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## **The Historic Organs of Bristol and Gloucestershire**

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# The Historic Organs of Bristol and Gloucestershire

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CONSIDERING THAT the largest piece of furniture likely to be placed in any church is an organ, it is astonishing that so little notice is taken of organs by antiquarians and compilers of guides and gazetteers. Not only are beautiful (in the visual sense) instruments ignored, but downright ugly assemblages of pipes and mechanism, dumped anywhere that was convenient to the organ builder and often obscuring architectural or historical work of great importance, are passed over in silence, instead of being denounced for the aesthetic outrages they are. Architectural travellers abroad, above all in Germany and the Netherlands, cannot fail to notice the great contrast with Britain in this respect. There, the traditional place for an organ is in the western gallery, or at least a high position with a solid reflecting surface behind it, where the instrument not only sounds well but has to be made to look well; here, only too often, it is stuffed into a chapel, transept or triforium, hiding what ought to be clearly seen, and because of its unfavourable acoustic position much larger and louder than is really necessary. Presumably the fact that the 19th century saw so many organs tucked away almost out of sight is the reason why we virtually forgot how to make them look pleasant. It is ironic that in Hill, Walker, Willis and others Britain produced some of the finest organ designers and voicers the world has known, but that many of their organs were unpleasant to look at if not frankly hideous. (Though a qualification must be made in the case of the first-named firm during the period when Dr Arthur Hill, who fully appreciated the importance of a good case and wrote what was for many years the standard work on the subject, illustrated by his own expert drawings, was in control.) Perhaps organists and organ builders make a mistake in talking of cases, for the term can imply something placed round an instrument after it has been finished, whereas the true case is, at any rate in part, the result of building the organ in accordance with correct musical and acoustic principles.

The phrase 'box of whistles' has been known to be applied derisively to an organ, but it is quite a fair description if it be remembered that some of the whistles are liable to be very large. The simplest organ would consist of a rank of pipes of different lengths, on the lines of the pan-pipes or syrinx, the longest (sounding the lowest notes) on the left, standing over a box charged with air under pressure, with some kind of key mechanism to admit air to the desired pipes. Add another row of pipes, of different tone-quality, and you must also add some kind of apparatus to make either row speak, or, putting it the other way round, to prevent the unrequired row from speaking; hence the 'stops', as we call the handles controlling this function. The lopsided effect of having the longest pipe on the left, with a slope to the shortest on the right, was overcome by such devices as running a short length of tube to convey wind from the hole in the windchest where the pipe ought theoretically to stand to its actual position. So pleasing symmetrical arrangements of pipes, with either the longest or the shortest in the middle, became possible. Later, the very large pipes were grouped in 'towers' at the sides, or the centre, or both, and later still, the flat banks of pipes in between were sometimes given a curved plan. The 'choir' cases, as we miscall them, generally smaller versions of the main cases and placed in front of them but at a lower level, originated as separate small organs, fixed behind the seat of the organist, who had to turn round to play them; hence they were given the name 'chayre' organ. In the 19th and 20th centuries the development of various kinds of pneumatic and electric transmission, replacing mechanical action, meant that any pipe could be, and often was, placed anywhere there was room for it, so that the principle of having

each section of the organ speaking from its own tone-cabinet within the case—which has aural as well as visual significance—was forgotten. Recent years have seen a welcome trend back to mechanical action, as the only kind to give the player intimate control of phrasing and allow the pipes to speak naturally.

The tonal qualities of British organs have been written about extensively, but less attention has been paid to their appearance, and consideration has been mainly directed to large instruments. The search undertaken to compile the following list has revealed a number of small 19th-century organs, sometimes without pedals but tonally entirely adequate for the buildings in which they stand, unknown to the outside world of music yet producing charming sounds and often visually far more attractive than some of their big brothers. It is hoped that nothing of importance has been missed. By 'historic' is meant generally at least a century old, but also with other claims to distinction. No doubt there are other organs not mentioned which have some pipes of considerable age; unfortunately organ builders have often not bothered to record such matters; a rank of pipes may be removed from an organ, be stored in a workshop for years, and then find a home in another instrument, with no note made of their history.

Britain's old organ cases have suffered sadly, compared with those on the Continent. Literally hundreds of them were destroyed or mutilated when Tractarian practices brought choirs and organs from western galleries into chancels, and the craze for 'vistas' caused the destruction of medieval screens and the organs standing on them in cathedrals and large churches. That more care is now being taken over these matters makes it appropriate to record here that this happier state of affairs owes much to the efforts of a Gloucestershire parson, the late Andrew Freeman, vicar of Standish with Hardwicke, who did more than anyone else of his day to awaken the consciences of church authorities to consideration of what their organs ought to look like and where they ought to be placed. His memorial is the fine west gallery case at Standish church, by Stephen Dykes Bower; a little earlier, during his lifetime, the organ at Hardwicke was graced with part of a new case—still, alas, unfinished after nearly thirty-five years—designed by the same architect.

#### BRISTOL: BUCKINGHAM BAPTIST CHURCH (QUEEN'S ROAD)

An interesting two-manual-and-pedal organ by the Bristol builder, Joseph Monday, erected in 1851 and still in its original condition, except for a new pedal-board and some extra wooden pipes to extend the pedal compass. The manual compass extends an octave lower than normal, but the extra keys have no pipes of their own; on the Great they operate the pedal pipes (a reminder that comparatively few English organists played with their feet in 1851), while on the Swell they are completely dumb, the pedal pipes being operated by the keys of the next octave above and the actual Swell pipes stopping at tenor C. The couplers are activated by brass knobs in slots, a very unusual feature.

#### BRISTOL: THE CATHEDRAL

Surviving from the organ built by Renatus Harris in 1682-5 are parts of his cases and pipe-fronts and some of his pipes. He put his organ on the screen which had been erected across the eastern part of the choir shortly after the abbey church became a cathedral in 1542. The English habit of placing organs on screens, generally between nave and choir, meant that they were seen and heard on both sides and so had front and back cases. With the addition of a small 'chayre' organ behind the player's seat, by a local builder, Brice Seede, in 1786, Harris's organ remained in this position until 1860, when screen and organ were taken down on the commencement of the great restoration and extension of the building. It was lucky that the carved oak Harris fronts fitted so neatly into the two north-west choir arches where they now are, but they lost their lofty pinnacles and were otherwise mauled about in the process. While they are not much more than screens to the real organ behind, they do act as a memorial, even if in rather mutilated form, of what was obviously one of Harris's finest cases. A major reconstruction of the organ by Walker in 1907, and minor alterations

since, have not affected their appearance. Seede's chayre case became a domestic book-case, but its surviving parts, mainly carved pipe shades and ornamental work, returned to the cathedral in 1956, incorporated in the casework of the delightful chamber organ, by Harrison and Harrison Ltd, in the eastern Lady chapel. This was the gift of Mr H. P. Chadwyck-Healey, in memory of Sir Sydney Nicholson, founder of the Royal School of Church Music. The case was to the design of R. H. Brentnall.

#### BRISTOL: CHRIST CHURCH (CITY)

The church was built in 1786-90 and among the fittings preserved from its medieval predecessor was the organ Rhenatus Harris had built in 1707-9. It stands handsomely in the western gallery, and despite several rebuildings the case has survived virtually unaltered. It suffered somewhat when the church was damaged by bombing in the last war but in 1969 was most happily cleaned and repaired under the direction of T. B. Burrough. It is believed that this organ still contains quite a number of Harris pipes.

#### BRISTOL: CITY MUSEUM

(1) A large barrel organ of about 1820, from Stawley church, Somerset. Gothick<sup>1</sup> oak case with dummy wooden pipes, some gilded. An organ of this size would presumably have had a fairly large repertory of tunes, but the barrels have disappeared and the instrument is not in working order.

(2) A small organ with a single rank of pipes, enclosed in a beautiful inlaid mahogany Sheraton case, made by Christopher Ganer in 1775. Large oval aperture in front, covered with fabric, for egress of sound. The case is exactly similar to those of the 'square' pianos being manufactured at the same time by Ganer and others. The wind is pumped to the pipes by means of an iron pedal. The writer knows of no other organ of this shape and size, though small organs in cases resembling those of upright pianos were made in Germany (see note on Winstone church).

(3) A barrel organ in a mahogany case with a dummy gilded wooden pipe-front, by an unknown maker, dating from about 1800. It was at one time in use in Bedminster parish church. Three ranks of pipes; one barrel with ten psalm tunes. At the time of writing the instrument is being repaired and is destined for the museum at Blaise castle house.

#### BRISTOL: ST GEORGE, BRANDON HILL

John Smith, the Bristol builder, made a small organ for this Smirke church shortly after it was opened in 1823. In 1854 this was replaced by another instrument, by the same maker, enclosed in a graceful mahogany case, in the west gallery. It was removed to its present position, in the south gallery, twenty years later, with the console under the gallery—hopelessly inconvenient for the player, who could not hear the instrument properly and had to grapple with the inevitably heavy touch resulting from the long distance the wooden trackers had to run to operate the pipes. Despite this, over seventy years elapsed before the organ was reconstructed, with a console in the gallery, by Daniel, of Clevedon. Among the additions then made (1948-9) was a new choir organ, housed in a pleasant little 19th-century case from Counterslip Baptist church. Opportunity was taken to repair and clean the main case and refurbish the gilding of its front pipes, some of which are dummies. Although both cases have their merits they are markedly different in design and shape, and it cannot be said that their juxtaposition in the gallery is entirely happy.

#### BRISTOL: HORFIELD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (WHITEFIELD MEMORIAL TABERNACLE)

This pleasant new building retains from the old one of 1753 the pulpit, pews and organ, delightfully reinstated under the supervision of Eustace H. Button. The organ is one of the most intriguing in

1. The spelling 'gothick' has been used for furnishings, following Horace Walpole's practice, but 'gothic' for medieval or revival architecture.

Bristol, bearing the inscription: 'John Smith, Bristol, Fecit 1815'. The date must clearly be regarded as authentic, but the organ looks older than that: perhaps Smith used a late 18th-century case. It is of Spanish mahogany, with gilded front pipes in three towers and two flats and no subsequent excrescences to spoil its quite splendid proportions. Despite several enlargements and tonal revisions, most of the original pipes remain and the instrument was sympathetically dealt with when erected in its new home by Daniel of Clevedon in 1960. John Smith came from Bath as a young man and married into the Seede family (see note on Bristol Cathedral organ), eventually taking over the organ building business in about 1823; he may well have been apprenticed to Brice Seede's son, Richard.

## BRISTOL: LEWIN'S MEAD UNITARIAN CHURCH

The organ looks contemporary with the building (1787-91) and its other fine furnishings; in fact, it was made in about 1840, probably by Joseph Monday (see Bristol: Buckingham Baptist church), whose son-in-law, W. G. Vowles, took over the business in 1858. The Vowles firm, now incorporated in J. W. Walker & Sons, Ltd, built and restored hundreds of organs in Bristol and the South-West and several times worked on this organ, without however spoiling its clean, bright tone. The mahogany case, of somewhat severe classical design though of great dignity, has been carefully looked after, though at some time the front pipes have been incongruously diapered.

## BRISTOL: ST MATTHEW, KINGSDOWN

Imposing dark-painted pine case in the west gallery housing an instrument originally built by John Smith in 1840 and enlarged by his successors, the firm of W. G. Vowles. Most of Smith's pipes remain, doubtless revoiced at the rebuilding between the wars by Hele, of Plymouth, when the organ may have lost some of its upper work; for its tone, though good, is more dignified than bright. (English organ builders of the 1840s had not succumbed to the later taste for the preponderance of unison and sub-octave ranks of pipes found in so many organs made later in the century.) Five dull zinc pipes in the middle of the case show up badly against the other gilded ones, though the latter now need cleaning and refurbishing.

BRISTOL: THE ROY MICKLEBURGH COLLECTION<sup>1</sup>

(1) A chamber organ of unknown provenance, dating from about 1850. It certainly looks to be in the Great Exhibition style, with its highly elaborate mahogany case, inlaid with different kinds of mahogany, satinwood and mother-of-pearl. Three towers of pipes and two flats—quite ecclesiastical in shape if not in decoration. One manual with five stops. At the moment of writing in process of restoration, so it has not been possible to play it.

(2) A number of barrel organs—the genuine articles, that is, with wind reservoirs and pipes, not the perambulating street pianos. They became very popular as replacements for the old church bands in the first part of the 19th century and some makers advertised them, rather spitefully if often accurately, as likely to give vastly superior results to those of a 'finger organ', played by human agency, in country churches. In some cases a single handle both turns the barrel and pumps wind to the pipes, in others a separate pumping handle is provided. A barrel may be pinned to play up to a dozen tunes, and three or even four barrels were common; so the repertory could be fairly extensive. It consisted mainly of 17th- and 18th-century metrical psalm tunes, but the later models often included a few early Victorian hymn tunes. These instruments soon spread from the church to the home and very large numbers of what were often not more than glorified musical boxes, small enough to stand on an ordinary mantel shelf and pinned with a few popular ballads of the

1. This collection, housed above the shop of Mickleburgh, Ltd, in Stokes Croft, is a private one, not open to the public, and may be inspected only by special arrangement with Mr Mickleburgh.

day, became very popular. The ecclesiastical ones normally produced three- or four-part harmony, but the house models often offered only a treble air with a rudimentary bass.

The collection includes good examples of both types. The most important is one by H. Bryceson, of London, who made many hundreds of similar instruments. It has seven barrels and four stops, each barrel containing ten tunes, so the repertory is exceptionally varied. The gothick oak case, with a dummy gilded pipe-front, is a miniature version of the cases of many of the larger non-movable organs with keyboards made round about 1820, the presumed date of this instrument.

*Other barrel organs in the collection:*

- (i) A house organ by Muir Wood, of Edinburgh. Oak case, dummy wood front pipes; four stops and four barrels.
  - (ii) By Robson (later Flight and Robson), of London. Also with secular tunes and very similar to the above, but in a mahogany case.
  - (iii) A very small table barrel organ in an oak case, with ten secular tunes on a single barrel.
  - (iv) A rather larger table model by Flight and Robson. Mahogany case; two barrels, each with ten secular tunes.
- (3) A rare example of a 'Scudamore' organ. These instruments were devised by the Revd J. Baron, of Upton Scudamore in Wiltshire, who considered that a single rank of open diapason pipes was all that was required for the accompaniment of services in small village churches. Willis was impressed enough with the idea to make many such organs. Some of the pipes in this instrument are embossed: a very unusual feature for those made since the early 17th century, so one cannot help suspecting that Willis may have removed them from an ancient organ. They are of excellent tone. Here is an organ reduced to its bare essentials: a solid stand supporting a single rank of pipes on a wind chest with a small bellows, and a short keyboard with a handle to pump the wind.
- (4) Not a serious musical instrument, but worth recording as the ultimate in popularizing the organ principle of tunes produced by individual pipes supplied with air from a bellows, is a mechanical organ with a single rank of wooden pipes and figures of monkeys with instruments, the latter activated by the mechanism which operates the valves to the pipes.

BRISTOL: JOHN WESLEY'S 'NEW ROOM', HORSEFAIR

This shrine of Methodism, the first of all Methodist chapels, was built in 1739 and enlarged in 1748. It contains an excellent example of the 'house' organs made in great numbers by John Snetzler, the Swiss-German builder who had his home in England from some time in the 1740s. House organs had been fairly common for two centuries, but Snetzler's work made them extremely popular. They nearly always had, as here, a single keyboard, with some of the stops divided in the middle, so that the left hand could play a soft accompaniment to a solo in the right hand. This instrument has a mahogany case with trellised glass doors (which can be opened to increase the volume) in the Chinese style. A paper bearing the inscription 'John Snetzler fecit 1761' is inside the soundboard. The organ did duty for many years in the church at Little Plumstead, Norfolk, and has been well cared for. It is ideal for performing much of the pedal-less English organ music of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

BRISTOL: OLD KING STREET BAPTIST CHURCH (CAIRNS ROAD)

This new building inherited from the former chapel in Old King Street the organ built by W. G. Vowles, of Bristol, in 1845. Triple-fronted pitch pine case, mercifully free of the glossy varnish often thought appropriate for this timber in ecclesiastical circles, with gilt front pipes projecting well above the wooden framing. The instrument was rebuilt with pneumatic action when it was set up in its new home in 1957, but not otherwise altered. The tone is very fine and an excellent testimony to the sterling quality of early Vowles pipework.

## BRISTOL: ST PAUL, PORTLAND SQUARE

This church, in a once very fashionable district of Bristol, was renowned for its music from the time of its consecration in 1784. Frequent musical festivals and oratorio performances were held until well into the 19th century, such famous performers as Madame Catalini, Mrs Billington and Signor Rauzzini being among the stars engaged. The organ used on these occasions was replaced in about 1840 by the present instrument which probably contains older pipework. No record of its builder has been found. So far as clarity and purity of tone are concerned it is one of Bristol's more notable organs, though recent damage by water leaking from a faulty roof has put part of it out of action. Its case, in a fairly massive early 19th-century rococo style, is not unimpressive and must have looked well before it was moved from the west gallery to its present cramped position on the south side of the chancel. Gaudy painting at some time of the woodwork and front pipes has not improved its appearance.

## BRISTOL: ST THOMAS (CITY)

As at Christ Church (City), part of this organ has survived from an earlier building than the present (1792-3) one. In 1730 John Harris, son of Renatus, in partnership with his brother-in-law, John Byfield, erected the 'one good fair tuneable and substantial organ with a carved case of the best Dutch Oak' he had tendered for two years earlier. No doubt an important factor in the choice of these two men for St Thomas was the fame of the splendid organ—almost certainly the first in Britain to have pedals—they had built at St Mary Redcliffe in 1726. The case of the St Thomas organ remains, though treated less than sympathetically during successive rebuildings of the instrument, when it has acquired some disfiguring additions. Some of the original pipes also survive. This organ must have looked very fine in its original home in the west gallery.

## ALDERTON: ST MARGARET OF ANTIOCH

Bought from Frocester church and installed here in 1947, as a thanksgiving for deliverance in war, is a single-manual organ, with an octave and a half of pedals, by Joseph Monday, of Bristol. The story at Frocester is that the organ was made in 1795; this is clearly not true, for Joseph Monday did not take over his stepfather's organ business until 1847. The tone and appearance of the Alderton instrument are very similar to those of Monday's larger instrument at Buckingham Baptist church, Bristol (*q.v.*), of 1851. The gothick case, of dark-painted pine with dummy wooden gilt show pipes, has a central cross and four pinnacle-like finials, reminiscent, like many mid-19th-century organs, of the west fronts of gothic revival churches. There are five ranks of manual pipes, one of them divided, and two of pedal, one of which is an addition to the original organ. Lacking any documentary evidence at Frocester one can only guess that the instrument dates from about 1850.

## ARLINGHAM: ST MARY

A good example of the small one-manual organs built by Joseph W. Walker, founder of the well-known firm which has been responsible for some of this country's finest organs. Like Henry Willis, J. W. Walker took just as much care with the regulation and voicing of his tiny instruments as with his large ones. The tone-quality here is quite delicious and entirely adequate for supporting congregational singing. Gothick case, not improved by a coat of dark paint, now very worn, which ought to be removed. Records of the instrument's date are lacking, but it looks like other organs by the same builder of the 1850s and 60s.

## BARNESLEY: ST MARY

A puzzling instrument. An undistinguished pipe-rack facing the chancel suggests a cheap factory-made organ of the mid-19th century, but at the side, close to the wall and almost hidden from view, the name-plate of Samuel Green, the 18th-century builder of an organ at nearby Cirencester, is revealed, with a comely mahogany front (or back?) clearly of his workmanship. There are no records of the instrument's history. It looks as though a Green chamber organ has been unceremoniously added to in a mistaken effort to bring it up to ecclesiastical standard. There is some old pipework—probably Green's—which produces attractive sounds.

## BISLEY: ALL SAINTS

In 1965 the organ was moved from a chamber adjoining the chancel to the west end of the south aisle, with electric action to a new console at the front of the nave. A brass plate preserved from the old console bears the inscription: 'Rebuilt J. W. Walker 1862'. So the organ was apparently of some age in 1862 if it was rebuilt then; in fact, the old English 'long octaves' on the manuals (the same compass as on the Thomas Elliot chamber organs noticed elsewhere in this survey) suggest a date certainly not later than 1820. No attempt was made in 1965 to give the instrument a case, or even a screen; instead, the unsightly array of pipes and mechanism has been hidden from view by the simple but unworthy stratagem of hanging curtains in front of it. This is visually unsatisfactory, for the tops of the longer wooden and metal pipes protrude above the curtains, while acoustically it is disastrous, the curtains being made of sound-absorbent material.

## BITTON: METHODIST CHURCH

A good example of the hundreds of pedal-less single-manual chamber organs made by Thomas Elliot at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, this one being dated 1804. (The famous John Snetzler was succeeded by his foreman, named Ohrmann, who was joined as a partner by W. Nutt; the latter, on Ohrmann's retirement, took into partnership Thomas Elliot, already established on his own account. Nutt disappears from history almost at once, and Elliot carried on alone until 1825, when he took his son-in-law, William Hill, into the business. Thus began the firm of William Hill and Son, builders or restorers of some of the most famous organs in the world. So Elliot stands near the beginning of a notable dynasty.) It has not proved possible to trace the detailed history of this little organ. Labels inside the case and on some of the pipes show that it was once consigned by rail to Coddington rectory, near Ledbury (Herefs.). The Bitton Methodists bought it for £7 at a Bath auction in 1930; unfortunately the auctioneers destroy their records after twenty years, so enquiry there has been fruitless. The well-proportioned mahogany case, with a gilded dummy pipe-front, may be compared with the similar ones at Littledean and Tewkesbury. Of the trio, the Littledean instrument is the most decorative, in the Sheraton style, though it is slightly smaller than the Bitton one. At Bitton there are six stops, their pipes all enclosed in a 'nag's head' swell-box: *i.e.* instead of the normal venetian louvres there is a sliding sash with three plank shutters completely closing the box's apertures when the sash is down and opening them when it is up; the device is controlled by a pedal and the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* obtained are very effective. A pedal 'shifting movement' cuts off all the stops except those of unison pitch. The Hautboy rank consists of thin-toned flue pipes, not reeds: a misleading name, perhaps, but a useful device in an instrument probably designed with the idea in mind that regular tuning was unlikely. The tone of the whole organ is most pleasing, quite adequate for congregational singing when the swell-box is open but deliciously quiet when it is closed and only the softest stops are in use. The devices noted above make this instrument far more flexible for the player than might be expected from a cursory examination. Nothing, apart from tuning and the addition of an electric blower (the old manual pumping handle has been preserved and can be used if the electricity supply fails),

seems to have been done to the organ in its long life, and the mechanical action, though a little noisy, is still remarkably responsive to the touch. The compass is the old English GG (no G sharp) to F<sup>3</sup>, 58 notes, and the Stop Diapason is divided at middle B-C into treble and bass sections. A fall flap covers the keyboard which is drawn forward when in use. The stop handles are sprung, so that they have to be hitched down to retain them in the 'on' position.

## BROOKTHORPE: ST SWITHUN

A chamber organ made in 1768 by John Snetzler for the Wilde family, of Sulham Manor, Berkshire. It went to a mission church at Tilehurst in 1932 and was bought for Brookthorpe in 1939. Beautiful mahogany case with pipes arranged in three flats. Thirteen, presumably original, toe pedals are preserved at the side of the instrument. Most of the pipework is also original and of very pleasant tone. The thirteen wooden pedal pipes were added to by Daniel of Clevedon in 1939, when the organ was restored and a full-compass pedal-board was fitted.

## CHIPPING CAMPDEN: BAPTIST CHURCH

Here is a little organ, by an unknown maker, with a very interesting history. It started life as a barrel organ in Buckingham Palace and was the personal property of the Prince Consort. After Prince Albert's death it passed—whether by gift or purchase is not known—to Chipping Norton Baptist church, and was converted to finger operation. Extra ranks of pipes and a pedal department were added on its migration to Chipping Campden, but the delicate, bright tone of the original pipes seems not to have been interfered with.

## NORTH CERNEY: ALL SAINTS

This lovingly cared-for church is served by a delightful little single-manual organ standing in a chamber built for it in 1876. Victorian 'organ chambers' are usually abominations, with their organs crammed into spaces much too small for them and no proper egress for the sound, but here the plan has been most successful, for the instrument stands high in a gallery looking into the nave and there is plenty of space all round it. Originally a barrel organ—said to be by Joseph W. Walker, though the name appears nowhere on the console or the case—in the west gallery, it was converted to finger operation in about 1850. The triple-fronted gothic case has excellent proportions and was beautifully decorated in blue and gold by Stephen Dykes Bower and William Butchart a few years ago.

## CHELTENHAM: ALL SAINTS

Some pipes in this organ date from 1874, a fact which just qualifies it for inclusion in this list, though the instrument's outstanding tonal and visual qualities would have demanded notice anyway. The church was completed in 1868 and was served successively by two inadequate organs until 1887, when, under the superintendence of the new vicar, the Revd George Gardner, a fine musician, a composer, and a leader in the movement for church music reform, William Hill and Son erected a three-manual organ which, in the vicar's words, was 'one which would compare favourably with anything of the kind in England'. Its fine case, springing on coved supports above the arch leading from the north aisle, was a happy inspiration of Dr Arthur Hill. In 1896 a chancel division of four stops was added, with another beautifully painted and gilded case, designed by H. A. Prothero. (Comparison with the curiously ineffective Scott case at Cirencester, made at the same time, is instructive.) Most of the pipes for this section came from the two magnificent Hill organs in Worcester cathedral, both built in 1874 and in 1896 in process of being combined and ruined by that misguided genius of the organ-building world, Robert Hope-Jones, whose memorial is to be found in the diaphanous fog sirens round the coasts of Britain.

The All Saints organ has always been a joy to listen to and to look at. Subsequent additions, and a complete post-war reconstruction by Nicholson of Malvern, have amplified its tonal resources without spoiling its appearance.

CHELTENHAM: BAYSHILL UNITARIAN CHURCH

As has so often been the case in this search, written records of the church's early history have disappeared. The building was opened in 1842 and the organ looks to be of about that date; if so, the tradition that this was the second organ to be erected in Cheltenham could well be true. It is a tiny one-manual-and-pedal instrument of no great tonal distinction but with an unpretentious stained deal case not without dignity. The dummy metal front pipes have been inoffensively coloured. The organ has obviously been rebuilt at some time—probably to an altered specification—and the pedal-board is a comparatively recent addition. No maker's or restorer's name can be found.

CHELTENHAM: NORTH PLACE CHURCH (COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION)

The church was built in 1816 and an organ is recorded as being in the west gallery in 1825. Probably this instrument, or part of it, was incorporated in the present one when a local builder, H. Williams, erected a new organ, for the tuner is of the opinion that some of the pipework is of the early 19th century. Williams had been trained in the factory of the distinguished firm, Gray and Davison, of London, and was in the habit of obtaining many of his pipes from them; so his organs often had a tonal distinction beyond what might have been expected from a man whose reputation was purely local. The exact date of his work here is not known, but 1870 is considered likely. (A bazaar was held in March 1874 to clear off the outstanding debt of £57 10s. on the organ.) It is assumed that Williams put his instrument in its present position, on the platform at the east end, for no expensive work on it can be traced until 1894–5, when there were considerable alterations to the church and its furnishings, including the repair of the organ. Presumably this was when the gothic case was 'grained' in the startling shades of lemon and ginger which accord so ill with the uninspired painting of the front pipes. ('Case' is hardly the right word: there is not much more than an elaborate frame for the pipes.) The tone is remarkably fine, especially on the Great, which seems to have all the hallmarks of a Gray and Davison diapason chorus. The Swell is good, too, in spite of stopping at tenor C, as do three of the softer stops on the Great. A thoughtful restoration, with some extra upper work in the Pedal department, could make this organ extremely suitable for the music of Bach and his contemporaries.

CHELTENHAM: ST MATTHEW

A fine example of the work of 'Father' Willis. The organ builder's records were lost in the bombing of 1941, and those of the early years of the church have somehow disappeared, so exact dating is tantalizingly impossible; but it is known that the instrument was in the temporary church which was rebuilt and enlarged in 1879. It is likely that the organ would have been enlarged at the same time. A few additions have been made since then, without spoiling the typical Willis tone. The less said about the 'case' the better.

The notice on the console, stating that the organ is a copy of the Willis one at the Crystal Palace, cannot be correct. The organ in that building was not by Willis.

CIRENCESTER: ROYAL AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE CHAPEL (ST GEORGE)

A good example of a mid-19th-century (1851) small two-manual organ by Gray and Davison. By this time organ builders were beginning to feel that richness and gravity of tone, even in the

smallest instruments, were more desirable than the sparkling brightness which had characterized English organs until about 1840. But Gray and Davison were slower to adopt the new tonal fashions than most of their contemporaries and their little organ here has affinities with instruments of earlier date, despite a specification which on paper looks rather dull. It was carefully restored, with some new upper work which fits in well with the original pipework, by John Coulson a few years ago. That some of its stops do not extend below tenor C makes it not very versatile, though for a good deal of the classical organ repertoire it can sound quite convincing.

## CIRENCESTER: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

Some pipes of the organ set up by Samuel Green in 1790 on the then existing screen between nave and chancel were retained when Gray and Davison built a new instrument in 1867, and a few of them were again used when this was entirely rebuilt in a new position by 'Father' Willis in 1895-6. (Pictures of the Green and Gray and Davison organs may be seen in the clergy vestry.) Gilbert Scott's elaborate case is supposed to have been inspired by that at Strasbourg cathedral; unfortunately this architect nearly always allowed the tops of his front pipes to project above the confines of his cases—a comparison between the Strasbourg and Cirencester cases will emphasize at once the curiously unfinished appearance of the latter. The characteristic Willis tone is superb in the chancel, though it is less effective elsewhere in the church, thanks to the ill-advised placing of the organ in the south-east chapel. Willis certainly miscalculated when he assured the church authorities that the instrument would sound entirely satisfactory in all parts of the large building if he placed it here; but he was approaching the age of eighty and his mind was much occupied by other projects, so perhaps he can be forgiven. But complaints that the Choir organ, placed behind the main instrument, was virtually inaudible in some parts of the nave, led to this section being moved across the chancel to a screen dividing it from St Catharine's chapel a few years later. It is itself very cramped, and it makes an unwelcome intrusion into the graceful but narrow chapel.

## CLEARWELL: ST PETER

A two-manual-and-pedal organ with a remarkable history. Built by Telford and Telford, of Dublin, in about 1820, for the earl of Dunraven, and installed in Limerick castle. The earl married Caroline Wyndham-Quin, of Clearwell, and on his death she returned to England to live at Clearwell castle and there installed the Limerick organ. She was mainly responsible for the demolition of the old church and the building of the present one, dedicated in 1866, to which she removed the organ. The pedal section was probably inserted then, for it is unlikely that an organ in an Irish country house would have had pedals in 1820. But the original—or perhaps some subsequent—builders indulged in a sort of Irish frolic, for the instrument is very curiously arranged, the pipes of the Swell being at the rear with the Swell shutters opening inwards, and the normal positioning of the manual stops being reversed. It is therefore maddening to play, but the tonal quality is good and the organ awaits a benefactor to pay for a sympathetic and conservative overhaul. The case has clearly suffered during its travels—not much of it is left—and the front pipes are elaborately coloured, but so brightly that the effect is of gaiety rather than vulgarity.

## DEERHURST: ST MARY

The organ was presented to the church in 1932, when it was said to have been made in 1840. The mahogany domestic-looking case suggests a chamber organ of about that date. Obviously considerable changes have been wrought and the instrument is now a small two-manual one with pleasant-sounding pipework crammed into a space too small for it to speak properly.

## EASTCOMBE: PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH

A fairly large two-manual-and-pedal organ, purchased second-hand from a private house in Bussage in 1863. The stop handles look of about that date, so one guesses that the instrument was probably enlarged on its removal to the chapel, but the crocketed gothick case, in stained and varnished deal, gives the impression of being of about 1820. The organ stands handsomely in the western gallery and the flue pipework sounds well, but the reeds are unfortunately out of order and the instrument is generally in very poor condition. No maker's name can be found on it and the chapel records are silent on the matter.

## GLOUCESTER: THE CATHEDRAL

Thomas Harris, father of the more famous Renatus, built a new organ for the cathedral in 1663-5, placing it in a loft over the south choir stalls and reusing an earlier chayre case, of Elizabethan character, thought to date from about 1579. Many famous British organ builders worked on the instrument over the centuries, the most notable event in its history being its transference to its present position on the choir screen in 1717. Willis twice executed major overhauls and additions in the 19th century, at the second one turning the soundboards round, so that the majority of the pipes spoke to the south, and moving the console from a position between the east main case and the chayre organ to the south, so that the player could cope with the recently introduced nave services. A reconstruction by Harrison and Harrison in 1920 provided a very fine organ of the romantic type, highly suitable for the transcriptions of orchestral music then forming a major part of the repertory of every leading British organist. It remained unaltered until 1970, when a complete rebuilding was undertaken by William Hill & Sons and Norman & Beard, Ltd, to a scheme drawn up by Ralph Downes. Certain compromises had to be made, for the organ is used for the daily services in the choir, for nave services with large congregations, for solo recitals, and in combination with chorus and orchestra in the Three Choirs Festivals and other concerts. Foremost in the designer's mind was the desire to give Gloucester an organ which would be suitable for the adequate rendering of the real organ music of all schools from the 16th century onwards, but still be an instrument with sufficient varied tone-colour for the best of the organ compositions of the more romantic 19th and 20th centuries. The result is, in effect, two three-manual instruments controlled from a single four-manual console, three manual sections speaking to the east and three to the west, with a common pedal department between them. A notable tonal revolution has been achieved; apart from consideration of authentic tone-colours, the contrast in clarity between the old and new organs, despite the notorious Gloucester echo, is quite remarkable.

But for many people not primarily interested in organ music the most arresting feature of the rebuilt organ is the care that has been lavished on the case. Harris showed great ingenuity in 1663 when he designed a main front case which harmonized so happily with the chayre case of probably almost a century earlier without actually copying it. An unusual, and more continental than English feature of the older case, was the projection of a single pipe in the middle of a group of five in the central tower, a design reproduced, with very different detailing, in the main case. Another rare feature, for the Harris family, is the placing of the main central tower high, so that its cornice is level with those of the large side towers, in contrast with the more usual English habit of making a sweep down from high outside towers to a low middle one. The nave case is much plainer, with painted pipe shades instead of carved ones; but it must be remembered that this was originally a 'back' case, seen only from the south transept. Most notable is the elaborate painting of coats of arms and other decorations on all the show pipes; this was the work of a local craftsman, John Campion, and the recent cleaning of the case reveals these beautiful details with a clarity absent for very many years. These fine cases were treated in a very cavalier fashion by successive rebuilders of the organ, and by 1970 had deteriorated so much that there was real danger of their collapsing. It was then decided to raise the main case 16 inches, thus revealing the open arches on either side and bringing it into better relationship with the chayre case, and to reduce its width (increased several

times over the years) so that the nave front no longer rested clumsily on the screen parapet. All this repair and refurbishing, under the direction of Michael Gillingham, has given Gloucester cathedral quite the most notable organ case of its period in Britain.

## GLOUCESTER: ST MARY DE LODE

An interesting 18th-century organ by an unknown maker, rebuilt in the early part of the 19th century, recently removed from the closed church of St Nicholas and sympathetically restored by John Coulson, of Downend. Great manual compass, in the usual 18th-century manner, from low G (no G sharp) to F<sup>3</sup>, 58 notes; Swell from F below middle C to F<sup>3</sup>. Bright, assertive tone, very suitable for 17th- and 18th-century music and for congregational singing. 'Nag's head' Swell (*vide* Bitton Methodist church), but not now working. Striking mahogany case surmounted by a crown on cushion and two urns, all freshly gilded; fairly unassertive Victorian diapering on the front pipes.

## GORSLEY: CHRIST CHURCH

A charming one-manual organ with a gothick case, painted white, and gold front pipes. Probably of the very early 19th century, though possibly earlier still. The colours of the keys are reversed (black naturals with white sharps) but these are not original.

## HARTPURY: ST MARY

Of about 1860, with two manuals and pedals. Deal case, stained dark, with gilded front pipes in a very curious pattern, including two fat towers with dummy pipes in separate compartments. All now looking rather shabby. No evidence of a builder's name. Some gothick organ cases seem to have taken their design from the architecture of gothic revival churches; Hartpury organ, for instance, bears a remarkable resemblance to the design of the west front of Savage's Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, London, replaced by Sedding's much larger building in 1890.

## HORSLEY: CHAVENAGE HOUSE

The minstrels' gallery in the great hall contains a single-manual chamber organ, said to be of the 18th century, though the general lines of its dark mahogany case, with gilded pipes, suggest that it could be earlier. The owner of Chavenage has no record of its maker or when it was installed, but dismantling might reveal a signature on a soundboard or elsewhere (a habit to which John Snetzler was prone). The instrument is unfortunately in a completely unplayable condition, so no opinion on its tonal quality can be offered. There are seven ranks of pipes and a spare slide.

## KEMBLE: ALL SAINTS

Chamber organ by John England and Hugh Russell, dated 1784. Pleasant, very domestic-looking mahogany case with broken cornice. Nearly all pipework original and of charming tone. Repaired, and a new pedal-board added, with its pipes at the back of the instrument, by John Coulson in 1966.

## LITTLEDEAN: ST ETHELBERT

A chamber organ by the prolific Thomas Elliot, smaller but more elaborate in appearance than others by the same builder which have been found in Gloucestershire churches (see Bitton Methodist church and Tewkesbury abbey). Dated 1790, it has a very fine mahogany case with an oval of gilded dummy pipes flanked by a rectangular panel of pipes on either side. There are four manual stops. The 2-octave pedal-board looks to be a later addition.

## MICKLETON: ST LAWRENCE

A single-manual chamber organ by G. M. Holdich, a 19th-century builder who made mainly small instruments, though he produced a large one of high merit, with a proper pedal section, for Lichfield cathedral. Precise dating of his Mickleton organ has not proved possible, though its charming unforced tone, on low wind-pressure, suggests that it cannot be less than a century old. It was moved to a new west gallery and given a splendid case by Ellery Anderson in 1931.

## MINCHINHAMPTON: HOLY TRINITY

There is nothing visually attractive in the organ here; what earns it a note in this catalogue is the age and tone of some of its pipes. The first organ in the church was erected in 1836-7 in the west gallery of the old nave. After the complete rebuilding and extension of the nave in 1842, this instrument was sold. The vestry minutes of 5 June 1851, record that 'the purchasing and putting up of Mr Allen's organ be left entirely in Mr Whateley's hands.' Mr Whateley was the rector and Mr Allen presumably the Charles Allen who was a well-known organ builder in Soho. This private arrangement between rector and organ builder meant that tantalizingly little information about this instrument is now available. It seems to have had two manuals but no pedals, and it stood in the new west gallery. In 1873 choir and organ migrated to the chancel, and from that date the organ underwent several enlargements and alterations, not all of them well-advised, though most of the original pipework was retained. By 1968 some sections of the instrument had become unplayable and John Coulson was engaged to rebuild it completely. Expert examination of the pipes then suggested that many of them are of excellent 18th-century workmanship and that at least one rank may be older than that. The opportunity was taken of restoring all these pipes to what was thought to be their original condition and of adding to them some ranks from dismantled old organs of high quality taken from disused churches. The result is that Minchinhampton now has one of the finest-sounding organs for classical organ music in Gloucestershire.

## NEWENT: ST MARY

Remarkably handsome mahogany case, well carved, though certainly not by Inigo Jones as a local legend avers. Circular carved frame at top enclosing symmetrically arranged gilded pipes whose mouths make a downward-sweeping line, admirably balanced by the upward-sweeping mouths of the larger pipes below. The church acquired this organ in about 1790, but the case is clearly older than that; David Verey (*Gloucestershire: The Vale and the Forest of Dean*) suggests c. 1740. The small case, looking rather like a chayre organ, not very happily fixed at the side, is of later date. The main case mysteriously lost a carved urn and finials at some period, but these were traced in a London auction sale and most advantageously restored to their old position in 1958. The tone is pleasant, though those old pipes which remain cannot be producing anything like their original sounds.

## PAINSWICK: ST MARY

A sad example of a historic organ being badly treated over the years. It was made by the famous John Snetzler for an untraced London church and came to the west gallery at Painswick in 1814, when it must already have been at least sixty years old. It was subsequently stuffed into its present cramped position between the clergy vestry and the chancel, with Snetzler's graceful mahogany front case, now no more than a screen, looking forlornly down the south aisle and not properly visible on account of the narrowness of the arch. A mean row of unframed modern zinc pipes, luckily not seen from most of the nave, fronts the chancel. Quite a number of old pipes survive, revoced out of recognition.

## PARKEND: ST PAUL

A fragment of the Renuart Harris case (1710) from Salisbury cathedral is preserved in an otherwise not very distinguished organ.

## PILNING: ST PETER

A splendid little chamber organ, bearing the brass label 'William Allen Londini Fecit', formerly in a nearby house. Allen was a reputable London craftsman of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, who built instruments for Peterborough and Lincoln cathedrals. No date can be found on the Pilning organ, but *c.* 1790 seems to be suggested by its general style. Mahogany case, scrolled at the top in the Chippendale manner, with symmetrical display of dummy wood pipes; the latter, doubtless originally gilded, now 'silvered' with aluminium paint which contrasts ill with the dark woodwork. Five ranks of speaking pipes are original; three more and a pedal-board have been added at some time. The tone is bright and clear, quite adequate for the building and far more satisfying than that of the dull and ponderous-sounding late Victorian instruments often placed in churches of this size. As usual with English organs of the period, the manual compass runs down to low G with no G sharp. Unpleasing modern touches are the ugly lamp for the music desk and the indeniably obtrusive switch and wiring for the electric blower.

## QUEDGELEY: ST JAMES

The organ, in an 'organ chamber' on the north of the chancel, is practically invisible, but should not be disregarded on that account. It is a small two-manual instrument, built by 'Father' Willis in 1870, and it can truthfully be said that he took just as much care over its voicing as he did with the great cathedral organs he was occupied with at the same period. The stop handles have beautifully turned rosewood heads with solid engraved ivory faces, in the same style as those of, say, St Paul's cathedral at that time, and the tone is such that it is well worth going out of one's way to hear it.

## RANGEWORTHY: HOLY TRINITY

An interesting little chamber organ not now in very good condition. Mahogany case with dummy gilded pipes in five flat ornamented panels. No maker's name or date is known but the instrument would appear to be of the 1830-40 period. A two-octave pedal-board is obviously a more recent addition. (*See postscript.*)

## SOUTHAM: THE ASCENSION

A single-manual organ made in 1867 by H. Bryceson, of London. It was formerly in Southam de la Bere House. The rather dull specification must mark either an unimaginative rebuilding at some time or a departure from the ideals of clarity and brightness characteristic of similarly-sized English instruments of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The latter seems more likely, for the names on the stop handles look to be original. The pedal-board is permanently coupled to the manual.

## STAVERTON: ST CATHERINE

Here is the nucleus of a chamber organ by an unknown builder of the first half of the 19th century, though some of the pipework looks and sounds older, and the lettering on the stop handles might well be of the late-18th century. The mahogany case, like the rest of the instrument, has been subjected to alteration, but its main outlines suggest the Regency manner. A pedal-board has been added, but only its lowest octave has pipes, the upper part being merely coupled to the manual keys.

There are now five ranks of pipes, of pleasant, clear tone, and the little instrument is doubtless far more artistic, despite its limitations, than the electronic machine it recently displaced.

TEWKESBURY: THE ABBEY

A mecca for organ lovers, with three remarkable instruments.

(1) One of the most notable organs in Britain, the so-called Milton organ, stands in an open position on the south side of the choir. Its origins are uncertain. A Harris, possibly the grandfather of Renatus Harris, is thought to have built it for Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1637. (Records at Magdalen refer to Renatus Harris being employed for repairs in 1686 'because his grandfather first made it'.) But Andrew Freeman had reason to believe the original builder was the maternal grandfather of Renatus, Thomas Dallam, the greatest English pre-Restoration organ maker, whose superb organ cases are such a beautiful feature of King's College chapel, Cambridge. But the case of the Tewkesbury instrument is surely Elizabethan; if so, it may be that made by John Chappington, who built an organ at Magdalen in 1597. Evelyn visited the college in 1654 and heard 'Mr Gibbon, that famous musician, giving us a taste of his skill and talents' on the 'double organ', which had somehow escaped the well-nigh universal destruction of such instruments. ('Mr Gibbon' was Christopher Gibbons, brother of the renowned Orlando; a 'double organ' probably means one with two keyboards, or possibly two fronts.) Shortly after Evelyn's visit the college presented this organ to Cromwell, who had it set up at Hampton Court Palace—perhaps to save a fine instrument from destruction. Here Milton may well have played on it, but proof is lacking. At Cromwell's death his goods were inventoried and the organ and chayre organ from 'Maudlin' College were valued at £300. (What happened to the chayre organ is not known.) In 1660 the instrument was returned to Magdalen. Robert Dallam, Renatus Harris and others effected repairs, and Harris completely rebuilt it in 1690–1. In 1737 Thomas Schwarbrick made a new organ for Magdalen and the old one was sold to Tewkesbury. Here, its first home was on the screen which then divided nave and choir. In 1796 additions were made to it by Henry Holland, a minor craftsman from London, and in 1848 it was given a major overhaul by the young Henry Willis, whose work here was so much admired that he was immediately invited to rebuild the Harris organ at Gloucester cathedral, the first of his many cathedral commissions. At Tewkesbury his beautifully engraved stop handles are still a feature of the now unused but happily preserved console. In 1875 the screen was removed and the organ went successively to the north aisle of the nave, the south transept, the north arch of the tower and finally, in 1887, to its present position. Apart from all this moving about, which did less damage than might have been expected, it remained substantially as Father Willis had left it, until 1948. Its tone was, and is, quite delightful, and there is no doubt that there are more pre-Restoration pipes speaking here than in any other British organ. The front case has often been claimed as the most beautiful in England. There are thirty-seven show pipes, brilliantly gilded, ten of them elaborately embossed, in five towers and four flats, making a magnificent sight against the black oak of the case. The carved ornament is of high quality. There are more gilded pipes in the back case, which is comely enough, though very plain; it looks like 18th-century work.

(2) In the north transept stands the entirely uncased 'Grove' organ, a *multum-in-parvo* four-manual instrument built by the short-lived firm of Michell and Thynne for the South Kensington Inventions Exhibition of 1885. In the following year it was featured in the Liverpool Exhibition where it was bought by the Revd C. W. Grove and presented to the abbey as a commemoration of queen Victoria's Jubilee. It used to sound absolutely thrilling in the ample Tewkesbury acoustic, but action failures have made it virtually unplayable since 1939. Perhaps the most remarkable features of an organ which ought to be regarded as a national treasure are to be found in the 'string' stops, but the whole instrument is of noteworthy tonal quality.

(3) Against the choir screen, on a movable platform, is a chamber organ made by Thomas Elliot in 1813. It was clearly very similar to the unaltered Elliot organ at Bitton Methodist church (*q.v.*) but has been reconstructed. The mahogany case with dummy show pipes is characteristic of

its builder, as is the keyboard which slides out for use. It has six ranks of pipes, at least four of which are original. The swell-box has disappeared, but another tiny one, containing only the Oboe pipes, has been added. There is an octave of pedal 'pull-downs' operating the lowest octave of the keyboard.

In 1948 a grandiose and in some ways unwise scheme was initiated for enlarging the Milton and Grove organs and adding to them an entirely new section in the apse above the Norman chapel in the south transept, all three organs being controlled from a large five-manual console, with a separate two-manual one for the Milton organ only, in a loft behind the north choir stalls. The Milton part of this scheme was completed in 1948, and the apse organ was added in 1951. Unfortunately four ranks of pipes were removed to the latter from the Grove organ. The present organist's intention is that these should be returned to their proper home and the Grove instrument restored exactly to its original state.

#### UPLEADON: ST MARY

An exceptionally well-proportioned chamber organ by an unknown builder, thought to date from about 1790. Plain mahogany case with gilded dummy pipes arranged in three towers and two flats in elevation only, for the front of the case is, in fact, entirely flat. Five ranks of speaking pipes, one of them divided into treble and bass sections. There are no records of how and when the church acquired this organ, nor, until 1967, could anyone remember its being played, so decrepit had it become. In that year it was carefully repaired and is now, visually and aurally, a most attractive feature of one of the more interesting small churches in Gloucestershire.

#### WINCHCOMBE: ST PETER

The organ, of about 1735, was purchased from the earl of Plymouth and enlarged in 1890. Its oak case, in the Chippendale manner, has not escaped some mauling over the years but has recently been tastefully repaired and rearranged while the organ was being rebuilt. No doubt some 18th-century pipes remain; if so, they have been revoiced and their sound is different from what it was originally.

#### WINSTONE: ST BARTHOLOMEW

A rare example of a tiny organ whose pipes are housed in a case resembling that of a large upright piano. There is no maker's name on the instrument but it is known that it was made in Germany. Three ranks of pipes but no stops, so that they all speak together, except when a pedal, cutting off the wind to two of them, is depressed for soft effects. Elegant mahogany case with two hinged doors, filled with crimson brocade, which are opened when the organ is in use. The general style of the casework and the long compass (low G, with no G sharp, to high C) suggests a date in the late 18th or very early 19th century.

#### WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE: ST MARY

For once, the 'Handel played on our organ' story may be true. In 1726 George I, as the parish's most distinguished resident, accepted the office of churchwarden at St Martin-in-the-Fields; but three months' experience of the duties was more than enough. He resigned, and gave the church a new organ, built by Christopher Schrider for the large sum of 1,500 guineas, as compensation; the legend 'The Gift of His Most Sacred Majesty King George', still very prominent, being emblazoned on the case. In 1799 the churchwardens of St Martin's, having allowed it to deteriorate, sold it to the Revd William Tattersall, vicar of Wotton, for £200. It was set up in the proper place, the west

gallery of 1626; its present position, south of the chancel, is by comparison unfortunate, though it is not obstructed by masonry, and the incorporation of the once separate chayre case in the north face of the main case has been achieved more successfully than might have been expected. Successive repairs and alterations have preserved a good deal of Schrider's pipework, inevitably revoiced, though the characteristic tone of an 18th-century English organ has not been entirely lost. The gilded show pipes are well set off by the dark oak of the case; visually this is one of the most attractive organs in Gloucestershire, only those at Gloucester cathedral and Tewkesbury abbey taking precedence. The statement that Handel 'publicly opened' the instrument at St Martin's cannot be positively upheld from documentary evidence, but it is very likely true and it is reasonably certain that he would have taken the opportunity of playing it on other occasions.

There are also some old organs, mainly in village churches, which, while hardly meriting the description 'historic', deserve to be noted for their tonal qualities. Mostly small, and in no case with any claim to visual distinction, the following instruments come into this category.

CHIPPING SODBURY: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST. By W. G. Vowles, 1869.

FRAMILODE: ST PETER. By J. W. Walker, 1860.

FREETHERNE: ST MARY. By John Nicholson, date unknown.

HAMPNETT: ST GEORGE. By Nicholson and Co., 1874.

Longborough: ST JAMES. By John Nicholson, 1867.

MORETON VALENCE: ST STEPHEN. By J. W. Walker, 1849.

NETHER SWELL: ST MARY. By Nicholson and Co., 1872.

POULTON: ST MICHAEL. By J. W. Walker, 1869.

SAUL: ST JAMES. By an unknown builder, rebuilt by J. W. Walker, 1865.

TEWKESBURY: HOLY TRINITY. By Nicholson and Co., 1869.

TODDINGTON: ST LEONARD. By Nicholson and Co., 1869.

UPPER SLAUGHTER: ST PETER. By J. W. Walker, 1855.

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*Postscript:* RANGEWORTHY: HOLY TRINITY. An expert on timber suggests a date as much as half a century earlier than that given above. (Late information from Canon J. H. W. Fisher.)