

B. C. SHEPHERD & SONS

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Incorporating A.E.& F.A.Still & Church Organs Ltd.

Pipe Organ Builders

Established 1927

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New organs (tracker or electric), Rebuilds, Restorations (tracker,pneumatic,electric),
Overhauls, Tonal modifications, Tunings.

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The rebuilt organ of St. Mary's Parish Church, Old Town, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

St. Mary's Church in the delightful old town area of Hemel Hempstead was built in about 1150, and is an outstanding example of a cruciform Norman building. A very fine lead covered spire approximately 200 foot high was added in about 1350.

The organ was built in 1910 by J. W. Walker & Sons of London. It is situated in an organ loft at the front of the north transept, with the largest pedal open wood pipes on the east wall of the transept.

It was very soundly constructed, and of high quality materials. The action was tubular pneumatic throughout, though with mechanical composition pedals working on the pneumatic drawstop actions.

The tonal scheme was typical of the period. Though intended to be a three manual and pedal instrument, it was built as a 2 manual with the third manual (Choir) prepared for.

In the 1970s the organ was cleaned, and the primary pneumatics were recovered, not in leather, but in a plastic substitute. This however failed after a few years, and the organ was abandoned about 15 years ago, and an expensive electronic substitute was purchased for use, until such time as the real organ could be properly restored.

Early in the new millennium the eminent organist Catherine Ennis was appointed as consultant for the rebuilding of the organ.

We were called in to quote for the work in 2002, by which time only about 30 notes worked on the Great and 16 notes on the Swell. Our quotation was accepted, and we commenced work in late 2004, and finished in early 2006.

Catherine was anxious that the organ was not altered tonally, but she and the diocesan advisors accepted that the pneumatic action could be electrified.

The action has been electrified from the keyboards to the soundboards (pipe chests), and the internal pneumatics have been overhauled and releathered. The pallets have been recovered. The pneumatic drawstop actions have been retained and overhauled. The mechanical composition pedals which work on the stop rods have been retained.

The manual keyboards including the Choir keyboard have been overhauled and electric contact actions fitted. Likewise the pedalboard has been overhauled. The Choir keyboard has been utilised as a coupler manual, with Swell to Choir and Great to Choir couplers being added. A Swell Sub Octave coupler has been added.

A solid state switching system has been installed for the notes and couplers.

The organ has been cleaned. After cleaning and repairing, the pipes have been checked for correct speech and adjusted and regulated. The speech of some stops had become quite bad, especially the Swell Mixture. A few missing pipes have been replaced.

A new wooden ladder had been made for access to the passageboards for tuning. A roof has been fitted above the Great to help project the sound of the organ into the church.

Lighting has been fitted inside the organ, and new lights on the console.

The console woodwork has been repaired and some repolishing has been done.

Care has been taken to retain the original tone, and no revoicing has been done, but the tone is brighter after cleaning and adjusting of the bad speech of the pipes.

Despite the poor acoustics of the church, and the organ's position in the transept loft, it has a very good tonal quality, and is a credit to the original builders.

| Great Organ | Swell Organ | Pedal Organ |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Open Diapason Large 8 | Bourdon 16 | Open Diapason 16 |
| Open Diapason 8 | Open Diapason 8 | Bourdon (Swell) 16 |
| Wald Flute 8 | Stopped Diapason 8 | Octave (Ext. Open Diap.) 8 |
| Dulciana 8 | Echo Gamba 8 | |
| Principal 4 | Voix Celeste (tenor c) 8 | |
| Harmonic Flute 4 | Principal 4 | 3 composition pedals to Swell |
| Fifteenth 2 | Mixture 3 Rks | 3 composition pedals to Great |
| Trumpet 8 | Horn 8 | & Pedal |
| | Oboe 8 | |
| | Clarinet (tenor c) 8 | Reversible Great to Pedal |
| | Tremulant | |
| Choir Organ | | Balanced Swell Pedal |
| Prepared for, 5 knobs | Couplers | |
| (one knob in use as a | | Compass of Manuals CC to a |
| Pedal Resultant Bass 32) | Swell Octave | 58 notes |
| | Swell Sub Octave | Compass of Pedals CCC to f |
| | Swell Unison Off | 30 notes |
| | Swell to Great | (radiating and concave) |
| | Swell to Choir | |
| | Great to Choir | Pitch 517 at C |
| | Swell to Pedal | (Diapason Normal or |
| | Great to Pedal | Continental) |
| | Choir to Pedal | |
| Wind pressures: Swell 4". Great 4¼". Pedal 5". | | 1178 speaking pipes |
| Discus Blower | Composition of Mixture: Bottom C to Tenor b (24 notes) 15, 19, 22 | |
| | Middle C to Top a (34 notes) 8, 12, 15 | |