



*The Parish Church*  
*of the*  
*Holy Trinity*  
*Amblecote*



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**A brief history of the organ at Holy Trinity Amblecote.**

The description does not pretend to be exhaustive, neither is it highly technical.

The organ was built by J. Nicholson in 1849 and dedicated in that year on 28<sup>th</sup> October. It was purchased by public subscription at a total cost of £219. 00. Though no precise records are extant it would appear that the specification of the instrument was as set out in Appendix 1.

The organ would have been pumped by hand, indeed the original pump is still attached and may be used in the event of power failure.

The figure of £219.00 means very little unless seen in some context. At that time the average clergy Stipend was £250.00 per annum, a bricklayer earned 30 shillings (£1.50) for a 58.5 hour week, and the organist's salary was £20.00 per annum for which he would be expected to tune the organ as well as to play for services and train the choir. The cost of building a similar instrument today would be in the region of £150,000.

The organ was originally placed in the gallery at the west end of the church – a position still favoured by builders on the Continent and by many in this country. There are two principal reasons for this. Firstly, as far as the Liturgy is concerned, it is felt that music is better heard than “seen”. Secondly, the sound of an organ stands to gain as it descends. It was unfortunate, therefore, that the organ was moved from the Gallery in 1877 and placed in the vestry, the height of the room had to be increased to accommodate it. The cost of this removal was £42. At the same time the organist asked for an increase in salary, though it is not recorded whether he received more than the £26 per annum to which he was then accustomed.

In 1900 the organ was again moved, this time to its present location in the North East corner of the Church. Six years later, new action, many new parts and a new stop – the Great Fifteenth of 2' pitch – were incorporated into the organ by Messrs Norman and Beard. The cost of this work was £270. This may have been when the electric blower was installed.

Records are somewhat sketchy between that time and 1977, except that the organ was cleaned in both 1922 and 1942. At some stage, probably at one of these times, two stops were added: a Harmonic Flute of 4' on the Great and an Octavin at 1' on the Swell.

The most extensive alterations have been made during the last 16 years.

In 1977 the organ was again cleaned and overhauled, and the Great Clarionet was replaced by a two-rank Mixture. This stop is used in conjunction with a chorus of Diapasons to give a richer and brighter ensemble. The term “two-rank” means that for every note depressed, two pipes sound at an interval of a fourth or a fifth apart, pitched two or three octaves higher than the note played. The total cost of this venture was £1,769 plus VAT.

So to the present: the most recent venture to clean, overhaul and upgrade the organ has cost some £13,000. It ought to be pointed out that when we speak of cleaning and overhauling the organ, it is not merely a question of running a duster or vacuum cleaner over it. Every single pipe (and there are now 1,020) has to be removed and individually washed or cleaned and the whole interior mechanism has to be dismantled so that action, electrics and blowing apparatus may be attended to. This has taken approximately eight weeks to complete with two or three men working full time. There have also been some additions which will make a considerable difference to the tonal structure of the instrument. The old 8' Dulciana has been converted to a twelfth of  $2\frac{2}{3}$ . This has a similar effect to the Mixture in that it gives a fullness and sonority to a chorus of stops, but it can be used in other effective ways. Two new stops have been added to the Pedal department which will equally enhance the definition of this formally rather weaker section of the organ. This has been achieved by extending the existing 8' Bass Flute by one octave (12 new pipes) to allow for two stops: a Quint of  $5\frac{1}{3}$  and a Choral Bass of 4'. Another important alteration has been the conversion of the Pedal action from mechanical to electric – in 1993.

In 1994 the Cornopean (always unsatisfactory) was replaced with a Trumpet 8' at a cost of £1225.00

The full specification of the renovated instrument is set out in Appendix 2 for those to whom it is of interest.

The work in 1977, the maintenance and tuning since, and the present major overhaul have all been in the hands of Hawkins Limited of Lichfield.

Mark Cyphus M.A., F.R.C.O.

## **Appendix 1 (1849)**

### **Great**

Open Diapason – 8’  
Clarabella – 8’  
Dulciana – 8’  
Principal – 4’  
Clarionet – 8’

### **Swell**

Bourdon – 16’  
Open Diapason – 8’  
Stopped Diapason – 8’  
Voix Celestes – 8’  
Principal – 4’  
Mixture – II  
Cornocean – 8’  
Oboe – 8’

### **Pedal**

Bourdon – 16’  
Bass Flute – 8’

### **Couplers**

Swell to Great  
Swell to Pedal  
Great to Pedal

Two Toe Pistons to Great and to Swell  
Mechanical Action with Electrified Pedals

## **Appendix 2 (1993)**

### **Great**

Open Diapason – 8’  
Clarabella – 8’  
Principal – 4’  
Harmonic Flute – 4’  
Twelfth – 2.2/3’  
Fifteenth – 2’  
Mixture - II

### **Swell**

Bourdon – 16’  
Open Diapason – 8’  
Stopped Diapason – 8’  
Viol d’Amour – 8’  
Voix Celestes – 8’  
Principal – 4’  
Piccolo – 2’  
Cornocean 8’ replaced 1994 by]  
Trumpet - 8’ ]  
Oboe – 8’

### **Pedal**

Bourdon – 16’  
Bass Flute – 8’  
Octave Quaint – 5.1/3  
Choral Bass – 4’

### **Couplers**

Swell Octave  
Swell to Great  
Swell to Pedal  
Great to Pedal

Balanced Swell Pedal  
1022 Pipes