

The Parish Church of
Saint Paul, Honiton

THE ORGANS

PAST & PRESENT

Prior to the building of S. Paul's, the mediaeval parish church of Honiton was S. Michael's, situated at the top of Church Hill, somewhat distant from the developing town. By the early 1830's it was felt that there was need for another church in the centre of the expanding community. Consequently the foundation stone of S. Paul's was laid on October 28th. 1835 and the building erected on the site of the old All Hallows School Chapel. This had been made available by the School whose buildings surrounded the new Church. At Easter 1838 it was consecrated by Bishop Henry Philpotts of Exeter.

The church was built on a north/south axis and not east/west as usual. This is significant when considering the problems to be encountered by the second organ.

The first instrument was installed for the opening of the church. It cost £350 and was built by Messrs. Robson & Son, 10, St. Martin's Lane, London. A newspaper report says ".... a magnificent instrument, possessing great richness of tone, with fullness and power".

2 rows of keys, Great organ GG to f. Swell to tenor F

Great

Open Diapason

Stopt Diapason

Dulciana

Principal

Twelfth

Fifteenth

Sesquialtera 3 ranks

Trumpet

Swell

Open Diapason

Stopt Diapason

Principal

Flute

Hautboy

Unison Pedal pipes to GG 1 1/2 octaves

Swell and Pedal Coupler

(taken from the Sperling Notebooks, vol. II, p. 71)

Another report in Sept. 1849 says that ".....the organ is about to be removed from its lofty position to the [newly enlarged] gallery underneath". This work was carried out by the Exeter firm of Henry Brooking & Son. A further note in Nov. 1849 says "...the removal of the organ is an improvement, but it was far from finished [.....] owing to the havoc made by the damp state of the church". (*Water has often featured in the history of this church - witness the stains running down every pillar!*).

Probably for reasons of fashion more than anything else, this organ was superseded after a mere 35 years. Its fate is unknown except that Michael Farley (*see note later*) has suggested that some pipes could have been used in the next organ. He points to similarities with several ranks in the organ at Ottery St. Mary, known to have had the attention of Robson, if not actually built by him, around 1842. (*There is another [altered] Robson organ, with delightful 'Gothick' case, dated 1841, just a few miles away at Uffculme Parish Church.*)

The second organ was commissioned from Bishop and Sons. They were asked to build a two manual organ at the 'east' end of the 'north' gallery, placed near to the new choir stalls. (*The outline of the central tower of the case can still be seen on the gallery front*).

Bishop's initially provided the whole of the Great and Pedal divisions, together with the Swell keyboard. This was installed in January 1873 at a cost of £313. Three months later the Swell pipework and another Pedal stop were added. These additions cost a further £475.

Manual CC-a 58 notes, Pedale CCC-f 30 notes.

Great

Open Diapason	8
Keraulophon	8 <i>tenor C</i>
Clarabella	8
Stopd. Bass	8
Principal	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Sesquialtera	III ranks
Trumpet	8

Swell

Double Diapason	16	<i>metal to ten.C Bourdon bass-large scale</i>
Open Diapason	8	<i>bass of wood</i>
Stopd. Diapason	8	<i>bass voiced with sharp bevels.</i>
Clarinet Flute	8	<i>ten C large scale</i>
Gamba	8	
Principal	4	
Harmonic Piccolo	2	
Mixture	II ranks	
Double Reed	16	<i>lowest octave French 1 1/2 scale</i>
Cornopean	8	
Oboe	8	
Cremona	8	

Pedal

Open (large)	16
Principal	8

4 couplers (including Pedal Octave) with 3 composition pedals each to Great and Swell. Wind pressure 3"

(*This information is taken from Laurence Elvin's book 'Bishop & Sons - Organ Builders'*).

This was a rather more enterprising tonal scheme than usual and no doubt made a good impression. The opening recital was given by S. S. Wesley (1810-76), a great nephew of John Wesley and at that time organist of Gloucester Cathedral, but formerly of Exeter.

In 1883 one finds a reference stating that ".....the old organ was removed." It would appear therefore, that for ten years the church had two organs in situ, or at least a case from the former instrument, if not all the original pipes, as some may have been used in the 'new' organ at the other end of the church.

It was assumed that over the next 90 years the Bishop instrument received only routine maintenance. However, when it was being dismantled in Jan. 2000, a pencilled note was found on internal woodwork. This stated that "T. Neal & H. Woods rebuilt this organ - July 4th. 1906". It seems unlikely that major rebuilding would have been necessary after only 33 years, unless the problems that would contribute to the eventual ruin of the organ were beginning to take their toll.

By 1960 however, the mechanical action had become so warped, worn and heavy that Osmond & Co of Taunton were asked to electrify the action. This they did, together with changes to the tonal scheme, at a cost of £1989. The Sesquialtera was revised and the Keraulophon gave place to an anaemic Dulciana. The Cremona disappeared as did the Stopped Diapason and the lowest octave of the Double Diapason. A useful (ubiquitous) Bourdon/Bass Flute rank was added.

The organ's centenary, 1973, saw the appearance of a detached stop-key console, designed for three manuals, so plainly a reject from elsewhere! It was sited behind the choir stalls but underneath the organ(I), which was

cleaned at the same time, all for £5346. Rain water damage in 1979 and 1982 necessitated further work.

Between 1985-7 the building was closed for a programme of restoration and reordering and the nave divided with a new wall. The organ was partly dismantled, the small pipes put in store at S. Michael's and the rest covered up. In spite of this much dust got into the action and onto the pipes still in place. On the re-opening of the church, the console was moved to the 'south' gallery opposite the organ. This work cost almost £4000. Yet more rainwater penetration in 1989 involved repairs to the Great soundboard.

Because of the building's orientation the large window behind the instrument (facing west) allowed heat from the sun to literally bake the organ. A solar reflective film was applied to the glass in 1989, but far too late.

And so, to summarize, the heat treatment and water damage, dust and recent upheavals, much warped and damaged internal structure, an increasingly sluggish action, many wind leaks, and the poor quality work of 1960, plus loss of tonal integrity meant that by 1990 we had a sad and rapidly ailing instrument whose days were nearly over. A nettle had to be grasped, rebuild on another site - our new 'west' gallery, or start afresh.

If the Bishop, even in its semi-ruinous state, had been an historic or truly worthy instrument the first option would have had merit - though probably more costly. After long and detailed discussion it was decided that a new organ would be the best solution. So we come to...

The third and present organ.

The chosen builder was Kenneth Tickell of Northampton who writes: ".....the importance of good positioning for organs is now widely appreciated. S. Paul's is to be congratulated on providing a perfect setting for their new instrument. Like all our organs it has mechanical (tracker) action to the keys and pedals. The case is made of American Oak, the rounded arches of the church being the obvious inspiration for the design. The polished front pipes, including the unusual embossed central pipe, are made of 70% tin, whilst those inside are alloys of tin and lead, as well as poplar wood".

The Great division stands in the centre at the first level, the Pedal section is divided on either side of the Great. High above the Great is the Swell box with its pipes inside. This is the traditional 'werkprinzip' layout favoured by organ builders over the centuries. Our modern concession is electric action to the stops and piston controls, together with a two level memory for stop combinations. In addition to the six thumb pistons for both manual divisions, four for the Pedals and six generals, it is possible to programme any one or every one of those 22 combination pistons to act as general pistons, covering all the stops.

In a small company there is little demarcation between jobs, all the staff had some part in most aspects of creating this organ. Responsibilities were as follows:

Kenneth Tickell: *Design, electrics, project management, tonal finishing*
Tony Coles: *Soundboards, casework, winding, installation*
Barry Plummer: *Casework, Swell box*
Tim Pitkin: *Casework, coupler action, electrics, wooden pipes*
Tomas Jansky: *Bellow, upperboards, wooden pipes*
John Furniss: *Voicing, actions*

Others involved were:

David Frostick: *Reed voicing*
Derek Riley de Cayless & Keith German (Lyndale Woodcarving): *Pipe shades*

Most of the metal pipes were made by Jacques Stinkens, Zeist, Holland, the rest by T. Davies of Leeds. All wooden pipes were made in the Tickell workshop.

Great		
Bourdon	16	
Open Diapason	8	
Stopped Diapason	8	
Principal	4	
Spitz Flute	4	
Fifteenth	2	
Cornet	II ranks	12:17 ten. C
Mixture	IV ranks	19:22:26:29
Cremona	8	

Tremulant

Swell		
Chimney Flute	8	
Salicional	8	
Vox Angelica	8	
Principal	4	
Nason Flute	4	
Wald Flute	2	
Larigot	1 1/3	
Sharp Mixture	III ranks	26:29:33
Trumpet	8	

Tremulant

Pedal	
Subbass	16
Principal	8
Flute	8
Gemshorn	4
Posaune	16

This organ was installed in October 1999 and is the last completed Tickell organ of the 20th century. The Blessing and Dedication by The Very Revd. Patrick Mitchell, former Dean of Windsor, took place on Advent Sunday, November 28th. 1999, with the Inaugural Recital later the same day. This was given by those most closely associated with the genesis of this instrument; Alan Thurlow, (Organist and Master of the Choristers at Chichester Cathedral - Consultant), Kenneth Tickell himself, John Mingay (S. Paul's organist) and Robin Davis, a pupil of John Mingay and, at the time, Organ Scholar elect of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge.

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This whole 'new organ project' occupied the Fund Raising Committee and the Trustees for some seven years. Under the Presidency of the late Dr. Lionel Dakers O.B.E and the leadership of the Revd. Prebendary James Trevelyan M.A., Rector of Honiton from 1978 to 2000, many individuals worked tirelessly to achieve their goal. The splendid result amply rewards their dedication and resolve. The entire cost, c. £150,000, was contributed without recourse to church funds and the organ was dedicated and played for the first time 'debt free'. The fund was over-subscribed and as a result a significant sum has been 'ring-fenced' for capital expenditure on the organ at some stage in the future.

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The Bishop organ was dismantled in January 2000 by Michael Farley of Budleigh Salterton, a respected local organ builder whom Kenneth Tickell has entrusted to care for the new organ. At the time of writing the Great soundboard, Trumpet and Mixture plus the Swell box and Open Diapason, Principal and 2' from the Swell have been re-used in the organ at Farley (!!) Parish Church near Salisbury. The Swell 16' reed has become the Pedal Bombard at Bridport United Church and one or two other ranks have been incorporated in instruments elsewhere. Whilst the remainder await new homes it is heartening to know that so many of the old pipes have been given a new lease of life.

(c) *John Mingay*
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