

West-end wonders at Arundel and Cheltenham

Paul Hale

We all know that the ‘west end’ of a church, cathedral or hall is considered often the best place acoustically to site an organ. But such a site also brings challenges, as David Wells and Kenneth Tickell have recently discovered. ‘Something Old’ this time is the venerable Hill organ at Arundel Cathedral, reopened by James O’Donnell last June after restoration by David Wells; and ‘Something New’ is Kenneth Tickell’s instrument at Cheltenham Ladies’ College, due to be opened by Dame Gillian Weir on the 10 March this year.

For many years, patiently awaiting its renaissance, a Hill organ has sat – colourfully but modestly – on the west gallery of Arundel Cathedral. Known of by many, heard by few, this organ has suffered from a fundamentally flawed wind supply for most of its life, a situation not improved by the typical 1960s make-over it received. It has had to wait until the advent of a dynamic director of music (Elizabeth Stratford),



The colourful Hill organ sited at Arundel’s west end.

some sound advice from experts – Thistlethwaite and Bell, a suitcase full of money and the experience of David Wells’s craftsmen to reach at last its full potential.

Its story can easily be told. In 1870–3, the 15th Duke of Norfolk,

scion of one of the country’s most prominent and historically significant Roman Catholic families, built the church of St Philip Neri in his home town of Arundel. Designed by J.A. Hansom (of Hansom-cab fame) in French Gothic style, the building is blessed with a resonant acoustic; it became the Cathedral Church of Our Lady and St Philip Howard in 1965. Duke Henry fitted out his great church with an organ by the Hill firm which had actually been built as a two-manual in the 1850s and was probably residing in the Catholic Church of St John the Evangelist, Duncan Terrace, London at the time when the Duke wanted an organ rapidly installed. Reworked as a three-manual and ready for the opening of the church on 1 July 1873, the organ appears to have received its casework between 1875/8.

The tonal scheme shows that British organ building was at a pivotal
continued middle column, page 28

Arundel Cathedral’s original Hill specification

| GREAT ORGAN | | SWELL ORGAN | | CHOIR ORGAN | | PEDAL ORGAN | | COUPLERS | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------------|--|
| Double Diapason | 16 | Bourdon | 16 | Gedeckt | 8 | Open Diapason (wood) | 16 | Swell to Great | |
| Open Diapason | 8 | Open Diapason | 8 | Dulciana | 8 | Open Diapason (metal) | 16 | Swell to Great Sub-Octave | |
| Stopped Diapason | 8 | Stopped Diapason | 8 | Vox Angelica (II ranks) | 8 | Violone (wood) | 16 | Swell to Great Super-Octave | |
| Cone Gamba | 8 | Hohl Flute | 8 | Suabe Flute | 4 | Octave | 8 | Choir to Great | |
| Octave | 4 | Octave | 4 | Harmonic Flute | 4 | Flute | 8 | Swell to Choir | |
| Wald Flute | 4 | Gemshorn | 4 | Flageolet | 2 | Fifteenth | 4 | Great to Pedal | |
| Twelfth | 2 ² / ₃ | Fifteenth | 2 | Clarionet | 8 | Mixture 17.19.22 | III | Swell to Pedal | |
| Fifteenth | 2 | Mixture 15.19.22 | III | Solo Trumpet | 8 | Trombone | 16 | Choir to Pedal | |
| Mixture 17.19.22 | III | Horn | 8 | | | | | | |
| Sharp Mixture 22.26 | II | Oboe | 8 | | | | | | |
| Trumpet | 8 | Clarion | 4 | | | | | | |
| Clarion | 4 | | | | | | | | |

Accessories

Five composition pedals to Great
Two composition pedals to Pedal

Two composition pedals to Swell
On/off pedals for Great to Pedal

Manuels: C–a³
Pedals: C–f¹



Arundel Cathedral's new specification

| GREAT ORGAN | | SWELL ORGAN | | COUPLERS | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----|---|--|
| Double Diapason | 16 | Open Diapason | 8 | <i>Great to Pedal</i> | |
| Open Diapason | 8 | Stopped Diapason | 8 | <i>Swell to Pedal</i> | |
| Stopped Diapason | 8 | Hohl Flute | 8 | <i>Choir to Pedal</i> | |
| Cone Gamba | 8 | Viola da Gamba (new) | 8 | <i>Great Pistons to Pedal</i> | |
| Octave | 4 | Octave | 4 | <i>Generals on Swell Toe Pistons</i> | |
| Wald Flute | 4 | Flute (new) | 4 | | |
| Twelfth | 2 ² / ₃ | Fifteenth | 2 | | |
| Fifteenth | 2 | Mixture 15.19.22 | III | | |
| Mixture (new) 17.19.22 | III | Horn (new) | 8 | | |
| Sharp Mixture 22.26 | II | Oboe | 8 | | |
| Trumpet | 8 | Clarion (new) | 4 | | |
| Clarion | 4 | <i>Swell Octave</i> | | | |
| <i>Swell to Great</i> | | <i>Swell Sub Octave</i> | | | |
| <i>Choir to Great</i> | | <i>Swell Unison Off</i> | | | |
| | | | | Accessories | |
| | | | | Six thumb pistons to each manual | |
| | | | | Six toe pistons to Pedal & six to Swell | |
| | | | | Six general thumb pistons | |
| | | | | Reversible thumb pistons to all unison couplers | |
| | | | | Reversible toe piston to Great to Pedal | |
| | | | | Setter piston & General Cancel | |
| | | | | Manuals: C-a ³ , 56 notes | |
| | | | | Pedals: C-f ¹ , 30 notes | |
| CHOIR ORGAN | | PEDAL ORGAN | | | |
| Gedeckt | 8 | Open Diapason (wood) | 16 | | |
| Dulciana | 8 | Open Diapason (metal) | 16 | | |
| Vox Angelica (II ranks) | 8 | Bourdon | 16 | | |
| Suabe Flute | 4 | (moved from the Swell, 1968) | | | |
| Harmonic Flute | 4 | Octave | 8 | | |
| Flageolet | 2 | Flute | 8 | | |
| Clarionet | 8 | Fifteenth | 4 | | |
| Solo Trumpet | 8 | Mixture 17.19.22 | III | | |
| <i>Tremulant</i> | | Trombone | 16 | | |
| <i>Swell to Choir</i> | | | | | |

moment. Fully developed choruses sit side by side with new style flutes, strings and reeds; Hill even provided (as he had done at All Saints' Margaret Street in 1859) a horizontal Trumpet stop on the Choir Organ. The action was tracker with pneumatic assistance to Great and Swell; the blowing was by a water engine. See page 27 for original specification.

In 1888 the key actions were rendered tubular-pneumatic by Hill, a new console was supplied and a larger hydraulic engine supplied. Repair work took place in 1931 (HNB) along with a few tonal changes typical of the time. In 1968 partial electric actions were introduced, the console hacked around and further tonal changes effected. The work did not make the organ all that it should be – the wind, for instance, would run out with startling alacrity –

and a cleaning in the 1980s could not address any fundamental problems.

David Wells has now completely restored the organ with a new Hill-style console, new electro-pneumatic actions, a revised and fully adequate 'traditional' wind system, and appropriate tonal revisions to return to the spirit of the 1870s. He has triumphed over a tricky west-end position where the layout of the organ has to avoid obscuring the rose window. The beautifully-decorated 16ft front has been restored by art conservator Jenny Duffy, and the horizontal trumpet (curiously rendered vertical in 1931) arranged to fire once more down the nave. For a revised specification, please see above.

Princess Hall, Cheltenham Ladies' College

Quite a different challenge faced Kenneth Tickell at Cheltenham Ladies' College, where the west end of the Princess Hall is tiered and the acoustic as dry as dust. With Ian Bell as consultant, Tickell has managed to create a beautifully encased three-manual organ with a tonal scheme suitable for teaching, accompanying

choir and congregation, and playing the solo organ repertoire – a real *multum in parvo* instrument. It has tracker action to the three manual divisions and pedals, with mechanical coupling, together with electric stop and combination action. Kenneth writes:

'The distinctive Princess Hall is one of the original buildings on the

present College site. The Arts & Crafts style interior features galleries running on two levels around the rear and both sides of the hall, and the new organ has been installed on the upper rear gallery. The site was complex, requiring the organ to be accommodated on the rising tiers



Ken Tickell

The console at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

of the gallery. The resulting limited height dictated the layout of the instrument: the Great and Choir divisions are combined on common soundboards at impost level, with the Swell behind. Space considerations also suggested the sharing by communication of the basses of the Great and Choir Principals and 8ft Flutes. The Pedal

towers in C and C# sides display the Open Diapason pipes from 16ft F, the lowest notes being in common with the Sub Bass and combined with open wood helper pipes. The Pedal 8ft Octave and Flute are extended by communication from the 16ft Open Diapason and Sub Bass. The organ case is of stained and polished oak, with contrasting console woodwork of maple with ebony stringing details. The rounded profiles of the case towers and the tracery of the pipeshades take their inspiration from decorative details within the Hall.'

Tickell already had experience of building a west-end organ for an acoustically dry school building – the Lower Chapel at Eton. Such experience doubtless informed the design of this organ and will greatly benefit future generations of Cheltenham Ladies' College pupils. Lucky young ladies. The specification is listed right.

It is good to note that whilst few British churches manage to aspire to new organs at present, instruments continue to be built for educational institutions. Over the next couple of issues I hope to look at three such organs of significance – at Marlborough College (Beckerath), Glenalmond



The case at Cheltenham Ladies' College.

Cheltenham Ladies' College Princess Hall

GREAT ORGAN

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|------|
| Bourdon | | 16 |
| Open Diapason | | 8 |
| Open Flute | | 8 |
| Principal | | 4 |
| Fifteenth | | 2 |
| Mixture | 19.22.26.29 | IV-V |
| Trumpet | | 8 |
| <i>Choir to Great</i> | | |
| <i>Swell to Great</i> | | |

SWELL ORGAN

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------|----|
| Chimney Flute | | 8 |
| Viola | | 8 |
| Voix Celeste | | 8 |
| Principal | | 4 |
| Harmonic Flute | | 4 |
| Octave | | 2 |
| Sesquialtera | 12.17 | II |
| Mixture | 15.19.22.26 | IV |
| Bassoon | | 16 |
| Trumpet | | 8 |
| Hautboy | | 8 |
| <i>Swell Tremulant</i> | | |

CHOIR ORGAN

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Stopped Diapason | | 8 |
| Principal | | 4 |
| Spitz Flute | | 4 |
| Nazard | | 2 ² / ₃ |
| Gemshorn | | 2 |
| Tierce | | 1 ³ / ₅ |
| Mixture | 22.26.29 | III-IV |
| Cremona | | 8 |
| <i>Great & Choir Tremulant</i> | | |
| <i>Swell to Choir</i> | | |

PEDAL ORGAN

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|----|
| Open Diapason | | 16 |
| Sub Bass | | 16 |
| Octave | | 8 |
| Flute | | 8 |
| Choral Bass | | 4 |
| Mixture | 19.22.26.29 | IV |
| Trombone | | 16 |
| <i>Great to Pedal</i> | | |
| <i>Swell to Pedal</i> | | |
| <i>Choir to Pedal</i> | | |

Accessories

Manuals: C-a 58 notes, coverings of Bone with Blackwood sharps
 Pedalboard: C-F 30 notes, radiating and concave
 6 thumb pistons to each manual division
 6 Pedal toe pistons
 6 General thumb and toe pistons
 96 memory levels and sequencer

College (Harrison & Harrison) and Trinity Hall, Cambridge (Carsten Lund).

Two are not complete yet, so watch this space for your organ news!