

Mr. Fred. Gostelow, A.R.A.M., F.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.

From the lists of Recital Programmes appearing in the various musical papers, the name of Mr. Fred. Gostelow is rarely missing. Probably few organists give so many recitals as he does in the course of a year. In Bedfordshire and the neighbouring counties he almost has a monopoly, but his reputation has travelled much farther than that, for his engagements take him into many parts of the country.

Mr. Gostelow was born in Dunstable. His mother was very musical, and a cousin—Mr. W. R. Drifill—is well known as a composer of



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organ music. At an unusually early age little Gostelow showed remarkable precocity, for when only three years of age he could play a tune on the piano, and a year-and-a-half later he could play almost anything by ear. He was also a very sweet singer, his clear soprano voice being much admired. He therefore, at the age of nine, became a choir boy. But it was not as a vocalist he was to make his name, for when thirteen years old he was appointed organist of the Congregational Church, in Dunstable, for which he received a salary. But he remained there for a year only, and was then appointed organist at the Baptist Church in the same town, where he rendered efficient service for about six years.

From his early years young Gostelow quite made up his mind to be a musician. In due course, after receiving lessons from local teachers, he entered the Royal Academy of Music. He studied the piano under Mr. Evers and Mr. Hartvigson, organ under the late Mr. W. G. Wood, and Mr. Davenport for harmony. He worked so hard and so thoroughly that he obtained the highest possible awards as a pianoforte and organ player, and also in harmony and sight-singing. He also obtained the Heathcote Long prize for pianoforte playing. He later took private lessons in counterpoint from Dr. Turpin and Sir Fredk. Bridge, and pianoforte lessons from Mr. Tobias Matthay.

On leaving Dunstable, Mr. Gostelow was appointed organist at Waller Street Wesleyan Church, Luton, a position he held for two years. He then went to the Parish Church in that town, where he has remained as organist and choir-master ever since, his excellent work being much appreciated. He has a voluntary choir of about 60 members. The church is of the Evangelical school, but the vicar, the Rev. Canon Mason, M.A., loves good music, and is always anxious for the choir to give of the very best. The organ is a fine 3-manual instrument, recently rebuilt by Messrs. Norman & Beard. Mr. Gostelow gives recitals occasionally, which always draw very large audiences.

As a trainer of boys' voices Mr. Gostelow is exceedingly successful, which is of great assistance in his church work. In his home he has a boys' practice room, in which there is a nice little 2-manual organ and a piano. There most of the work with his boys is done. It is there also that the artiled pupils (for Mr. Gostelow usually has three) gain their experience and knowledge. Most of the organists in the churches and chapels in the district have had their instruction in this room, and I know that both master and pupils look back with much pleasure to the happy and profitable times spent together.

For the past eight years Mr. Gostelow has been organist and choirmaster at the private chapel at Luton Hoo Mansion, where great interest is taken in the musical services by Lady Wernher. There is a paid choir, and a full cathedral service is given every Sunday at noon. There is a beautiful 4-manual organ (by Messrs. Norman & Beard), containing 50 stops, with 18 pistons.

As already intimated, Mr. Gostelow is best known as a recitalist. Amongst the many important places where he has played may be mentioned Crystal Palace, Alexandra Palace, Guildhall School of Music, Royal College of Organists, Portsmouth Town Hall, Bow and Bromley Institute, Yarmouth Parish Church. He was solo organist at the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts in 1908. Mr. Gostelow always gives an interesting and varied programme. His playing is brilliant, and creates much enthusiasm amongst the

Frederick Gostelow, choirmaster and organist at St. Mary's Luton for twenty one years.



From the book: "North Chilterns Camera 1863-1954
From the Thurston collection in Luton Museum"