

Nothing is known of organs at Westbourne (if indeed there were any) before 1819 and even then records relate only to the installation of an organ in that year but tell us nothing more. Like many other churches which installed barrel organs around that time, it is thought probable that Westbourne installed some sort of organ when church bands became redundant during the first half of the 1800s but exactly what, when and where is a matter for conjecture. We do, however, know a great deal about the organ which was installed in 1862, much of which became the Great division of the instrument which accompanied services until its final service of Evensong on Easter Sunday, 2001. The 1862 organ was a one manual instrument made by JW Walker and it was installed at the head of the north aisle (where the altar now stands in the side chapel). It must have been quite a feature of the church in that it possessed 14ft high gilded front pipes which were re-gilded 3 years later- possibly because they had become tarnished during the removal of the Minstrels' Gallery, its windows and the false ceiling in 1864. At that time the organ was also slightly enlarged.

The total cost of the organ in 1862 was 180 guineas. It measured 14' high by 8'9" wide and 5'11" deep. It was enclosed in a box with Venetian swell and gilded front speaking pipes, a 30 note 'German' pedalboard and 3 composition pedals. The specification was as follows:

Open diapason	8	
Stopped Diapason	8	
Dulciana	8	Bottom octave from Stopped Diapason
Principal	4	
Flute	4	
Fifteenth	2	
Mixture	III	
Spare slide (trumpet)		
Bourdon pedal (CCC-F)	16	
Coupler: Manual to Pedal		
3 composition pedals		

From 1864 – 1865 JW Walker enlarged the instrument as follows:

Keraulophon 8ft TC inserted on spare slide.

Open Diapason 16ft inserted in place of *Bourdon CCC to F Tenor 30 pipes*. (This stop disappears later and the Bourdon reappears with no record to explain the change)

New bellows with double feeders.

Front pipes regilded.

In 1876 the organ was enlarged to a 2-manual instrument with the addition of a Swell division and couplers to the Great and Pedal at a cost of £237.17s.0d. Records show that the Swell comprised 6 stops, 4 of them new, with the *Keraulophon* now '*being employed on the Swell*' together with the '*Stopped Diapason Treble taken from the Great organ*'. Another new stop '*Wald Flute Treble was substituted in Great for Stopped Diapason Treble Pipes taken for Swell*'.

Specification of organ as in 1876 (Walker)

Great		Swell		Pedal	
Open Diapason	8	Horn Diapason*	8	Open Diapason	16
Wald Flute*	8	<i>(metal to TC, then stopped wood)</i>			
Dulciana TC		Stopped Diapason	8		
Principal	4	Keraulophon TC	8		
Flute	4	Harmonic Flute*	4	<i>Swell to Great</i>	
Fifteenth	2	Suabe Piccolo	2	<i>Swell to Pedal</i>	
Mixture	III	Horn*	8		

* New pipework

We know that Alice Anne Marten provided funds not only for the addition of the Swell organ but also for an organ chamber to be built on the outside of the SE corner of the church, into which the rebuilt organ was housed in 1876 and remained there, with modifications, until its removal in 2001. The organ chamber (now the clergy vestry) was so well blended with the rest of the building that few people were, or are, aware that this part of the church is only 125 years old. Windows were built into the chamber but then boarded up with thick tongued and grooved oak planking to provide some insulation for the chamber against extremes of the weather.

Fourteen years later, in 1890, WJ Haywood of London carried out further modifications to the organ, adding an 8ft Oboe to the Swell division and a 16ft Open Wood to the Pedal division, completing the work in time for Christmas that year. Nothing further was done to the organ until 1935 when Hele and Co of Plymouth overhauled the organ and undertook its tuning and maintenance. At this time the only changes made were to the Flute stops on the Great. They modified the old Walker *Flute 4ft* to become the *Chimney Flute 8ft* and, at the same time, somewhat confusingly, added their own *Wald Flute 4ft* with the Walker *Wald Flute 8ft* disappearing. Electric blowing was installed in 1938, the organ having been pumped manually prior to this by means of a large handle operated by boys from the village who were known as 'blowers'. Many of them inscribed their names on the inside of the wood panels which encased the organ chamber. The organ was cleaned again by Hele in 1952 and then, in 1967, it was decided that they should rebuild the instrument, replacing the mechanical action with electro-pneumatic action and resulting in the final specification below:

Specification after the 1967 Hele rebuild:

Great		Swell		Pedal	
Open Diapason	8 W	Open Diapason*	8 W	Open Diapason (a)	16 HW
<i>(with Hele bass)</i>		<i>(ex Horn Diapason)</i>			
Chimney Flute	8 W	Stopped Diapason	8 W	Bourdon (b)	16 W
Dulciana TC	8 W	Keraulophon TC	8 W	Octave (a)	8 H
Principal	4 W	Gemshorn	4 H	Bass Flute (b)	8 H
Wald Flute	4 H	Fifteenth	2 H	Octave Flute (b)	8 H
Twelfth	2½ H	Mixture 19.22.26	III H		
Fifteenth	2 W	Trumpet (ex Horn)	8 W		
		Oboe	8 W		
<i>Swell to Great</i>		<i>Thumb pistons:</i>		<i>Balanced swell pedal</i>	
<i>Swell to Pedal</i>		<i>4 to Swell, 4 GP combs</i>		<i>Discus blower</i>	
<i>Great to Pedal</i>		<i>Toe pistons as above</i>			
		<i>Swell to Great reversible toe piston</i>		W=Walker, HW=Haywood	
				H=Hele	

Although much of the original Walker pipework was carefully restored and incorporated, the organ had now become something of a hybrid. The 1876 Swell *Harmonic Flute 4ft*, and *Suabe Piccolo 2ft* were removed and the *Great Mixture III* was replaced with a *Swell Mixture* of unusual double-quint design. The inaugural recital was given by Harold Darke, a recording of which still exists, although of poor quality.

It became apparent that the 1967 modification had done very little to resolve the problem of the sound being locked in the organ chamber and the effect of the Hele mixture, rather than binding the organ tone, seemed to produce a rather piercing sound which was uncomfortable to the average ear while the *tutti* (full organ sound) lacked cohesion. Reports were obtained and, in the 1980s, a number of options were put forward and discussed by the PCC, including the possible purchase of an electronic instrument (a topic which was raised again prior to the decision to install the Tickell organ). The following extract from Willis' proposal dated 18th June 1982 may be of interest: 'Although you say that the church is willing to have the Great organ outside the West Arch of the organ chamber (i.e. in the South aisle) I feel that to do this would further unbalance matters not only because the Swell would then still be behind the arch (presumably with the Pedal at the back with its tones mostly coming out of the chancel) but because the idea of the manual organ tones all coming from the South East corner of the Nave does not appeal (to the Parish) in the present context'. Clearly opinion can change in 20 years! Fund raising was started but plans for a long-term organ solution had to be placed 'on the back burner' on two occasions when emergency repairs to the church were required: the first when fungus necessitated the stripping of the wooden floor from under the pews and its replacement with York stone and the second when a large crack appeared in the main chancel arch. Willis was consequently engaged only to clean the organ and carry out minor work in an effort to project more sound into the nave. In 1982 Willis swapped over the Great and Swell Fifteenths, revoiced the Keraulophon to make it less reedy and more of a Salicional and turned the whole organ around, fitting a new swell box so that the organ spoke out into the Nave, rather than the chancel. This work was effective.

The situation could have continued for several more decades of deterioration before the organ wheezed its last but the seeds of change were sown in 1990 when the relatively new PCC Treasurer, Christopher Shaw, obtained approval for separate budget headings, including that for the organ. Funds for the organ were then set aside each year and, by the turn of the Millenium, had grown to over £20,000. This and the fact that the Tickell Organ Fund was ring-fenced, plus the will to mark the Millenium in a way that would benefit generations to come, was a great boost to the efforts of the fund raising team who, within five weeks, had obtained promises for the majority of the money needed for the instrument in which we rejoice today. It was a remarkable achievement.

Nevertheless it was very sad indeed to have to say goodbye to the old organ, despite its imperfections, and a great joy to find that, with the exception of the Pedal Open Wood (which many church members took away as a souvenir or to convert into a window box or pot planter) every other organ part was destined for a new home incorporated into other instruments in the area.

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