

# Innovation at the Inn

The Organs of Lincoln's Inn Chapel, London – Paul Hale

Readers may have observed that whereas a modest parish church with limited resources rebuilds or replaces its organ perhaps once every seventy-five or hundred years, those establishments with greater resources, whose instruments are often used daily, tend to be places where organs are regularly 'modernised', augmented or replaced. Cathedrals are the most obvious examples of this, as are 'Oxbridge' college chapels. This article takes a peek inside a more private institution, one of London's Inns of Court: Lincoln's Inn, where development of its chapel organ has taken place regularly over 190 years.

Many readers will never have come across Lincoln's Inn; indeed, what are the Inns of Court? Today there are four – the Inner Temple and the Middle Temple (with the renowned Temple Church and its Harrison & Harrison organ), Gray's Inn (with its 1993 Mander) and Lincoln's Inn (now boasting a new Tickell organ in its chapel). The Inns of Court are the professional associations to one of which every barrister in England and Wales (and those judges who were formerly barristers) must belong. The Inns have supervisory and disciplinary functions over their members and house a chapel, libraries, dining facilities in a great hall and professional accommodation. Each is a self-contained precinct where barristers traditionally train and practise, although growth in the legal profession, together with a desire to practise from more modern accommodation caused many barristers' chambers to move outside the precincts of the Inns of Court in the late 20th century. Each Inn is a substantial

complex with sets of chambers for many hundreds of barristers, whose buildings and extensive gardens cover several acres. The layout is similar to that of an 'Oxbridge' college. The 'chambers' were originally used as residences as well as business premises by many of the barristers, but today, with a small number of exceptions, they serve as offices only.



Lincoln's Inn is situated off Chancery Lane and dates from the early fourteenth century. The current chapel was built between 1620 and 1623 by Inigo Jones, was repaired following Wren's advice in 1685 and was extensively rebuilt in 1797 and again in 1883, when it was extended by one bay to the west and the barrel-vaulted roof replaced with the current

wooden construction. All the woodwork and most of the windows date from the seventeenth century.

A small organ was built in a new west end gallery by Flight and Robson in 1820/1, at which date the tradition (maintained to this day) of a professional choir and organist was founded. Flight and Robson added a Swell in 1841: this regular revisiting of the organ was to be the pattern for the next 150 years or so. In the 1850s quotations for a new 3-manual organ were obtained from Robson, from Hill and from Cavaillé-Coll. The Inn went with William Hill – the safe choice, though how the story of organs in London might have been different had the Inn looked to Paris.

Further attention to the 1856 Hill took place in 1868 and 1874, until Norman & Beard undertook a rebuild with tubular-pneumatic action in 1905, with more work in 1911 (adding a Violone), 1921 (adding a 32ft flue – mainly in the case), 1926, 1935/6 and 1954 (see top of the next page for the specification at that point).

Between the 1950s and 1970s such an organ became deeply unfashionable and many were rebuilt out of all recognition. Some of the more intelligent and successful rebuilds were carried out during those decades by J.W. Walker (then still at Ruislip) and Hill, Norman & Beard (then still at Hornsey). HNB's style quite closely followed the 'American Classic' concept, with lower wind pressures (and often lowered upper lips), 'clarified' choruses, fewer 8ft stops, a wide variety of flutes but few Romantic open or harmonic flutes, a liking for tapered stops of all types, mild strings, smaller-

**1954 specification**

GREAT		SWELL		CHOIR (enclosed)		PEDAL	
Double Diapason	16	Bourdon	16	Stopped Diapason	8	Contra Violone	32
Open Diapason I	8	Open Diapason	8	Viola da Gamba	8	Open Diapason	16
Open Diapason II	8	Stopped Diapason	8	Dulciana	8	Violone	16
Open Diapason III	8	Echo Gamba	8	Gemshorn	4	Bourdon	16
Stopped Diapason	8	Voix Celeste	8	Hohl Flute	4	Octave	8
Octave	4	Principal	4	Piccolo	2	Violoncello	8
Stopped Flute	4	Harmonic Flute	4	Clarinet	8	Bass Flute	8
Octave Quint	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Fifteenth	2			Trombone	16
Fifteenth	2	Mixture	III				
Sesquialtera	III	Cornopean	8				
Trumpet	8	Oboe	8				
		Clarion	4				

scaled, brighter reeds, fluty cornets and cornets decomposées, more/higher tierce-free mixturework including Cimbels, Choir organs turned into pseudo-Positifs, and so on. In 1969 the Lincoln's Inn organ was given a thorough HNB remodelling in this style, arriving at the stop-list below.

The photograph to the right shows twin cases dominated by small-scale bearded Pedal pipes, framing a contrasting empty 'chaire' case with diapered silent pipes (see over). This was the organ which accompanied the chapel services for the next forty-five years, until it became clear that something major needed to be done. The director of music, Nicholas Shaw, writes thus:

*By the beginning of [the new century] it was becoming clear that the organ was in need of attention. The atmospheric conditions on the organ gallery, with its large clear glass window, are harsh, with a large amount of solar gain recorded. That the organ was rebuilt on no fewer than nine occasions is due in part to this solar gain, as well as to the usual changes in fashion that affected organs in the second half of the twentieth century. This had left the instrument visually and tonally confused. Major work was needed to keep the organ operational and reliable, so the Inn took the*



*The cases as they appeared from 1921, including the 32ft flue with mitred bassetts*

**1969 specification**

GREAT		SWELL		CHOIR		PEDAL	
Gedeckt bass 27 rank B, rest old Swell	16	Open Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8	Contra Bass rank A	32
Open Diapason	8	Hohl Flute old Great from Ten C	8	Gemshorn	4	Major Bass rank A	16
Gemshorn new, apart from bassetts	8	Spitz Gamba old Hill tapered Gamba	8	Hohl Flute	4	Bourdon rank B	16
Stopped Diapason new, apart from bassetts	8	Voix Celeste	8	Piccolo	2	Principal rank C	8
Octave	4	Principal	4	Larigot new	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Bass Flute rank B	8
Stopped Flute old Swell 8ft	4	Wald Flute old Great	4	Sesquialtera 19.24 / 12.17	II	Super Octave rank C	4
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Fifteenth	2	Cremona old Clarinet revoiced	8	Octave Flute rank B	4
Fifteenth	2	Quint Mixture 22.26.29	III	Trumpet rank D	8	Mixture 12.15, new	II
Furniture 19.22.26	III	Contra Oboe new bottom octave	16	Clarinet rank D	4	Trombone rank D	16
Trumpet rank D, new from mid C up	8	Trumpet new	8			Trumpet rank D	8
		Clarion	4			Rohr Schalmey new	4



*The 'chaire' case, silent since 1905, with diapered pipes now in storage*

*decision that to restore the organ would be to continue the cycle of periodic and costly work and that the most expedient course of action would be to commission a new instrument.*

William McVicker was taken on as consultant and in due course Kenneth Tickell's company won the contract, having designed a 3-manual organ with Great and Swell in a new case on the

north side of the gallery, Pedal in a new case on the south side, and the Choir organ in a new 'chaire' case – all, of course, with mechanical key action. The old organ was taken apart and removed by Paul Derrett with assistance from Keith Bance and a team of Polish builders all employed by Clive Hope-Ross, who bought the organ to rebuild in a barn at his Oxfordshire home. The

new organ was installed and completed during 2009.

To improve conditions for an organ, the West window has been treated with a special film to alleviate future difficulties, the walls around the gallery have been re-plastered and there is a new hard surface to the gallery floor; there has therefore been a marked improvement in the acoustic of the building. The brief for the new organ included the conditions that it should not obscure the window, that it should be kept well away from the north and south walls, and that it should be stylistically in keeping with the architecture and fittings. It needed to be able to lead large congregations and accompany the Inn's professional choir, and to be a versatile instrument over a wide repertoire, with great colour and character. Quite a tall order!

Tickell's case design develops this brief imaginatively. A careful study of the photographs will show that its segmented mouldings echo the ceiling, and that there is an attractive interplay of small and large pipes. Kenneth adds:

*Great care was taken in designing the mouldings, panelling style and other small details, such as the balusters of the new gallery rail. These all take inspiration from the 17th-century pews and other furniture in the chapel. The*



*The Choir pipe-shades, carved by Keith German*

**Kenneth Tickell specification**

GREAT (C-a <sup>3</sup> )		SWELL (C-a <sup>3</sup> )		CHOIR (C-a <sup>3</sup> )		PEDAL (C-f)	
Bourdon	16	Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8	Open Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8	Traverse Flute	8	Salicional	8	Contra Bass open wood	16
Chimney Flute	8	Viola	8	Principal	4	Sub Bass	16
Gamba (conical)	8	Voix Celeste	8	Recorder	4	Principal	8
Principal	4	Principal	4	Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Open Flute	8
Spitz Flute	4	Harmonic Flute	4	Flageolet	2	Choral Bass	4
Fifteenth	2	Octave	2	Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
Cornet 1.8.12.15.17	V	Mixture 15.19.22	III-IV	Larigot	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Trombone	16
Furniture 19.22.26.29	IV	Double Trumpet	16	Mixture 26.29.33	III		
Trumpet	8	Trumpet	8	Cremona	8		
		Hautboy	8	Tremulant			
		Clarion	4				
		Tremulant					

**Couplers:** Sw-Gt, Ch-Gt, Sw-Ch, Sw-Ped, Gt-Ped, Ch-Ped,  
Great & Pedal combinations coupled, Generals on Swell toe pistons

**Actions:** Mechanical (tracker) key action to all manual divisions and Pedal organ, employing wooden trackers, squares and backfalls, and aluminium rollers with wooden arms. Compensating action tensioning using Kinetrol dampers is fitted to maintain a constant depth of key touch at the keyboards. Electric stop and combination actions with 'Stepper'.

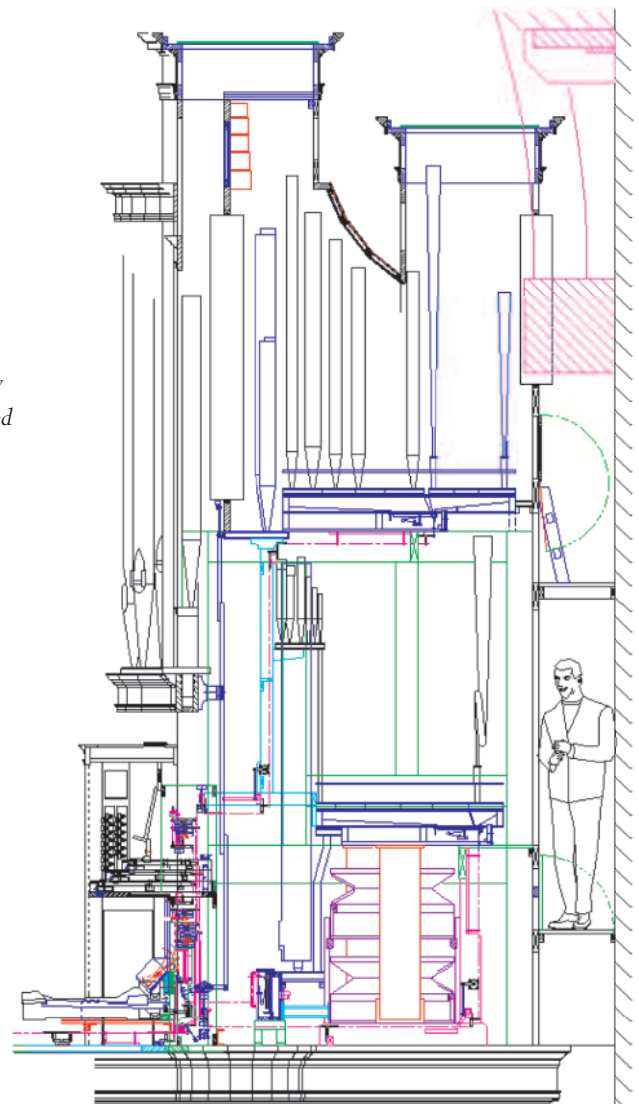
*organ sits on the existing gallery structure, but all of the front mouldings have been made new, so that it is a harmonious whole. Inspiration [for the pipeshades] struck when some panels of early 16th-century mural painting were brought to our notice, which are displayed in one of the many passages within the buildings of the Inn. The rudimentary foliage has been worked into the designs for the limewood shades, which contrast with the darker oak of the cases.*

Tonally the organ performs very much as one would expect; Tickell's earlier, beautiful, if somewhat reticent style, now has a confident boldness following his

success at Worcester Cathedral. There are principal choruses on all divisions offering a wealth of variety in solo repertoire and congregational accompaniment. The Swell chorus is, to my ear, the only one not entirely successful due to the slotting

of the 8ft and 4ft principals and the presence of a 2ft flute. Even without using the 2ft, the 2ft-based Mixture sits uneasily on the 8 & 4. Perhaps the 4ft would have been better unslotted and therefore less stringy in tone, but the Romantic French

*The layout of the north case, Great & Swell, with console*



*Image left: The 16th-century mural painting which inspired the pipe shades*

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*Kenneth Tickell's new installation*

nature of the Swell flues should be observed (there are harmonic flutes at 8ft and 4ft, with a fluty principal at 2ft); something of a departure for this company and entirely consonant with slotted diapasons. This division is best employed, therefore – and works very well – in a French/English Romantic manner, with the Mixture coming on with or after the reeds, in which context all falls into place. The Choir, in its 'chaire' case, is carefully calculated, having a presence and freshness but not sounding too bold; it balances perfectly with the other departments at all levels. The Great Gamba is of the lovely Hill-inspired tapered variety; having that as well as a gentle Salicional on the Choir and a pair of relaxed Swell Violas is a real delight, as is the medium-scale bearded wooden Pedal Contra Bass, which adds a sonorous, slightly stringy tone, underpinning all with its prompt speech. Tickell has embraced the

usefulness of the Haskell (re-entrant tube) principle for the basses of the Swell Viola and Diapason. I love Haskellled basses for their prompt clarity and excellent speech; here their use overcomes the lack of height in the Swell box (which has shutters on its north and south sides, with excellent tonal projection). Their voicing is confident and assured, as is all the flue voicing, the reeds having the evenness and quality which one has come to expect from the work of ace reed voicer David Frostick. Of the actions little need be said other than that Tickell's vast experience of intelligent tracker design and CAD techniques bears fruit here in a comfortable responsive touch and a perfectly manageable coupled weight.

The Benchers of Lincoln's Inn may have missed creating an innovative organ in 1856 when Cavaillé-Coll was sent back to Paris with no contract in his pocket. This time round they've chosen well

and London's organ scene is greatly enhanced by this superb instrument and its innovative Swell. Let's hope they will now leave well alone so that their Tickell organ can remain unaltered and appreciated for the foreseeable future.