

Durham Cathedral

by kind permission of the Chapter



Photograph by CRA Davies

Organ Recital

by James Lancelot

to celebrate 150 years of
HARRISON & HARRISON, ORGAN BUILDERS

Wednesday 12th October 2011



The Organ of Durham Cathedral

A personal tribute

James Lancelot

Engraved deep on my memory is a particularly precious musical experience: the evening on which I first explored the organ of Durham Cathedral shortly after I had accepted appointment as Organist. In the course of more than an hour's uninterrupted improvisation I explored every one of its 98 registers and started to understand how they might be combined in ways expected and unexpected. It was the start of a love affair which has continued for twenty-six years, and I am still learning.

An organ built by a master craftsman in 1877 but much remodelled by a very different master in two rebuilds thirty-one years apart and then further rebuilt in 1970 (of all times) has a fair chance of being an incoherent hotch-potch; were this to be the case, Durham would not be unique. That the organ is so triumphantly successful and ultimately coherent (albeit different from Henry Willis' conception, and varied in the language and timbre of different components) speaks volumes for the skill and musicianship not only of all the builders concerned but also for the organists involved; and here Conrad Eden must be mentioned, for the success of the 1970 rebuild owes much to him as well as undoubtedly to Harrison & Harrison. What is the secret of the organ's success and legendary status?

First must be the building in which it is situated; visually transcendent, but also acoustically breathtaking – exciting without being confusing. But a close second (for a fine building can endue even a mediocre instrument with a sense of wonder) must come the quality and coherence of the voicing, and significantly the placing and layout of the organ, allowing every rank to speak clearly into the building. The size and inclusiveness of the specification gives the instrument huge variety as well – and by this I do mean variety, and not eclecticism.

At the instrument's heart lies Willis' core, a relatively small four-manual instrument, originally crowded (surely to its detriment?) in one single bay each side of the quire. Father Willis' voicing was undoubtedly magisterial and sublime; but the relative paucity of enclosed stops and the absence of upperwork from Choir and Solo would perhaps strike one today as a limitation. The three Harrison & Harrison rebuilds of the last century saw the instrument spread into the neighbouring westward bay on each side and the north triforium, and a near trebling of the number of enclosed ranks, as well as general enlargement. Willis' pipework was largely revoiced early in the century; the tierce chorus of the Great (a Willis trademark, at least in his 'middle' period) was first modified and later remodelled as a quint chorus. The pitch, a little higher than A=440, was left unaltered.

The organ was built to accompany the Anglican liturgy, in particularly that daily manifestation of it which is English cathedral Evensong; and to lead the congregation in hymns. Rather more than 99% of such worship would have taken place in the quire rather than the nave. These functions it has fulfilled and continues to fulfil in a manner that is beyond praise – a reflection on its quality and on the largely unchanged nature of Evensong. Few if any other instruments in Britain can accompany the psalms and the choral repertoire of the last 200 years to such effect, in the right hands.

But external changes have enlarged the role of the organ, and it is these changes to some extent that drove the rebuild of 1970. More worship takes place in the nave (significantly more in the last decade, indeed); and there is greater awareness of different historical periods and schools of organ music and of performing practice. Here, it is not only skilled voicing but sheer size that helps; so, to take obvious examples, one can build virtually a straight-line Great chorus for baroque music, while retaining an enormous mass of 8-foot flue sound for the English Romantics. One can accompany the choir delicately on the Choir Organ, while in French symphonic music combining Choir and Positive for use

as a Positif (and indeed combining Swell and Solo as an enlarged Récit). This is not necessarily to suggest that the organ can be made to sound German or French; but to emphasise that it can give a comprehensible English translation of such music in which structures, balances and relative colours survive convincingly.

And, as well as registering music by ‘the rules’, one can dream. My own personal odyssey at Durham includes much travel both at home and abroad, hearing and playing a huge variety of organs old and new and trying to learn from them. Now, increasingly, I find myself entering the cathedral with a preconceived sound in my head which I will try to recreate, sometimes by the use of exotic and apparently eccentric choice of stops. That the instrument responds so convincingly and uncomplainingly to such treatment surely says something about that love affair which began in 1985. Long may it continue.

James Lancelot

James was born in 1952, the great-grandson of J R Cousans, who set up the organ-building works of that name in Lincoln in 1878; successive members of his family led the firm for nearly a century. Successively a Chorister of St Paul’s Cathedral, Organ Scholar of King’s College, Cambridge, and Sub-Organist of Winchester Cathedral, James took up his present appointment of Master of the Choristers and Organist here at Durham Cathedral in 1985.

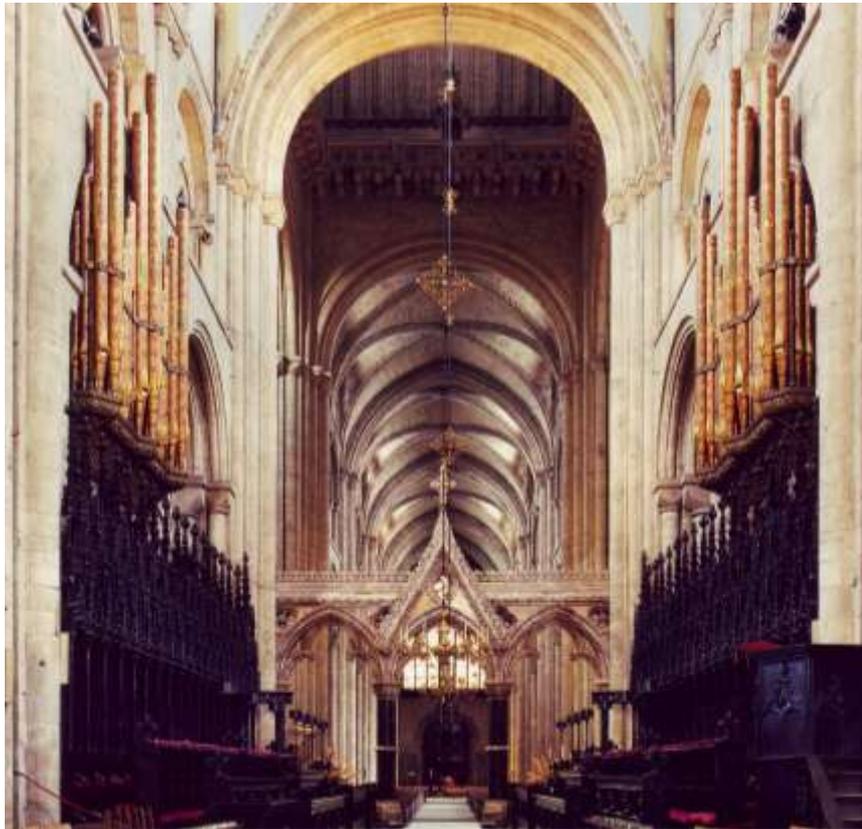
Although the post carries responsibility for the maintenance and development of the Cathedral’s ministry of music, expressed most specifically in the daily singing of Evensong by the Cathedral Choir, meaning that much of his time is spent in choir-training and conducting (and still more in administration!), James continues to regard organ playing as central to his work here. He plays the Cathedral organ regularly in its liturgical role, ably supported by successive Sub-Organists and Organ Scholars. But James also pursues a career as a recitalist here and elsewhere. As well as giving concerts throughout Britain, he has toured three times as a recitalist in the USA and once in New Zealand; and has played in numerous places on the continental mainland, from St Petersburg to Bordeaux, on instruments of many different periods and styles. His recordings have won golden opinions, not least that of the complete organ works of Hubert Parry, and a DVD of Elgar’s Organ Sonata. A recent recording of Mendelssohn’s Organ Sonatas here awaits release.

James enjoys custodianship of the incomparable instrument here in the Cathedral, but also ownership of a five-stop practice organ built for him in 1995 by Harrison & Harrison – the first in a series of such instruments built by the firm in recent years.



Bass pipes of 32ft Opficleide

Solo French Horn & Orchestral Tuba



The Organ of Durham Cathedral

In 1686 the renowned organ builder Bernard Smith completed his contract to build a “good, perfect, laudable and harmonious” organ on the quire screen. After many alterations, and a migration to the south side of the quire in 1847, that organ was finally dismantled in 1873. ‘Father’ Smith's east-facing “Chair” case, with its gorgeously hand-painted front pipes, found a new home in 1880 in the Chapel of Durham Castle, where it now fronts the Harrison organ of 1926; organ and façade have both been restored in 2011. Elements of Smith’s west-facing case were reconstructed in 1936 in the south aisle of the nave.

The organ which forms the basis of the present instrument was built by the firm of Henry Willis and completed in 1877. Willis was then at the height of his powers, acknowledged as one of the leading British organ builders; late in his life he, like Bernard Smith, was given the unofficial title of ‘Father’ as a mark of respect. The divided layout, on both sides of the quire, was a notable technical innovation.

At the time when the Cathedral organ was built, Harrison & Harrison had been established in Durham for only five years. By the turn of the century, when the firm was invited to overhaul it, Thomas Harrison had retired and his two sons Arthur and Harry were in charge. This was a turning-point in the firm's history: the work developed into a complete re-modelling and transformation of the instrument, and it was comprehensively revoiced in a broader and more majestic style commensurate with the building. The new style of voicing reached a level of refinement which would become the hallmark of the firm's work and would influence the course of British organ building for the next fifty years.

The rebuild was carried out in two stages: the main part in 1905, and the remainder (including the recasting of the Solo Organ, with its famous strings and orchestral reeds) in 1935.

In 1970, under the supervision of Cuthbert Harrison, the organ was overhauled: the Positive Organ was added and some other changes were made, but the main musical structure of the organ was carefully preserved. It was again overhauled between 1993 and 2001.

The Great Organ is in the south case, with the console below and the Choir and Positive Organs one bay further west; the Swell Organ is in the north case, with the Bombarde stops to the west and the Solo Organ in the triforium above. The Pedal stops are on both sides.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL

PEDAL ORGAN

1. Double Open Wood	32
2. Open Wood I	16
† 3. Open Wood II (from 1)	16
4. Open Diapason	16
* 5. Violone	16
6. Dulciana	16
7. Bourdon	16
† 8. Contra Viola (from 84)	16
† 9. Octave Wood (from 2)	8
10. Principal	8
* 11. Violoncello (from 5)	8
* 12. Dulciana (from 6)	8
13. Flute	8
14. Twelfth (from 5)	5 ¹ / ₃
† 15. Super Octave Wood (from 2)	4
16. Fifteenth (1996)	4
* 17. Twenty Second	2
18. Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
† 19. Double Ophicleide (from 21)	32
* 20. Double Trombone (from 22)	32
† 21. Ophicleide	16
22. Trombone	16
† 23. Cor Anglais (from 92)	16
24. Tromba	8
* 25. Cornett	4

*I Choir to Pedal II Great to Pedal
III Swell to Pedal IV Solo to Pedal*

POSITIVE ORGAN

* 26. Flûte à Cheminée	8
* 27. Quintade	8
* 28. Prestant	4
* 29. Flûte Ouverte	4
* 30. Doublette	2
* 31. Sesquialtera	II
* 32. Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃
* 33. Octavin	1
* 34. Octave Tierce	4 ² / ₅
* 35. Cymbale 26.29.33	III
* 36. Dulzian	16
* 37. Trompette	8

V Positive on Great VI Positive on Solo

CHOIR ORGAN (enclosed)

38. Bourdon	16
39. Viole d'Amour	8
40. Gedeckt	8
41. Flauto Traverso	8
42. Gemshorn	4
43. Stopped Flute	4
44. Flauto Traverso	4
* 45. Nazard	2 ² / ₃
46. Piccolo	2
* 47. Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
† 48. Dulciana Mixture 15.19.22	III
49. Clarinet	8

VII Tremulant (2001)

*VIII Swell to Choir IX Solo to Choir
X Bombarde Tubas on Choir a*

GREAT ORGAN

50. Double Open Diapason	16
† 51. Contra Clarabella (12 from 7)	16
† 52. Open Diapason I	8
53. Open Diapason II	8
54. Open Diapason III	8
† 55. Open Diapason IV	8
56. Gamba	8
57. Stopped Diapason	8
58. Claribel Flute (24 from 57)	8
59. Octave	4
† 60. Principal	4
61. Harmonic Flute	4
62. Octave Quint	2 ² / ₃
63. Super Octave	2
64. Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
* 65. Scharf 26.29.33	III
66. Contra Posaune	16
67. Posaune	8
68. Clarion	4

*XI Reeds on Choir XII Choir to Great
XIII Swell to Great XIV Solo to Great*

SWELL ORGAN

69. Double Diapason	16
70. Open Diapason I	8
71. Open Diapason II	8
72. Salicional	8
73. Vox Angelica (tenor c)	8
74. Lieblich Gedeckt	8
75. Principal	4
76. Harmonic Flute	4
77. Fifteenth	2
78. Mixture 12.15.17.19.22	V
79. Oboe	8
80. Vox Humana	8
<i>XV Tremulant</i>	
81. Double Trumpet	16
82. Trumpet	8
83. Clarion	4

XVI Solo to Swell

† 1935 additions
* 1970 additions
ø Stops 19, 21, 97 and 98
are grouped together as the
Bombarde Division

The manual compass is 58 notes

The pedal compass is 30 notes

The actions are electro-pneumatic

SOLO ORGAN (84-96 enclosed)

† 84. Contra Viola	16
† 85. Viole d'Orchestre	8
† 86. Viole Céleste	8
† 87. Viole Octavante	4
† 88. Cornet de Violes 10.12.15	III
89. Harmonic Flute	8
90. Concert Flute	4
91. Harmonic Piccolo	2
† 92. Cor Anglais	16
93. Corno di Bassetto	8
94. Orchestral Oboe	8
<i>XVII Tremulant</i>	
† 95. French Horn	8
† 96. Orchestral Tuba	8
97. Tuba	8
98. Tuba Clarion	4

*XVIII Octave XIX Sub Octave XX Unison Off
(N° 92 has an extra octave of pipes in the treble)*

COMBINATION COUPLERS

*XXI Generals on Swell foot pistons
XXII Pedal to Swell pistons
XXIII Great and Pedal Combinations
coupled*

ACCESSORIES

Ten foot pistons to the Pedal Organ
Ten pistons to the Choir and
Positive Organs
Ten pistons to the Great Organ
Ten pistons to the Swell Organ
(duplicated by foot pistons)
Ten pistons to the Solo Organ
Ten general pistons and general
cancel
Reversible pistons: *I-VI, VIII, IX,
XII - XIV, XVI, XXII, XXIII,
1, 20, 22*
Reversible foot pistons: *II, III,
XIII, 1*
Piston for Solo Orchestral Tuba (96)
Piston for Solo Tuba (97)
Reversible pistons for Full Organ
I and II
Pedal cancel foot piston
Eight general and eight divisional
piston memories (1994)
Balanced expression pedals to the
Choir, Swell and Solo Organs

Programme

Passacaglia, BWV 582 *Johann Sebastian Bach*
(1685-1750)

Chorale Prelude: *Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen*, Opus 122 N° 8 *Johannes Brahms*
(1833-1897)

Sonata in A, Opus 65 No 3 *Felix Mendelssohn*
(1809-1847)
Con moto maestoso; Andante tranquillo

Five Short Pieces *Percy Whitlock*
(1903-1946)
Allegretto; Folk Tune; Andante tranquillo; Scherzo; Pæan

Interval

during which drinks will be available in the Chapter House

Organ Demonstration (with Mark Venning)

Symphony N° 6 in B minor, Opus 59 *Louis Vierne*
(1870-1937)
Introduction et Allegro (Poco agitato e a piacere - Lento -Allegro risoluto);
Aria (Andante quasi adagio); Scherzo (Vivace);
Adagio (Larghetto); Final (Allegro molto)

Passacaglia, BWV 582 *Johann Sebastian Bach*

The music of Bach encompasses a whole universe of different moods and styles, and the **Passacaglia is a perfect example of the monumental aspect of his work**; “a colossal and sublime composition”, it consists of a sequence of variations above a ground-bass, followed by a fugue on the same theme. The twenty repetitions of the eight-bar bass theme are enlivened by an inexhaustible variety of textures, rhythms, and accompanimental motifs. Many of these figures and motifs are derived from the work of older composers, but the way Bach uses them, and his control of the whole magnificent structure, are quite unique; notice, for instance, how the theme leaves the bass and soars up to the soprano at the exact mid-point, in Variation 11. And then after the last variation Bach starts again with a Fugue on the same theme, bringing the whole work to a climax of almost symphonic proportions. No other work provides a more concentrated demonstration of the essence of his genius: the Passacaglia displays in its purest form “a veritably breathtaking logic and consistency in the development of musical ideas that has never been surpassed or perhaps even equalled since.”

Chorale Prelude: *Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen*, Opus 122 N° 8

Johannes Brahms

Quite apart from his significance as composer and pianist, Brahms was also one of the leading authorities of his time on the history and performance of Baroque music. At the end of his life, in the summer of 1896, he returned to the traditional roots of German musical culture, and confided his last thoughts to the organ in a set of short Chorale Preludes based on Lutheran hymns, in the manner of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* chorales. In these modest contrapuntal miniatures the elegiac mood of his late piano works is concentrated and intensified in music whose apparent simplicity conceals depths that increase with every hearing. *Es ist ein' Ros'* is a tender lullaby inspired by an old German carol to the Virgin Mary (usually sung in England to the words *A great and mighty wonder*); the tune is concealed within the gently undulating melodic line that passes between the soprano and tenor voices.

Sonata in A, Opus 65 No 3

Felix Mendelssohn

Most of the great 19th-century composer/pianists (Liszt, Schumann, Brahms, and even Chopin) tried their hand at organ playing at one time or another, but Mendelssohn was the only one who took a serious and lifelong interest in the King of Instruments. In England his masterly performances of Bach and his improvisations “on the noble Organ in the Town Hall at Birmingham, as well as other large Organs in the Metropolis” aroused universal admiration, and his *Six Grand Sonatas* were commissioned by an English publisher in 1844. They were published the following year to generous critical acclaim. “These intensely poetical new ideas,” said Schumann, “what a perfect picture they form in every Sonata! In Bach's music I always imagine him sitting at the organ, but in yours I rather think of a St. Cecilia touching the keys.”

Some of the Sonatas incorporate pre-existing material, and Mendelssohn based the first movement of the Third Sonata on a wedding march that he had written for the marriage of his sister Fanny in 1829. “I love the beginning,” he told her, “but detest the middle, so I am completely rewriting it.” The new middle section forms a striking contrast, and introduces a much darker mood. The theme comes from Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise – the despairing cry of the tenor soloist, *Watchman, will the night soon pass?* This theme becomes the subject of a fugue for the manuals, which unfolds above a majestic hymn tune in long notes on the pedals – Luther's penitential chorale *Aus tiefer Noth* (“From depths of woe I cry to Thee”). With the introduction of continuous semiquaver figuration the music becomes progressively louder and more animated. It builds up to a frenetic climax, and culminates in the return of the optimistic march music, which finally brings this long and complex piece to a triumphant conclusion. After all this drama, the Sonata concludes in complete simplicity with a short *Andante* in Mendelssohn's most melodious style.

Five Short Pieces

Percy Whitlock

Percy Whitlock made his name in the 1930s in Bournemouth, first at the cathedral-like church of St Stephen, and then as Borough Organist at the new Pavilion in the Winter Gardens. The Compton organ here was “designed to perform music of the most severe type or the latest foxtrot with equal facility”, and Whitlock's duties and musical sympathies were similarly wide-ranging – working with Sir Dan Godfrey and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, performing solos from both the classical and the theatre repertoire, or playing with the pit orchestra for artists like Gracie Fields and Paul Robeson. His own compositions all display a wonderful gift for memorable melody and rich harmonic colour, and his early death at the age of 42 was a sad loss for British music. The Five Short Pieces (1930) provided Whitlock with his first great success as an organ composer: a nonchalant *Allegretto*, a wistful, pastoral *Folk Tune*, a lyrical *Andante*, and a perky *Scherzo* for flutes, concluding with a triumphant and lusciously harmonised *Paeon* for the loudest stop of the organ, the tuba..

Louis Vierne was the great romantic among the French organ composers: “I do not believe,” he once said, “that a musician who, as a man, is incapable of love or suffering, will ever create anything of real beauty.” Organist of Notre-Dame in Paris for 40 years, he was profoundly influenced by the ambience of the cathedral and its organ, but his music remained essentially secular in inspiration, reflecting the turmoil of his own highly-charged emotions. He wrote some beautiful vocal, orchestral, piano and chamber music, but it is his compositions for his own instrument – and particularly his six great Organ Symphonies – that form the core of his creative output.

Composed during a long summer holiday at Menton on the French Riviera in the summer of 1930, the Sixth Symphony seems to be inspired by the ever-changing moods of the sea – a kind of organist’s *La Mer*. Vierne, who was almost blind, spent his days sitting on the beach, composing the music in his head, and then wrote it down in braille. Finally he undertook the enormous task of writing out this monumental score on large sheets of manuscript paper. This painstaking labour is immortalised in an evocative photo: Vierne is sitting on a terrace, beside a white-shuttered French window, its lace curtains fluttering in the breeze. A high music-stand containing the manuscript paper is in front of him, about two inches from his nose, and he is writing on this with his right hand, while his left hand follows the original braille score, placed on another chair beside him.

The Symphony is constructed in cyclic form, and the musical material of each movement is derived from imaginative transformations of the same two thematic motifs. A short *Introduction* presents the two themes in turn: Theme A, a vigorous motif of aspiration, soaring upwards in leaps and bounds, and Theme B, a motif of repose, drifting around a central note, rising, and then falling again. A dramatic crescendo leads into the first movement proper, a perfectly proportioned sonata-form *Alllegro* which retains both themes as first and second subjects; their surging ebb and flow seems to evoke a sparkling summer sea in full flood.

Tranquil gliding chords open the *Aria*, the first of the Symphony’s two slow movements, introducing an angular, anguished cantilena for solo trumpet. As the solo becomes more and more intense, the melodic line gradually assumes the shape of Theme A, and then sinks back into the return of the gliding chords; the movement ends in a golden twilight haze, with Theme A rising mysteriously from the deep.

In the *Scherzo* that follows Vierne’s highly chromatic harmonic language reaches its furthest extreme, almost approaching atonality at times, as bizarre clusters of notes fly in all directions. Theme A appears in the two ‘trio’ sections, its elegant contour fragmented – almost caricatured – into a breathless dance.

In the opaque, fathomless depths of the *Adagio*, Theme B comes into its own, contrasting with a brighter central section of soaring lyricism, based on a syncopated version of Theme A. Finally the gloom descends again, and a thick sea-mist seems to envelop the sombre final page, which uses the softest, deepest tones of the organ to extraordinary effect.

The joyful *Final* begins with an energetic theme in the style of a fanfare, supported by a repeated timpani-like motif in the pedals. Theme B returns in a brief episode, but the music is soon hijacked by a another new theme – a very melodic, diatonic tune which carries all before it. The reprise of the opening bars leads to a conclusion of prolonged and breathtaking brilliance, with Theme A thundering out for the last time in the pedals, and the Symphony ends in a cascading torrent of pedal scales. “Yes, the Mediterranean was made for eternal holidays!”, Vierne wrote to a friend. “Under this burning sky one forgets all one’s regrets and misfortunes – nothing is left but the sheer joy of being alive!”



Proceeds from this Recital will be given to Durham Cathedral's Music Endowment Fund held at the County Durham Community Foundation, the purpose of which is to provide bursaries for Choristers and to support the Cathedral's acclaimed Music Outreach Programme. Contact Gaye Kirby, the Cathedral's Head of Development, on gaye.kirby@durhamcathedral.co.uk or 0191 374 4052 for more information.

www.durhamcathedralchoir.org.uk

Photographs by J Maritz

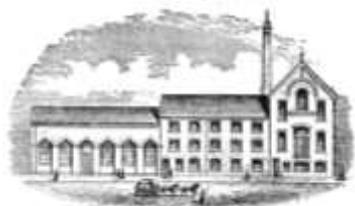
Harrison & Harrison

A sesquicentennial sketch

Thomas Hugh Harrison was born in 1839, the second son of Thomas William Harrison of St Pancras, London, whose firm made parts for the organ-building trade. At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to the organ builder Henry Willis, a fact of which he remained proud throughout his career. Some time after completing his seven-year apprenticeship with Willis, he joined the Bristol firm of William Allen as manager. A forceful and even combative personality, he was clearly ambitious on his own account, and in 1861 he took the bold step of moving to Rochdale to set up his own firm.



Thomas Harrison



The business was conducted energetically from the start, and Thomas was soon attracting favourable notice from influential people in the musical world, such as Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, Sir John Stainer and John Bacchus Dykes, Precentor of Durham Cathedral and subsequently Vicar of St Oswald's Church. By 1870, however, the firm had overstretched itself financially, and in 1872, probably encouraged by Dykes, Thomas made a fresh start in the city of Durham. In this new venture he was supported by his father in London, and the name Harrison & Harrison dates from this time. He purchased an old paper mill in Cross Street (today's Hawthorn Terrace), which was enlarged around the turn of the century and served the firm well until 1996.

The firm advanced steadily. An important early contract was the three-manual organ built for the Chapel of Castle Howard in 1875, which still survives in virtually its original form. Within twenty-five years Harrison & Harrison had built more than three hundred organs, predominantly in north-east England and Scotland, but also in Yorkshire and Lancashire, with rarer examples further south and five overseas. Surviving organs from this period – including a number in County Durham – show sturdy workmanship and a colourful musical quality. During these years the firm established a reputation that was to provide a good basis for greater things.

Thomas's two sons, Arthur and Henry (Harry), joined the firm in the 1880s as apprentices and in due course became partners. Thomas himself retired to London in 1895, leaving them in charge of the business. In their hands it soon started to reach new levels of musical and technical mastery. Arthur Harrison inherited a full share of his father's single-minded determination, which was allied to a reticent but engaging personality; he became a voicer of legendary vision and perfectionism and a respected member of the English musical establishment. Harry's contribution was more unobtrusive but no less important, in achieving the highest standards of design, craftsmanship and administration.



Arthur Harrison

The rebuilding of the organ in Durham Cathedral was one of the brothers' first milestones, in 1905; it was to be followed by more than twenty cathedral organs and many others for churches and concert halls throughout Great Britain and overseas. Arthur Harrison achieved his ambition of providing organs for three of England's most famous buildings: The Royal Albert Hall, King's College Cambridge and Westminster Abbey. He died in 1936, when the Westminster Abbey organ was partly completed, and is commemorated in a window in the Chapter House of Durham Cathedral.



Harry Harrison



Cuthbert Harrison

Harry Harrison's son, Cuthbert, took over the leadership of the firm in 1945. Educated at Durham School and Exeter College, Oxford, he first chose a military career but was persuaded by his parents to join the firm after his uncle's death. He promptly immersed himself in the world of organ building and, with the help of a devoted staff, re-established the firm's fortunes after the disruption of the Second World War.

A hugely influential event was the building of the organ in The Royal Festival Hall in 1954. This landmark instrument, which will be restored by H & H in time for its sixtieth anniversary, introduced the British organ world to the classical influence of the continental Organ Reform Movement – a striking act of courage on the part of H & H, the effects of which have reverberated down the decades. Remarkably, the firm absorbed this influence while remaining true to its roots in English organ building.

Other notable instruments during Cuthbert's thirty-year tenure included Coventry Cathedral, St Albans Abbey, the Colston Hall Bristol, Harrow School Speech Room, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and St Clement Danes, London, together with many rebuilds and restorations, such as Lincoln, Wells and Ripon Cathedrals and the Temple Church. Cuthbert was a great supporter of Durham Cathedral, serving as secretary of the Friends for many years; he remained Chairman of H & H until his death in 1991.

In 1975 Mark Venning took over the management of the firm. The next thirty-five years saw the building of organs for St Davids Cathedral, Cirencester Parish Church and St Edmundsbury Cathedral, nine for the United States, and a successful series of organs with mechanical action; notable restorations included the famous Schulze organ of St Bartholomew's Armley, the Usher Hall Edinburgh, the Albert Hall Nottingham, Reading Town Hall, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Stockholm City Hall, Westminster Abbey, and the cathedral organs of Lichfield, Peterborough, Salisbury, Southwark, Winchester and Westminster. Mark served as President of the International Society of Organbuilders from 1994 to 2000.



Mark Venning

In 1996, after 124 years in Hawthorn Terrace, the firm moved to a purpose-built workshop in Meadowfield, still within the City boundary.



Christopher Batchelor

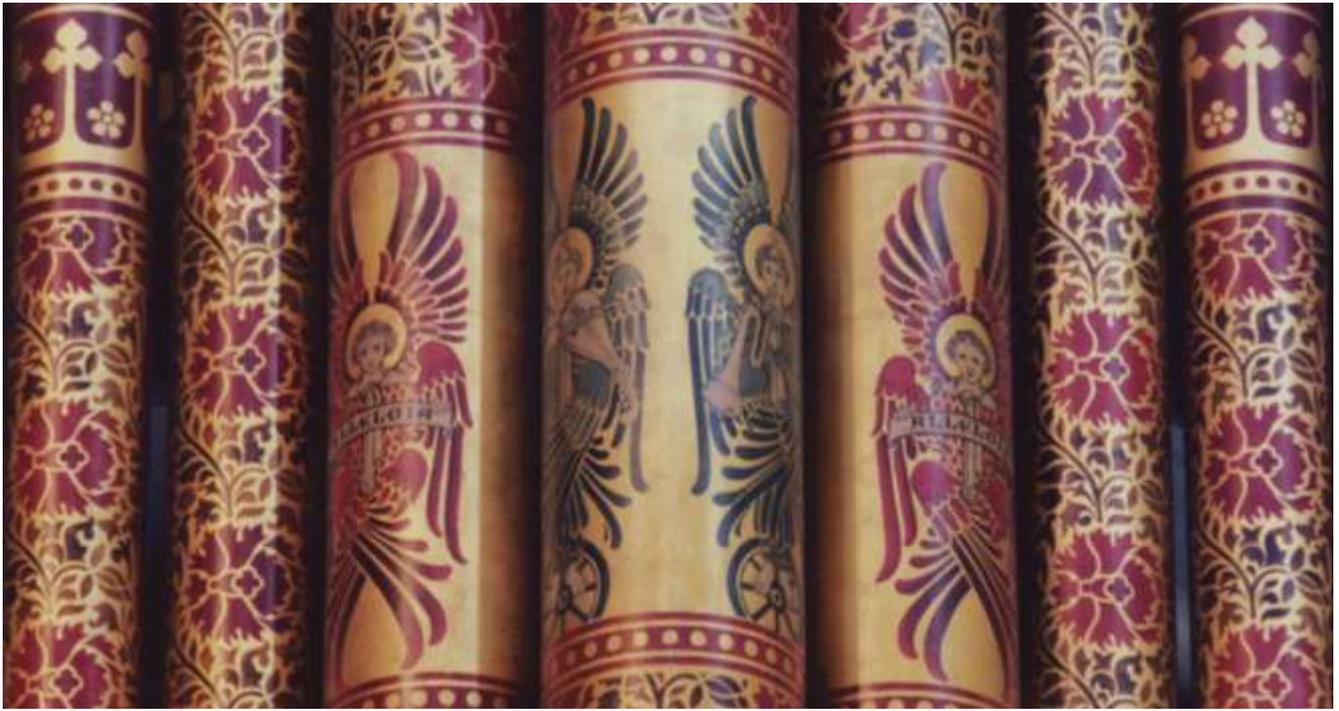
At the end of January 2011, Christopher Batchelor succeeded Mark Venning as Managing Director; Mark remains active as Chairman. Current projects include several in London: the rebuilt organ in Westminster Central Hall was inaugurated on 8th October, and we are currently doing major work at Holy Trinity Sloane Street and the Temple Church, with the Royal Festival Hall following on.

With a staff of 50 – a number that has varied little since the early twentieth century – we are now one of the largest firms of organ builders internationally: a fact which, though unimportant in itself, might surprise even our ambitious founder. He would also be pleased to know that his descendants are among our shareholders 150 years on. Looking to the future, we are proud of our apprentice training programme. Our skilled organ builders are the foundation of our success, and many of them stay with us throughout their working lives. While we remain true to our English traditions – Arthur Harrison would still recognise the colourful and meticulously-blended sound of a modern Harrison organ – an awareness of international trends and techniques has been augmented in recent years by interaction with craftsmen from other European countries.

As well as building and restoring organs, we also tune and maintain them; in this way we have built excellent relationships with our customers extending back through many decades. It is wonderful that tonight we can celebrate our 150th anniversary, and the work of our predecessors, here in Durham Cathedral with our flagship instrument of 1905.

MBV

Further reading: *The Harrison Story*, by Laurence Elvin, published by the author, 1977; articles by David Watt and Richard Hird on Thomas Harrison, and by Relf Clark and George Dixon on Arthur Harrison, *Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies (JB IOS)* 29, 2005; articles by Richard Hird on Thomas Harrison, *Durham Biographies VI*, Durham County Local History Society, 2009, and on Arthur Harrison and the Durham Cathedral organ, *JB IOS* 18, 1994; article by Mark Venning on Cuthbert Harrison and the Royal Festival Hall, *JB IOS* 23, 1999; articles by Relf Clark on Harrison & Harrison, *Organ Building* 11, 2011, and on Arthur and Harry Harrison in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; *Durham Cathedral Organs*, by Richard Hird and James Lancelot, Dean and Chapter of Durham, 1991. Information from these sources is gratefully acknowledged.



Photographs by CRA Davies