

St. Thomas' Church Heigham Norwich

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The Church Organ at St. Thomas' Church, Heigham, Norwich

Specification

TWO MANUALS	CC-A	58 notes
RADIATING & CONCAVE PEDALS	CCC-F	30 notes

SWELL ORGAN (ENCLOSED)

CYMBALE	29-33-36	LARIGOT	2.1/3ft	CLAIRON	4ft
QUARTANE	19-22	BOURDON	4ft	HORN	8ft
OCTAVE	2ft	FLUTE		BASSOON	16ft
PRINCIPAL	4ft	GEDACKT	8ft	HAUTBOY	
OPEN DIAPASON	8ft	SALICIONAL	8ft		Tremulant

GREAT ORGAN

MIXTURE	19-22-26-29	SIFFLUTE	1ft	TRUMPET	8ft
FIFTEENTH	2ft	TIERCE	1.3/5ft		
OCTAVE	4ft	BLOCKFLUTE	2ft	Tremulant	
PRINCIPAL	8ft	NAZARD	2.2/3ft		
OPEN DIAPASON	8ft	KOPPEL FLUTE	4ft		
		STOPPED	8ft		
		DIAPASON			
		BOURDON	16ft		

PEDAL ORGAN

MIXTURE	19-22-26-29	GEDACKT FLUTE	4ft	SCHALMEY	4ft
FIFTEENTH	4ft	STOPPED FLUTE	8ft	TROMBONE	16FT
QUINT	5.1/2ft	BOURDON	16ft		
OCTAVE	8ft	OPEN WOOD	16ft		
PRINCIPAL	16ft				

COUPLERS

SWELL to PEDAL
GREAT to PEDAL
SWELL to GREAT

PISTON COUPLERS

Gt & Ped. Pistons coupled
Sw & Ped. Pistons coupled

6 Pistons to each department & 10 general pistons
10 Levels of Memory

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History



In 1942 St Thomas's Church was gutted by fire as a result of enemy action. Its subsequent re-building within the old walls has created one of the most beautiful church interiors in the City of Norwich and its hardwood floor, plastered roof, and spacious aisle arches have produced the superb acoustics for which St. Thomas's church is proudly renowned.

The small two manual Norman and Beard organ of 1890 was destroyed with the church and after the reconstruction the church obtained their three manual Abbot and Smith organ of 1892 from St Mary's Castlegate, York. This organ had a chequered history at St.Thomas's and by 1976 was in a near unplayable condition.

Reconstruction

The reconstruction had to tackle many problems. The pipework was in a deplorable condition, the action was heavy, inaccessible and unadjustable and the basic framework of the organ was insecure and unsafe. The tonal scheme was ponderous, particularly in the pedal organ.

The scheme marries old material with new, to provide a versatile instrument with all the qualities of a new organ. The result is an organ complete in all departments, rich in its variety of tone colours.



The old Abbot and Smith swell and great soundboards have been retained and to these have been added two new slider soundboards for the pedal organ. Each soundboard has its own built in wind regulator, which gives a stable wind supply under all conditions.

The organ also had a new mechanical action, which emerge from the rear of the console at five different levels.

The piston system was especially designed for this organ using switches from the old Norwich Telephone exchange!

The thumb pistons are of ebony and the drawstop heads are re-turned out of the ivory knobs of the Abbot and Smith organ.

Only eight completely new ranks and five from other sources have been added to the old pipework.

A Few Technical Facts about the Organ

The organ has thirty-six speaking stops, and every stop (including the eleven pedal stops) is of full independent compass. Each department has a complete diapason, flute and reed chorus.

The Diapason choruses, with the exception of the Swell Cymbale, consists of old pipework, but most of this has been revoiced, repitched, and rescaled from other stops.

The Flute choruses; most of the flutes are old pipework. The only new ranks are on the Great – namely the Tierce, Blockflute and Koppelflute. The Stopped Diapason is made from the old Clarabel.

The Reed choruses; the Swell Clairon is a truly French stop, made for us on the continent and spelt this way by the pipemakers. This stop has open domed shallots.

The Swell Horn is the old stop, but has new resonators of larger scale in the treble.

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The Bassoon Hautboy is what it says – a bassoon up to middle C, and an Hautboy above middle C, which being a 16ft. stop, speaks tenor C of an 8ft. compass, here providing a useful solo voice of beautiful character. The bassoon is of half length and is voiced in a full free-speaking manner. This rank has open conical shallots in the 8ft. register.

The Great Trumpet is the Abbot & Smith trumpet, revoiced as a full chorus reed with open beaked conical shallots.

The Pedal Schalmey is a 4ft. solo or 'Cantus Firmus' reed – it is an oboe schalmey – in fact it is an old oboe, revoiced with small half open conical shallots.

The Pedal Trombone is constructed from the wood of a 16ft. Open Diapason. The shallots are integral with the blocks, and were turned from Brazilian Mahogany. They are domed, and of large bore heavily leathered; the design is reputed to have been used by Cavaille Coll, but the scales are our own.

All the reed tongues are new, and are of a special alloy of brass.

There are 2218 pipes in the organ.

The wind is blown by the original 1 HP blower supplied for the organ by Abbot & Smith, and is available at the following pressures:

GT	2" wg.
SW	2. 7/8" wg
Small Ped	3" wg
Large Ped	4" wg

The mechanical action contains over 2500 precision bearings, and the total length of lightweight aluminium trackers is enough to reach from the church to the Norwich Ring Road!



The Large Pedal Soundboard was constructed out of massive timbers formerly in the roof of the now demolished nearby St. Philip's Church; the sliders on this soundboard are 15ft. long.

The Small Pedal Soundboard was made entirely from plywood; both pedal soundboards have aluminium pallets and plastic sliders with modern slider seals.

The Swell and Great Soundboards, though positioned differently to before (apart from complete renovation) as originally constructed by Abbot & Smith; the great organ soundboard is nearly six feet wide, and carries all thirteen full compass stops side by side.

Bellows

During October 1997 the bellows of this organ were removed for extensive repairs and re-leathering. This work was again carried out by Bower and Co. who had rebuilt the organ nearly 20 years ago.

The work was essential as the bellows were leaking air and were in a worse condition than first feared.

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Improvements

During 2006/7 the organ had its first major clean since its rebuild. It was also an opportunity to make some additions and improvements. A faculty was applied for and the following work was agreed and carried out. The Great III mixture was to be replaced with a new IV Mixture. The divisional pistons were increased from five to six and ten general pistons were added with 10 levels of memory. This replaced the specially designed piston system used at the last rebuild. We also added a tremulant to the swell and great organ.

It was a pleasure to award the contract to Bower and Co to make these improvements. Richard Bower's skills have given St Thomas's church an organ, which we are proud of. The organ is a living instrument that will sing majestically in this church for years to come. It is the envy of many churches and organists and many distinguished organists have given recitals here over the years.

The organ is held in high acclaim and rightly so.

The money raised for the improvements was around £25,000, the majority of which was raised by a 'Sponsor a Pipe' appeal.

A Note about the Organ Builders

E & W Storr and Richard Bower met in 1968. Following a happy partnership, Richard Bower continued as sole proprietor. In 1972, and throughout the period since then, the firm has always, continued to overhaul, rebuild and restore organs throughout the county and beyond.

Our interest in more radical and logical organ building, with more Classical tonal schemes, and mechanical action was first shown with our organ at Wroxham in 1973. The present organ shows our increasing ability to apply Classical ideas to an existing instrument. We are also developing our skills and interest in building new small organs, as may be seen in our instrument installed at Swannington.

Our labour force is very small, and this, together with our policy of making as much as is practical so to do ourselves, encourages a high standard of proficiency and craftsmanship. Occasionally a rare opportunity for apprenticeship may exist.

Also it is interesting to note that a Mr J G Bower, a former churchwarden at St Thomas was the great grandfather of the organ builder Richard Bower.

Recording

In 1982, James Parsons recorded the organ, just after the rebuilt organ was completed. In 2009 it will be recorded once again by James Parsons, Director of the Oundle International Festival, on the Priory Label.

The organ was also used in a recording by Taverham Hall Preparatory School.