

# Imagination triumphs where space is limited

Paul Hale

It's very common for organs to be fitted into spaces too tight for them. The result? Limited tonal egress, poor tuning and eventual mechanical unreliability as those parts which are inaccessible begin to fail. Two such organs in the UK have recently been replaced by instruments based in the same small spaces but intelligently planned to assure musical success and reliability. A third instrument is an

choristers, so legend has it, as was its 1841 successor. The Smith organ came to languish in the College brew house until that canny collector of organs, Sir John Sutton, came upon it in 1845 'full of hops' as he put it. After a period out of sight in private ownership (Dr Harding Newman and, in 1936, Captain J. Lane), it came into the proud possession of Noel Mander and resides to this day in St Peter's Organ Works. Robin Jennings

share of replacing organs once deemed satisfactory with new ones. The church of St Mary the Less ('Little St Mary's') replaced its Hill & Davison with a Lewis in 1883 and then replaced that in 1978 (to considerable fanfare) with a new organ by Bishop & Son, based on redundant Holdich pipework. A swallow's nest case was designed by Lawrence Bond and the organ was shoehorned into it. This instrument has, in turn, recently been replaced with a somewhat larger new organ by Kenneth Tickell & Co., with the Great in the Bond case (slightly improved and with new front pipes). By using space behind the case for the Swell and Pedal basses, all can be reached for tuning and maintenance – a problem with its predecessor. One hopes that Little St Mary's has now found an instrument with which it can live for many years. A glance at the stop-list will show how comprehensive a scheme it is, and although some might wonder at the choice of an 8ft Trumpet on the Pedal rather than 4ft flue or an 8ft flute, it should be remembered that it is actually transmitted from the Great and is thus not an independent rank, for which there is presumably no room.

Up in Scotland Sandy Edmonstone has been working at St Columba's Church, Blackhall, Edinburgh. His task was to replace a mongrel of an organ buried deep in a chamber, with an instrument projected forward some four feet into a new case (designed by Derek Watson-Griggs). The console sits in an adjacent gallery so there was no question of using tracker action. Other than some pedal ranks, 'retained on both artistic and economic grounds' (Angus Tully, the church organist, writing in *Organbuilding Vol.7*, to which



*Robin Jennings's copy of a Father Smith organ at Stanley Pontlarge*

imaginative answer to the really small church; it is a rarity in the UK – the copying of every detail of an historic organ, in this case a tiny but well-known Father Smith.

Let's begin with the baby. A compact instrument (c.1670) by Bernard 'Father' Smith once stood in the Song Room at New College, Oxford. It was much abused by

has recently set about making a copy of this delightful little organ for the tiny mediæval church at Stanley Pontlarge, near Gretton, north-east of Cheltenham. The stop list is 8ft Stopped Wood, 4ft Principal (wood), 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>ft Twelfth (metal), 2ft Fifteenth (metal); a photograph of this exquisite instrument is above.

Cambridge has also done its fair

**St Mary the Less specification,****Kenneth Tickell & Co.****GREAT ORGAN**

Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Spitzflute	4
Fifteenth	2
Cornet	IV
Mixture	IV
Trumpet (or Pedal)	8
Tremulant	
Swell to Great	

**SWELL ORGAN**

Chimney Flute	8
Viola	8
Celeste	8
Principal	4
Nason Flute	4
Flageolet	2
Sesquialtera	II
Mixture	III
Cremona	16
Oboe	8
Tremulant	

**PEDAL ORGAN**

Sub Bass	16
Principal	8
Posaune	16
Trumpet (or Great)	8
Swell to Pedal	
Great to Pedal	

*St Mary the Less, Cambridge***St Columba's  
specification****GREAT ORGAN**

Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Stopped Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
Mounted Cornet (TC)	III
Mixture (III)	1 1/3
Trumpet	8
Tremulant	
Swell to Great	

**SWELL ORGAN**

Open Diapason	8
Lieblich Gedackt	8
Gamba	8
Celestes (TC)	8
Gemshorn	4
Suabe Flute	4
Gemshorn	2
Larigot	1 1/3
Mixture (IV)	2
Contra Posaune	16
Cornocean	8
Oboe	8
Tremulant	
Octave coupler, Sub-octave coupler	

**PEDAL ORGAN**

Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Bass Flute	8
Octave	4
Trombone	16
Swell to Pedal, Great to Pedal	

*Pipes and console of St Columba's Church, Blackhall, Edinburgh, to demonstrate the distance*





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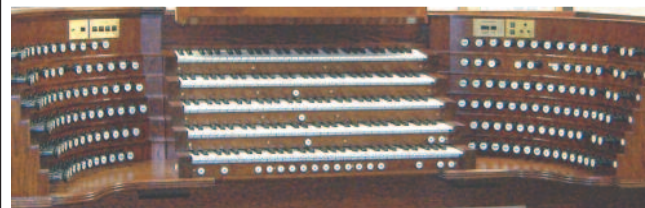
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The new terraced console has been designed in consultation with Mats Ericson, the City Hall Organist. It takes its inspiration from Cavaillé-Coll and from Swedish traditions; the geometry of the layout has been specially designed so that all 165 drawstops are easily accessible.



The console will be mobile, and will be on view behind a glass case on the floor of the Blue Hall. The rebuilt organ will be used for the Nobel ceremony in December 2008.



The console of the Walcker organ of 1925, with four manuals and 115 stops, was built within the instrument. It was replaced in 1972 with an American console of 138 stops (below), which was placed on the floor of the Hall. The ivory key coverings have been reused for the new console.



the reader may turn for greater detail) the entire organ is new.

It is instructive to compare the Cambridge and Blackhall stoplists. Although the Scottish instrument has a more powerful Swell in a full-size box (to fill a large church) the two Greats are notably similar and indeed unusually so, both opting to include a Cornet and a Tremulant. The Blackhall Great assumes both 8ft & 4ft flutes will be used as the lower ranks of a 5-rank cornet; the Cambridge Great assumes only the 8ft. Cornets are more useful than may be supposed. As well as the ubiquitous English Cornet Voluntary there is, of course, much solo use in classical French repertoire where such a stop – if beautifully voiced – can be used as the *dessus de tierce* or *tierce en taille* (note the Blackhall stop wisely descending to

tenor C). The French tutti is rendered Gallic in colour with the addition of the Cornet to the reeds, and it is vital in the *Grand Jeux*, of course. Some of Bach's more declamatory chorale preludes also work well with a Cornet as the solo register, especially with a Tremulant. A Great Tremulant in a scheme always raises a smile, but think – on which manual of many an organ are the most beautiful solo flutes, sometimes a Cornet, a melodic Diapason or even a Clarinet? The Great. Having a Great Tremulant to enliven such stops costs very little and adds a great deal to the tonal resources available. But don't go asking your organ tuner to pop one in the next time he calls...

Later in 2008 we will compare the new organs in Jesus College Cambridge (Kuhn) and St John's

College Oxford (Aubertin); we will also look at several nineteenth century organs skilfully revived – or revised. Please remember that this column seeks to highlight recent work of interest in the UK; it does not attempt a full critique of each instrument as it is impossible to visit them all.

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