

Sir Malcolm Sargent's organ revived

Paul Hale

From 1914 to 1924 Sir Malcolm Sargent (1895–1967) cut his teeth as a professional musician as Organist & Choirmaster of St Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Sargent ran choirs and orchestras in the locality, became England's youngest Doctor of Music by being granted the Durham degree, and made a lasting reputation for himself in the area as he began to develop into Britain's most popular conductor. No-one who witnessed his moving final Royal Albert Hall appearance at the Proms, two weeks before pancreatic cancer claimed him in September 1967, is likely ever to forget it.

On 31 October 2009, during a 'Battle of the Organs' concert given by Carlo Curley (who latterly lived in Melton Mowbray until his untimely death there) along with recitalist Keith Hearnshaw and St Mary's Director of Music, James Gutteridge, the Melton Mowbray organ was re-dedicated by Bishop Christopher Boyle as the *Sir Malcolm Sargent Memorial Organ*.

With a major refurbishment of this organ recently concluded, the time seems right to celebrate both it and the church's most famous musician, half a century after his death.

The St Mary's organ began life as a one-manual on the west gallery, made by John Gray. In 1850 it was rebuilt by Groves & Mitchell and divided either side of the chancel, with the addition of a Swell Organ; the console was built in on the south side. In 1869 William Hill & Son enlarged the organ, removing the main body

of it to the eastern chapel of the north transept; a Choir Organ was added in 1880. In 1896/7 William Hill & Son completely rebuilt the instrument, with a new building-frame, soundboards, actions, wind system, most reed stops, several ranks of flue pipes, a 32ft Double Open Diapason (wood) and new

hydraulic blowing mechanism. It grew to 39 speaking-stops on three manuals and pedals. Much of the 1897 organ's structure remains to this day.

The 1897 stop list (notice the fine complement of reeds and Choir 8fts) as set out on the facing page.



The main transept case

Between 1910 and 1927, Norman & Beard (later Hill, Norman & Beard) overhauled the instrument, afterward maintaining it and carrying out occasional repairs. T. H. Haydn Morton (formerly Morton & Moody) of Oakham carried out some work in 1929/30 when an electric blower replaced the hydraulic engine. Unfortunately, in 1941 bomb damage caused the Great reeds and the Choir Organ to be put out of action.

Full restoration had to wait until 1955, when J.W. Walker completely rebuilt the instrument. They electrified the Swell and Great actions, added top-note machines to extend the Great and Swell to 61 notes, built a Choir Organ (structurally new but using old ranks of pipes except for new bass octaves) on the south side of the chancel, redesigned the wind system to incorporate fewer large reservoirs and more small Walker single-rise regulators, placed a very large detached stop-knob console at the head of the south transept, created a Pedal Organ from existing and additional ranks on unit chests,



sharing some ranks with Great, Swell and Choir, Haskelled the 32ft Double Open Wood bottom octave, fitted two large oak cases containing the pipes of a new 16ft metal Open Diapason, and mounted a new oak case to the rear of the Choir Organ, with dummy front pipes. Dummy fronts of mute zinc pipes with no casework were also fitted in front of the Choir expression box (facing north across the chancel) and in front of the main organ arch on the north

1897 Specification

GREAT ORGAN

Double Diapason	16
Open Diapason No.1	8
Open Diapason No.2	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Twelfth	2 ² / ₃
Fifteenth	2
Sesquialtera 17.19.22	III
Mixture 26.29	II
Double Trumpet	16
Trumpet	8
Clarion	4

SWELL ORGAN

Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Salicional	8
Principal	4
Fifteenth	2
Mixture 17.19.22	III
Contra Fagotto	16
Cornopean	8
Oboe	8
Vox Humana	8
Clarion	4

CHOIR ORGAN

Gedact	8
Dulciana (t.c.)	8
Cone Gamba	8
Gamba	8
Vox Angelica (t.c.)	8
Gemshorn	4
Suabe Flute	4
Flautina	2
Clarionet (t.c.)	8

PEDAL ORGAN

Double Open Diapason	32
Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Trombone	16





Console and North Transept



Chancel showing two dummy organ fronts

Specification a

GREAT ORGAN		RANK	
1	Double Open Diapason	16	B
2	Contra Gedeckt	16	A
3	Open Diapason No.1	8	
4	Open Diapason No.2	8	
5	Open Diapason No.3	8	B
6	Wald Flute	8	
7	Gedeckt	8	A
8	Octave	4	new trebles
9	Principal	4	B
10	Harmonic Flute	4	
11	Twelfth	2 ² / ₃	
12	Fifteenth	2	
13	Mixture 17.19.22	III	recast treble
14	Sharp Mixture 26.29	II	
15	Cornet (G20 to G56) 1.8.12.15.17	V	new
16	Double Trumpet	16	C
17	Tromba	8	D
18	Trumpet	8	C
19	Clarion	4	C

SWELL ORGAN		RANK	
20	Open Diapason	8	
21	Stopped Diapason	8	
22	Salicional	8	
23	Voix Celeste (ten.C)	8	
24	Principal	4	
25	Suabe Flute	4	
26	Twelfth	2 ² / ₃	
27	Fifteenth	2	
28	Mixture 22.26.29	III	
29	Oboe	8	
Tremulant			
30	Double Trumpet	16	
31	Cornopean	8	
32	Clarion	4	



The nave

revised 2018

CHOIR ORGAN **RANK**
[SHUTTERS FOR NAVE AND CHANCEL]

33	Contra Gamba	16	E	
34	Lieblich Bourdon	16	F	
35	Open Diapason	8	H	
36	Lieblich Gedeckt	8	F	
37	Viola da Gamba	8	E	
38	Voix Celeste (ten.c.)	8		new
39	Prestant	4	H	
40	Lieblich Flute	4	F	
41	Gambette	4	E	
42	Nazard	2 ² / ₃	F	
43	Fifteenth	2	H	new
44	Flautino	2	F	
45	Tierce	1 ¹ / ₅		new
46	Mixture 22.26.29	III		new
47	Double Clarinet (ten.C)	16	I	
48	Clarinet	8	I	
	Tremulant			
49	Contra Tromba	16	D/M	
50	Tromba	8	D	
51	Trumpet	8	C	
52	Clarion	4	C	

PEDAL ORGAN **RANK**

53	Double Open Wood	32	J	
54	Open Wood	16	J	
55	Open Diapason	16	B	
56	Bourdon	16	K	
57	Echo Bourdon	16	F	
58	Gamba	16	E	
59	Principal	8	L	new
60	Bass Flute	8	K	
61	Gambette	8	E	
62	Fifteenth	4	L	new
63	Octave Flute	4	K	
64	Contra Trombone	32	C	new
65	Ophicleide	16	M	
66	Trombone	16	C	
67	Trumpet	16	Swell	
68	Tromba	8	M/C	
69	Clarion	4	C	

side of the chancel.

The organ was dedicated at Evensong on Sunday May 6th, 1956. St Mary's organist, Mr H. L. Barnes, played, on later dates giving demonstration recitals to various groups. Further recitals were played by Dr Francis Jackson (York Minster), Dr George Thalben-Ball (Temple Church, and Birmingham City Organist) and George Gray (Leicester Cathedral).

The instrument was a significant example of Walker's rebuilding projects, which were particularly numerous in the 1950s and 1960s. The general quality of their work did not seem to suffer from the enormous number of contracts passing through the Ruislip factory at the time, though some on-site decisions about wind trunk runs and unit chest placement occasionally did. A glance at the NPOR reveals that in 1955/6 not only were they carrying out a very similar rebuild at Sherborne Abbey, at St John's church St John's Wood, a 45-stop rebuild at Heaton Moor, a new organ of 70

speaking stops at St Columba's Pont Street (London), a three-manual rebuild at Royal Holloway College, but also a much larger one at Rochester cathedral, a rebuild of their famous 1938 organ at Notre Dame de France, Leicester Square, a more progressive small instrument for John Webster at University College Oxford, at least twenty other smaller contracts (including several new unit extension organs), and, to cap it all, the building in 1956/7 of their iconic 83-stop instrument in St Cuthbert's, Edinburgh. This is a quite extraordinary output of organ work in a country still suffering from post-war shortages.

The bulky and rather splendid console boasted (and still does) 82 stop-knobs controlling 69 speaking stops including a 32ft Grave Gedeckt on the Great (from tenor C) and four 16fts (two from tenor C) on the Choir. The Pedal was not the only department to rely on extended ranks (its seventeen stops were drawn from only two ranks not shared with manual departments): on the Great ten stops were derived from



The restored Walker console

five ranks and the entire 20-stop Choir organ was derived from only five ranks plus two loud reed ranks shared with the Great and Pedal. Despite this amount of extension, the organ achieved local celebrity and has fulfilled its role with some distinction for more than 60 years. It had some weaknesses, to which I shall return shortly.

The only work carried out between 1955 and 2017 was the cleaning of the Great pipework, by Cousans Organs. In recent years it became clear that the electrical components and console were completely worn out and the whole organ was in need of a full overhaul.

In 2012 a contract for its

refurbishment, modernisation and improvement was won by Henry Groves & Son (Jonathan Wallace) of Nottingham. The project was executed in their workshops whilst St Mary's was closed throughout 2017 for building works (including a new stone floor, underfloor heating, new lighting and the addition of comprehensive kitchen and toilet facilities), then installed in the church from January 2018, tonal regulation taking place from May to August.

The work carried out fell into two categories: (1) refurbishment and (2) modest improvements to the organ's layout and specification. The refurbishment work has been

fairly standard, though extensive, and has involved the replacement of all electrical systems and components, selective re-leathering, a top-overhaul of the slider soundboards, the cleaning and restoration of all the pipework, a complete restoration of the console (by Renatus of Bideford) with new manual keyboards, new pedal keys, all wooden surfaces refinished and repolished and a comprehensive new combination piston system installed, the blowers refurbished (by Stephen Lemmings), the casework re-stained to match the church's new oak fittings and new swell engines fitted to the three shutter fronts.

The second task was to improve

on certain aspects of the layout and specification. The sound of the Swell had, since 1955, been muted owing to the placing of the Great and Choir reeds on large Roosevelt chests above the Great and in front of the Swell box. These have now been removed to a new position beneath the Great, speaking boldly through pierced oak panelling, to the enormous benefit of the Swell. The layout of the Choir, in its small but tall box, was cramped and the tonal egress poor. Together with a new compact wind system designed by Groves, new Choir chests have been made which use the space better; the sound now reaches into the church – an enormous space – far better. Tonal improvements have concentrated on reducing the amount of extension. For example, the Choir Dulciana rank – virtually inaudible but from which five pitches were derived – has gone, replaced by a Voix Celeste of equal character to the excellent Hill Viola da Gamba, and on the Pedal a new Principal / Fifteenth rank replaces the borrowing of the Principal from the Great Open Diapason No.3 and the Pedal 8ft derivation of the Choir Lieblich rank. The Choir

has gained a new Tierce, which it previously lacked, a 2ft Fifteenth extension of the Diapason rank, and a ‘repeating’ three-octave Mixture in the Walker style, using three knobs vacated by the departing Dulciana rank. The Great has exchanged the bizarre 32ft Grave Gedeckt extension for a bold new five-rank Cornet and the three-rank Mixture has been recast to make it more usable. For added grandeur, a half-length 32ft reed of good scale, using vintage 16ft Hill wooden Trombone pipes, has been added (replacing the 8ft Octave Wood extension) as an extension of the Hill Trombone, which it matches perfectly and tastefully.

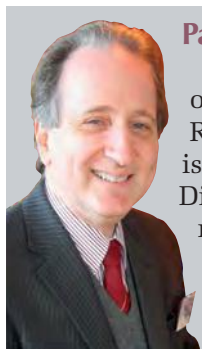
The tonal improvements are shown in the revised stop-list herewith. New pipes were made by F. Booth & Sons (Leeds) and voiced by David Hall; the 32ft reed was voiced by Trevor Tipple.

It would be good to think that should Sir Malcolm Sargent have heard this revised and refreshed organ – the organ which bears his name – he would have been delighted with the result. All who hear it and play it certainly are – and Sargent would have been delighted with that, too, for his



Choir organ rear case

great aim in life was to bring fine music to everyone: precisely what this magnificent organ can now do.



Paul Hale is a professional organ consultant, recitalist and choral conductor.

Whilst Organ Scholar of New College, Oxford (1971–4), Paul Hale began to write about the organ – his first published piece was in *Organists’ Review*, of which he was later to become Reviews Editor and then Editor (1990–2005). A noted recitalist, lecturer and choir trainer, Paul is well-known in the UK, in Europe and in the USA. As well as being an Organ Adviser for the Dioceses of Southwell and Lincoln, Paul is an accredited member of the AIOA and has designed many new and restored organs throughout the UK. He is a diploma examiner for the RCO, and has been awarded honorary fellowships by the GCM and the RSCM and the Archbishop of Canterbury’s ‘Thomas Cranmer Award’ for his contribution to church music. More information is available at www.PaulHale.org

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