Leaks in the Lakes:

two soggy Lake District organs dried out

Paul Hale

Lead theft from church roofs has become a nationwide epidemic; many readers will have experience of the distress, damage and inconvenience it causes. The introduction of promised legislation to ensure that cash sales of lead to scrap metal dealers are replaced by a paper-trail is welcome; the sooner it is enforced, the better. Over the past four years, insurance companies, principally the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (EIG) – probably the most helpful insurance company in the world – have paid out hundreds of thousands of pounds to churches restoring not only the roofs but also artefacts standing beneath which have been seriously damaged by the water ingress following the removal of roofing lead.

The Hope-Jones console name-plate at St Mary, Ambleside, and his personal stamp on a Diaphone boot block.

The most expensive items ruined by water in this manner have been numerous pipe organs up and down the country. The removal of lead flashing leads to rain running down an aisle roof into a gully between the aisle and the nave wall – just above where so many organs are placed – then leaking through into the church below, often just above the Great soundboard of the unsuspecting instrument. Restoring a flooded organ often entails complete soundboard rebuilding, wooden pipe remaking, reservoir releathering, electric action replacement, console restoration, re-polishing, and so on.

That "every cloud has a silver lining" is certainly true in the case of many organs restored following water damage. A significant portion have benefitted from a level of thorough restoration which their churches could probably never have afforded without an insurance pay-out. Thus many instruments are now in far better condition than they were before being flooded. Unfortunately, EIG has expended such a huge amount of money on such restorations that each claim is now limited to a sum scarcely sufficient to make the church waterproof, let alone restore the organ. Let us hope that lead theft very soon tails off and becomes only a painful memory.

This article is about two significant "water damage" contracts carried out in Cumbria, demanding great patience over many months. One was undertaken by Malcolm Lightbown's team at St Mary's Church, Ambleside; the other was a Mander contract at

St James's church, Whitehaven. Both organs are historically and musically important. The older of the two, at Ambleside, was built by Robert Hope-Jones in 1898, serial number 118.

1898 was a very busy year for Hope-Jones, then at the zenith of his UK career. Ten instruments were built, including the 4-manual organs in Llandaff Cathedral, St Saviour's, Birkenhead, and St Michael's, Chester Square (London). A further four 4-manual organs were built in the following year! Norman and Beard were Hope-Jones's principal sub-contractor for much of this work (albeit mainly to his patents and designs), as at St Mary's Ambleside. A three-manual with a typical Hope-Jones console, the Ambleside organ has a massive concrete swell box, a Tuba, a pedal Diaphone, exaggerated scales, big reeds, insignificant upperwork – all the characteristics that one expects in a Hope-Jones.

Originally the manuals were arranged with the Great as the lowest keyboard, the Swell in the middle and the Solo at the top. As built, the stop-list was as below.

The Hope-Jones console at St Mary, Ambleside

The Hope-Jones Diaphone resonators and beaters at St Mary, Ambleside

St Mary, Ambleside, as in 1898

GREAT (61 NOTES)	
Rohr Gedeckt (mainly from Pedal A)	16
Open Diapason	8
Viol d'Amour	8
Octave	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Swell to Great Octave/Unison/Sub Octave	
Solo to Great Octave/Unison/Sub Octave	

SWELL (61 NOTES)	
Open Diapason	8
Tibia Clausa	8
Viol d'Orchestre	8
Phoneuma	8
Celestina	4
Cornopean	8
Tremulant	
Octave/Sub Octave	
Great to Swell	

SOLO (61 NOTES)		
Tuba	(16 ins wind)	8
Octave/Sub Octave		
Great to Solo		

PEDAL (30 NOTES)		
Contra Bourdon	(A, bass quinted)	32
Open Diapason	(ext of Great Open)	16
Bourdon	(A)	16
Flute	(A)	8
Diaphone	(16 ins wind)	16
Great/Swell/Solo to Pedal		

The Hope-Jones Swell Tibia and Viole pipes at St Mary, Ambleside – note the typically extreme pipe-scales

Added to and altered in 1900, 1905 and 1909 by Norman & Beard, with its wiring, magnets and contacts replaced by Hill Norman & Beard in 1935, and its Choir Organ added by them at a later date, its stop list is on the left.

Some electrical components, including all the console electrics, were replaced in recent years by a local builder, who also simplified the wind system for cheapness, but a thorough soaking meant that the whole organ needed restoring, which has now been completed. The huge soundboards were glue-flooded and repalleted; the reservoirs were releathered and in one instance restored back to double-rise. The Choir soundboard and Tuba – mounted by HNB mid-air in the cavernous swell box – have been moved to the rails always intended

St Mary, later specification

GREAT	
Rohr Gedeckt	16
Open Diapason no.1	8
Open Diapason no.2 (NB 1905)	8
Hohl Flute (NB 1900)	8
Octave	4
Harmonic Flute (HNB 1935)	4
Fifteenth (HNB 1935)	2
SWELL	
Open Diapason	8
Tibia Clausa	8
Viol d'Orchestre	8
Echo Gamba (HNB 1935)	8
Gemshorn (NB 1905)	4
Cornopean	8
Oboe (NB 1905)	8
Tremulant	
CHOIR (HNB, POST-1935)	
Stopped Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Nazard	2⅔
Clarinet	8
Tuba [original H-J]	8
PEDAL	
Contra Bourdon (A)	32
Open Diapason	16
Bourdon (A)	16
Flute (A)	8
Diaphone	16
Usual unison couplers plus octave couplers to Swell and Choir	

The organ case at St James, Whitehaven

for them behind the Great. They sit adjacent to the stentorian 16ft wooden Diaphone which proudly dominates the centre of the organ. All the pipework has been restored and the church in addition paid for the restoration of the Great, which had not been water damaged. This instrument is a significant Hope-Jones relic. Now sounding finer and working better than for many decades; it is definitely worth a visit.

Equally worthy of a visit is the 1909 Norman & Beard in St James's, Whitehaven. This is one of those iconic instruments designed in that exciting decade by Lt-Col. George Dixon, of St Bees (a neighbouring town, with its famous Father Willis). Unlike his two most significant designs – Ely Cathedral and St Nicholas Whitehaven (destroyed by fire in 1971), which were both built by Harrison & Harrison, this characterful *multum in parvo* instrument was built by Norman & Beard. Comparing H&H and N&B work for Dixon one has to conclude that at this early stage of the British "symphonic" organ, H&H had the edge in quality of specialist voicing (strings in particular), actions and consoles. The Whitehaven organ is a valiant attempt at what H&H seemed to achieve more instinctively; N&B soon caught up, as their superb subsequent work in this style shows.

In *The Organ Quarterly*, October 1929, Dixon wrote about this design thus:

> *The idea of obtaining the maximum variety and effect from the minimum number of stops is no new one, and, as is well known, it is always more difficult to design a small instrument than a large one, particularly when grandeur of effect and reasonable completeness throughout are especially aimed at. The number of stops which could be inserted was comparatively small: it was therefore necessary to exclude every register which did not in some way or other tend to build up the general ensemble, and to ensure that each individual stop should possess its own distinctive tonal character. Except in the case of the Viole Céleste, this principle was strictly adhered to. It was then quite exceptional to make the only double in the swell a reed, and the Trombas playable independently from two manuals...*
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> *The introduction of an independent pedal reed in so small a scheme is, alas, a rarity. Unfortunately, all three manual doubles are of the covered type. Had space and funds permitted, an open*

St James, Whitehead, Lt-Col. George Dixon's planned specification

II GREAT (58 NOTES)		
Rohr Bordun	wood & metal	16
Open Diapason		8
Geigen		8
Claribel Flute	wood; closed bass	8
Principal		4
Twelfth		2⅔
Fifteenth		2

III SWELL (SOUNDBOARD WITH EXTRA TREBLE OCTAVE, 70 NOTES)		
Horn Diapason	wood & metal	8
Leiblich Gedeckt*	wood & metal	8
Geigen Principal*		4
Gemshorn		2
Mixture	12.19.22	III
Corno di Bassetto		16
Trumpet		8
Tremulant (also acting on Orchestral)		

I ORCHESTRAL (ENCLOSED, 58 NOTES)		
Quintatön*		16
Hohl Flöte	wood; open throughout	8
Concert Flute*	harmonic metal	4
Viole d'Orchestre		8
Viole Célestes*	full-compass	8

BOMBARDE (FLOATING)		
Harmonic Tromba		8
Octave Tromba	ext. Tromba	4

PEDAL (30 NOTES)		
Open Wood		16
Subbass	from Great 16ft	16
Octave Wood	ext. Open Wood	8
Flute	from Great 16ft	8
Trombone		16

The organ was built in 1909 by Norman & Beard with the stops marked * "prepared-for" only.

1943 proposed specification

I GREAT (58 NOTES)		
Rohr Gedeckt	wood & metal	16
Open Diapason		8
Geigen		8
Claribel Flute	wood; closed bass	8
Principal		4
Twelfth		2⅔
Fifteenth		2
Harmonic Tromba		8
Octave Tomba	ext. Tromba	4

II SWELL (SOUNDBOARD WITH EXTRA TREBLE OCTAVE, 70 NOTES)		
Open Diapason	wood & metal, leathered	8
Viole Sourdine		8
Lieblich Flute		4
Mixture	15.19.22	III
Corno di Bassetto		16
Oboe		8
Trumpet		8
Tremulant		

PEDAL		
Open Diapason	wood	16
Subbass	from Great 16ft	16
Octave	ext. Open Wood	8
Flute	from Great 16ft	8
Trombone	ext. Great Tromba	16

Couplers: Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Swell to Great, Reeds on Swell, Swell Octave, Swell Octaves alone. Compass 58/30. Wind pressures: Action, Pedal reed, Great reeds, all Swell – 7in,; Great and Pedal flues – 3½in.

16ft. of some kind – borrowed, of course, on the pedal – would have been inserted on the Great, together with a compound stop. The borrowing of manual doubles on the pedal – to which post-war designers have taken so kindly – was however a conspicuous feature in nearly all Messrs. Harrison's pre-war schemes and owes its inception to Thomas Casson in the [eighteen-]eighties.

The Great Claribel and the orchestral Hohl Flöte are worthy of note. The middle and lower portions of the former are kept down for accompanimental purposes; while the latter, with its mouth on the wide side, though enclosed, is a prominent solo stop. A few words may be said about the 16ft. Corno di Bassetto. While it is smooth enough to blend well and has sufficient body to serve as a foundation double in a medium sized swell (which the Oboe has not), it also answers the purpose of an orchestral double reed, and by octave duplication as an ordinary solo Clarinet 8ft. (of complete compass), which would otherwise be absent from the scheme. One of the combinations draws the Corno di Bassetto 16ft. and Octaves Alone. The Trumpet, voiced after the French school with open parallel shallots, is brilliant and incisive, but refined in quality. It presents a fine contrast to the smooth toned Trombas of the Bombarde. The Swell Octave coupler is effective to the top note of the keyboard, and its value in consequence is greatly enhanced. The Sub-octave coupler was rigidly excluded, but 16ft. registers have been freely introduced throughout the scheme, thereby securing ample dignity. There are no mutations or chorus on the Orchestral; but, except in quite large instruments, such stops on the third manual were then unthought of in this country.

In *The Organ Quarterly*, for January 1943 Reginald Whitworth revealed Dixon's original *multum in parvo* scheme, which was for a two-manual instrument. When the organ was completed in 1927 Dixon's clever 3-manual scheme was somewhat weakened by the following alterations to his plan: on the Swell an Echo Gamba 8ft was installed instead of the planned Gemshorn 2ft; a 4ft Gemshorn replaced the planned 4ft Geigen Principal; and a 15th rank was added to the Mixture instead of the planned 12th. On the Orchestral an 8ft Oboe replaced the planned 16ft Quintatön; the 8ft Viole Célestes, when fitted, was to tenor C only.

A cheap electrification in recent years had removed much of the 1909 tubular pneumatic action but left the organ in otherwise original – and extremely dirty – condition. The water damage insurance claim enabled the church to commission Mander Organs to undertake a full programme of restoration, retaining the electrified action, with improvements and a new Musicom transmission.

Once Mander Head Voicer, Michael Blighton, had attended to pipework rather reluctant to give of its best, the instrument sprang to hearty life once more and is a splendid example of a clever Dixon scheme well executed.

The Great stands behind the case-pipes, with the Trombas and Trombone on two unit chests behind it. Behind them is the Swell, with the Orchestral swell box mounted directly above it. At the back of the organ stands the pedal Open Wood and that part of the Great Bourdon shared with the Pedal. Two hydraulic engines used to stand under the two main reservoirs; they have been replaced in recent years by a Discus blower.

The late David Sanger had just begun these two projects – local to him – at the time of his tragic death.

Completed, and still current, specification

II GREAT (58 NOTES)	
Rohr Bordun	16
Open Diapason	8
Geigen	8
Claribel Flute	8
Principal	4
Twelfth	2⅔
Fifteenth	2

III SWELL (70 NOTES)	
Horn Diapason	8
Leiblich Gedeckt	8
Echo Gamba	8
Gemshorn	4
Mixture 15.19.22	III
Corno di Bassetto	16
Trumpet	8
Tremulant (also acting on Orchestral)	

I ORCHESTRAL (ENCLOSED, 58 NOTES)	
Hohl Flöte	8
Concert Flute*	4
Viole d'Orchestre	8
Viole Célestes (TC)	8
Oboe	8

BOMBARDE (FLOATING)	
Harmonic Tromba	8
Tromba Clarion (ext. Tromba)	4

PEDAL	
Open Wood	16
Subbass (from Great Bordun)	16
Octave Wood (ext. Open Wood)	8
Flute (from Great Bordun)	8
Trombone	16

Couplers: Orchestral to Pedal, Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Orchestral Octave, Bombarde to Orchestral, Swell to Orchestral, Bombarde to Great, Orchestral to Great, Swell to Great, Swell Octave, Swell Octaves alone. Combination pedals: 4 to Great, Bombarde, Pedal and couplers; 4 to Swell and couplers. Reversible pedals to: Great to Pedal, Tremulant. Balanced pedals to Swell, Orchestral. Compass: 58/30. Wind pressures: Great – 3½in.; Swell, Orchestral, Bombarde – 7in.; Pedal – flues 3½ and 4½in., reed 8in.

I took them on and was reminded of David and his wonderful work every time I visited Whitehaven, his converted chapel being visible from the main road, deserted and sad. I am pleased that something David began has resulted in a completely new lease of life for this pair of colourful instruments; he would have been delighted.

The organ console at St James, Whitehaven, before restoration

A windchest from St James, Whitehaven under repair at Mander Organs

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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, Chairman of the RSCM in his area, and has been awarded honorary fellowships by the GCM and the RSCM for his contribution to church music. More information is available at www.PaulHale.org