

# Perfect for the Priory

Paul Hale

“Serendipity” – a word often used by my erstwhile colleague, Barry Ferguson, in our Rochester Cathedral days – sprang to mind one pleasant spring day as my wife and I were driving west across Wiltshire. Having just surveyed the beautiful little William Hill organ at Rushall, we were heading for my parental home in Wells, Somerset, when serendipitously we found ourselves driving through Edington. “Hang on”, I said; “Harrisons finished a new organ here only last week – we must take a peek”. A familiar sigh came from my long-suffering wife, followed by “Well, I need a cup of tea”. A delightfully refurbished pub having been found and tea ordered, my wife was cosily ensconced with her book and I set off to stroll the delightful half mile or so through country lanes to find the Priory

Church. Approaching the building, serendipity struck again – wasn’t that the Diocesan Organ Adviser, Dr Richard Godfrey, going into the church? Excellent – I’ll ask him to show me the organ. On entering the beautiful Priory – so peaceful outside Festival time – I spotted Dr Godfrey again, but deep in conversation with others – clearly not to be disturbed. And there, looking so invitingly at me, were the two elegant cases of the new H&H; the organ looked so beautiful – surely I could get to hear it? But who was this? Serendipity once more: there was Mark Venning standing by the instrument – a project well under way when he retired as Managing Director of Harrison & Harrison. Mark needed little encouragement to sit down and improvise an impressive Cook’s tour of the brand-new organ as I strolled

around the church gauging its visual and musical impact from all quarters.

I was not disappointed. The instrument looks solidly beautiful, with impressive acres of richly polished oak and gleaming tin. The console is classic Harrison and looks set to shrug off a hundred years of playing, and the sound fills the church, fitting both the building and the acoustic like a glove.

Edington’s Consultant, my fellow *OR* columnist, John Norman, tells me: “The background is that the former organ was a 1905 Henry Jones (Gt 7, Sw. 8, Ped. 2), restored by John Coulson in 1976, when a Great Mixture replaced the Clarinet and the treble of the Great Open was replaced. Like all Henry Jones’ instruments, it was worthy but musically very dull (cut-ups too high). The Pedal’s pneumatic action



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## Edington Priory Church specification (26 speaking stops)

PEDAL ORGAN	
Sub Bass	16
Principal	8
Stopped Flute	8
Trombone	16
<i>I Great to Pedal</i>	
<i>II Swell to Pedal</i>	
GREAT ORGAN	
Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Viola	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Rohr Flute	4
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	III
Trumpet	8
Cremona	8
<i>III Tremulant</i>	
<i>IV Swell to Great</i>	
SWELL ORGAN	
Open Diapason	8
Gedackt	8
Salicional	8
Céleste (B flat)	8
Gemshorn	4
Open Flute	4
Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Flageolet	2
Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
Mixture	III
Hautboy	8
Cornocean	8
<i>V Tremulant</i>	
<i>VI Sub Octave</i>	
ACCESSORIES	
Six foot pistons to the Pedal Organ	
Six pistons to the Great Organ	
Six pistons to the Swell Organ (duplicated by foot pistons)	
Eight general pistons	
General cancel piston	
Reversible pistons to the couplers	
Stepper, operating general pistons in sequence	
Eight divisional and 128 general piston memories	
<i>Great &amp; Pedal combinations coupled</i>	
<i>General foot pistons</i>	
Mechanical key action	
Electric drawstop action	
Manual compass 58 notes	
Pedal compass 30 notes	

needed attention but, worst of all, from the point of view of the annual Choir Festival, the organ was nearly a semitone sharp at C = 540 Hz. The Festival Society agreed to finance a new instrument and the Henry Jones was removed in January by an Estonian organbuilder. It was reopened in the hall of Gustav Adolf Grammar School, Tallinn, in June."

I asked Harrison & Harrison's Head Voicer, Andrew Scott, for some background to the design of the instrument, and was delighted to receive this full reply, which will afford you a real insight into the

mind of its tonal designer:

*To design an organ for a village church should be a quite straightforward process, but it was always going to be a musical challenge to design an instrument for an exceptional priory church that has to serve the village community for most of the year, and then evoke the colour and body of a cathedral organ when the Edington Festival of Music within the Liturgy takes place. It is rare to have a brief to build an organ with two such distinct roles; to get the musical balance right so as not to overwhelm the normal Sunday choir and congregation, whilst being bold enough to support the Festival's needs, meant that a dynamic approach was needed for the specification and tonal architecture.*

*The Great organ is voiced to be firm and bright but not overly brilliant. The wooden bass and metal treble 16ft Bourdon when played up the octave is a good alternative to the all wood 8ft Stopped Diapason, though its primary role remains that of the double. The 8ft Open Diapason forms the south case front and is a warm, yet bold foundation. The 8ft Viola is slightly tapered at the request of the organ's consultant, John Norman. I was sceptical about using a tapered stop as I was envisaging something more akin to a second open diapason, but this is now one of my favourite stops on the organ; it is very versatile on the Great and offers a gentle accompaniment stop for the Swell. The 4ft Rohr Flute is deliberately quite perky and sits with the 16ft and 8ft flutes equally well. The 4ft Principal and 2ft Fifteenth sit comfortably on top of the Open Diapason, Stopped Diapason and Viola, separately or combined, so there are several ways of forming a chorus, by using any one of the three full-length 8ft stops alone or in combination, depending on how much 8ft tone one likes or needs. The open-*

*topped Cremona with closed shallots errs more towards being a clarinet as it ascends the scale but also doubles as a good chorus reed, allowing the Trumpet with its open shallots to be a bit more bold and splashy for solo use, and the Trumpet also caps the whole ensemble off with a dash of excitement and drama.*

*The Swell organ is based on a full-length 8ft Open Diapason, and as with the Great has a choice of three full-compass independent 8ft foundation stops. The 8ft Gedackt has a wooden bass and is metal with canisters from c13 so as to contrast with the rounder, wooden 8ft stop on the Great. The strings are neither laid back and sentimental, nor strong and acidic, which allows the Salicional and Gedackt to be used together as a good foundation before the larger Open Diapason is added. The Celeste works well with either its intended partner in the Salicional or with the Open Diapason. A magical effect can be created by coupling the Swell strings with the sub-octave played up an octave, which will easily play the role of making the angels cry. The wider-scaled mutations are at home on the Swell, allowing for various cornet combinations, but they are also balanced to be used to colour the Swell chorus. The Hautboy is fully capped with slots and is a modern take on an old-fashioned stop which is creamy and smooth, whilst the Cornocean and its closed shallots is much darker and voiced with a slightly louder bass to exploit the lack of a 16ft when the sub-octave coupler is used.*

*The Pedal organ, voiced on a pressure of 125mm (5"), is founded on a prompt and round-toned 16ft Sub Bass, which is the only pedal 16ft flue. As an alternative to this the Great 16ft can be coupled down to the pedals to be used under the Swell strings, and this is made easy of access through the*

capture system. The two pedal 8ft stops are independent ranks, and whereas the 8ft flute sits nicely on top of the Sub Bass and reinforces the 16ft tone, the 8ft Principal (which forms the pipes of the west case) is much firmer and combines to reinforce the 16ft tone further. The full-length Trombone has wooden shallots for the bottom octave, which have been leathered in black goatskin. Remarkably this stop has no tongue loading in the bottom octave, even though it is on 5" wind pressure.

As in any organ, but even more necessary in a small instrument, variety and musical blend are all-important: the whole instrument has been voiced to ensure that every stop has a part to play and everything can combine even in unconventional combinations. The organ is unashamedly English and has all of the ingredients to accompany the liturgy with style and conviction, but it will also lend itself convincingly to other schools of solo repertoire.

Andrew has summed up the organ very well: no need for false modesty as it is a particularly fine achievement. The Swell sub-octave coupler (rare on tracker action) makes up in no small degree for there being no Swell 16ft reed; as Mark Venning improvised his way around the organ for me I found it hard to imagine that the "full swell" actually relied upon a sub-octave, as it was so effective. The Pedal Sub Bass has been kept necessarily full and firm as there was no room for a 16ft Open. As Andrew has written, the Great Bourdon forms the soft pedal 16ft and balances perfectly the various "string" combinations on the swell, made all the more effective by the excellent box.

The Diapason choruses are particularly well managed – balanced within themselves and against one another. The Mixtures work perfectly in this acoustic, adding controlled brilliance in the bass and tenor and then rich reinforcement to the choruswork where they break back in the treble. Their composition



The case in Edington Priory

is: Great 19.22.26 (12 notes), 15.19.22 (12 notes), 12.15.19 (12 notes), 8.12.15 (22 notes); Swell 15.19.22 (18 notes), 12.15.19 (12 notes), 8.12.15 (28 notes).

The chorus reeds have a real "quality" of tone; one cannot imagine them doing anything other than staying in tune and in regulation. The Pedal Trombone is sonorous and at a stroke gives the *tutti* its "cathedral" quality. The flutes and mutations offer many subtle and beautiful colours – though perhaps a little more piquancy would have

been effective here. The Swell strings are well voiced; calm, yet with the box open possessed of a useful character. The tapered Great Viola is akin to a Hill "Cone Gamba" and forms the perfect second open metal stop on such a Great, as it is so versatile.

Any doubts? Only one, really: the Great Cremona is so loud that although it does indeed act well as a chorus reed for the Great it's hard to imagine it playing gentle romantic clarinet solos. On the other hand, as a powerful "Cromorne" it fits the bill





## LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL RECITALS 2014

<b>21 APRIL</b>	<b>11.15am</b>	<b>EASTER MONDAY RECITAL</b> IAN TRACEY (ORGANIST TITULAIRE, LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL)
<b>5 MAY</b>	<b>11.15am</b>	<b>SPRING RECITAL (LIVERPOOL ORGAN DAY)</b> DANIEL BISHOP (ASSOCIATE ORGANIST, LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL)
<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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### New organ, St. Teresa's, Beaconsfield

GRAND ORGUE		POSITIF		PEDALE	
Montre	8'	Bourdon	8'	Soubasse	16'
Bourdon	8'	Prestant	4'	Positif to Pedale	
Salicional	8'	Flute	4'	Grand to Pedale	
Prestant	4'	Nazard	2 2/3'		
Doublette	2'	Doublette	2'		
Fourniture	IIIrks	Tierce	1 3/5'		
Trompette	8'	Tremblant			
Postif to Grand orgue					

Suspendu tracker action, oak case, scale diameters after J.A.Silbermann,  
hammered metal pipework cut to length.

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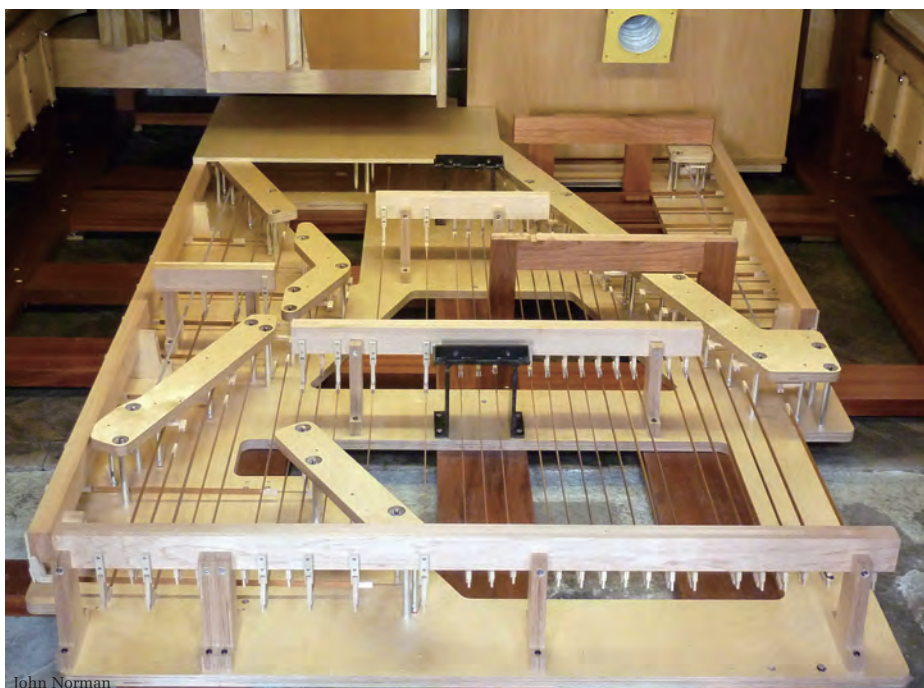
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neatly, so is indeed a versatile stop.

Well done, Edington Priory, for commissioning this splendid new instrument. And well done, Harrison & Harrison, for bringing their aspirations into being. The Festival will be enhanced, and, more importantly, the church's weekly liturgy will be enriched and the people inspired to sing God's praises. That's what an organ like this can do and no digital substitute can ever come near achieving.

**Top: Looking across the Swell pipe work through the shutters to the Great organ**

**Bottom: The stout mechanical action to the Pedal organ, under construction in Durham**

**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)

