

# A fresh start at Whyke

Paul Hale

The story of many church organs over the past 150 years could be described as:

- 1 1850–1900, a new or second-hand organ placed in a chancel chamber to accompany a choir;
- 2 1930–60 electrification with additions;
- 3 1960–2010 overhauls with replacement electrics and further tonal alterations.

At the same time, certainly over the past 50 years, the centre of gravity of churches has moved west: the nave altar and nave congregational singing now reign supreme, leaving the organ uncomfortably marooned in its chancel chamber, often with no choir to accompany. Some churches still have choirs, and in them the musical situation, even when flourishing, is a challenge: how can the organ lead the essentially congregational nature of today's services, whilst still being able to accompany the church choir with subtlety and colour?

One such church is St George's, Whyke, on the eastern outskirts of Chichester. The parish is an ancient Christian foundation for which a new building was erected in 1901–3, designed by J.E.K. & J.P.

Cutts. The liturgy at St George's is colourfully Anglo-Catholic, with a fine 20-voice Parish Choir, a superb girls' choir (called "The Score": see <http://org-rev.com/whykescore>) and a thriving congregation – clearly a church where a fine organ is needed.

The organ history of the church is not quite like that described in my opening paragraph, as the church has had only second-hand organs until now, but, like our hypothetical church, each instrument was larger than the last and yet it remained buried in the chancel chamber. To give the reader an idea, the W.J. Haywood organ transferred in 1901 from the old church had these stops:

Great 8.8.4[flute].2[flute];  
Swell 8.8.4;  
Pedal 16.

Its 1947 replacement grew, after rebuilds in 1960, 1962, 1970 and 1987 to:

Great 8.8.8.4.4.2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>.2.8;  
Swell 8.8.8.8.4.2.III.8;  
Pedal 16.8.8.4.2.16.

Despite the 1987 rebuild, the subsequent installation of a hot-air central heating system hastened the instrument's demise, as such systems so often do.

## Whyke specification

### GREAT ORGAN

Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
Mixture III–IV	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Trumpet	8
Great Suboctave	

### SWELL ORGAN

Stopped Flute	8
Salicional	8
Voix Celeste TC	8
Principal	4
Gemshorn	2
Sesquialtera II	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Oboe	8
Tremulant	
Swell Octave	
Swell Suboctave	

### PEDAL ORGAN

Bourdon (A)	16
Quint (A)	10 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Principal (B)	8
Bass Flute (A)	8
Fifteenth (B)	4
Trombone	16

### COUPLERS

Swell to Great
Swell Octave to Great
Swell Suboctave to Great
Swell to Pedal
Swell Octave to Pedal
Great to Pedal
Great and Pedal Combinations Coupled
Generals on Swell Toe Pistons
Usual combination pistons including Generals

### ACCESSORIES

Adjustable bench
Cimbelstern
Compass: 61/30notes

ROBIN JACKSON  
and MAUREEN McALLISTER

## ORGAN DUET RECITALS

Wednesday, June 4 <sup>th</sup>	Truro Methodist Church	1.10pm
Friday, June 13 <sup>th</sup>	Truro Cathedral	1.10pm
Tuesday, September 2 <sup>nd</sup>	King's Lynn Minster	12.30pm

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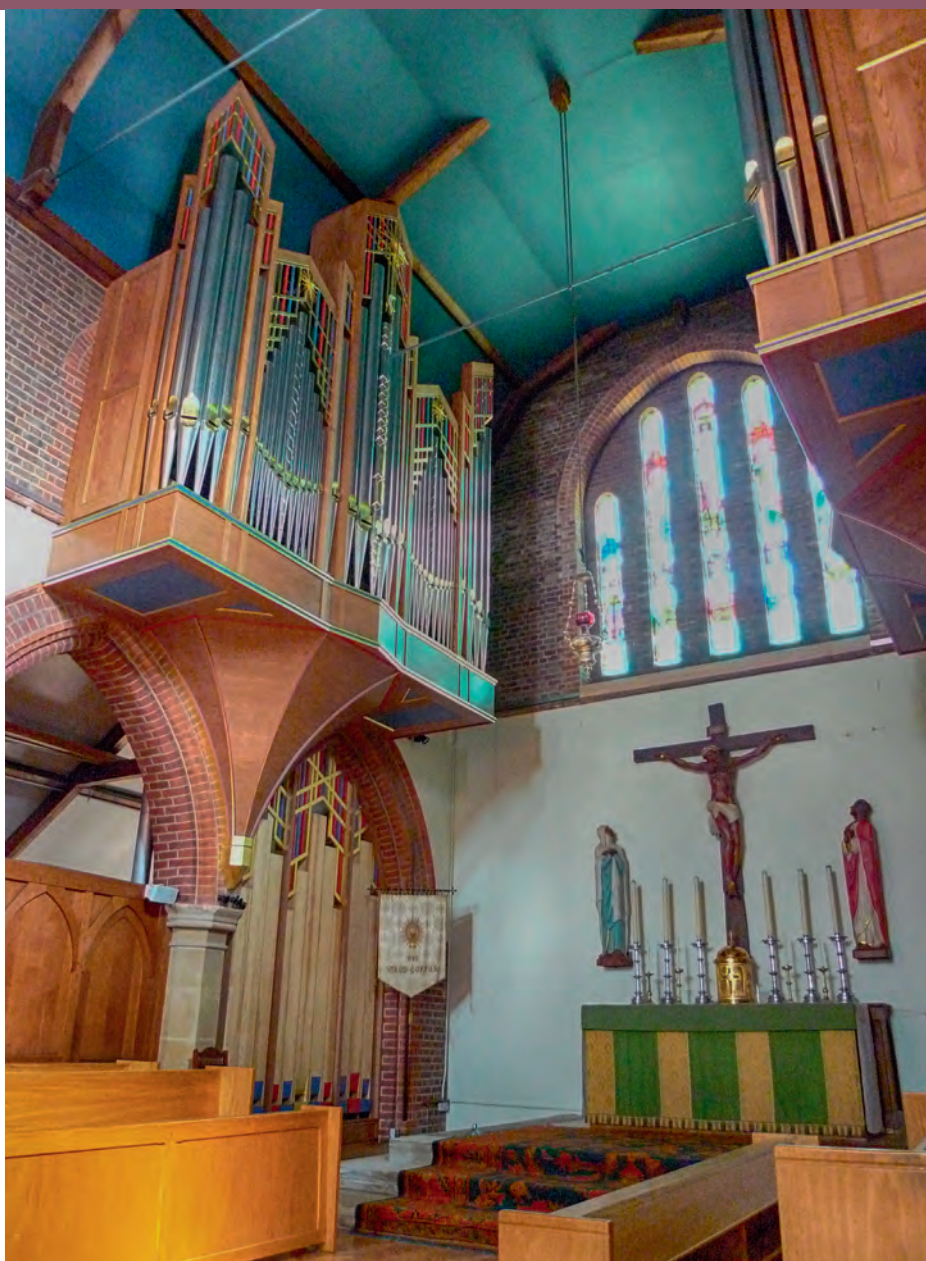


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The musical tradition of St George's has been nurtured and developed since 1973 by Susan Howell Evans – an astonishing 40 years as Director of Music. Not only was Sue awarded an Honorary ARSCM in 2003 in recognition of her outstanding work, and made an Honorary Member of the Guild of Church Musicians in 2012, but “Occasionally I do something silly, like leap out of a plane for St George's skydiving team, raising over £1,500 towards the organ I now delight in playing every Sunday”.

So what is this organ in which Sue delights? By 2010 the church had decided that enough was enough and took the courageous decision to commission a new organ from Nicholson & Co. But where to put it? Certainly not bottled up in the old chancel chamber.

In the nave, perhaps? Fine for the congregation but not much use for the choir in the chancel. Therefore, the bold and dramatic choice was to elevate the instrument in two cases, each above the two easternmost arches to the north and south of the east window, springing out of the pillar between these arches. Simon Platt designed the striking cases. He had previously designed the Llandaff Cathedral cases for Nicholsons, having sprung to fame for his stunning nave “swallows' nest” cases in Brussels Cathedral, colourful chamade-enhanced case at Madrid Cathedral de la Almudena, and spectacular curved case at Niigata Performing Arts Centre, Japan, all containing organs built by Gerhard Grenzing. Some of Platt's trademark features can be seen embellishing the Whyke cases,

which, like all fine organ prospects, repay hours of contemplation. More of his work can be seen on his informative website <http://org-rev.com/simonplatt>.

The layout has the Great organ on the north side and the Swell opposite on the south, in cases made as shallow as practical. The Pedal organ is recessed at ground level under the Great, its position being much less critical since low frequencies diffuse around obstacles. Painted wooden Bourdon bassettes form an attractive display, not dissimilar to the one at Llandaff Cathedral. One blower on the north side serves the Great and Pedal, whilst a smaller blower, hidden in a window reveal at high level, supplies the Swell and the Pedal Principal rank. Andrew Moyes, Managing Director of Nicholsons, writes “*The key action is of necessity electro-pneumatic and the console is detached and mobile. In this situation, we felt that the choice of key action was subservient to the acoustic design. Placing the organ on the walls has freed up useful vestry space.*”

Having decided on the position, it was a challenge to build a comprehensive instrument in the space allowed – after all, neither case must block the east window.

We are most fortunate that Guy Russell, Tonal Director at Nicholsons, has generously offered to explain the thinking behind the tonal scheme and its execution. How rare it is to see in print the whole tonal design process as it goes through the mind of a head voicer:

*The brief from the organ committee was for an instrument that would accompany the choir in the chancel, support and lead the congregation in the nave, be able to play the solo repertoire and be flexible enough to be used for concerts and other secular events. It was thought essential that there be a trumpet stop for weddings.*

*Nicholsons worked out that there would be a maximum of*



eight stops on the Great, helped by much of the Open Diapason being on display in the case, and seven stops on the Swell. The swell shutters made the room available less than for the Great. The display pipes in front of the Swell would be part of the Pedal Principal.

The Great specification was mostly straightforward. The diapason chorus (of spotted metal with 2/9<sup>th</sup> mouths) is based on a generously scaled Open Diapason, Principal and Fifteenth. This chorus is firm, fairly bright and robust and is augmented by a 4-rank Mixture (which reduces to 3-ranks in the bass to save space). After much thought the Trumpet was put on the Great. If it had been on the

Swell it would have taken up too much space especially as it would have to be quite large to fulfil all the functions required. The Swell was always intended to be a little subservient to the Great. The Trumpet makes a fine solo stop when played against the Swell and adds power and solid reediness to the diapason chorus.

A spotted metal Dulciana is included on the Great. This is not too thinly scaled making it more of a small Gamba than the often anaemic stop that one encounters. The Great has a wooden Stopped Diapason. This is a full, solid sound with some harmonic interest; it combines well with the Dulciana to give a small diapason tonality. The

Flute 4ft is a tapered stop of medium scaling which means it can be used as a flute or as an alternative 4ft for a minor chorus when used with the Stopped Diapason and Dulciana, without being cloying, as a larger-scale flute might be. For this reason it also combines well with the Swell Stopped Flute and Salicional. It makes an interesting alternative to the Stopped Diapason when played on its own an octave lower. The Great unusually has a Suboctave coupler, which adds gravitas to the department and interesting combinations when coupled with the Swell.

The Swell is based on a large-scaled canistered flute and a medium-scaled Salicional. The

Left: View of the case  
Right: The console  
Below: One of the jambs





## LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL RECITALS 2014

<b>26 MAY</b>	<b>11.15am</b>	<b>WHIT RECITAL</b>
		DAVID POULTER (DIRECTOR OF MUSIC, LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL)
<b>28 JUNE</b>	<b>7.30pm</b>	<b>ORGAN GALA</b>
		TINE THING HELSETH & IAN TRACEY (TRUMPET & ORGAN)
<b>18 OCTOBER</b>	<b>3.00pm</b>	<b>88TH ANNIVERSARY RECITAL</b>
		IAN TRACEY (ORGANIST TITULAIRE, LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL)
<b>1 NOVEMBER</b>	<b>7.30pm</b>	<b>SILENT FILM NIGHT</b>
		DONALD McKENZIE (ORGANIST, ODEON LEICESTER SQUARE)
<b>26 DECEMBER</b>	<b>11.15am</b>	<b>BOXING DAY HOLIDAY</b>
		IAN TRACEY (ORGANIST TITULAIRE, LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL)

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Saturdays 26<sup>th</sup> July –  
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## KOBE ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL, JAPAN

We recently completed our eighth instrument in Japan for the Anglican Cathedral in Kobe. It is a two manual and pedal organ with 18 stops. The key action is suspended mechanical action and the drawstop action is electric. The unusual asymmetrical case contains the Great and Pedal on one soundboard at impost level, with the Swell above.

GREAT ORGAN	SWELL ORGAN	PEDAL ORGAN
Open Diapason 8	Gedackt 8	Bourdon 16
Stopped Diapason 8	Salicional 8	Principal 8
Principal 4	Celeste 8	Trombone 16
Fifteenth 2	Chimney Flute 4	Trumpet 8
Mixture IV 1 1/3	Nazard 2 2/3	
Trumpet 8	Recorder 2	
	Tierce 1 3/5	
	Oboe 8	



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## MANDER ORGANS

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*Stopped Flute is constructed of plain metal and although not over-loud it does have carrying power and sonority due to its scaling. The scale of the Salicional ensures that its tonality can be unforced but firm. This stop is of spotted metal and slotted into the treble. It is paired with the Voix Celeste, which is of similar scale and tonality. The Celeste can be used to good effect with the Stopped Flute as well. The Stopped Flute and Salicional, when used together, give quite a convincing small open diapason sound. The medium scaled Principal 4ft can be added to these to build up a chorus, as can the tapered Gemshorn 2ft. The Gemshorn is subtle enough to be useful with the Stopped Flute or can be coupled across to the Great smaller chorus. A principal-scaled Sesquialtera was included in the Swell. This can be used in several solo or chorus combinations on the Swell and can also be coupled across to the Great and combined with several combinations including full chorus up to Mixture, where it adds a certain piquancy to the ensemble. The Swell reed is a full-scaled Oboe, the Trumpet being on the Great. This is fairly loud and can be used as a solo stop or a chorus reed. The Swell has Octave and Suboctave couplers, and of course a subtle Tremulant for use with the Flute, Sesquialtera or Oboe.*

*The main portion of the Pedal is situated at ground level in the easternmost arch on the north*

*side of the chancel. It has a large scaled wooden Bourdon 16ft, from which is extended a Quint 10<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>ft and an 8ft Bass Flute. The department also has a fruity Trombone 16ft (metal), fairly big in scale and power. The bass notes of the Pedal 8ft Principal are the display pipes in front of the Swell. This rank is extended to the Pedal Fifteenth, with the trebles within the Swell casework.*

*To make the organ more versatile the couplers do not 'play through' but have separate drawstops for Swell Octave and Suboctave to Great and Swell Octave to Pedal. At the Church's request we included a Cimbelstern, whose revolving star is on the north case.*

As well as accompanying the church choir with refinement and beauty, the instrument is able to play the solo repertoire with conviction, as was demonstrated by Thomas Trotter to a full church at the inaugural recital. The programme included music spanning several centuries, ending with the Widor Toccata. The organ throughout sounded much larger and more versatile than the specification might suggest, as should be the

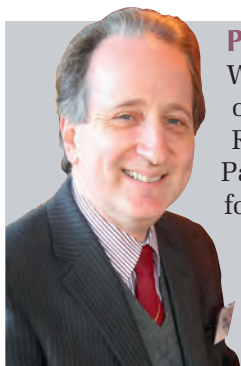
way with all smallish instruments. The dynamic level ranges from a whisper, using the Swell strings with the box shut, to an exciting and powerful tutti. And the people of St George's are delighted that the organ sounds the same whether heard in the chancel or from the west end: owing to its elevated position, internal layout, and the shape of the roof of the church, the tone, remarkably, retains its intensity right to the back of the nave.

In such a scheme as this, space dictates what can be fitted in. Thus the Swell has but a solitary Oboe and there is no manual double. The "open" voicing of the Oboe, the superb swell enclosure and the octave couplers go a long way to obviating any weakness in the Swell stop list. Also, the rare Great Suboctave adds richness to the tutti.

I find inspiration in this scheme, and hope that other parishes will take note, perhaps taking a deep breath and commissioning a new pipe organ. Our liturgy and music will greatly benefit from such projects, as, of course, will our talented organ-builders.

#### Footnote:

I have a large archive of organ-builders' specification leaflets, which prove invaluable for historical research both for articles and organ consultation projects. There are, of course, gaps in my collection, which I should like to fill. If any reader is ever wondering where to dispose of their collection of specification leaflets etc, perhaps they'd kindly consider passing it on to me? It will find productive use!



#### **Paul Hale is Cathedral Organist at Southwell and a professional organ consultant.**

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](http://www.PaulHale.org)