

A quart in a pint pot at Goring-on-Thames

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This is the story of one of my favourite types of British organs – a *multum in parvo* instrument of no great size but having a far greater range of tonal possibilities than one might expect. Let us look first at its origins.

The church at Goring was built in around 1100. The building was originally without aisles or transepts and then consisted simply of a chancel, nave and western tower, with the chancel ending in a semi-circular apse. The north aisle was added in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century by the Augustinian nuns of the adjacent priory. The north porch and doorway date from the fourteenth century. At one time there was a Musicians' Gallery above the door at the west end of the nave, which was removed in the nineteenth century.

During excavations in 1886, the foundations of the original Norman apse were discovered. Two years later, when a major refurbishment of the church was undertaken, which included the installation of the organ, the apse was rebuilt on these foundations and the wall that had served as the east end of the church since the Dissolution of the Monasteries was demolished. Nothing can be seen today of the nunnery except the corbels that supported the roof of the cloister on the south wall of the church.

Following the granting of a Faculty on 12 July 1886 for an organ chamber to be built on to the north side of the church, Alfred Monk (of London) was contracted to build a three-manual organ. This was installed in 1887/8 and opened in a recital



Image 1 | Goring chancel front and console

by James Hallé, Organist of St Barnabas Church, Kentish Town, where Monk had in 1885/6 built a slightly larger organ of 31 speaking stops. Doubtless Monk recommended Hallé as a suitable recitalist.

The specification was as follows:

By 1930 the mechanical action was worn out and the organ would have appeared old-fashioned.

Bishop & Son (of London and Ipswich) were contracted to rebuild it. They replaced the tracker action with electro-pneumatic mechanism to notes and stops, though the stop-key console they installed had tubular-pneumatic mechanism for the combination mechanism of the stop-keys and pistons. This was old-fashioned technology even in 1930, by when

Great Organ (56 notes)

1	Open Diapason	8	
2	Clarabella	8	
3	Gamba	8	installed shortly afterwards
4	Principal	4	
5	Flûte Harmonique	4	installed shortly afterwards
6	Piccolo	2	
7	Trumpet	8	

Swell to Great

Swell Organ (56 notes)

8	Violin Diapason	8	
9	Rohr Flöte	8	
10	Echo Gamba	8	added 1904
11	Voix Celeste (from tenor c)	8	added 1904
12	Gemshorn	4	added 1904
13	Lieblich Flöte	4	
14	Mixture 12.15.17	III	
15	Horn	8	
16	Oboe	8	

Tremulant

Choir Organ (56 notes)

17	Lieblich Gedact	8	
18	Dulciana	8	
19	Flauto Traverso	4	
20	Clarionet (from tenor c)	8	

spare slide

Swell to Choir

Pedal Organ (30 notes)

21	Open Bass (metal)	16	
22	Bourdon	16	
23	Violoncello	8	

Swell to Pedal

Great to Pedal

Choir to Pedal



Image 2 | Goring console

such firms as Henry Willis and John Compton were fitting all-electric consoles. At the same time, Bishops extended the Swell box backward to encompass a 16ft Lieblich Bourdon, divided the Swell Mixture into three ranks of new pipes (of flute tone, one rank stoppered), removed the Swell 4ft Flöte, added a Choir Voix d'Orchestre, replaced the Great Gamba with an Open Diapason II (though keeping the bottom octave), derived an acoustic 32ft stop from the two Pedal 16fts, extended the metal Pedal Open Diapason 16ft up to 8ft pitch and installed an electric blower. The Great Trumpet was revoiced with harmonic trebles. Complex top-note machines were fitted to extend the compass to 61 notes. The swell shutter mechanism was converted to a balanced action. An additional reservoir was installed for the Swell organ, and it may have been that the Swell wind pressure was slightly increased for the sake of the reeds.

In 1930 the specification was left thus:

In 1962/3 the 1930 electrical switchgear, contacts and relays were replaced by Bishops, though much 1930 cotton-covered cabling was retained. They also re-

Great Organ (61 notes)	
1 Open Diapason I	8
2 Open Diapason II	8 new
3 Wald Flute	8 renamed
4 Principal	4
5 Harmonic Flute	4 renamed
6 Fifteenth	2 Piccolo pipes revoiced (?)
7 Harmonic Trumpet	8 revoiced with harmonic trebles
Swell to Great	
Swell Organ (61 notes)	
8 Lieblich Bourdon	16 added, using old Lieblich Flöte from 4ft C up
9 Violin Diapason	8
10 Rohr Flute	8
11 Echo Gamba	8
12 Voix Celeste (tenor c)	8
13 Geigen Principal	4 renamed
14 Twelfth	2 ² / ₃ lowest Mixture rank, an open flute
15 Fifteenth	2 middle Mixture rank, a true Fifteenth
16 Seventeenth	1 ³ / ₅ highest Mixture rank, a wide-scale flute rank
17 Mixture 12.15.17	III the above three stops combined
18 Horn	8
19 Oboe	8
Tremulant	
Octave	added
Sub Octave	added
Choir Organ (61 notes)	
20 Lieblich Gedact	8
21 Viole d'Orchestre	8 added
22 Dulciana	8
23 Flauto Traverso	4 really a small-scale open wood Wald Flute
24 Clarinet (from tenor c)	8
Swell to Choir	added
Pedal Organ (30 notes)	
25 Contra Bass	32 extension of Op. Diap., with a 102/3 from the Bourdon
26 Open Diapason (metal)	16 moved inside from the western arch at a later date (?)
27 Bourdon	16
28 Octave	8 added extension of Open Diapason
29 Violoncello	8 moved (later?) to between the Swell box and chamber wall
Swell to Pedal	
Great to Pedal	
Choir to Pedal	



Image 3 | Great pipework

leathered the soundboard and slider machine actions and those in the Pedal chests. In 1999/2000, the old Great Piccolo pipes were replaced with true Fifteenth pipes, made of spotted metal to match the fine original Monk pipework.

The church's renowned and



popular Organist and Choirmaster, Michael Howell, became frustrated with the instrument as its electrical and pneumatic mechanisms failed and its tonal scheme proved a poor match for his music aspirations for the church, which boasts an excellent choir.

The present writer was called in in 2017 to prepare a report and recommendations, which formed the basis of a complete rebuilding contract executed to the highest standard by Clevedon Organs during 2022. Sadly, Michael Howell died following a brief but terminal illness in March 2021. The organ rebuild was therefore very much a memorial to Michael, a Westminster Abbey chorister, Music Scholar at Cranleigh, Organ Scholar of Exeter College, Oxford, and subsequently a distinguished teacher and performer.

During my 2017 survey of the organ, the first thing to note was the very fine spotted-metal Monk pipework. It is as good a quality as would be found in a contemporary instrument by Willis, Walker, Hill, or Harrison. At the time it was not sounding anywhere near its best because (a) the way in which much of it was regulated back in 1930 left some of it sounding too 'polite and retiring', particularly the Great Diapason chorus, despite the presence of the new Great Fifteenth; (b) it was really dirty with the mouths of the smallest pipes becoming clogged; and (c) the sound of the instrument could not readily escape west, as the arch facing down the north aisle was partially blocked with Bourdon pipes. I felt that cleaning, repairs, moving the Bourdon and then a tonal rebalancing throughout would work wonders and go some way towards revitalising the sound of the organ in the church.

This modest approach was in the event developed into a much more root and branch rebuilding of the organ (while always cherishing the most worthy aspects of its heritage): such was Michael Howell's enthusiasm. Significant tonal improvements were planned (eagerly aspired to by Michael) to transform the sound of the organ, so it could

lead the congregation with much greater clarity and vivacity, as well as play organ music and accompany the choir with more colour and variety. The following scheme was agreed upon (eventually) and was then carried out by Clevedon Organs, with new slider soundboards, designed by Anthony Hall of Clevedon Organs, which were CNC machined by Renuus and fitted out in Clevedon's workshops. Renuus also rebuilt the console to Clevedon's designs:

Cleaning of all pipes and parts retained, with special attention to the front pipes and wooden casework.

Replace worn-out slider soundboards and poor top-note machines with new 61-note slider soundboards.

Releather wind system.

Add west-facing Swell shutters

Carry out vital improvements to the layout to enable the organ's tone to emerge more fully and to make the Great and the Swell far easier to tune.

Rebuild the console with new controls and keyboards, though maintaining and indeed enhancing the 1930s visual style, with its elegant curves.

Carrying out the tonal development of each department, without much physical enlargement, because of the relatively modest space and the need to have every pipe and piece of mechanism readily accessible for maintenance.

The resulting specification is as follows:

It can be seen from the stop-list that not only have the flue and reed choruses been improved, but a wide range of solo colours and combinations now allow a

Great Organ (61 notes)		
1 Lieblich Bourdon	16	Originally Sw Lieblich Bourdon
2 Open Diapason I	8	Existing
3 Open Diapason II		Existing
4 Stopped Diapason		Originally Ch Lieblich Gedackt
5 Principal		Existing
6 Wald Flute		Originally Ch Flauto Traverso
7 Fifteenth		Existing
8 Mixture 19.22.26		New, spotted metal
9 Harmonic Trumpet		Existing, from no.20
Solo to Great, Swell to Great		
Swell Organ (61 notes)		
10 Violin Diapason	8	Existing
11 Rohr Flute	8	Existing
12 Echo Gamba	8	Existing
13 Voix Celeste (T.C.)	8	Existing
14 Geigen Principal	4	Existing
15 Nazard	2 ² / ₃	Existing, re-named
16 Fifteenth	2	Existing, re-named
17 Tierce	1 ³ / ₅	Existing, re-named
18 Sesquialtera 12.15.17	III	Existing, re-named (drawing nos 15-17)
19 Mixture 15.19.22	III	New, plain metal
20 Double Clarinet	16	Partly new, from no.23
21 Horn	8	Existing
22 Oboe	8	Existing
23 Clarinet	8	Existing
Tremulant		
Sub Octave, Super Octave, Unison Off		
Solo Organ (61 notes)		
24 Hohl Flute	8	Originally Gt Wald Flute
25 Viole d'Orchestre	8	Existing
26 Dulciana	8	Existing, tuned to undulate
27 Harmonic Flute	4	Originally Gt Harmonic Flute
28 Harmonic Piccolo	2	Additional Monk pipes
29 Clarinet	8	From no.23
30 Harmonic Trumpet	8	Originally Gt Trumpet
Solo to Great, Swell to Great		
Sub Octave, Super Octave, Unison Off		

Pedal Organ (30 notes)		
31 Acoustic Bass	32	Existing, from no.33 & no.1
32 Open Diapason	16	Existing
33 Bourdon	16	Existing
34 Lieblich Bourdon	16	Existing, from no.1
35 Violoncello	8	Existing
36 Bass Flute	8	From no.1
37 Fifteenth	4	From no.35
38 Octave Flute	4	From no.1
39 Harmonic Trombone	32	Acoustic; from nos 32, 33 & 40
40 Trombone	16	Additional Noterman pipes; treble from no.30
41 Double Clarinet	16	From no.20
42 Trumpet	8	From no.30
Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Solo to Pedal, Solo Octave to Pedal		
Great & Pedal Combs uncoupled [sic], Gens on Sw toe pistons		
Accessories		
6 Divisional thumb pistons to Solo		
8 Divisional thumb pistons to Great		
8 Divisional thumb pistons to Swell		
8 General thumb pistons		
6 Reversible thumb pistons to all unison couplers		
4 Advance thumb pistons (General stepper)		
1 Retard thumb piston (General stepper)		
1 Setter thumb piston		
1 General Cancel piston		
8 Divisional toe pistons to Swell		
8 Divisional toe pistons to Great & Pedal		
1 Reversible toe piston to Great to Pedal		
1 Reversible toe piston to Swell to Great		
1 Advance toe piston (General stepper)		
1 Retard toe piston (General stepper)		
1 Reversible toe piston for Trombone 16ft		
1 Reversible toe piston for Trombone 32ft		
Illuminating button for West Shutters Off		
Illuminating button inverting toe pistons (stepper / couplers)		
99 memory levels each for Divisional and Generals		
Record and playback facility, controlled via a tablet		
MIDI interfaces / controls		

player to register music of many periods in a musically satisfactory manner; to accompany the excellent church choir; and heartily to lead congregational singing. This is achieved despite adding only one

additional stop to the Great and Choir, and two to the Swell. For the first time in its life there are complete Diapason choruses to Mixture on both Great and Swell, along with an enhanced Pedal complete

with a long hoped-for Trombone. The Choir has become a Solo, one of its tasks being to enhance the Great 'fonds' when all 8ft flues are coupled together. Notice the helpful enclosure of the Solo Clarinet in the

something old, something new



Image 4 | Solo pipework

Swell box, where it also functions as the 16ft chorus reed. The Great and Choir flutes have exchanged places, making accompaniment of the St Thomas's choir on the Great much more subtle than was possible before. Another feature not evident from the printed specification is

that the Solo octave couplers are programmed to work to the entire compass. For example, the Trumpet rank has a 4ft top octave of pipes for use with the Octave coupler and the Lieblich Bourdon is used for the 16ft octaves of the 8ft flues, when the Sub Octave is drawn.

As the church begins a new era, with the completion of this organ and the appointment of a successor to the late Michael Howell, the transformed instrument has already proved itself more than fit for purpose in recital, concert, and liturgy. Long may it continue to inspire.



Paul Hale is a professional organ consultant, recitalist and choral conductor.

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, and has been awarded honorary fellowships by the GCM and the RSCM, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'Thomas Cranmer Award' for his contribution to church music. More information is available at www.paulhale.org



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