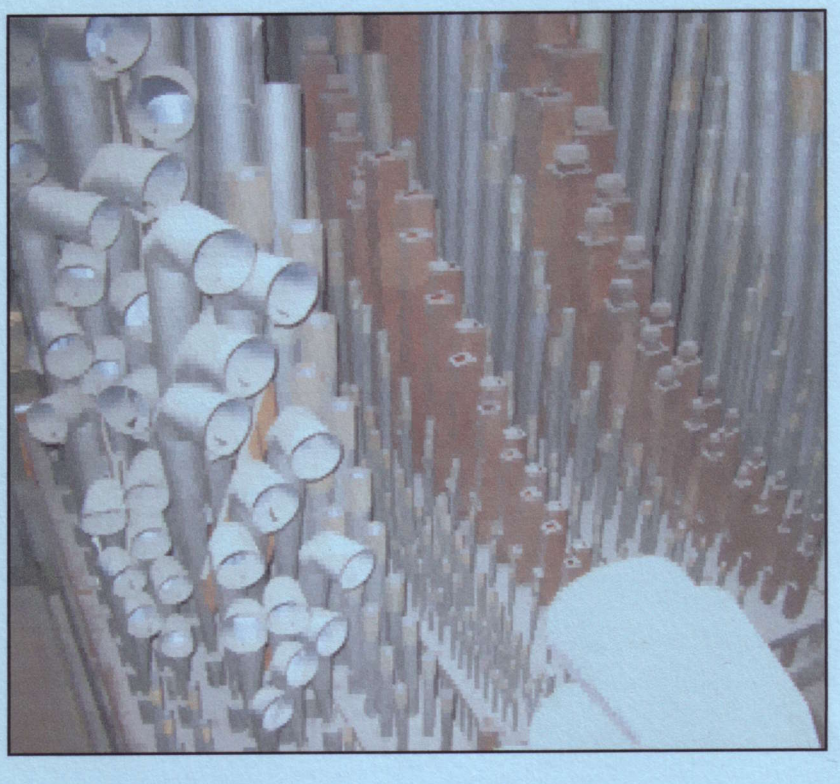

St Peter's Church, Streatham

The Organ

IAN BELL Professional Advice on Organbuilding Matters

IAN BELL

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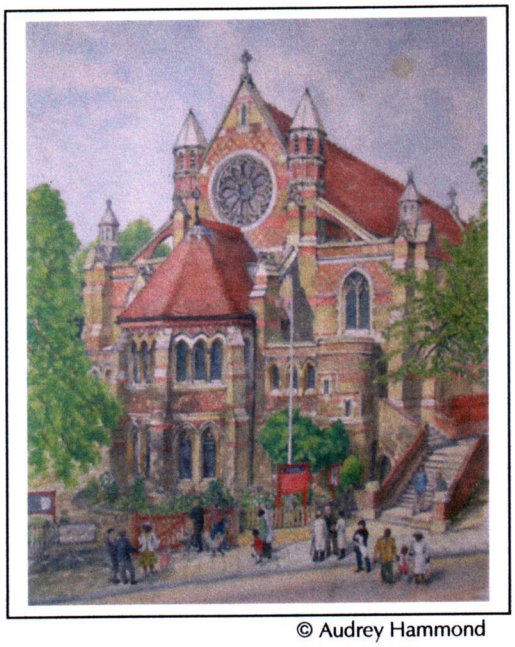


St Peter's Church, Streatham

A Report on the Organ,

1. The organ's past
2. The present form and condition of the organ
3. Future options

Dates and builders' names quoted for work in the past are deduced (and where appropriate revised) from those listed in the National Pipe Organ Register, in contemporary reports, and in the builders' own records. It is often the case that upon closer inspection, when the organ is dismantled, some of these details may prove to be in some degree inaccurate. This is however of no relevance to the significance of the organ, nor to the practical matters under discussion.

The Past

The organ at St Peter's was installed in stages between 1870 and 1913, and is a magnificent and much admired example of the work of one of the most highly respected organ building firms of its period, William Hill & Son. It is, in short, an instrument of exceptionally high quality.

When the Hill firm first put forward proposals for an organ for St Peter's in 1869, the founder of the firm — William Hill — was 80 years old, and was in the last year of his life. He had built his business on a number of daring and high-profile projects in the 1830s, and went on during the next decade to be responsible for the crucial evolution of the English organ into the form that we know today, working with many well-known musicians including Mendelssohn.

In the 1850s and 60s his tight grip on the market was loosened by serious competition from other firms. Hill's death in 1870, unsurprisingly initiated a rather rocky stage in the firm's order book, which coincided with the onset of the most prestigious period in the working life of Hill's greatest competitor, Henry Willis. The Hill firm passed to Hill's son, Thomas, who followed very much in his father's footsteps and kept broadly to the company's well-established style, at the same time as allowing some careful development of tonal and mechanical ideas. Despite the challenge from Willis the firm retained a large and loyal following, and with the benefit of hindsight we can see that the Hill organs were equally deserving of the respect with which they are, once again, endowed.

In the later years of Thomas Hill's life the firm undertook many very fine projects including, in 1890, the huge instrument for Sydney Town Hall. Following his death in 1893, direction of the firm passed in turn to his son, Dr Arthur Hill, an educated and artistic man who had trained as an architect. He was in some ways less committed to the burden laid upon him, and the weakest of the three generations both in character and in health. Nevertheless the experienced team remained determined and successful, and some of the very finest Hill organs were built under Arthur Hill's direction in the 1890s and early 1900s up until the first world war, many — as at Streatham — having excellent organ cases designed by Hill himself.

Arthur Hill was increasingly worn down by his responsibilities, and in 1916 agreed to a merger with Norman & Beard of Norwich, after which the firm's style changed significantly. The company which resulted — Hill, Norman & Beard as it became known — remained very active until the 1970s, but then gradually subsided and finally ceased trading in 1998.

The records of the Hill firm are preserved in the British Organ Archive and may answer the minor questions which arise over quite how the organ at St Peter's grew. We know that the initial proposal in 1869 was for a three-manual instrument, and substantial further sums were proposed in 1875, described in the Estimate Book as 'additions' which would seem to suggest that the organ had at first been installed incomplete, possibly lacking the Choir Organ. In 1876 the stoplist was noted as:

Pedal

Sub Bourdon	32
Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Trombone	16

Choir

Lieblich Gedact	8
Dulciana	8
Gemshorn	4
Suabe Flute	4
Flautina	2
Clarinet	8
Vox Humana	8

Great

Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Gamba	8
Principal	4
Wald Flute	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	III
Trumpet	8

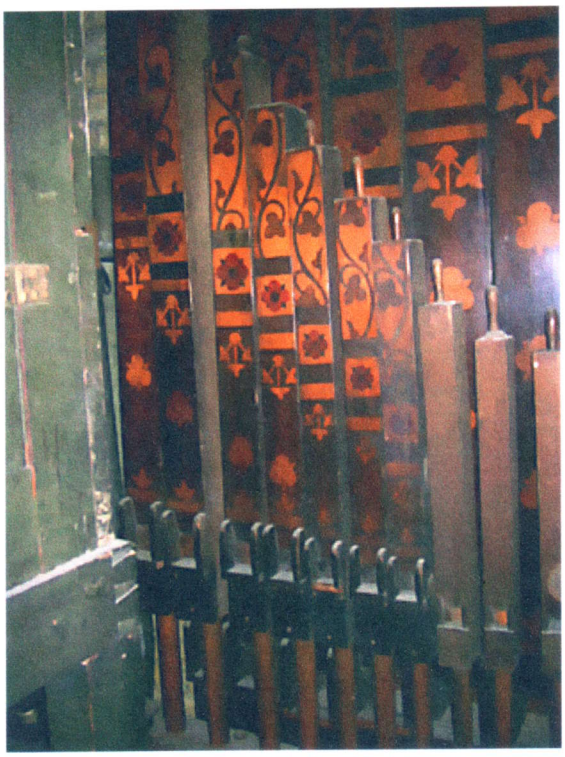
Swell

Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Principal	4
Rohr Flute	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	III
Cornopean	8
Oboe	8
Clarion	4

Further work took place in 1903, and in 1913, bringing the instrument to its completed four-manual state, as it remains today:

Pedal		
Sub Bourdon	32	
Open Diapason	16	
Violone	16	West case pipes
Bourdon	16	ext 32
Principal	8	
Violoncello	8	ext 16
Bass Flute	8	ext 32
Trombone	16	
Choir		
Open Diapason	8	
Gedact	8	
Dulciana	8	
Gemshorn	4	
Suabe Flute	4	
Flautina	2	
Clarinet	8	enclosed
Vox Humana	8	enclosed
Great		
Double Diapason	16	
Open Diapason 1	8	
Open Diapason 2	8	
Stopped Diapason	8	
Gamba	8	
Principal	4	
Wald Flute	4	
Twelfth	2 2/3	
Fifteenth	2	
Mixture	III	
Trumpet	8	
Clarion	4	
Swell		
Bourdon	16	
Open Diapason	8	
Stopped Diapason	8	
Salicional	8	
Voix Celeste	8	
Principal	4	
Rohr Flute	4	
Twelfth	2 2/3	
Fifteenth	2	
Mixture	II	marked IV
Double Trumpet	16	
Cornopean	8	
Oboe	8	
Clarion	4	
Solo		
Rohr Gedact	8	
Viol d'Orchestre	8	
Harmonic Flute	4	
Orchestral Oboe	8	
unenclosed:		
Tuba	8	

It is believed that the casework into the North aisle, designed by Arthur Hill, was added in 1903, making this the third facade facing west. To begin with it would seem that there were stencilled Bourdon pipes in that arch, and these survive inside the organ (below).



Later, a simple row of metal bass pipes from the Choir Organ filled the gap, and remain still in place behind the later Hill casework (above).

More recent changes to the organ are described in the section which follows.

Present form and condition

Repairs made after the war do not seem to have involved any changes, and the organ's present form incorporates mechanical repairs and replacements made more recently. In 1972, the small firm of Bishop & Son began what was probably seen as a phased rebuilding operation.

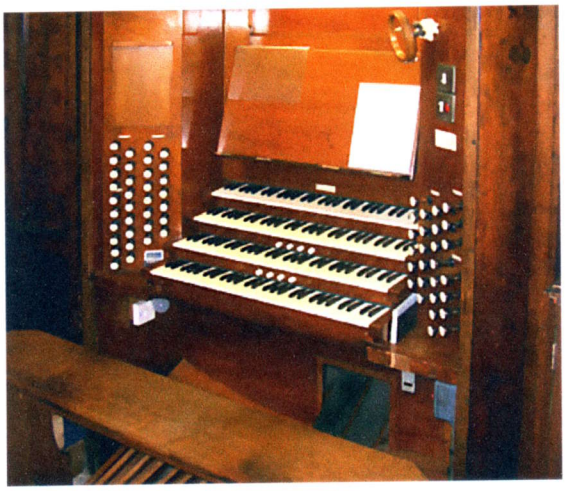
In addition to general cleaning, they adapted the action of the four manual departments to work electrically, in place of the 1903 tubular-pneumatic action operating on wind-pressure. This meant providing four new keyboards, and applying electro-magnets to the initiating primary valves of the four main actions, which had their rotten leatherwork replaced with new, but otherwise remained unchanged. The modest number of thumb pistons provided in 1903 remained unrestored, and again were simply adapted to be operated by new thumb piston units in the keyslips of the new keyboards.

Nothing was done to the mechanism of the Pedal Organ or the stop action, nor to the numerous bellows, and after a further 20 years the Pedal had become virtually unplayable and the organ ran out of wind-pressure. In 1994 David Wells Organ Builders of Liverpool began another programme of phased repairs. All of the Pedal chests were overhauled, and converted to electro-pneumatic operation, in similar fashion to the work of 1972. The electric blower was overhauled by specialist engineers, but has still proved inadequate.

I became peripherally involved soon after the opening of discussions with David Wells Organ Builders, having been invited by David Wells to advise him on some aspects of the work as a result of my earlier involvement with several large Hill instruments of the period. In the event there was little to say; but it was good to make the acquaintance of the instrument, and to watch the way in which the organbuilders coped remarkably well, with a very difficult task.

Further repairs could not be proceeded with until 2000, when the drawstop slider machines all had their leatherwork renewed. At that point a cloud with a silver lining arrived, in the form of rain-water leakage through the roof. Several of the bellows were rain-damaged as were the slider soundboards of the Swell and Choir, all of which were restored with the help of the subsequent insurance claim.

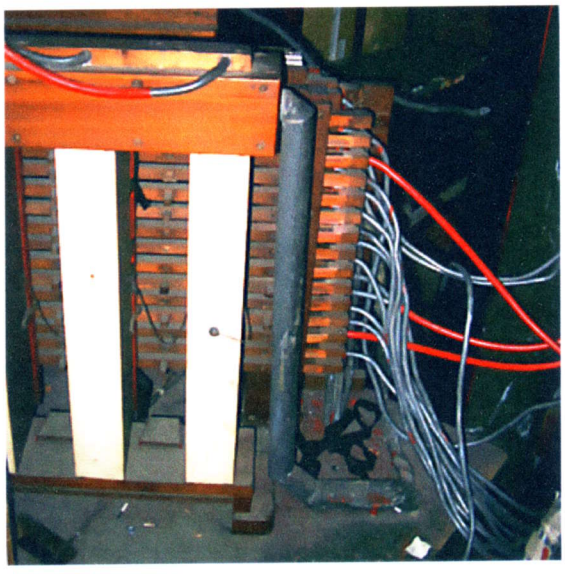
Nothing further has been done.



Console: Though inevitably becoming a little worn, the console remains a very handsome piece of furniture that is in every respect typical of the work of the Hill firm during the period when Dr Arthur Hill was in charge. There has been a certain amount of regrettable intrusion from electrical and other fittings, but there are many much, much worse.

The keyboards were new in 1972 and are of good quality, with playing surfaces of ivory, which is now slightly discoloured, and plastic sharps. The touch is set on the deep side.

The thumb pistons are conventionally positioned, but were disconnected some while ago because of the erratic condition of the older parts of the mechanism. The composition pedals were removed in 1972. The combination action itself, operated by vertical 'book' motors behind the jambs, is in a very poor state, the leatherwork of the motors never having been renewed. Makeshift repairs in 1972 and later have left the whole mechanism in disarray (below).



The ivory-faced stop-knobs and rosewood bushings are again the familiar Hill product of the time, of good quality with elegant hand-finished engraving, some of which now requires re-filling. Some later replacements, presumably to replace lost discs, are not a good match — the Gt Clarion and the Viol d'Orchestre, for example — but that is perhaps not the greatest priority at the moment.

The pedal keys date from 1903 and have been overhauled more than once thereafter, though they are now again becoming a little noisy in use. The pedalboard is set quite close to the modern standard in relation to the manual keys. The two main swell pedals, offset slightly towards the treble end, are almost certainly a later modification. The original 'trigger' pedal for the two Choir reeds remains, and was in use until relatively recently. The swell boxes are only moderately effective; in the case of the Solo that is because of the modest shutter area; and the Swell is not helped by being partly blocked by the later Solo, as well as having a second small set of later shutters on its west face which are disconnected, and often hang open.

Access: Access to the interior of the organ for tuning purposes is unusually awkward for an instrument of this size, and lighting is decidedly makeshift if not actually dangerous.

Once at pipework level things are easier. The instrument is slightly unusual in its layout. Whilst the Great and the Swell sit one behind the other facing south in the usual Victorian fashion, the Choir is behind the aisle case in the unhelpful manner frequently favoured by Hill. The Solo, added as the last stage, sits awkwardly above the Great, with shutters only in the ends of the box, and obscures the upper half of the Swell, which has had some of its shutters disconnected as they no longer make a valuable contribution.

Two Pedal stops, the Principal and Trombone, are on a slider chest behind the Swell, and the remainder are distributed around the edges of the chamber in the time-honoured fashion.

Soundboards: Most of the organ's 2,600 pipes stand on seven slider soundboards, which feed them individually with wind-pressure according to the combination of keys and stops selected by the organist. Attached to the soundboards are the key actions — one for each note on each keyboard; and the slider actions — one for each stop or set of pipes.

The soundboards all seem to date from 1903 or 1913 and were originally very well made and nicely finished. Four have been overhauled either in 1994 or 2003, and appear in good order. With all of the pipes in place it is impossible to examine the condition of these, or the remainder, properly; and this can in any case vary significantly in accordance with changes in relative humidity at differing times of the year, because of the very large areas of timber involved in the construction of soundboards of this age.

Several simple tests are usually revealing, however, and there is no worrying evidence here of 'running' (where a certain amount of wind-pressure seeps from pipes which are being played, to other pipes which should be silent) on any of the soundboards. Neither are there any indications of murmurs (caused by unsoundness in the pallets which feed wind-pressure to the pipes), and the likelihood is that whilst renewal of the felt and leather pallet coverings might be viewed as desirable simple on the basis of time elapsed, in the context of a programme of restoration disciplined by scarcity of funds, any further attention to the soundboards may well be achieved without removing them from the organ.

It should be repeated that symptoms of runnings and sticking sliders can vary with extremes of relative humidity, and certainly grave damage can be inflicted on any instrument of this age if it is overheated in the dry frosty months of the year.

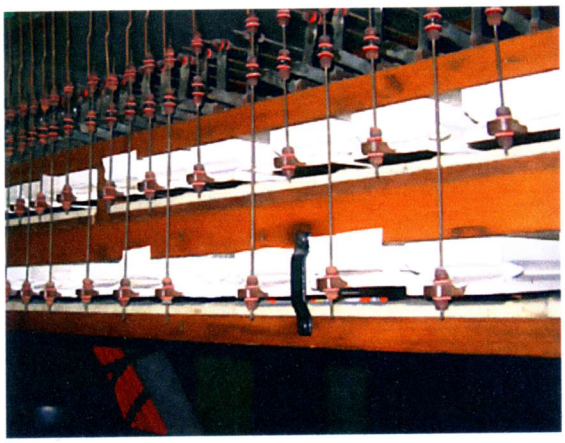
Slider actions: These move the sliders to bring the different ranks of pipes into operation when the stop-knobs are moved at the console. They

are to Hill's usual twin-motor design, presumably dating from 1903 or 1913, and have recently been overhauled with new leatherwork. In so far as it can be reached for inspection this work appears to have been tidily done, and is in good order. It can remain as part of the future plans.

However, several sliders are reluctant to move, especially when relative humidity is low. Of the total of 41, no less than 8 were off altogether on the date of my visit, and a further 3 were very slow. I do not believe that this stems primarily from any problems with the machines themselves, nor with their restoration.

There appear to be two causes for the malfunctioning; first, much of the lead tubing connecting the machines to the console is damaged and flattened, and this is restricting the signals of pressure arriving from the stop-knobs. Secondly, and more important, there is simply insufficient wind-pressure to make them work, though only a very slight push from the finger is required to make them function. I return to this below.

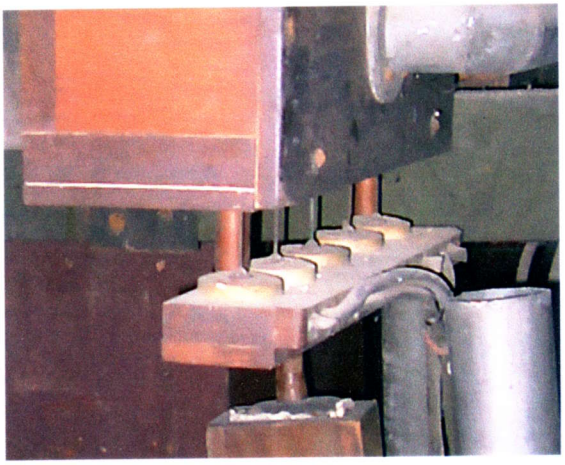
Key actions: The key actions connected to the soundboards are again to Hill's usual 'external motor' design. These consist of a row of small bellows or 'motors', one attached to each pallet, which inflate to pull open the pallet and operate the pipes. Often this design of mechanism is distractingly noisy, especially when — as on the Great, Swell and Solo here — the actions are connected to more than one pallet with exposed linkages. However, at St Peter's the noise level is more acceptable than is often the case.



These actions were overhauled in 1972, when their delicate sheepskin leatherwork was replaced. However, that leather (above) was not very expertly applied, and was somewhat thinner than it should have been. Several motors have split, requiring the application of patches, and others are developing leaks, and therefore becoming less powerful.

This is one reason why many notes barely function, or will only function when relatively few stops are in use, but it is not the main reason, which is again a lack of wind-pressure. The small reservoir feeding these actions simply will not fill, because the blower is not delivering adequate pressure, and therefore the actions are not powerful enough to do their work. As with the sliders, only a slight amount of assistance is required to encourage them to work in the robust fashion that Hill actions normally would.

Those notes which do work function well, both in attack and repetition, but the lack of pressure simply does not give enough working margin for many of the actions to operate.



Off-note and Pedal chests: The Pedal chests which were overhauled in 1994 were all working, and all in good order. This has proved a good investment, and covers the majority of those pipes not on slider soundboards. A few other bass chests remain, like those of the Choir Dulciana and some Great basses, where the original leatherwork of the external purses (above) and internal motors awaits attention. This is not a huge job, nor the highest priority, but must be dealt with when the pipes on and around them are cleaned.

Wind system: The electric blower is clearly inadequate to supply the full demand of the instrument, or even to allow all of the reservoirs to rise. It dates from the 1930s or earlier but was extensively overhauled in 1994. David Wells' report prior to that date stated: "The blower is venerable, and has insufficient pressure margin to cope with the present leakage. In the long

term it should be renewed, although this may not be the highest priority at the moment."

In the event, for whatever reason, the supply remained inadequate, though it has improved slightly since the slider machines and the majority of the reservoirs were releathered in 2000 and 2003.

Replacement of this machine with a modern plant would be easy and would immediately restore to full working order most of the slider machines and key actions, as well as allowing full use of the organ without it 'dying'. Because of the remote siting there is no need to consider the most expensive and silent machines, and the whole operation — which must happen sooner or later — could be achieved for about £5,000 plus whatever an electrician would charge to connect the wiring (which I believe dates only from 1994).

This would not cure every fault — the slider actions on the Solo would remain susceptible to damaged tubing, and the extra pressure would be quite likely to accelerate the failing leather-work of the key actions, all of which must be on the list for future attention. But even allowing for that, the net gain — the value for money, if you like — would be tremendous, especially in the winter months.

The organ contains several bellows or reservoirs, which store the wind produced by the blower and regulate its wind-pressure. The heavier leatherwork of these will typically last much longer than the more delicate sheepskin of the action, but 80 or 90 years is likely to see some deterioration, and the condition of the reservoirs here has varied considerably.

Fortunately most have relatively recently been completely overhauled, and appear in very good order. At the other extreme, the two very largest have not been releathered since at least 1903 — very possibly earlier — and are in a poor state. One of these has in fact been disconnected and abandoned, presumably in 1972, and this can really be forgotten.

The other is in poor condition, with splits and patches, and the difference between its leatherwork and that of the restored bellows above it can clearly be seen in the accompanying photograph. The problem here is that it is large in area and cannot easily be extracted. This large area is no longer necessary now that the organ is

electrically blown, and the best option may well prove to be to cut it up and remove it, and install a smaller reservoir which can be slotted in through the gaps between the posts with the panels removed.

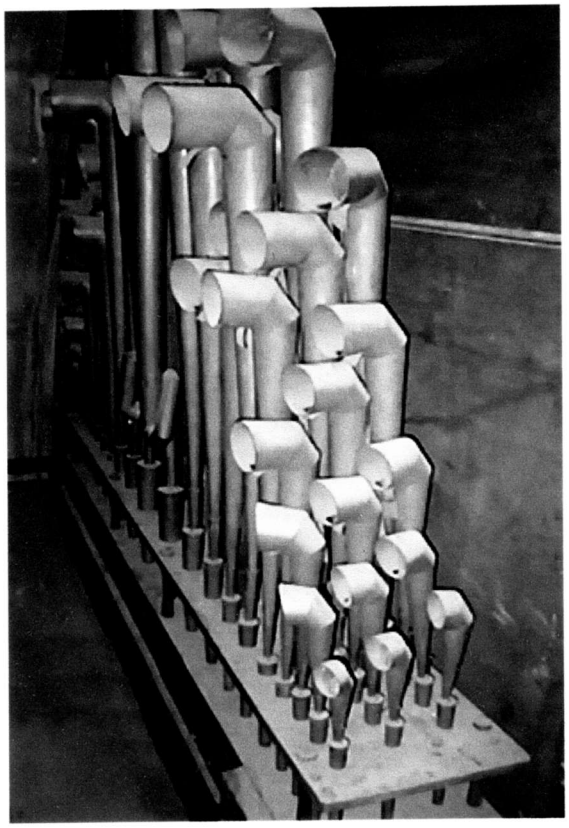
As already mentioned, one smaller restored reservoir, provided to regulate the wind-supply for the pneumatic action, is simply not rising.

The steadiness of the wind supply to the various sections varies but is generally acceptable, with the slightly higher pressure for the reeds being the best.

There is a humidifier plant of good manufacture, which appears to be professionally maintained.

Pipework: The pipework, all from the various stages of the instrument's construction by Hill, is of excellent quality, and is mostly in good condition, with just odd bumps and bruises. In scaling, treatment and appearance it is in every respect typical of the successive generations of the Hill family, and is much to be prized.

The metal flue pipes are fitted with tuning slides, which are in good order, and rather surprisingly the pitch is set at the modern standard of A.440. The tuning, considering the other demands upon the organ tuner's time here, is quite good.



Whilst those pipes which have been cleaned as part of recent work remain satisfactory, other sections — and in particular the unenclosed pipes of the Great and of the Tuba (above) — are very dirty.

A small question-mark hangs over the matter of the Swell Mixture, shown on the console as being of four ranks, but in fact being only of two, with no sign that could ever have been different. The earlier recorded stoplist also shows only two ranks, and it is unlikely that in the spirit of 1903 or 1913 any additional mixture ranks would have been envisaged.

The tonal character of the organ is superb, and I cannot overstate the point that it must not be interfered with. Like other organs of the period that were built in two stages — such as the comparable instrument at All Saints Hove — it benefits from a happy combination of the vitality of the earlier voicing style, and the sophistication of the later re-finishing. Here, it is the later additions — the Solo organ and the re-working of the reeds — which have gained the most, as would be expected, and yet are not out of place.

Whilst familiarity may blunt the effect for the parishioners, for the visitor it is a pleasure to experience an instrument as fine as this, in such inspiring surroundings.

The Future

Many parishes find themselves, like it or not, the wary custodians of quite large and complex organs which are going to require substantial sums of money to keep them going. Not all of these instruments are of good quality, and it costs as much — perhaps more — to restore a mediocre instrument as it does to care for one with a good pedigree.

At St Peter's, at least there can be no doubting that the organ not only has an excellent pedigree but is of national importance. Therefore although the organ is periodically going to cost large sums of money, it is at least worth it.

Ideally, the work necessary to sort the organ out ought to be done in one operation, but I know the task is a daunting one, and it is possible to continue a step at a time if that cannot be avoided. The disadvantage of that is already, rather prematurely, beginning to show here, where the first stage of the work carried out in 1972 is now beginning to fail, whilst other areas have not yet been addressed. It becomes an endless process, like the proverbial painting of the Forth Bridge.

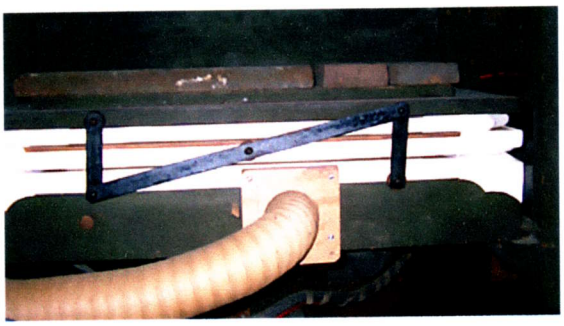
What, in the simplest terms, is the position? It can be summarised as follows:

1) The work undertaken in 1972 was quite competently executed in difficult circumstances, but has not lasted as long as might have been expected. The leatherwork that was new at that time is already splitting, and has been patched in some areas. It can, within reason, be coped with during regular maintenance by further patching, but has to be on the agenda for further attention.

2) The rebuilding of the Pedal chests and slider soundboard in 1994 was tidily executed, again in awkward circumstances. It included the replacement of the slider machine for that soundboard with new slider solenoids, on the presumption that the whole organ would receive similar treatment. All of this work remains in good order, and is not a cause for concern.

3) The releathering of the remaining slider machines in 2000 was a reversal of the earlier expectation, in that the question of Lottery funding had arisen, and with it the presumed requirement for restoration of what exists, rather than replacement with new. This was again well executed but is let down by the lack of adequate wind-pressure from the blower.

4) The work undertaken to selected reservoirs and soundboards in 2003, after water damage, has again been very nicely and professionally done, and can be ticked off the list.



My only small reservation here is with the fashion in which a new flexible duct has been applied to the small reservoir (above) which feeds the actions, in the hope of improving the lack of pressure. This was a vain hope — it is the blower which is at fault — and in due course should be removed.

The list of items which remain is as follows, arranged in a possible order of priority.

1) The blower must be renewed with a more adequate machine. Whilst it involves the frustration of accepting that one aspect of the expenditure 12 years ago was in vain, this is, in my view, the most urgent item, offering the most immediate gain, at an easily estimated and relatively modest cost. I would expect this to be achieved for between £5,000 and £7,000. There are also one or two badly split and leaking small concussion bellows (below) which could logically be done at the same, or otherwise left until the final stage.

2) The stop action must be electrified to bring all the stops into working order. Although this could, in strict terms, be carried out as a separate operation, logically it should form part of the completion of the electrification of the console, with the provision of solenoids to the stopknobs and the installation of a modern piston system. The cost of this will depend upon the extent of the piston system and the provision of controls, and may vary considerably from builder to builder. I would expect something between £20,000 and £30,000 in all.

3) The key actions must be releathered again. Some builders will prefer to propose replacement with quieter, enclosed actions, and future repairs to these would certainly be less costly. Either way, a cost of between £15,000 and £20,000 might be expected.

4) That would leave the question of the largest of the bellows, and the concussion bellows if they had not been dealt with earlier; and the cleaning of the remaining pipework and soundboards on site. There are a variety of options, but again a figure in the region £20,000 might not be far off.

The only way to discover true costs is, of course, to ask. I very much doubt that the costliest of our organbuilders can be considered, or indeed are necessary. Come what may, the choices are few, which I will be happy to comment upon if invited.

I should say that the provisions in the recent budget for bringing repairs to organs, bells and clocks into the VAT relief scheme which already exists for repairs to other aspects of church fabric, should now apply here. This means that you have to pay the VAT, and then claim it back. Details are still being clarified, but look hopeful.

Finally two other related matters — the chances of grant assistance, and the question of additions or alterations to the organ.

The chances of substantial grants towards organ work are, in every sense, a lottery, and they reduce dramatically if the organ in question has been significantly altered, or if such alteration — even on a small scale — forms part of the currently proposed work. Almost all organ-related grants are heavily weighted towards the conservationist viewpoint — which is reasonable enough, given that the bodies concerned exist to conserve our heritage, not weaken it.

The only body offering substantial grants to organ restoration projects is the Heritage Lottery Fund. When this fund started, in the mid 1990s, the requirements were strict. This was partly to form

a natural limit on the number of qualifying projects, and meant that any organ which had been materially altered in relatively recent times would probably not qualify. There have been rare exceptions in some high-profile buildings, but that was the general position, and the work in 1972 at Streatham would definitely have disqualified it.

Though the same general principles still apply, the emphasis at HLF has now changed somewhat, to focus on public benefit and public access, rather than simply the age and unspoilt importance of the organ itself. Since this is public money, the concern is understandable, and it has resulted in one or two grants to instruments which are distinguished but have been often rebuilt, and would not originally have qualified. One example was Hereford Cathedral, where the public benefit of an organ being used in a wide variety of sacred and secular concerts, not least the Three Choirs Festival, is obvious.

However, I honestly cannot see it being easy to make out a similar case for St Peter's, especially when the organ has been considerably altered in its mechanism, with more changes on the way. They also prefer to fund an entire project, not one which they pick up on half-way through. Whilst I cannot speak officially, I do act as an assessor and project monitor for HLF and know how they work; and I really would not hold out great hopes here.

Thereafter the size of grants drops dramatically to a thousand or two, or even a few hundreds. One source is the Council for the Care of Churches (CCC), but again the CCC organs committee is also strongly inclined towards conservation, and similar fine but mechanically modernised organs have not even cleared the first hurdle. Examples such as St John's Upper Norwood and All Saints Margaret Street come to mind.

There are one or two other small funds, such as the ON Organ Fund, where conservation is not such an issue, and grants of few hundred may be forthcoming, but they are more likely to offer these to top up a fund than start it. My advice is to consider the matter of funding as something that must be managed locally, and see any small grants as being a bonus rather than an essential.

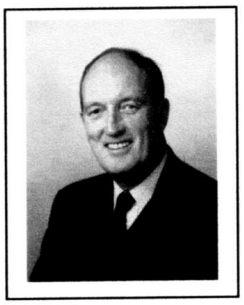
The second question is that of significant changes to the organ. Whilst it may be felt that the comments above amount to a green light to do whatever you like, since as far as funding is concerned the horse has already bolted from the open stable door, I would urge restraint as strongly as I can. The organ is too important to be subjected to the whims of its temporary curators — whether organists, organ advisors or incumbents.

I am aware, for instance, that there has been discussion about a detached console; but whilst I can appreciate an argument based on the care that must be taken in balancing organ to choir, many churches require such care, and this would be a costly and contentious alteration which would certainly come up against objections from the DAC, the CCC, and from conservationist bodies because, at root, where is the real necessity? The difficulty here, if there is one, is not the position of the console but that the organ itself is now left rather high and dry at the back. But that will not be changed by altering where the player sits, even if there were spare money around to fund it.

Tonally the organ is as complete as it needs to be — and is indeed generous in its resources by any parish church standards. It is a convincing and well-integrated example of its breed, and needs no changes, only being made to work.

I hope that the remarks above may be of help in highlighting the main factors; and will be happy to comment on an outline schedule, and a short-list of appropriate contractors, if it is felt that it is necessary to look beyond David Wells and his team.

Ian Bell
May 25th 2006



IAN BELL was born and educated in York. He has been involved in professional organ building for over 45 years, first as a voicer and then as designer and in management. After an apprenticeship in the Compton voicing shops, he was in charge of voicing for N.P.Mander Ltd of London from 1965 until 1972.

From 1972-91 he took charge of the Design Office at Mander, a task which included the costing, estimating and managerial supervision of all projects in the workshops and on site. During this period he was responsible for the design, pipe scaling and supervision of countless new organs and major reconstructions throughout the world, including the Cathedral organs of St. Paul's, Canterbury, Chichester, Rochester, Truro and Bristol, and large projects at Birmingham Town Hall, Eton College Chapel, Winchester College Chapel, Princeton University Chapel, and many more.

He resigned his directorship at Mander in 1993, since when he has advised organ builders' customers on technical matters on an independent professional basis, currently or recently being involved with some 60 projects in Britain and abroad including advice at the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall (as a committee member), Royal College of Organists (as technical adviser), St George's Hall Liverpool, Southampton Guildhall, St Paul's Cathedral, Hereford Cathedral, Gloucester Cathedral, Bristol Cathedral, St Albans Cathedral, Chichester Cathedral, Washington National Cathedral (as joint adviser), Grace Cathedral San Francisco, Arundel Roman Catholic Cathedral, Portsmouth Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sherborne Abbey, Auckland Town Hall NZ, Downing College Cambridge, St Paul's School, Harrow School, Eton College and the Cheltenham Ladies' College.

In 1987 Ian Bell was made a Fellow of the Incorporated Society of Organ Builders, of which he is a Past President. He has served as a Board Member and as Administrator of the Institute of British Organ Building, and as a director and editor of the journal *The Organbuilder*.

As Curator of the Grand Organ at St Paul's Cathedral, London, he advises the Dean & Chapter on matters relating to the organs, including the forthcoming restoration work on the Grand Organ, and new OBE Chapel Crypt organ. He ha served for ten years as a member of the Organs Committee of the Council for the Care of Churches, and has worked frequently as an assessor and project monitor for the Arts Council of England Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Heritage Memorial Lottery Fund.

He is, by invitation, a founder member of the Association of Independent Organ Advisers.