

The Organ in St Mary's Church Clopton

The parish is doubly fortunate not only in possessing an organ by William Hill & Sons, one of the finest and most significant firms of organ builders in the nineteenth century, but also in having within the parish the workshop of Roger Pulham, one of today's most highly regarded organ builders. An incomplete description of the organ may be found on the National Pipe Organ Register at <https://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=D05565>.

The organ is tightly packed into a chamber on the North side. This is probably an original design fault; the Victorians often desired larger organs than could sensibly be installed, and although attempts to cram them into tight spaces may have appeared ingenious at the time, a century or more later, when major repairs and restoration are necessary, it doesn't appear quite so clever.

The basic structure of the organ is largely as originally built, but pipes for extra stops have been added and subtracted from time to time, and pipes moved around. This may have been done in the early days by Hills, or by Cedric Arnold who restored in 1951 in accordance with the standards of the time, or by (the late?) Peter Bumstead, who until recently maintained it.

Further restoration work is now necessary, but there are major issues of accessibility. In order to tackle this, Roger Pulham has proposed a measure of reconfiguration of the instrument. The basic layout will remain, but the Great Organ will be brought forward and slightly raised giving space to work inside, but with fairly unobtrusive alterations to its appearance. At the same time parts of the instrument will undergo careful and sensitive restoration.

Mr Pulham has provided detailed drawings of the proposed work, together with a carefully worked out plan of how it is to be tackled.

I visited the church on 10th March 2021 and examined the organ. I am in full agreement with all of Mr Pulham's proposals, and confident that both the musical value and the technical reliability of the instrument will be enhanced as a result of this work.

Peter Godden
11th March 2021