

A SMOOTH RIDE AT MARKET DEEPING

Paul Hale

Organ projects rarely go entirely smoothly from beginning to end: I'm sure many readers experience challenges and struggles as they attempt to find the funding, gain the permissions and steer to success an organ restoration. It is therefore a pleasure to be able to report a recent project which has been a smooth and indeed enjoyable ride for all concerned.

Market Deeping is a market town on the A15 in South Lincolnshire, quite close to picturesque Stamford (on the Great North Road, as my father called it to his dying day). With a population of some 6,200

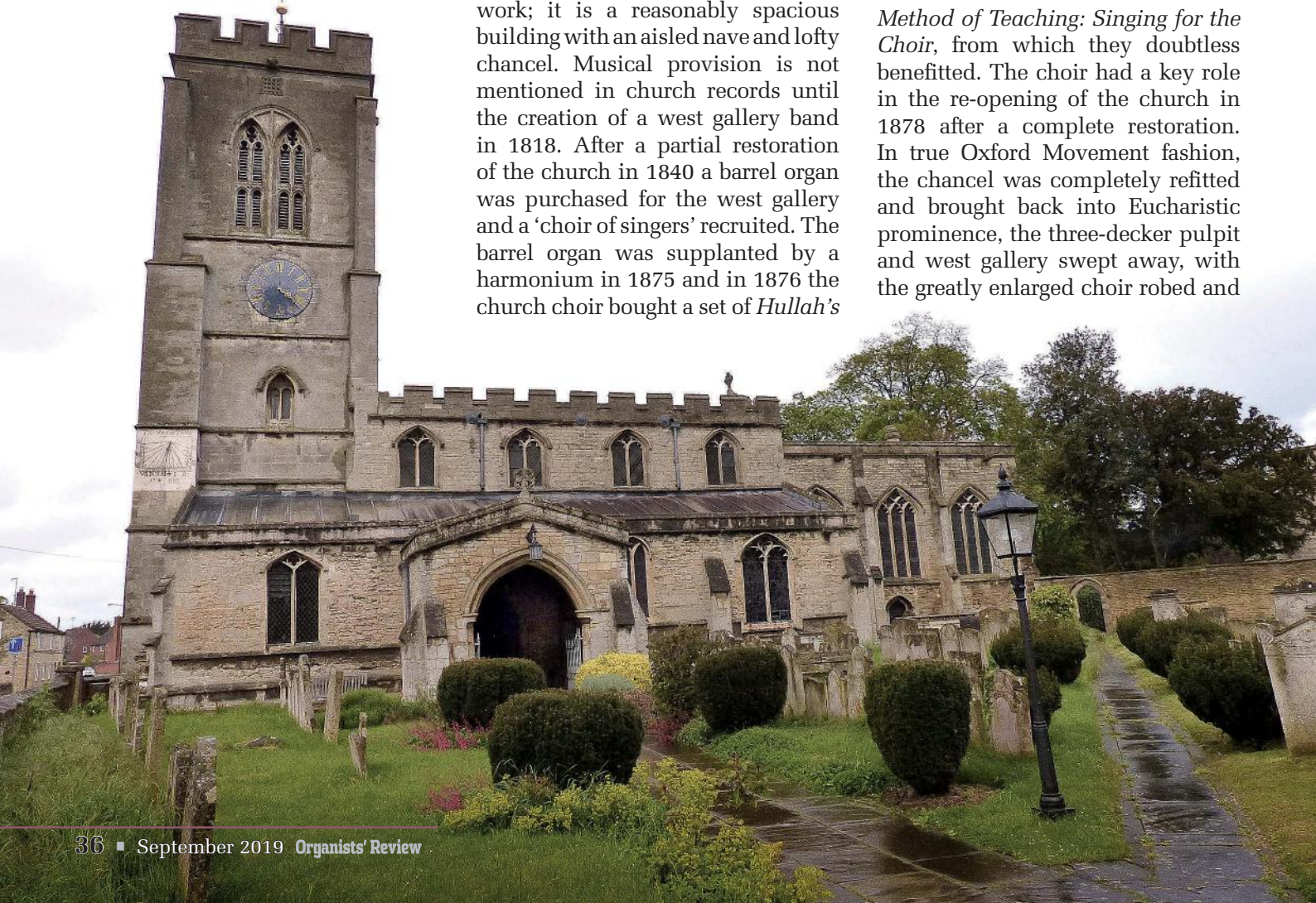
it is a thriving place with an active Anglican parish church. The church is dedicated to St Guthlac (674–715AD), a Lincolnshire-born saint who was a monk at Repton monastery and then became a hermit living at Crowland (eight miles east of Market Deeping), where he was much visited in search of spiritual guidance. After Guthlac's death, Crowland Abbey (dissolved in 1539) was built to commemorate him. Guthlac's story is related pictorially in the early 13th century *Guthlac Roll*, held in the British Library.

St Guthlac's church at Market Deeping is mainly of 15th century work; it is a reasonably spacious building with an aisled nave and lofty chancel. Musical provision is not mentioned in church records until the creation of a west gallery band in 1818. After a partial restoration of the church in 1840 a barrel organ was purchased for the west gallery and a 'choir of singers' recruited. The barrel organ was supplanted by a harmonium in 1875 and in 1876 the church choir bought a set of *Hullah's*

Original specification

GREAT (56 notes)	
Open Diapason	8
Dulciana (grooved)	8
Rohr Flute	8
Principal	4
Flautina	2
SWELL (44 notes, the bottom octave being from the Great stopped 8ft bass)	
Salicional	8
Hohl Flute	8
Gemshorn	4
Oboe	8
PEDAL (30 notes)	
Bourdon	16
Swell to Great	
Swell to Pedal	
Great to Pedal	
2 Combination Pedals	

Method of Teaching: Singing for the Choir, from which they doubtless benefitted. The choir had a key role in the re-opening of the church in 1878 after a complete restoration. In true Oxford Movement fashion, the chancel was completely refitted and brought back into Eucharistic prominence, the three-decker pulpit and west gallery swept away, with the greatly enlarged choir robed and



seated in new chancel stalls.

Three years later a new organ was installed on the north side of the chancel, to complete the restoration project. William Hill & Sons were the selected builders: it is good to remind ourselves that not only was St Guthlac a Lincolnshire man, but so was William Hill – born in Spilsby, as I have written about in a previous article.

The new organ, in a handsome oak case enclosing it on three sides, surmounted by spotted-metal 8ft front pipes, was relatively free-standing in a relatively spacious area, scarcely a ‘chamber’, as it is open to the north nave aisle and there is space to walk around the organ and indeed to reach the vestry to its east.

As specified in the contract, the organ had the adjoining specification:

The contact also, interestingly, specifies “Case to be of Oak, as per design – Gothic of the late 15th 13th Century”. The price was £270 with the option (not carried out at the time) of extending the Swell down to 56 notes for an extra £25.

The organ was opened by Dr Haydn Keeton, the renowned Peterborough Cathedral organist, who gave morning and evening recitals on Sunday, 28 September 1882 (doubtless with a hearty lunch in between). The music comprised works by Merkel, Hiles, Smart, Bach (*St Anne* fugue), Handel (*Waft her, angels*, from *Jephtha*), Silas, Mendelssohn (*Sonata II*), Batiste, Sterndale Bennett, and Mendelssohn (*War March of the Priests*, from *Athalie*). One wonders how Dr Keeton managed with a tenor-C Swell; I imagine it irritated him that something so anachronistic and musically inconvenient had been perpetrated.

Almost inevitably, this rather modest stop-list was soon found not to be comprehensive or loud enough for the hearty choral singing developing at St Guthlac’s. In 1896 Hill quoted for enlargement but nothing was done until 1916, when the organ was cleaned. In 1929 quotes were obtained from three firms to overhaul and improve the organ. By then the



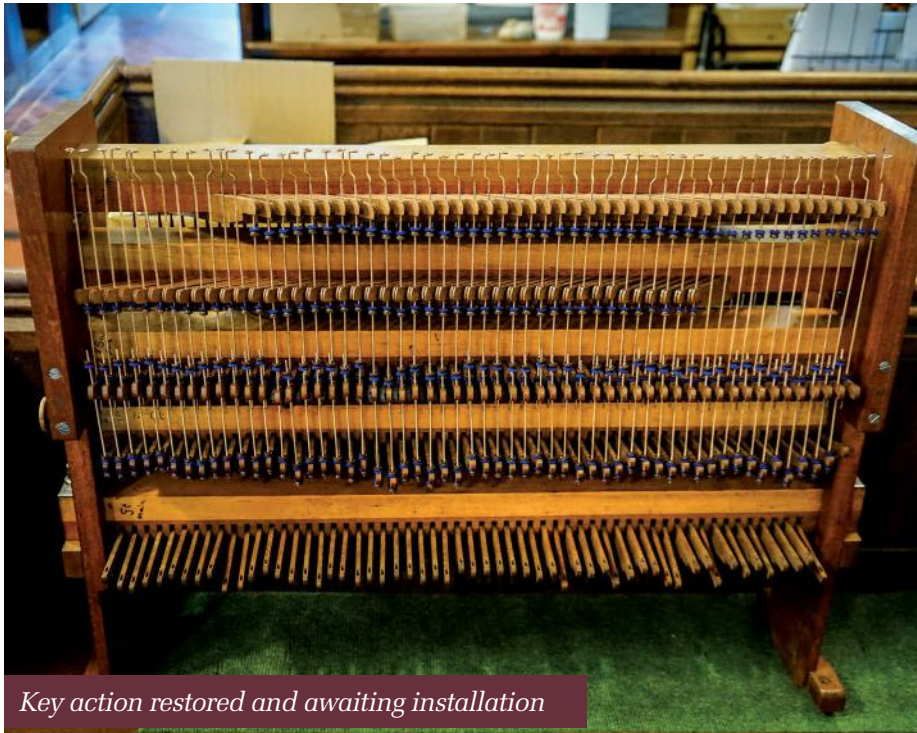
Console being reinstalled following restoration



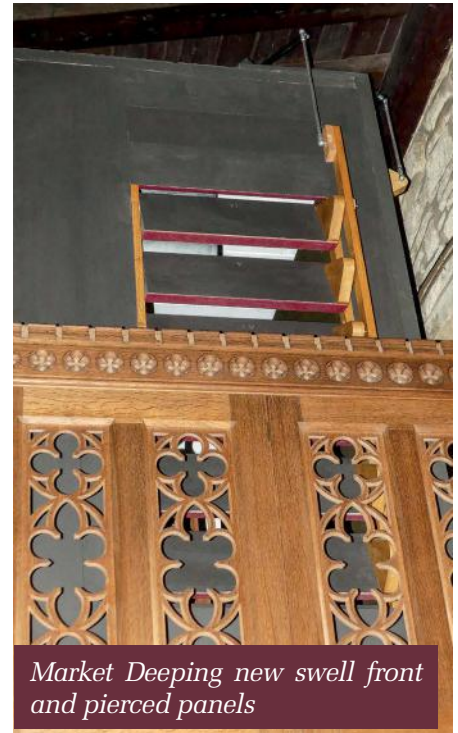
Nameplate



Dirt and debris before cleaning



Key action restored and awaiting installation



Market Deeping new swell front and pierced panels

Hill firm had merged with Norman & Beard to become 'William Hill & Sons and Norman & Beard' – and they won the contract. Consequently, during 1931 the organ was cleaned, the Swell extended to bottom C and enlarged by the addition of an 8ft Open Diapason, the Bourdon chest made pneumatic, extended to an 8ft Bass Flute and a 32ft Harmonic [acoustic] Bass, mechanical octave and sub octave couplers provided for the Swell, with new swell shutters and a balanced swell pedal. In 1946 HN&B installed the organ's first electric blower, situated in the adjacent vestry. The firm's final work here was a cleaning in 1968.

The organ was tuned and maintained for many years by the local HN&B tuner, Norman Hall, When he left HN&B and started his own firm, Norman Hall & Son (Cambridge), he held on to the tuning contract and, in 1993, won a contract for further work to the organ, aimed at brightening it up. He removed the Swell Salicional to storage, replacing it with a two-rank Mixture, electrified the action to the Bourdon rank, replacing the acoustic 32ft with a 4ft Flute and its associated extra twelve pipes, removed the Swell sub octave mechanism to storage, added

an 8ft Trumpet on electric action to the Great, outside the organ's NW corner, and cleaned the instrument.

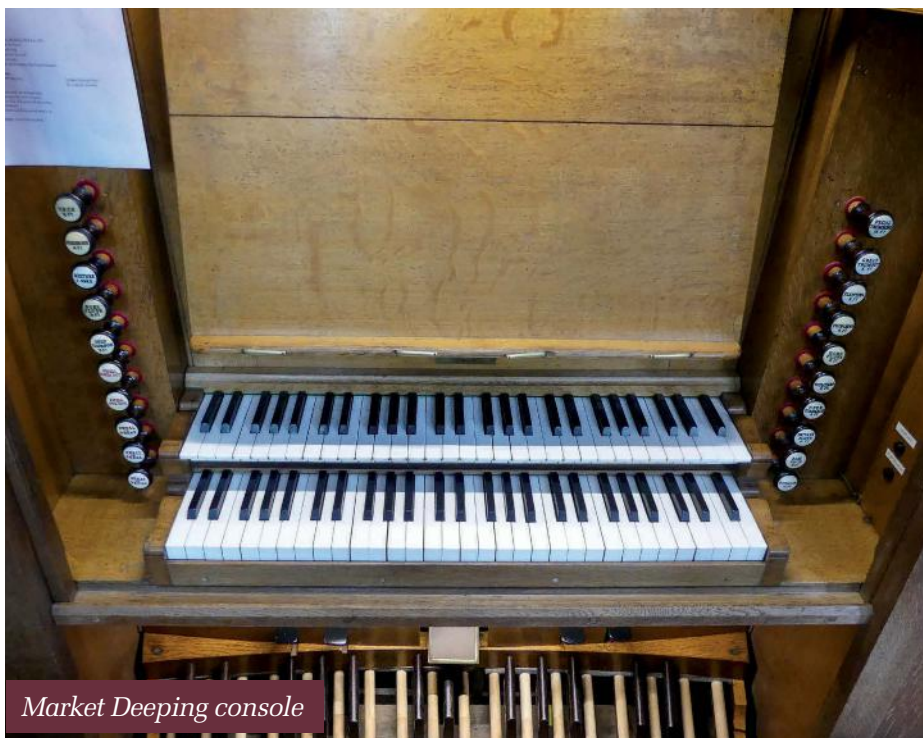
Readers will observe that the instrument still possessed – as its only 2ft – the Great Flautina. Despite the 1993 Swell Mixture, the lack of brightness in the Great was still felt, and the tone of the entire organ was somewhat reluctant to reach down the building owing to the amount of oak panelling surrounding it. So it was that in 2018–9 (by when the organ needed cleaning again) another firm, Clevedon Organs, arrived on the scene, proposing some imaginative improvements as well as a full restoration of the actions, console and soundboards. The initiator of the work was the church's vigorous organist and choirmaster, Peter Davies, whose enthusiasm and commitment won the whole-hearted support of the Rector, the PCC and the congregation. Here I quote the recently published splendid 56-page history of music at St Guthlac's (researched and written by Elizabeth Patterson):

'The whole church tackled the task with relish...ingenious money raising ventures started in December 2017. The *Organists Let Loose* was a particularly memorable

family evening...all sorts of music, solos; organ pipes and balloons were particularly great fun – and the audience wandering right around the organ as it was played. Sponsored carol singing – twice, a pledge auction, an "Unplugged" solo concert, a brave parachute jump, jazz breakfast, quiz evening, wine tasting, sponsoring an organ pipe, to name but a few. Some very generous individual donations were made. Then the real boost came when the National Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £40,000. Other grants came from the Diocese of Lincoln's Transformation Fund, Market Deeping Town Council, Garfield Weston Foundation, Invest SK and The Allchurches Trust. The financial target [of £88,000] was finally reached in March 2019. An amazing feat in just over a year!'

Not only was the organ cleaned and the entire mechanical action refurbished (during which the stored Swell Sub Octave coupler mechanism was re-installed and the actions and pallet springs set up to enable it, and all the actions, to work well) but also the following improvements were made:

'The Great Flautina pipes were stored within the organ and a new



Market Deeping console

Revised specification	
GREAT (56 notes)	
Open Diapason	8
Salicional (grooved)	8
Rohr Flute	8
Principal	4
Fifteenth	2
Trumpet	8
SWELL (56 notes)	
Open Diapason	8
Hohl Flute	8
Gemshorn	4
Mixture 15.19	II
Oboe	8
Swell Super Oct	
Swell Sub Oct	
PEDAL (30 notes)	
Bourdon	16
Quint	10 ² / ₃
Bass Flute	8
Octave Flute	4
St Guthlac	V
Trombone	16
Swell to Great	Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal	2 Combination Pedals
	Balanced Swell pedal

Hill-style Fifteenth replaced them. The Great Principal and the treble of the Open Diapason were loudened to a level that seemed more natural, at which point their tone matched that of the Fifteenth perfectly.

A vintage 16ft Trombone bass was installed at the back of the organ, extended from the Trumpet, which was revoiced into a far finer reed, and was encased in an oak tone cabinet to focus its tone and keep the dust out.

The west-facing upper casework panels of solid oak (a complete block to sound) were skilfully pierced with motifs matching others in the case, thus allowing much more tone from the Great to reach down the nave.

The swell box had an additional set of shutters made as an exact

stylistic match for the HNB shutter front, being installed on the west side of the swell box. This allows the Swell also to speak clearly down the nave.

The 1993 Swell Mixture was recast and revoiced, its bass being mounted on the soundboard whereas it had previously been conveyed off.

The rather insipid Great Dulciana was stored and the Swell Salicional brought out of storage and installed in its place on the Great, thus giving the Great more colour and acting as a second Open Diapason when used with the Rohr Flute.

The Pedal gained a 10²/₃ft extension of the Bourdon rank and a five-rank 32ft harmonics, derived from the Bourdon and the Trombone.

The blower was overhauled and its ugly zinc wind trunk boxed in

with oak. The soundboards were fully restored, as were the console surfaces. The casework was cleaned and waxed.'

The organ was dedicated on 27 October this year and on 30 November an opening concert was given. Many community events are planned for the future.

I hope this article gives heart to any readers seeking to embark upon an organ restoration project. At Market Deeping we have a modest organ in a modest church in a modest town – nothing fancy or well-endowed in any of them. Yet the people of St Guthlac's were united in their determination to succeed. And that, of course, is the key which unlocks the mystery of how to achieve these things – they were united. Let such unity prevail in all our churches.

Paul Hale MA FRCO FRSA Accredited Member of the AIOA
Organ Consultant

Technical and musical advice for any type of organ project;
 an experienced, comprehensive and national service.

*Current clients include parish churches, cathedrals,
 concert halls, universities and schools.*

PaulHale@diaphone.clara.net www.PaulHale.org
 3 Trefoil Close, Bingham, Notts NG13 8TX 07974 931057

VICTORIA HALL HANLEY
 Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3AD 4 Manual Conacher-Willis III

Saturday Organ Proms
 12 noon £10.50 (Concessions £9)
 Includes Tea/Coffee & Programme

Tel 07967 806 409 www.victoriahall-organproms.co.uk

February 22 James Lancelot
 March 14 Philip Rushforth
 April 18 Jonathan Scott
 May 9 Ashley Grote