

A tale of two cases

Paul Hale

For centuries organs have been built within more than one case – Great & Chaire/*Hauptwerk* & *Rückpositiv*/*Grande Orgue* & *Positif de dos*, with or without Pedal towers as well. Occasionally there are other reasons for a pair of cases – an organ fitted either side of a west window or an arch, or – particularly in the UK with our post-Oxford Movement chancel organ chambers – an instrument with one case facing across the chancel and the other facing down the church. An example of each of these categories has recently been built in England.

The diminutive Nottinghamshire church of St Michael, Linby, has recently been beautifully renovated, fitted with oak panelling and a new oak floor. A few years ago a ringers' gallery had been installed in the west tower, visible from the nave through the open arch; the new work is consonant with this.

The old organ was an undistinguished and distinctly battered small two-manual by Alexander Young, dating from 1890 and made for a church in Stockport, installed by Henry Groves at Linby in 1965.

With the need for maximum floor space there was no room left for this organ, so the church took the bold decision to instruct Groves (Jonathan Wallace) to construct a new instrument, using the old pipework along with some new, divided either side of the west arch in two cases. As the Alex Young front pipes were soft metal and in very poor condition, new flamed copper pipes were suggested by the Diocesan Organ Adviser as an attractive idea which would harmonise with the church's new modern oak fittings. A small mobile oak console can be placed wherever required.

In order to get the organ to fit within the small cases (the swell-front

Linby 1965 specification

GREAT ORGAN	SWELL ORGAN
8 Open Diapason	8 Open Diapason
8 Clarabella	8 Lieblich Gedackt
8 Dulciana	4 Principal
4 Principal	8 Oboe
2 Fifteenth (on a clamp)	Swell Octave
Swell to Great	
	PEDAL ORGAN
action: manuals mechanical, pedals pneumatic	16 Bourdon
	Swell to Pedal
	Great to Pedal

New Linby specification

GREAT ORGAN	SWELL ORGAN
8 Open Diapason	8 Violin Diapason
8 Clarabella	8 Lieblich Gedackt
8 Salicional (fr. Sw.)	8 Salicional
4 Principal	4 Octave (ext. Diap.)
4 Open Flute (ext. Clar.)	2 Piccolo (ext. Ged.)
2 Fifteenth	8 Trumpet
8 Trumpet (fr. Sw.)	
Swell to Great	
	PEDAL ORGAN
	16 Bourdon (ext. Clar.)
	8 Bass Flute (fr. Clar.)
	Great to Pedal
	Swell to Pedal

is behind the right-hand case pipes), direct electric action with expansion chambers was used, along with a small amount of extension/derivation to maximise the use of the pipework. The stop-list is above.

The organ's position means that its impact in the church is immediate and unfettered. Although possessing the same number of ranks as the old organ, it is hugely more effective and much appreciated by the congregation.

The much larger church of St Peter, in St Albans, has a new organ by Mander Organs on the north side of the chancel. It also speaks through two cases – one down the north aisle of the nave and one facing south across the church. It employs mechanical key action and electric stop action. John Mander writes about it thus:

'The new organ for St Peter's is a three manual instrument with 39 stops.



St Michael, Linby
Groves 1965 & 2006

In common with many English churches, finding a suitable position for the organ was not easy and it was decided to place it in the same position as the organ it replaced. The Great Organ is in the front of the case with the Choir Organ behind it and the Swell Organ at the rear.

'Modern organs are required to be far more versatile than organs of old which generally fitted into a particular style of organ music. Organists and listeners expect a wide variation of tone and repertoire to be played from all areas of the world as well as different eras. Clearly it is not possible within the scope of one instrument to produce an authentic rendering of the vast organ repertoire, but at least it should be musical. How can this be achieved? The aim is to scale and voice the organ so that an almost unlimited combination of sounds and registers can be selected by the organist to recreate the sounds required by the music as effectively as possible. To manage this, the various registers need to have a high degree of blend and this has been our aim with the new organ for St Peter's. Acoustics play a crucial role in this and the removal of the carpet in the church has undoubtedly helped this cause greatly as well as enhancing the congregational singing, not to mention the effectiveness of the choir.

An organ should suit a building not only musically, but also visually. It is generally a large piece of furniture and can dominate a building if its design is unsympathetic to the overall style of the church. Once again, here at St Peter's we have aimed to create a design which



St Peter's, St Albans
Mander 2006

gives the appearance of having been in the church for ever. Other notable elements of design in the church which are relevant are the screen and the pulpit and both acted as inspiration for the design of the organ, in particular in the way the casework mouldings were treated and the design of the carving. Over the years the stained oak casework will mature, which will enhance our efforts to create a design which suits the building, but already comments have indicated that it "belongs" to the church and does not look out of place in spite of its size.'

The tonal scheme of this Mander – a welcome and overdue example of their new work for the UK – illustrates

the inclusive and colourful nature of the instrument, though for an organ of 39 stops not to have an 8ft Pedal flute seems an unnecessary handicap. Tonal riches include an abundance of differently-scaled tierce combinations, contrasting 8' Great flutes, a Vox Humana in its 'Franckian' position on the Swell, a Choir string, a Choir Mixture pitched sensibly at 1', and a Pedal Quint to bind the bass together with a hint of 32' pitch.

Next time we celebrate the restoration of one of the finest parish church organs in the country – the 59-stop four-manual J.W. Walker organ of 1895 in St Matthew's church, Northampton. Not to be missed!

St Peter's, St Albans, specification

GREAT ORGAN		SWELL ORGAN		CHOIR ORGAN		PEDAL ORGAN	
1	Double Diapason	13	Open Diapason	25	Chimney Flute	34	Open Diapason
2	Open Diapason	14	Gedackt	26	Viola da Gamba	35	Bourdon
3	Stopped Diapason	15	Salicional	27	Principal	36	Quint
4	Harmonic Flute	16	Celeste (T.C.)	28	Koppelflute	37	Principal
5	Principal	17	Principal	29	Nazard	38	Fifteenth
6	Open Flute	18	Nason Flute	30	Piccolo	39	Trombone
7	Twelfth	19	Fifteenth	31	Tierce		Great to Pedal
8	Fifteenth	20	Mixture III	32	Sharp Mixture III		Swell to Pedal
9	Seventeenth	21	Bassoon	33	Cremona		Choir to Pedal
10	Mounted Cornet III	22	Trumpet		Tremulant		
11	Fourniture IV	23	Oboe		Swell to Choir		
12	Trumpet	24	Vox humana				
	Swell to Great		Tremulant				
	Choir to Great						