

# In and out of the box

Paul Hale

So much these days is written and spoken about the strict restoration of organs that it is easy to forget that not every organ was quite 'fit for purpose' when originally made. Some may have become less fit for purpose because of the demands now made upon them, or because they have been unsympathetically rebuilt. Whether to restore, rebuild or replace is often a tricky question; the answer often lies 'outside the box' of orthodox restoration. This time we look at three projects which neatly demonstrate differing approaches to this sort of question; if we had had room to illustrate a fourth organ this month, then an entirely new instrument would have illustrated another approach.

At St Helen, Bishopgate, Norwich, Richard Bower has carried out the historic restoration of an important little two-manual organ by Mark Noble

(1850). Always fit for purpose, its task today is much the same as it always was, so it has been restored 'as original'. A different approach was needed at Bulwell parish church in Nottingham, where Henry Groves & Son has rebuilt and enlarged to three manuals a two-manual Forster & Andrews (of 1872, later 'got at' by another hand), which previously made no impact in the nave – the very area where it was now desperately needed. At Uppingham School the organ had for years proved unbalanced and hard to accompany with since the chapel had been altered and extended. Here Nicholsons have built a structurally new three-manual organ in new casework, based on existing pipework by Harrison and Walker. The latter two organs have electro-pneumatic action.

Let's start with the oldest and smallest organ, St Helen, Norwich.

Richard Bower takes up the tale: 'It was built by Mark Noble, senior, in 1850 who was a fine Norwich organ builder. Mark Noble lived from c.1821 to 1895 and moved to Norwich in around 1847 having been brought up in Reading...he moved to London in around 1871. The Swell organ was added, possibly by his son Mark Noble (junior), in 1859. Mark junior was born c.1844 but alas died tragically in 1889 after a road accident in Whitechapel High Street, aged 45. The dates 1850 and 1859 appear on the lowest-note pallets of the Swell and Great soundboard; the Great is marked Mark Noble (senior), which perhaps infers that the Swell was by Mark Noble (junior). A newspaper cutting with the date of 1859 was also found inside the bellows; as this can be seen only by removing the leathering this shows that the reservoir was leathered or releathered not before 1859, the date of the Swell organ. A date of 1879 is just discernible pencilled on the back of the swell box; that is the likely date when the organ was expanded with the addition of 18 pipes to complete the compass of the Swell organ which previously, and within the swell box still, commenced at tenor G. The organ was moved forward to accommodate this, as can be seen by the extension of the side panelling.'

'Three styles of pipework exist. The Great Open Diapason, Principal and Fifteenth pipes are old, (around or pre-1850); the pipes of the Swell are younger, in Victorian style; and the gorgeous wooden pipework is presumably the hand of Mark Noble himself. The fascinating stop, 'Voil Degam', is younger still and is delightful and gentle. This stop was on the Swell organ but had obviously supplanted the Hautboy, now recreated. It has been retained and placed on the Great



*The Mark Noble organ in St Helen's, Norwich*

## St Helen's, Norwich specification

GREAT (CC to top f)	
Fifteenth	2
Flute	4
Principal	4
Voil Degam	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Open Diapason	8
(playing on the Great but placed on the left hand jamb)	
Swell Coupler (i.e. Swell to Great)	
SWELL (enclosed; tenor g to top f)	
Hautboy	8
Principal	4
Clarabella Flute	8
Open Diapason	8
(unenclosed CC—ten f#)	
Sw Bass	8
PEDAL	
Burdon (20 notes)	16
(The 20 straight pedals are permanently coupled)	

(replacing a non-original second Open Diapason).'

Built on an altogether more industrial scale was the very solid 1872 Forster & Andrews at Bulwell, Nottingham. Originally the organ was mechanical and sited in the North Aisle. It was moved to a chancel chamber and converted to exhaust pneumatic by Fenton Wragg (Nottingham) in the 1930s. The organ had some later work carried out but ceased to work well some years ago. Because of its chamber placement it never was able to lead hearty congregational singing, though it accompanied well the church's able choir. Plans for its improvement were developed during the 1990s but it was not until a large bequest became available that its rebuilding could be carried out.

During 2006/7 Henry Groves & Son converted the Wragg tubular-pneumatic action to electro-pneumatic, re-ordered the chamber and enlarged the organ to three manuals, whilst fully restoring all parts and relathering and augmenting the wind system. A new console was built into the old console space. The Pedal Open Wood was moved to open up the previously blocked archway into the nave's south aisle, behind which a large new Choir Organ was installed, in a position where its Principal chorus can lead congregational singing. The Pedal department gained a Principal chorus and a Trombone. The Forster & Andrews Great and Swell divisions being almost entirely unaltered, the bold-toned pipework was regulated to give of its best.

At Uppingham School, where they too rejoice in an excellent choir and sturdy congregational singing, a not dissimilar problem has been addressed by Nicholsons. Andrew Moyes, Managing Director, writes: 'An organ was built in 1914 by Harrison & Harrison for the school chapel. It was housed in the usual side chamber opening into the north choir (only). In the 1960s, the chapel was enlarged by taking out the north wall of the nave and building on a triangular annex. J.W. Walker rebuilt the organ, the chamber being opened up to face west as well as south. Walker retained the Harrison pipework for the Swell and Great but added a new pseudo-baroque Choir organ and functional cases. Many of those seated in the annex were unable to

## Bulwell, Nottingham specification

SWELL		CHOIR	
Lieblich Bourdon	16	Open Diapason	8
Violin Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Lieblich Gedact	8	Gemshorn	4
Flute d'Amour	8	Lieblich Flute	4
Vox Angelica	8	Nazard	2 2/3
Principal	4	Piccolo	2
Fifteenth	2	Tierce	1 3/5
Mixture 15.19.22	III	Fifteenth	2
Cornopean	8	Cremona	8
Oboe	8	Trumpet	8
GREAT		PEDAL	
Double Stopt Diapason	16	Open Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8	Bourdon	16
Claribel	8	Lieblich Bourdon	16
Dulciana	8	Principal	8
Principal	4	Bass Flute	8
Harmonic Flute	4	Fifteenth	4
Twelfth	2 2/3	Trombone	16
Fifteenth	2		
Sesquialtera 15.17.19.22	IV		
Trumpet	8		
Couplers			
Swell Octave	Choir Octave	Great to Pedal	
Swell Unison Off	Choir Unison Off	Choir to Pedal	
Swell Sub Octave	Choir Sub Octave	Gt. & Ped. Comb. Coupled	
Swell to Great	Choir to Great		
Swell to Choir	Swell to Pedal		



*Bulwell console*

see the high altar and much of the choir. It was a loud organ, needed for the famed hearty congregational singing. The Swell and Great soundboards were at low level facing west, which proved to be overbearing for those sitting nearest the organ. If the organ was played loudly enough to support the choristers, the balance was wrong for listeners in the nave annex. The Harrison and Walker pipework did not coalesce. In the past year, the chapel

has been reordered with the liturgical centre in the nave, against the south wall. The choristers occupy the old chancel but face west. The organ was in need of major attention and the reordering was an opportunity for a complete rethink. The present organ is entirely new except for the surviving Harrison pipework. The new Swell and Great soundboards have been raised to speak over the heads of those sitting near the organ. A new Choir organ,



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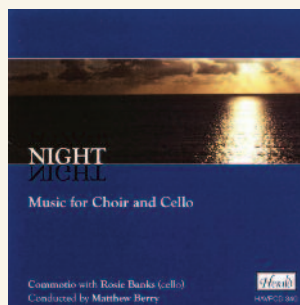
Voicing of the rebuilt organ is under way, and included a research trip to study the sound of a contemporary Walcker organ in Tallinn, capital of Estonia. Part of the Stockholm Manual II pipework is shown above; the Harrison pipework of the Solo organ below, with Peter Hopps hard at work.



We are not redesigning our website at present, despite hints from the younger generation that web-design has moved on. One recent addition is the slowly evolving gallery of Pictures from our Workshop, showing some of our ongoing projects: see [www.harrison-organs.co.uk](http://www.harrison-organs.co.uk).



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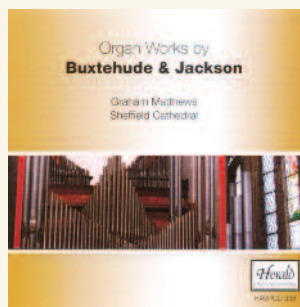


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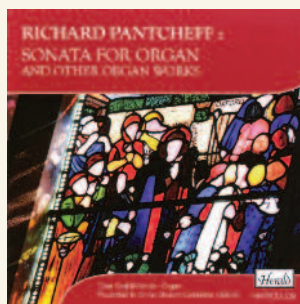
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Uppingham School

with new pipework to complement the H&H material, has been provided in a new case bracketed from the south wall, opposite the main organ. This has been designed as a 'small Great' chorus. Its location puts it in line-of-sight of the entire assembly which helps in supporting congregational singing. It can also be used with the Swell organ as a two-manual instrument to accompany the choristers. The swell box has two sets of shutters,

## Uppingham school specification

GREAT ORGAN			CHOIR ORGAN (south side of chancel)		
Bourdon	16	existing	Viola	8	new: zinc bass, spotted metal treble
Open Diapason I	8	existing	Stopped Flute	8	new: plain metal
Open Diapason II	8	existing	Gemshorn	4	new: spotted metal
Claribel Flute	8	existing 4ft, with new bottom octave	Open Flute	4	new: plain metal
Octave	4	existing	Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	new: plain metal, tapered
Harmonic Flute	4	existing Swell	Fifteenth	2	new: spotted metal
Octave Quint	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	existing	Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	new: plain metal
Super Octave	2	existing	Mixture 19.22.26	III	new: spotted metal
Mixture 19.22.26	III	existing	Clarinet	8	new: plain metal bass, spotted metal treble
Posaune	8	new: plain metal bass, spotted metal treble			
SWELL ORGAN (enclosed)					
Open Diapason	8	existing			
Gedeckt	8	existing			
Echo Gamba	8	existing			
Voix Celeste TC	8	new			
Principal	4	existing			
Wald Flute	4	new: wood			
Fifteenth	2	existing			
Mixture 22.26.29	III	existing: recast with more breaks			
Oboe	8	existing			
Tremulant					
Double Trumpet	16	existing			
Trumpet	8	existing			
Clarion	4	existing			
Octave					
Sub Octave					
			CHOIR PEDAL		
			Bourdon	16	new: wood
			PEDAL ORGAN		
			Open Wood	16	existing
			Open Metal	16	existing
			Subbass	16	existing Bourdon
			Bourdon	16	from Great
			Principal	8	new: zinc bass, spotted metal treble
			Bass Flute	8	existing Subbass
			Fifteenth	4	existing Principal
			Trombone	16	existing, revoiced
			Tromba	8	existing Trombone
Couplers					
Swell to Great		Swell to Choir	Choir to Pedal		
Choir to Great		Swell to Pedal	Great to Pedal		

facing west and south, with independent pedals so the west (main) front can remain closed when accompanying the choristers.'

This is still a very powerful organ when played in an empty chapel. But all is needed when the school decides to sing heartily. The comprehensive stop-list allows pupils to learn good registrational practice for all periods, and provides for colourful and atmospheric choir accompaniment. Tonal Director Guy Russell has revoiced the old pipework, blending it imperceptibly with the new

to form a remarkably cohesive whole. I note with admiration that the group of three independent schools in the same region – Uppingham, Oakham, Oundle – have all carried out major organ projects in relatively recent years. It is no coincidence that each regularly produces fine organ students winning major organ scholarships.

In the next issue we will compare two new, imported, Oxbridge College chapel organs – St John's College, Oxford (Aubertin, France) and Jesus College, Cambridge (Kuhn, Switzerland). They are as different as chalk and cheese, as you will see. Don't miss your August copy!



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