

1881 Henry Willis organ, for residence of ? in Leamouth Terrace, Edinburgh.
 In 1904 to Maryhill House, Elgin (Residence of A M Gregory), installed by C F Hamilton
 of Edinburgh. Later to St John's in Elgin, Bp 1979 to L.S.C.A. by A F Edmondstone.

St Michael the Archangel, Shalfleet, Isle of Wight

Andrew Cooper reflects on a north/south relocation of an 1881 Father Willis organ

Rolf There was a happy ending to the discarded organ!
 David S.

The Church of St Michael the Archangel, Shalfleet, Isle of Wight, is listed in Britain's *Thousand Best Churches*, principally because of the remarkable castle-like tower which served to protect the inhabitants of the surrounding area from French invaders.

The church possessed a two manual and pedal tracker organ of twelve speaking stops by Sims of Ryde, which had been installed new at the turn of the last century. Even then it would have been rather undistinguished and had survived on fairly minimal attention other than tuning.

In the summer of 2008 I was contacted because the church had been left a very generous legacy, part of which the Parish had wanted to spend on the organ or on a possible replacement. I took the view that even after spending all the money needed on the Sims organ, it could never be anything other than mediocre. So I recommended that we look for something rather better from amongst the stock of redundant organs available at that time.

The Sims organ was positioned in the north east corner of the church. The console faced north so the player looked straight down the aisle to see what was happening at the east end of the building. There was a simple inverted "V" of pipes above the player's head which comprised the Great Open Diapason bass and the bottom four notes of the Great Principal. Some high and rather dark-stained pine tongue and groove panels formed the two sides, the east facing side being used as a picture-board for old photographs of the church.

Whilst height for a replacement instrument was not a problem, the foot-print could not exceed 9'6" north to south. So my search was governed accordingly. The first place to look, of course, was on the IBO list of redundant organs, but none of the instruments then available, of a similar size stop-list came within the all-important 9'6". So the internet search broadened and eventually the list of Redundant Organs held by the Scottish Federation of Organists was scrutinised. A two-manual and pedal tracker organ by Father Willis, built in 1881, leapt out of that list and further enquiries proved it to have a foot-print of 9'x9' which was the same size as the existing organ, in fact.



Photo: Pam Rose

The Parish was keen to find out more and so shortly after I flew to Edinburgh to have a look. The instrument was in the possession of organ builder Paul Miller, who had removed the organ a few years before from St Andrew's church, Lhanbryde, and set it up in his workshop.

It quickly became obvious that here was the ideal organ for Shalfleet. It possessed only front casework of tulip wood which had originally all been ebonised for the instrument's first home in Leamouth Terrace, Edinburgh. Subsequently, the case had been partially and rather crudely 'grained'. So we went to Scotland again in January 2009 to dismantle the organ and bring it to our workshops where restoration commenced after Easter.

the most famous UK organ builder
 (St Paul's Cathedral, Royal Albert Hall etc)

Two tonal changes had been made some years previously. A Fifteenth had appeared on the Great in place of a 4' Flute and the Swell Hautboy had disappeared in favour of a Sesquialtera 12:17. We removed the wide-scale Fifteenth in favour of a Willis-style rank of characteristically smaller scale. The Sesquialtera was replaced with a small-scale Willis Cornopean from stock. All the original pipework was carefully restored by our pipe-maker and voicer, Nigel Nicoll.

An inaugural recital was given on the completed organ in July, 2009 by Geoffrey Morgan, organist of Christchurch Priory.

Andrew Cooper builds and restores organs throughout the South of England.



Photo: Andrew Cooper

▲ The organ of St Andrew's church, Lhanbryde in Paul Miller's workshop

The Bellows and their feeders were re-leathered together with the concussions and the action and soundboards were generally refurbished.

Something had to be done about the finish of the case and since it had been decided to place the instrument with the organist facing west, casework was needed for the south side and back. So new side casework was made in tulip wood to complement the style of the front. The ebonised finish of the front casework was stripped, and this proved something of a nightmare, but full marks to Colin Tate for his expertise in this regard. The front and side casework was then stained and polished and the front pipes were also stripped of their silver paint before being re-sprayed gold.

GREAT

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Open Diapason | 8 |
| Stopped Diapason | 8 |
| Dulciana | 8 |
| Principal | 4 |
| Fifteenth | 2 |

SWELL

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lieblich Gedackt | 8 |
| Viola | 8 |
| Vox Angelica | 8 |
| Gemshorn | 4 |
| Cornopean | 8 |

PEDAL

| | |
|---------|----|
| Bourdon | 16 |
|---------|----|

COUPLERS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Swell to Great | |
| Swell to Pedal | |
| Great to Pedal | |

COMPASS

| | |
|----------|----------|
| Manuals: | 56 notes |
| Pedals: | 30 notes |

Wind Pressure: 70 mm

Pitch: c = 523.3 Hz at 60°F

Wells-Kennedy Partnership Organ Builders and Consultants



OFFICE AND WORKS:

83-87 Gregg Street, Lisburn
Co. Antrim, BT27 5AW
Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9266 4257 Fax: 028 9260 3722

Email: wellskennedy@dnet.co.uk
Web: www.wk.dnet.co.uk

IBO BUSINESS MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ORGAN BUILDING