

THE ORGANS OF SOUTHWELL MINSTER

Southwell Minster became a Cathedral in 1884; its Diocese is almost exactly the geographical area of Nottinghamshire. Prior to that date the Minster had been a Collegiate Church for more than 900 years, with a college of prebendaries, a Choir School, and full daily sung services - performed without a break now for 1000 years.

An organ was built in the Minster in 1662-3 by "Mr Derby"; this was replaced in 1701 by a new one-manual instrument in a fine case on the screen, probably built by Father Smith. Repaired after a Nave roof fire in 1712, and again in 1727, a second manual (in a 'chair' case) was made by Dallam of York in 1730 and finished after his death by Thomas Swarbrick. In 1765-66 John Snetzler effected a complete rebuild and added a four-stop Swell, after which the organ gained a fine reputation for the quality of its tone. Work by G P England (1804), Buckingham (adding pedals in 1821), and Groves of London (c. 1854 - a new and larger Swell) did not help to make the organ readily serviceable, and in 1892 Bishop & Son replaced it with a completely new 4-manual organ in four divided cases on the screen.

A 1934 rebuild by Hill Norman & Beard placed the Great and most of the Pedal in the Nave triforium, electrified the action and enlarged the tonal scheme considerably; there were two consoles, one mobile (with stop-keys) in the nave. The pipework was revoiced on very smooth lines and included diaphonic basses and considerable manual and pedal extension. Caroe & Passmore designed a new screen case (partly modelled on the Father Smith case). There were no fewer than 81 speaking stops on three manuals and pedals. In late 1959 a Positiv organ was added under the screen on the south side, its pipework being visible from nave and quire.

Another rebuild took place in 1971, when the Great was squeezed into the screen case along with the smaller pedal ranks, most extended ranks were removed, and much upper work to manuals and pedals was added. The organ was revoiced on Baroque lines, with lowering of upper lips and reduction of nicking. However, with much 1892 action work and soundboards along with 1934 wiring, by 1989 the organ had become completely unreliable; its sound was undistinguished, making little impact in the nave and sounding completely unbalanced in the quire.

It was soon clear to me, arriving here as Organist & Rector Chori in 1989 that a single organ on the screen could not satisfactorily cope with the musical and liturgical demands of both nave and quire, for the two reasons that a) sound does not carry well past the crossing under the central tower, and b) organs can in any case only speak in one direction. Plans were drawn up to provide a second-hand electric-action organ, suitably rebuilt and modified, to support hearty singing at Diocesan services in the nave, as well as being able to accompany the Cathedral Choir when it sings in that part of the building. At the same time, consideration began to be given to providing a brand-new mechanical action organ on the screen, for the daily choral services in the quire.

In January 1990 Wood of Huddersfield suggested the installation of a large Binns organ formerly in the Upper Independent Chapel, Heckmondwike. This would be rebuilt as a three manual, with very complete Swell and Great divisions and a small Solo Organ comprising a Clarinet (a gift from Philip Wood) and a Tuba and its 4ft extension from the Minster's HN&B 1934 material; The organ was restored and electrified, adapted for the spacious south triforium site (four bays) and a booster blower added to provide 16ins wind for the Tuba.

A new mobile console was built, employing the refurbished keys from the Minster's 1934 nave console and the re-engraved ivory stop-knobs from the Binns organ. An SSL transmission was installed along with a combination mechanism by Taylor. One link with the 1892 organ was the re-use of the Bishop 16ft Open Wood, which was still lying horizontal in the nave triforium. The organ was opened by Roger Fisher on May 25th 1992, since when many Bank Holiday recitals on it have drawn large and enthusiastic audiences and all major Diocesan services have (at last) been provided with an inspiring and effective organ accompaniment.

Specification:

GREAT ORGAN

16 Double Open Diapason
 8 Open Diapason No. 1
 8 Open Diapason No. 2
 8 Gamba new
 8 Hohl Flute
 8 Rohr Flute
 4 Principal
 4 Gemshorn new
 4 Harmonic Flute
 2½ Twelfth
 2 Fifteenth
 IV Full Mixture (15.19.22.26) new
 III Sharp Mixture (26.29.33) new
 8 Posaine new
 4 Clarion new
 Tremulant

PEDAL ORGAN

32 Double Open Wood (digital)
 16 Open Diapason Wood
 16 Open Diapason Metal (from Great)
 16 Bourdon
 8 Principal (ext Bourdon)
 8 Bass Flute (ext Principal)
 4 Fifteenth (ext Bass Flute)
 4 Stopped Flute (digital)
 32 Contra Trombone
 16 Trombone
 8 Clarion (ext Trombone)

ACCESSORIES

8 thumb pistons to Swell
 8 thumb pistons to Great
 3 thumb pistons to Solo
 8 General thumb pistons
 8 toe pistons to Pedal
 8 toe pistons to Swell
 7 reversible thumb pistons
 3 reversible toe pistons

16 programmes to Departmental combinations
 16 programmes to General combinations

Sequencer with advance and retard thumb & toe pistons (separate memory, not a stepper through general 8)

SWELL ORGAN

16 Bourdon
 8 Open Diapason
 8 Gedackt
 8 Salicional
 8 Voix Celeste (t.c.)
 4 Geigen Principal
 4 Flauto Traverso
 2 Fifteenth
 2 Piccolo
 II Sesquialtera (12.17) new
 III Mixture (15.19.22)
 16 Double Trumpet
 8 Trumpet
 8 Oboe
 4 Clarion
 Tremulant

SOLO ORGAN (unenclosed)

8 Clarinet (Great Tremulant affects this)
 8 Tuba (16 ins. w.p.) old Screen Organ
 4 Clarion (16 ins. w.p.) (ext Tuba)

COUPLERS

Swell to Great
 Solo to Great
 Swell Octave
 Swell Unison Off
 Great to Solo
 Swell to Solo
 Great to Pedal
 Swell to Pedal
 Solo to Pedal

Great & Pedal Combinations Coupled
 Generals on Swell toe pistons

Setter piston
 General Cancel

Now it was the turn of the screen organ. Discussions from 1989 and 1994 took place between the Rector Chori and organ experts. John Norman (adviser to the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England), the organ builders N. P. Mander Ltd, Stephen Bicknell and Ian Bell were particularly helpful in clarifying what could or could not be done, once the decision had been taken to preserve (on historical and financial grounds) the Caroe case. A new case had been proposed and drawn by the Minster's Architect, Martin Stancliffe, as an alternative to which it had been hoped to add a 'Chair' case to the existing case in emulation of Southwell's eighteenth-century case, but constructional difficulties prevented this. At this point Nicholson of Malvern were invited to tender as their recent work at Portsmouth Cathedral and at Birmingham Cathedral (with the writer as Consultant) suggested that they would have the ability to design and voice a tracker-action organ to fit within our relatively small case, with the action going through ninety degrees as the console had to remain on the north side.

During 1994, plans with Nicholson had been refined and almost finalised, when in December I was told of a fine 1868/1906/1922 Nicholson organ in St Peter's Church, Malvern Wells, which had just been closed. It had just the tone we were after, and so we decided to buy it and use its pipework as the basis of an otherwise new instrument. The Diocese of Worcester kindly arranged for Southwell to purchase the organ. Meanwhile a generous legacy from the late Charles Cope meant that work could proceed. In March final permission was granted by the Cathedral Council for a total project cost of £320,000.

The Screen Organ scheme was approved by the C.F.C. on March 23rd 1995. The contract was signed in April and work immediately began in Nicholson's works at Quest Hills Road, Malvern. At the same time the case was cleaned and repaired, the old organ having been stripped out by voluntary labour, the pipework taken by Wood of Huddersfield for scrap or possible re-use. Some of the 1959 and 1971 ranks duly found their way into other organs. By mid-November Nicholsons were ready to erect the organ in the Minster. That work proceeded steadily into the New Year when three months' voicing and regulating by Dennis Thurlow and Guy Russell began. The instrument was handed over at 4 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, just in time for Assistant Organist Philip Rushforth to work up Vierne's *Messe Solennelle* for the organ's first appearance, on Easter Day 1996. Later that year an opening series of concerts featured Roy Massey, John Scott, David Sanger, Paul Hale and Philip Rushforth.

Incorporated in the English but eclectic specification are Copeman Hart digital electronic basses for the two 32ft stops and the 16ft Open Bass (wood). There was no room for these within the organ as ranks of pipes, and such had been the success of Copeman Hart's temporary organ, that it was felt worthwhile employing their expertise to produce a satisfactory solution. In the event it proved impossible to find room for a large bass horn, so reflex cabinets were mounted above the stairway on the South side of the Screen and near the pedal soundboard. The extreme bass is helped by a 16ft column loudspeaker within the Nave Organ, to which instrument digital 32fts were added at the same time. Also incorporated was circuitry allowing much of the Nave Organ to be played from the Screen console, to help with large congregations and processions. All this proved its great worth from that very first Easter Day and has been appreciated in daily services ever since, in broadcasts and in the many recitals given on it. Unfailingly reliable and a joy to play, the Nicholson organ has proved to be a triumph of engineering design, excellence of construction and beauty of tone.

The organ has four manuals and pedals, 51 speaking stops, 60 ranks of pipes and 3,725 pipes. A 66-page booklet by the present writer about the Minster's organs (with 28 photographs) is on sale in the Minster Shop.

Specification:

GREAT ORGAN

16 Bourdon
8 Large Open Diapason
8 Small Open Diapason
8 Stopped Diapason
4 Principal
4 Wald Flute
2 Fifteenth
IV Full Mixture (15,19,22,25)
III Sharp Mixture (25,29,33)
8 Trumpet
Tremulant
Swell Sub Octave to Great
Swell to Great
Choir to Great
Solo Sub Octave to Great
Solo to Great

SWELL ORGAN

8 Open Diapason
8 Lieblich Gedeckt
8 Salicional
8 Vox Angelica (C13)
4 Principal
4 Nason Flute
2 Fifteenth
II Sesquialtera (12,17)
III Mixture (15,19,22)
IV Picin Jeu (19,22,25,29)
16 Contra Posauone
8 Cornopean
8 Oboe
4 Clarion
Tremulant

CHOIR ORGAN (enclosed)

8 Gedeckt
8 Viol d'Amour
8 Voix Celeste (C13)
4 Gemshorn
4 Spitzflute
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Nazard
2 Fifteenth
2 Blockflute
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tierce
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Larigot
III Mixture (19,22,25)
8 Clarinet
8 Vox Humana
Tremulant
Swell to Choir
Swell Octave to Choir
Solo Sub Octave to Choir
Solo to Choir

PEDAL ORGAN

32 Subbass (digital)
16 Open Bass (digital)
16 Open Diapason
16 Bourdon
8 Principal (ext. Open Diap.)
8 Bass Flute
4 Fifteenth
IV Mixture (19,22,25,29)
32 Contra Posauone (digital)
16 Ophicleide
16 Bassoon
Great to Pedal
Swell to Pedal
Choir to Pedal
Solo to Pedal

Great & Pedal Combinations Coupled
Generals on Swell Toe Pistons

SOLO ORGAN (unenclosed)

4 Concert Flute
V Mounted Cornet (C13) (1,8,12,15,17)
Tremulant
8 Bombarde

TRANSFERS

Screen Organ OFF
Nave Organ ON

ACCESSORIES

A full complement of departmental pistons, generals and reversibles, with multiple programmes, a sequencer and a read/write smart-card.

Mechanical key action; electric couplers and stop action.

Reconditioned B.O.B X10B blower.

Key compass: manuals 61 notes, pedals 30 notes.

