

HINTS ORGAN

History and Restoration



1883 – 1974

The Organ almost ready.
The front Open Diapason
show pipes are already
painted light gold.

David Gumbley



The Organ before rebuilding

Note the Foyer tablet –

extreme left

'All illustrations are by the Author'

INTRODUCTION

I commend the following account of the History and Restoration of the Organ in Hints Parish Church no less for its content than for the meticulous care and attention to detail of its compiler David Gumbley, who has spent many hours of painstaking labour and research on the project. An organ is indispensable to the worship of Almighty God, and in our present instrument we have now undoubtedly one of the best in the LICHFIELD DEANERY. That we are proud of it, goes without saying, but the efforts put into its restoration, and the wonderful generosity shown by so many people in making the restoration possible, will be completely nullified unless the quality of our worship to the God to Whom our vastly improved organ is dedicated, is, by its means, greatly enhanced. That this will be so is our prayer, and my belief.

W. R. H. HESKETH

VICAR OF HINTS

PREFACE

The following account of the organs at Hints, and the recent work done to the present instrument, demonstrate in a most heartening way the kind of result which can still be achieved in organ-building in these difficult days.

In a small community, fund-raising on a scale necessary to do successful work to an organ is a formidable task; especially when inflation tends sometimes to overtake the ability to raise funds.

The whole enterprise has been carried through with the greatest enthusiasm, and all credit is due to those whose courage and foresight have been rewarded with such a successful conclusion. Like the builder of Staunton Harold Church in Derbyshire (the only church to have been built during the Commonwealth) those responsible for this work at Hints can indeed be said 'to have done the best things in the worst times'.

May their endeavours, and the music resulting from these, long be an adornment to the worship offered at Hints, and a source of inspiration to all who hear the organ.

Richard Greening, Lichfield 1974.

When the present church at Hints was completed in 1881 by local benefactor John Chadwick, it replaced a previous structure in Classical Style which dated from 1771 and of which there is an interesting print in the vestry. Specifically why it became unusable after only slightly more than 100 years is not clear; what is, however, evident is that it was in a sorry state by 1877, when plans for a new building were projected. That the 1771 building possessed an organ is not in doubt: it was almost certainly situated in the West gallery with the choir, this being the traditional position for organ and choir at the time. In the records of the Parish Meetings – long before PCCs – an entry for 1863 pays tribute to one John Floyer Esq. ‘for his kindness in paying the expense in the alteration and reconstruction of the organ’. Strange it is to consider that a little more than 100 years later we have once more put in hand ‘the alteration and reconstruction of the organ’ in Hints Church, although the present organ is the later 1883 instrument.

There are 2 tablets in Hints Church commemorating members of the Floyer family: one is on the south side by the pulpit; the other is on the north side directly opposite. Regrettably, no details of the 1863 rebuild are in existence today and we can only guess at its probable specification. It may be that George Holdich the London Organ Builder, who had built the new organ in Lichfield Cathedral in 1861, had a hand in the reconstruction, though this is pure speculation. The 1847 organ in Weeford Church is also, incidentally, thought by some to be a Holdich instrument. Other authorities attribute it to another London Organ Builder, Henry Jones.

Following the reconstruction of the organ, the minutes of the Parish Meeting record the appointment of John R. Thompson Esq. who was 'employed to preside at the Organ at Hints during the year ensuing'; this proposal was passed at the meeting on Monday March 28th, 1864. Mr Thompson's salary was £8.0s.0d. per annum and he was, in fact, reappointed each successive year until 1876; in 1877 there was no mention of an organist, but a meeting

was held in that year 'about the condition of the church building'.

In passing, it seems strange that no mention whatever is made in the extant records of Parish meetings of the demolition of the 1771 building or the erection of the new Church; nor is the benefactor, John Chadwick, named.

It is a matter of speculation whether any of the pipework or section of the 1863 rebuild was incorporated into the new instrument of 1883: it seems rather unlikely. An organ builder from Birmingham, Mr E. J. Bossward, whose builder's plaque the organ still bears, was employed to provide and install the instrument for the new building. Bossward is now forgotten in organ-building circles and none of this work seems to be extant in the area.

The Bossward Organ was a simple 2 manual instrument with 4 'speaking stops' on the Great, 3 on the Swell, and a Pedal 'department' consisting of only 18 'Bourdon' pipes, although a complete pedal board was supplied.

The 'swell' ranks were enclosed and the louvres of the box controlled by a 'kick-release' mechanism, a device which was replaced in 1967 by a balanced 'crescendo pedal'.

In retrospect, it seems that the organ was planned with economy in mind, since four of the ranks extended only to Tenor C and the Pedal stop lacked 12 pipes. The whole organ was enclosed in a very substantial oak case and was commissioned in 1883 when the new Church was dedicated.

The history of the Bossward instrument is rather sketchy and comparatively little specific mention is made in the available records. At the Easter meeting of 1890 the Church Accounts were presented and detailed the following: Organist - £14.0s.7d; Choir Trip - £6.5s.0d. In the following year (1891) the Organist was paid £23.10s.0d., the Choir Outing cost £4.16s.10d. and the tuning fee for Mr Bossward was £1.10s.0d. However, it was decided unanimously at this same meeting – 'not again to employ Mr Bossward as organ tuner'. The Vicar

(Rev. Carpenter) suggested 'the application of Mr Richardson of Manchester be considered'. This was agreed. What misdemeanour Mr Bossward had committed is not mentioned; perhaps his tuning expertise was in question, or perhaps it was an expression of lack of confidence in his prowess as an organ builder! Was the organ already proving unsatisfactory?

However, the tuning contract had not been let by the following year (1892) and only then was the Vicar authorised to write to Mr Richardson concerning the organ. But the plot thickens! In 1893 it was decided unanimously that 'an assignment as to the organ tuning be made with Mr Marston of Tamworth'. Perhaps Mr Richardson's fees were too high!

The century had turned and Edward VII was on the throne before further mention of the organ was made. In 1907, the instrument was in trouble: in the accounts we read of 'a special house-to-house collection for organ - £14.6s.0d. Mrs Chadwick £16.9s.0d.' It is not clear what

the trouble was, but recent inspection of the inside of the instrument revealed a label of the London and North Western Railway, showing that various components had been transported to an organ builder at Loughborough for attention. The label bears witness to their return to Tamworth (Low Level) Station in 1907.

The records afford some interesting notes concerning the Organist's salary and payments to the Choir: in 1864 the Organist was awarded £8.0s.0d. per annum: this had risen to £24.0s.0d. by 1890 – a princely sum for those days. But in 1918 there was a severe cut to £5.4s.0d! In 1915 a Choir Trip is recorded to have cost £2.16s.5d. and in 1916 Choir Prizes of £1.4s.10½d. were awarded: whether the prizes were for length of service or accomplishment in singing is not clear.

From 1922 until 1935 the PCC minutes seem regrettably to have been lost, but from 1936 until the present day we have excellent and detailed minutes, thanks to very conscientious secretaries.

From 1935 until 1945 Miss E Loader and Miss Andrews shared the responsibilities of the Organist's post; subsequently and until 1958 difficulties were experienced in obtaining the services of a regular organist and a great deal of compromise was necessary to maintain the music of the Church.

By 1948 plans were afoot for replacing the gas supply by connecting the Church to the mains electricity supply. Until that date gas had been the main source of lighting for the church at Hints and the gas outlet for the organ console lighting was still in evidence on the music desk before the present work was started. Vestiges of an even earlier mode of lighting were also still in evidence on the organ console: the Victorian candleholder brackets. Candle lighting has, in fact, been used on several occasions since the advent of electricity: on one occasion, deliberately: for a Christmas Carol Service, the other occasions are attributed variously to bad weather, technical faults, and industrial dispute. The gas point and the candle brackets can be seen in the illustrations.

At the meeting of October 26th, 1948, a tender was accepted for installation of electric lighting in the Church. At the same meeting a quotation of £89 from Jardines of Manchester for installing an electric blower for the organ was considered; evidently Jardines were not in charge of the tuning. One wonders at the difficulties incurred when tuning an organ without a constant supply of wind! At least 3 men must have been needed: a blower, one at the keyboard and a third to regulate and adjust the pipes. However, although the electric light may have been installed, the organ remained handblown until well into 1949; an entry for January 19th 1949 shows a motion by F. Bates that: 'Royston Gibson be appointed as Organ Blower at the sum of 3/- per week, and that he be present for practices'. Young Royston's reign as Organ Blower was not very long, since on June 3rd, 1949, 2 estimates for installing an electric blower were received. Messrs. Phelan and Durham's quotation of £50 was accepted. Subsequently, a Sale of Work was arranged on July 2nd and at a meeting on July 6th it was voted that the amount

required to install the electric blower be made up from Church Funds.

It may be noted that from 1907 until 1967 no overhaul or significant repair work on the organ was done; consequently, by 1962 the condition of the organ was deteriorating rapidly. At a meeting in October 1962 requests were made for an independent opinion on the state of the organ. However, owing to a change of incumbent this was deferred.

By 1966, the condition of the organ was giving cause for alarm: a total overhaul and clean was urgently required. Mr H. J. Mills, the Organist, obtained estimates and an Organ Fund was set up. In February 1967, Mr Hawkins of Walsall Wood was invited, on acceptance of his quotation, to carry out the repairs. By May the repairs were under way and the whole account settled by September 1967. In addition to the organ repairs volunteers painted the iron grill in front of the 'show' pipes, and incidentally, the iron work beneath the sanctuary rail.

So far so good – the organ was now in good mechanical order, the old tainted ivory keys had been replaced, much of the action had been renewed and all the pipework made to ‘speak’. However, no finance had been available to make any additions or alterations to the tonal side of the organ – there were still incomplete ranks of pipes and the organ still lacked ‘sparkle’.

In 1971, it was agreed that the 16ft (Bourdon) pedal rank should be completed: this entailed the addition of 12 ‘stopped’ pipes and at last enabled organ music with a pedal part to be played properly. Before this, and without a full range of pedal pipes, it had been difficult to play organ music with a full pedal part without a great deal of unsatisfactory compromise. At the same meeting it was agreed that an Organ Fund be set up and that an Organ Fund Committee be appointed to arrange efforts and events for the benefit of the Organ. The ultimate aim was to extend and remodel the organ and increase its range of tone colour. At this stage an estimate and

revised specification were obtained from Messrs Hawkins for £580.

As the Fund grew, and with it the enthusiasm and generosity of everybody, the Committee decided to be more ambitious than had originally been planned: compromise was cast aside and plans were laid for the complete remodelling of the organ. A further consultation by the organist with Mr Greening – Cathedral Organist and Diocesan Advisor on Organs – and Mr Hawkins, the Organ Builder, produced a further, more comprehensive specification which expressed our ambition to effect a radical improvement of the tonal qualities of the Organ. Needless to say, the revised estimate doubled the financial target: the goal was now in excess of £1,000. With this in mind, efforts were planned on a larger scale and more helpers joined the effort: generosity and co-operation abounded: our first Sponsored Walk made over £80, the Organist's 8-hour Marathon at the keyboard raised £40. A series of Organ Recitals by prominent organists was arranged and took

place in Weeford church by kind permission of the Rector and Churchwardens: the fund increased apace.

Despite strenuous and loyal effort by eager helpers, the organisers were becoming uneasy. With inflation running at 15% and more, the estimate was rising continually, and on enquiry, it was found that, with the extra imposition of VAT at 10%, the target had risen to £1,400. By early 1974, the bill was approaching £2,000 and it was time for thought: should aims be modified or should efforts be redoubled? At a meeting of the Standing Committee on February 28th, 1974, at which the Vicar, Churchwardens, Organist and Treasurer were present, the latter course was adopted, and, with the help of some mammoth functions: Cheese and Wine, Turkey Supper, Chicken Supper, Barbecue, Barn Dance, not to mention other successful events, the target was reached in a remarkably short time. The enthusiasm and willingness of everyone was incredible: the generosity most gratifying. So much so, that, by July 1974, the money had been raised.

Now the work has been done, how will the members of the congregation recognise the success in terms of the organ? Firstly, the show pipes have been painted in an impressive light gold colour, which not only improves the appearance of the organ façade but also brightens the Chancel as a whole. It may be of interest to state that of the 41 show pipes, only 31 are genuine 'speaking' pipes. Then the organ console has been given a new look, in that new, attractively engraved draw stops have replaced the old, rather cumbersome ones and all set on black panels. The number of 'stops' has increased: previously the organ had 10 draw stops; this had been increased to 17. The gas point has been removed from the console, but the Victorian candle holder fittings have been retained. Also, the dummy stop which was originally intended to be a form of communication between organist and blower, has been dispensed with. The desk and pedal board lighting have been rewired and the switches replaced by more modern devices. A 13-amp power point has been provided at the organ to facilitate inspection of the organ

with a 'roving' inspection lamp; this facility would also be available for tape recording or any other ancillary service required.

The main rewiring of the Blower from the Vestry via the transformer/rectifier, and the new light fittings, power point and switches formed a separate account – as specified in Hawkins Contract – and was carried out by Mr Ray Allen, a member of the congregation and an Electrical Contractor of 100 Brockhurst Lane, Canwell.

The tonal alterations will be immediately noticeable, in that there is a brilliance and sparkle which the 'old' organ never gave: the variety of available tone colour is infinitely greater: more ambitious music is now playable: the organ is capable of greater volume. Above all, its capabilities as an instrument for accompanying choir and congregation have been vastly enhanced.

In conclusion, it is sincerely hoped that the rebuilding of the organ in Hints Parish Church will be recognised as a witness to the liveliness of the Church in this small village and that it will not only beautify the worship of the

Church, but make a contribution to the life of the village as a whole, through recitals and other musical events.

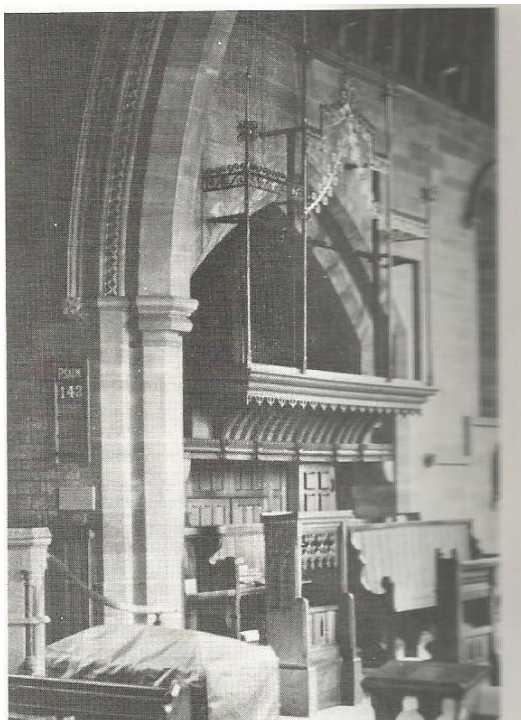
D. L. Gumbley 1974



A view of the Organ before rebuilding. Taken from the Sanctuary.

The Organ Console on August 19th, 1974. Note the gas point on the left; the candleholder brackets on each side; the old draw stops; the light and switch; the Blower switch and Mr Hawkins tuning and maintenance plaque. Mr Bossward's maker's plaque is out of sight behind the light.



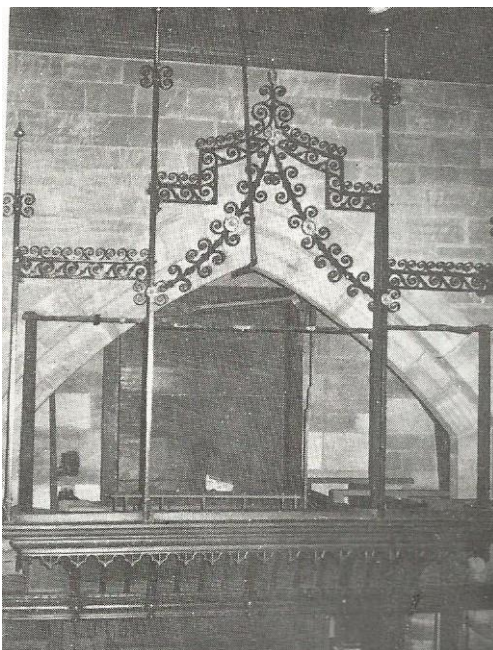


The Organ, devoid of pipes. The temporary instrument – a Lowrey electronic organ – is seen to the right of the pulpit.

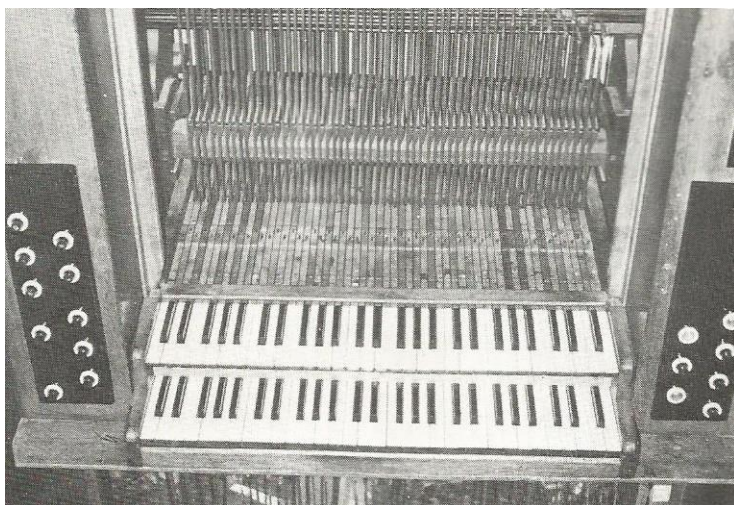
The left-hand stop 'jamb' before work had commenced. Note the 3 dstop names: pierced Gamba, Harmonic Fluet, Spitzflöte, which do not reappear on the 'new' organ.



The empty organ chamber showing the Swell box with louvres removed.



Transition at the Console. The new black panels are in place, as are most of the draw stops (minus knobs). Note immediately over the left-hand panel a slight burn mark: this is from the days of gas lighting, the gas point having been covered by the panel.





The left-hand 'jamb' showing the new black panel and the 10 new draw stops, as yet without the stop knobs and names.

Hints Organ Console
November 1st, 1974.



Main Events and Efforts 1971 – 1974

Final decision to go ahead with the complete programme of Organ Extension – February 28th, 1974 at Manor Farm, Hints. Work on Organ commenced: September 12th, 1974.

Bring and Buy Sale (Mrs F. Bates)	£ 24
Sponsored Walk (1)	£ 80
Organ Recitals	£ 40
Bring and Buy Sale (Mrs J. Barwell)	£ 25
Izaak Walton Ensemble	£ 25
Sponsored Walk (2)	£100
Wine and Cheese	£100
Pig and Cider Jig	£153
Turkey Trot	£214
Slide Show	£ 10
Barbecue	£185
Barn Dance	£720
Donations	£375
Guides	£ 21
Organists Marathon	£ 40
Whist/Bingo	£ 30

Most of the above amounts have been rounded ‘up’ or ‘down’: other smaller efforts made up the complement. Organ Extension and Tonal Alterations completed November 1st, 1974. Opening Recital by Richard Greening December 7th, 1974.

Acknowledgments

Particular mention is made of the following parishioners and friends of Hints Church through whose help and generosity the rebuilding of the organ was made possible.

Revd & Mrs W R H Hesketh
Mr & Mrs P Moulton and family
Mr & Mrs Davies (Middleton)
Mr & Mrs F Davies (Mile Oak)
Mr & Mrs A Thomas
Mr & Mrs P Packwood and family
Mr & Mrs R Clarke
Mr & Mrs L Wynn
Misses E and M Loader
Mrs M Gee
Hints Parish Church Choir
Mr & Mrs C Bates
Mrs K Bates
Mr & Mrs A Barwell and family
1st Hints, Weeford, Canwell Guides and Brownies
Mr & Mrs J Smith
Mr & Mrs G Davies
Mr & Mrs R C Bates
Mr & Mrs D L Gumbley
Miss E Taylor
Mr R Allen
Mr & Mrs Millward

Acknowledgment is also given to the 4 Organists who gave their services free to help the Hints Organ Fund.

Richard Greening	(Lichfield Cathedral)
Raymond Isaacson	(High Wycombe)
Michael Jones	(Edgbaston)
David Wulstan – Lecture/Recital –	(Magdalen College Oxford)

The Izaak Walton ensemble is thanked for their very successful recital in May 1973.

Particular thanks are directed to the Rector and Churchwardens of Weeford Parish Church for use of the Church and Organ for the Recitals.

Thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Millward of the Old Vicarage, Hints, for their generosity in loaning the church an electronic organ, this enabling the music of the church to continue without interruption.

Appendix:

A. Technical Details

Specification of the Organ in Hints Parish Church

(E. J. Bossward – Birmingham) 1883

SWELL ORGAN

Pierced Gamba	8' TC
Spitzflöte	8' TC
Harmonic Flute	4' TC
Swell Organ on common	

GREAT ORGAN

Open Diapason	8'
Dulciana	8' TC
Stop'd Diapason	8'
Principal	4'

12 note 'stopped' bass.

PEDAL ORGAN

Complete 30-note pedal
board

COUPLERS

Great to Pedal
Swell to Great

Bourdon 16' (18 pipes only) 'Kick-Release' Swell Pedal

On the right-hand jamb above the 'Great' draw stop a
'dummy' stop for attracting the blower's attention

Number of pipes: 374 (386 from 1971)

Tracker Action.

DETAILS

4 stops have pipes to TC (Tenor C) only – i.e. lowest 12 pipes non-existent.

Some of the show pipes are dummy pipes

Hand-blown until 1949

Gas lighting until 1948/9

Alterations carried out:

1967 – Organ cleaned and overhauled by Messrs Hawkins
of Walsall Wood (£381)

The kick-release ‘swell’ pedal replaced by a
balanced ‘crescendo’ pedal

Key Ivories replaced

1971– The 12 missing notes of the Pedal rank are installed
by Messrs Hawkins (£135)

1974 – Extensive Tonal Alterations by Messrs Hawkins
(£2200)

New Specification

GREAT ORGAN

1. Open Diapason 8' (unchanged)
2. Rohrflöte 8' (New extension of No.11)
3. Principal 4' (unchanged)
4. Twelfth 2.2/3 (Previous Dulciana rescaled; new trebles; extended below TC to full compass)
5. Fifteenth 2' (New)
6. Tierce 1.3/5 (New extension of No.11)
7. Mixture (2 ranks) 26-29 (New)

SWELL ORGAN

8. Stopped Diapason (ex Great 8')
9. Stopped Flute 4' (New) reconditioned pipework ex Hawkins stock
10. Larigot (19th) 1.1/3 (TC) (Old Harmonic flute rescaled with new trebles)
No.10 could be changed to a 2' stop in the future.
Previous 'Great' Stopped Diapason transferred to 'Swell'
Swell Pedal as existing
8' and 4' stops on Swell are full compass stops; the 1.1/3 is Tenor C only.

PEDAL ORGAN

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------------------|
| 11. | Bourdon | 16' (extended to 92 pipes) |
| 12. | Bass Flute | 8' (No.11) |
| 13. | Octave Quint | 5.1/3' (No.11) |
| 14. | Choral Bass | 4' (No.11) |
| 15. | Sifflöte | 2' (No.11) |

COUPLERS

Great to Pedal

Swell to Great

Total No. of pipes: 584

New ivory/plastic draw stops supplied; all 17 on new black wooden mounting

Blower replaced by a higher capacity appliance

Front 'show' pipes painted

Dummy 'stop' replaced

Tracker Action

Flute extension rank to be controlled by multi contact switch assemblies incorporating silver wire contacts. The pedals are fitted with Pedal jacks with silver wire contacts set in laminated blocks. The Great Organ keys are fitted with suitable switching arrangements to operate the additional ranks.

COMMENT:

Considerable use has been made of the Extension Principle despite the fact that certain organ builders now consider this method 'unartistic'. For Hints Organ and considering the limited finance available, it was inevitable that some extension would be used. Although, in certain respects 'second-best' in that we would have preferred independent ranks, the result of the current rebuilding is found adequate and tonally quite satisfying, the main use of 'extension' being confined to the Pedal department.

As for the future role of the organ, we hope that it will not only be a more worthy accompaniment to the sung parts of the church worship, but that its potential as a recital instrument may be realised from time to time.

The specification was planned with an eye to the 'classical' English organ; the addition of mutation and mixture stops (12th, 17th, 19th, 26th and 29th) being manifestations of this style of building. At one point a 1' stop for the Great was under consideration, as was a 4' flute stop. The choice of 1.1/3' pitch for the third 'Swell' stop was made with a view to adding as much variety to the organ as possible. Should this choice be found

unsuitable, conversion to 2' pitch would be relatively simple.

An obvious development for the future would be a reed stop – perhaps an Oboe 8' or Krummhorn 8' on the 'Swell'. The Pedal Organ may still be deemed underpowered, since it consists virtually of one 16' rank with availability at 8', 4', 5.1/3' and 2' pitches. A reed of 16' pitch would ensure adequate weight in the Pedal Department.

As redesigned the organ in Hints Parish Church is suitable for the performance of music of various styles, but is particularly appropriate for music of the classical and baroque styles.

D.L.G.

Vicars and Organists of Hints Parish Church

Vicar	Dates
Rev Carpenter	1884-1888
Rev Hayter	1889-1900
Rev Wilson	1901-1909
Rev Mermagen	1910-1914
Rev Wheeler	1915-1925
Rev Gasking	1925-1929
Rev Hunt	1929-1932
Rev Dodds	1932-1937
Rev Sinker	1937-1948
Rev Cawley	1948-1950
Rev J. Hope-Urwin	1950-1960
Rev Preb N. W. Watson	1960-1962
Rev J. W. Smethurst	1963-1970
Rev W. R. H. Hesketh	1971-

Organists	Dates
Miss E. Loader & Miss Andrews	1935-1945
H. J. Mills	1958-1971
D. L. Gumbley	1971-

Particular thanks are due to Mr Richard Greening, Cathedral Organist and Diocesan Advisor for his sympathy, interest and professional advice throughout the various stages of the rebuilding. Especial thanks are also due to Messrs W. Hawkins and Son, Organ Builders of Walsall Wood, for their efficiency, friendly help and enthusiasm at every stage of the re-modelling of the organ. It is hoped that the excellent relationship with the firm will continue.

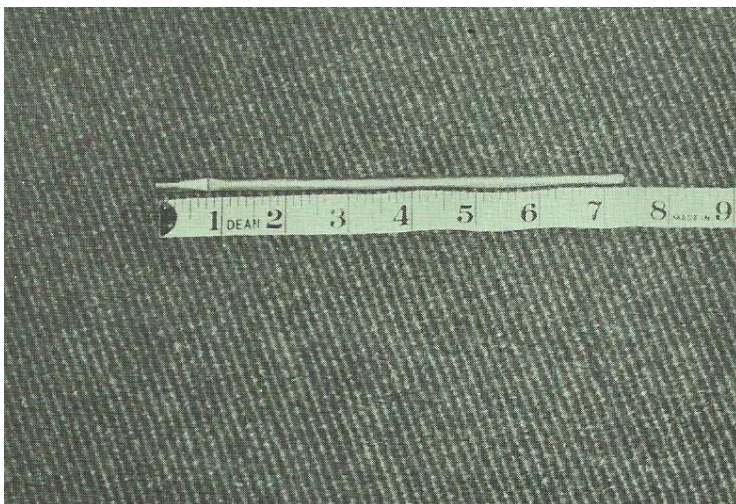
Writer's Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks are offered to the Vicar, Rev W. R. H. Hesketh for his untiring help in compiling this account. Thanks are also due to Miss E. Loader, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of local history and of the chronology of events in the parish has proved most invaluable.

To Miss M. Loader, through whose generosity this booklet finally went to press.

Finally, to my wife Pat for enduring my endless house in the darkroom, for assiduously reading the proofs and offering criticism, and to Mrs Elizabeth Allen for her unerring accuracy in typing the final proofs.

David Gumbley, November 1st, 1974



The smallest pipe – from the
2 rank mixture – has a working
length of only $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch.
The remainder of the pipe
is the foot. Total length $7\frac{1}{4}$ “

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