

Derby & District Organists' Association

(Registered Charity No.510567)

Newsletter

Behind the Façade, St John's, Derby



This is the first in a new series of articles in which members will be able to see behind the organ case to glimpse the construction and mechanisms which operate the complex instrument that is the focus of our Association.

The St John 'Father' Willis organ of 1875 sits in the north gallery of the church and speaks freely into the nave and chancel; few instruments of the period enjoy such an excellent position and such a fine acoustic. The original Willis specification (qv) lacks mutations and one would be forgiven for thinking that the sound would have been less than vibrant. However, one of Willis's great talents was to voice stops in such a way that even unison pitch stops developed rich harmonics: the Willis organ in All Saints, Hastings, dates from the same period, 1871, and has a similar specification, yet the Great fifteenth sounds like a mixture when drawn with the Great chorus.

Andy Storer, who has a long association with St John's, has compiled the following article and provided the three specifications of the organ.

Henry Willis Specification 1875 Great Organ

Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Viola da Gamba	8

Claribel Flute	8
Flute Harmonique	4
Principal	4
Fifteenth	2
Trumpet	8
Clarionet	8

Swell Organ

Open Diapason	8
Lieblich Gedacht	8
Salicional	8
Vox Angelica	8
Gemshorn	4
Piccolo	2
Cornopean	8
Hautboy	8

Pedal

Open Diapason	16
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Couplers

Swell to Great
Swell to Pedal
Great to Pedal

Over several years now there have been major restoration projects taking place at St John's Church which have included the exterior stonework, restoration of the cast iron windows and, in 2008, the complete redecoration of the interior of the church.

Finally, in 2009 will come the turn of the 1875 'Father' Willis organ. The dismantling of the organ will also enable the final decorating to be completed.

Since being installed the organ has undergone several alterations – the main ones being Adkins' enlargement to three manuals in 1914 and the Johnson restoration in 1975, when the original two manual scheme was re-instated together with some tonal changes on the manuals to provide more upperwork, and the enlargement of the pedal organ.



The console after the Johnson rebuild.

Adkins Specification 1914

Great

Lieblich Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Dulciana	8
Viola da Gamba	8
Claribel Flute	8
Flute Harmonique	8
Principal	4
Fifteenth	2
Trumpet	8
(Vacant slide)	

Choir Organ

(Enclosed, pneumatic action)

Dulciana	8
Hohl Flute	8
Viola da Gamba (ex Willis Gt)	8
Lieblich Flute	4
Clarinet (ex Willis Gt)	8

Swell Organ

No change from the Willis Swell.

Pedal Organ

Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Quint	10 ^{2/3}

NB The vacant Great slide was later filled with a wooden twelfth in 1958.

The Scheme of work to be carried out in 2009 by Ed Stow will first and foremost be to conserve the surviving Willis stops and mechanical action, together with releathering the large reservoir. The opportunity will also be taken to make some tonal modifications to the upperwork that was added in 1975.

Johnson Specification 1975

Great Organ

Open Diapason *	8
Geigen *	8

Claribel Flute *	8
Principal *	4
Harmonic Flute *	4
Twelfth	2 ^{2/3}
Fifteenth *	2
Quartane	19.22
Trumpet *	8

Swell Organ

Open Diapason *	8
Lieblich Gedacht *	8
Salicional *	8
Voix Celeste *	8
Principal *	4
Piccolo *	2
Acuta	26.29
Sext	12.17
Cornopean *	8

Pedal

(Electric action)

Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Bass Flute	ext. 8
Fifteenth	ext. 4
Mixture	ext. II
Trombone	16
Trumpet	ext. 8
Shawm *	4

Stops marked * are Willis.

Looking at each department in turn the proposals briefly are:

Pedal Organ

- Reinstatement of the 16' Open in place of the present unsatisfactory Open Diapason (Contra Dulciana qv) which arrived in the mid 1980s
- Add a larger scale bass to the Principal 8' in place of the existing Adkins bass
- Redistribute the Pedal Chests to the rear and east sides of the organ

thus allowing restoration of the lower, west-facing casework and moving console access to this side.

Great Organ

- Careful restoration of the Willis Diapason chorus, including the removal of leathering (added by Adkins) from the Open Diapason, and regulation of the Fifteenth
- A 16' Bourdon will be added in place of the existing Twelfth (1975)
- The existing Twelfth will form part of a new Sesquialtera to be fitted on a clamp
- The addition of a third rank to the mixture.

Swell Organ

- Removal of the pneumatic 12.17 Sext stop, which hangs from the roof of the box, thus enabling proper access to the division
- A flageolet 2' will replace the Piccolo to give a better chorus in the division
- The addition of a third rank to the mixture.

This tonal work, together with careful cleaning and repair to all pipework, action and casework, will preserve this fine organ for generations to come and it is hoped that the new 16' registers will restore the gravitas that the instrument needs in the wonderful acoustic of the church.

We at St John's look forward to the completion of this important project late in 2009.

Andy Storer

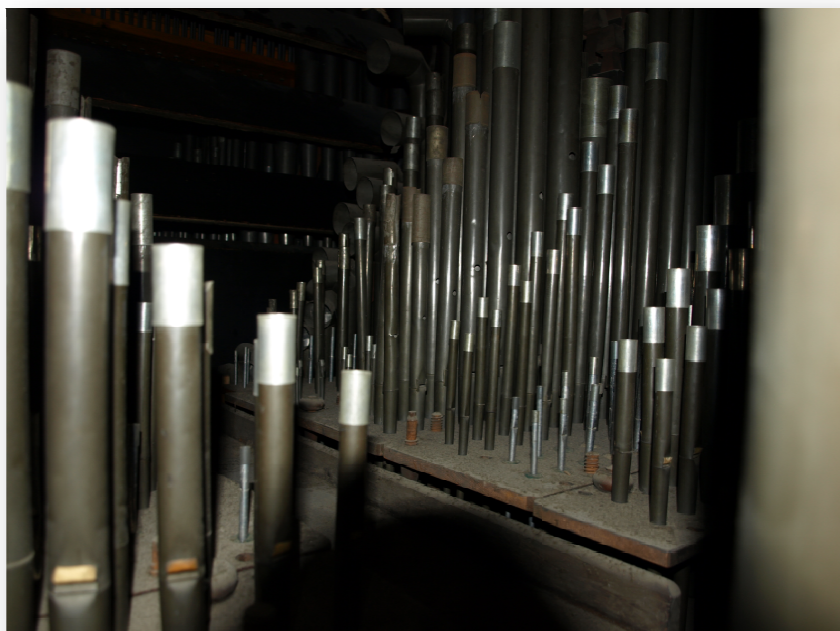
The photograph on page 1 shows the Willis organ sitting in the northeast corner of the north gallery; the remaining decoration will be done whilst the organ is dismantled. In the top left corner of the photograph (and right) the hooded top of the Pedal Diapason pipes can be seen. (David Johnson tells me that the stop came from a much larger instrument and was the Great Contra Dulciana – one can only guess at the scale of the rest of the Great pipework!) This stop is to be replaced with the Open Wood from St Anne's, Derby.

The leathering of pipe mouths (top of page three) was popular at the time when Adkins worked on the instrument in 1914. Hope-Jones had introduced large scale Diapasons with leathered lips to produce a solid foundation tone with



little or no development of the upper harmonics: these stops did not blend well but were popular because of their solidity and power at a time when bright upperwork was frowned upon. In this case Adkins may well have added the leathering to soften the speech of the Diapason and produce a less exciting tone. It will be interesting to hear the result of returning the pipes to their original speech. In both this photograph and the next one the accumulation of dirt in the organ can be seen, both on the pipe racks and in the mouths of the pipes themselves.

The Pedal Trombone is at the left of this picture; the hoods on the smaller pipes can be seen clearly. The purpose of the hood is to prevent dust and dirt entering the pipe and direct the sound to the front of the organ chamber. Larger reed pipes are still susceptible to dirt, even with the larger tongues used, though because of their length they often have to have a double knuckle (a bend or mitre) to reduce their height and this traps any dirt that enters the pipes. The knuckles



on the larger pipes here can just be discerned.

In the centre of the photograph (above) on the small chest is the 4' Pedal Shawm, originally part of the Willis Clarionet. When the restoration work is complete, the Trombone, Shawm and the Adkins Principal, which is hiding below the Shawm, will be placed at the north and east sides of the organ case; access to the console will then be along the west side of the case where these pipes now stand. The missing panel from the case is still available and will be reinstated.

The Great pipework (left) is well-spaced, allowing each pipe to speak freely; in many instruments this is an unimaginable luxury!

The sound of the Willis as it stands is glorious – without doubt one of the finest instruments in the county. It reminds me of the 'Father' Willis I played as a sixth former; the specification was almost identical to the St John's organ, and it was sited in an equally advantageous position. Sadly, the voicing had been 'tamed' when it was installed in the building and I can only surmise that there was insufficient money available to utilise the space that

was available in the organ chamber; the instrument had been shoe-horned into a small section of it to such a degree that it was impossible to move the organ bench.

I look forward to playing the revitalised Willis in St John's when it has been refurbished, as many readers will.

During the period that the Willis is out of action, (no pun intended) Ed Stow will erect the single manual Clatworthy organ (1811) that he and Terry Bennett

rescued last year. We shall have an article about that instrument and its refurbishment later in the year.

My thanks to Andy Storer for taking the time to discover so much information and to present it in such an accessible form.

TW

AGM 2008

The Association AGM took place on Tuesday 18th November 2008 at St Nicholas' Church Hall, Derby, with twenty members in attendance.

The minutes of the 2007 AGM were read and approved with Matters Arising being dealt with in the agenda, after which the Chairman reviewed what was adjudged to be a successful year for the Association.

The Treasurer's Report for 2007 outlined expenditure for the year, the end of year balance being £250 less than at the beginning of the year. The accounts were accepted.

Accounts for 2008 showed that after the increase in subscriptions last year the end of year balance would be £250 better than at the beginning of the year. Tax refunds amounted to £414 and were a substantial part of income. 2009 subs would not be increased though subscriptions for OR would increase to £22.10. There were no questions.

Stephen Johns outlined the Children and The Organ project and its successful start at Repton. Two Allestree schools were to take part in 2009 at St. Nicholas', Allestree.

Amendments to the Constitution were approved by the meeting:

- the Secretary and Membership Secretary are now one post – a return to the pre 1999 Constitution
 - the word 'Covenant' to be changed to 'Gift Aid'
- Committee membership to be increased from three to four members.
Elections:
PJ Williams – Chairman.
Ron Sherwood - Vice Chairman
Rev. J Bland – Chaplain
Chris Darrall – Treasurer
John Hunt – Gift Aid Secretary
Tony Westerman – *Newsletter* Editor

Committee Members:

S Johns, D Littleton, E Stow, R Tomkins.

AOB: G Chatto asked why the 2007 accounts were presented during the 2008 AGM in November. The matter had been the subject of previous discussion:

- the AGM used to be held in January with a consequent difficulty in finalising the accounts of the previous year in time and setting the subs for the new year
- programme cards with the names of the new committee members were produced following the AGM
- the IAO year runs from January to December.
- the weaknesses of the current system were acknowledged.

T Westerman outlined his proposals for the *Newsletter*.

G Smith expressed his thanks to members for their condolences upon the death of his brother, Norman.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.

The next Committee meeting will be 19th January 2009.

TW

2008 Crossword Solution

Across: 8 Martin Shaw; 9 Exit; 10 Strafe; 11 Sleepers; 12 Essayist; 14 Signet; 15 Vaughan Williams; 19 Sprout; 22 Last post; 24 Waffling; 26 Tallis; 27 Wake; 28 Down Ampney.

Down: 1 Fantasia; 2 Ottava; 3 Angelica; 4 This; 5 Owners; 6 Respighi; 7 Tierce; 13 Towel; 16 Geoffrey; 17 Less than; 18 Messiaen; 20 Plagal; 21 Triads; 23 Polyyps; 25 Gown.

Errata

My apologies to members for the errors contained in the December *Newsletter* and particularly to Ed Stow for misspelling his name.

The figures for subscriptions 2009 are correct on the subs sheet; please ignore the figures on the Newsletter.

TW

The Parr Hall Cavallé-Coll

After rumours that the Parr Hall at Warrington was to be demolished to make way for flats, there has been a stay of execution with new proposals to refurbish the building as a concert venue at a cost of £1.2m.

Plans had been in hand to remove the Cavallé-Coll organ to Sheffield Cathedral to replace the Mander organ from the 1960s though quite how the instrument would have fitted into the musical life of the cathedral is uncertain though it would have been heard more frequently.

(JB has given me a brief up-date in that things have changed and nothing has changed! Ed.)

Rev John Bland

IAO Yorkshire Organ Day at York & Everingham, Sat. 9th May 2009

Talk on music at Everingham by John Rowntree and a recital of C18th English organ music by Alan Spedding on the 1837 Charles Allen organ in the spectacular private chapel of St Mary & St Everilda.

Booking form available on our website www.iao.org.uk/york or by sending an s.a.e to Philip J Paul, YOD Conference, c/o Central Methodist Church, St Saviourgate, York YO1 8QN. Book by 27.4.09

Recitals

Walsall Town Hall – Paul Hale 21.1.09

DDOA

Annual Dinner – 17.1.09

Committee Meeting – 19.1.09

Europe's Oldest Organs – 18.2.09

Organ Study Day – 21.3.09