played held downwards on the lap or between the legs (see the following picture). By the 16th century, a standard shape for the viol did emerge with broad ribs, and a fairly flat fretted neck.



The following is taken from a paper given by Walter Knight Shirley (1864-1937) 11th Earl Ferrers F.S.A. to “The Society of Antiquaries of London” in 1913 and appears in the 2nd series Vol. 26 (27th Nov 1913 to 25th June 1914).

The Church gallery holds the choir and the very sweet-toned little organ, without pedals, by Father Schmidt. This has been moved eastwards at some time, possibly to give more room in the belfry, but the organist and singers are now severely cramped. There is no question as to the genuineness of the organ. Mr. Francis Burgess, the well known plainsong expert, wrote as follows after examining it: ‘the organ stands in its original case in the west gallery, and is now practically the same as when it left the builder’s hands some two centuries and a half ago. It contains the usual specification of the period (Open and Stopped Diapasons, Principal, Fifteenth, and Sesquialtera), most of the stops being drawn in two halves, a convenient device for a one-manual instrument. The original pipes, entirely of wood, are somewhat the worse for wear, but they still show signs of superb craftsmanship of the maker. The tone is “small”, but by no means ineffective, as the organ is well placed in a splendidly resonant building’.