

# History of the Organs in The Priory Church of Lady St Mary Wareham

Church Vestry accounts up to 1799 contain entries for the purchase of bass viol strings, this suggests that the Church Band, of singers and instrumentalists, was active at that date. Their music was in their own manuscripts, copied in the evenings after work. In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century these little groups of (West Gallery) musicians were ousted by the installation of organs - '*miserable dumbledores*' according to Thomas Hardy's Melstock church's west gallery musicians!

Documentary sources indicate that the first organ in Lady St Mary was installed in 1819. At present we have no detail of this instrument's maker or specification, however, contemporary accounts report that it was inadequate for the Church. Parish accounts record annual payments for tuning (£2.2s) from 1822 until 1827.

At a vestry meeting in March 1828 it was reported that the organ was in a bad state of repair (after less than ten years!) and of insufficient power for the church. Picture shows a 1967 restoration of what is thought to have been Lady St Mary's first organ – now, after several re-incarnations, in St Denys' Church, Eaton, Leicestershire.



To save the Parish continued expense for repairs it was decided to commission a new organ by subscription. The contract was awarded, at a cost of £218.11s (plus the old instrument), to Russell and Cranston of Ringwood. The specification was:

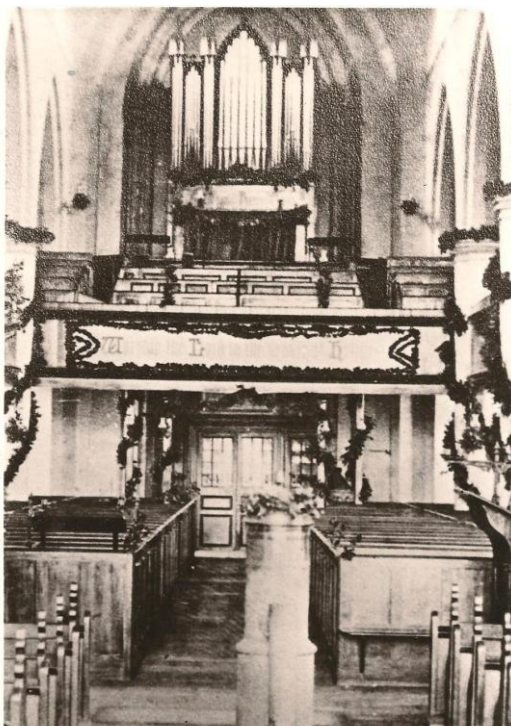
## **GREAT**

Open Diapason  
Stopped Diapason  
Principal  
Fifteenth  
Sesquialtera

## **SWELL**

Open Diapason  
Principal  
Oboe

**PEDAL:** "An octave of pipes coupled to Great"



The organ was installed in the west tower gallery. It was opened at a "Grand Concert" on 6th May 1829.

A plan, drawn in 1841 and in the Parish records, shows the organ in the west tower gallery after the Victorian reconstruction of the Nave following the demolition of the ancient and unique Saxon nave.

Parish records show that on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1842, there were great celebrations at the official opening of the new Nave. '*The Organist, Mr Groves, played whilst his daughter's voice could be heard amongst the Trebles.*'! The instrument had, earlier that year, been overhauled, "greatly improved" and re-erected by James Ling of Taunton. Picture shows what is thought to be the re-dedication of the Nave and the refurbished organ.

An apocryphal story tells how, in 1878, - *and without consulting anyone!* - a few members of the congregation

dismantled and moved the organ bodily from the Gallery to Chancel.

In 1883 the instrument was moved to St George's Church, Langton Matravers, where it remained until 1915.

In 1883 Mrs Mary Rodgett presented the church with a new organ in memory of her husband Miles Rodgett JP of Sandford, who died in June 1882. Miles Rodgett had settled in Sandford where he built Sandford house and developed an estate. He was a keen amateur musician and employed Maley, Young and Oldknow of London to build a three-manual organ for his music room - later to become St Martin's Church, Sandford. This instrument is still in that building.

On her husband's death Mrs Rodgett instructed the same firm to build an almost identical instrument in Lady St Mary.

The organ was erected at the east end of the south aisle, in front of the present opening to St Edward's chapel, and opened in May 1883.

The specification of the 1883 Maley, Young and Oldknow organ was:

| <b>GREAT</b>    | <b>ft</b> | <b>SWELL</b>       | <b>ft</b> | <b>CHOIR</b>        | <b>ft</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
| Double Diapason | 16        | Contra Gamba       | 16        | Open Diapason       | 8         |
| Open Diapason   | 8         | Open Diapason      | 8         | Liebelich Gedacht   | 8         |
| Violin Diapason | 8         | Stopped Diapason   | 8         | Dulciana            | 8         |
| Clarabella      | 8         | Salicionelle       | 8         | Bell Gamba          | 8         |
| Principal       | 4         | Voix Celestes (TC) | 8         | Gemshorn            | 4         |
| Harmonic Flute  | 4         | Principal          | 4         | Suabe Flute         | 4         |
| Fifteenth       | 2         | Wald Flute         | 4         | Harmonic Piccolo    | 2         |
| Mixture         | IV        | Flageolet          | 2         | Contra Fagotto (TC) | 16        |
| Posaune         | 8         | Mixture            | III       | Clarionet (TC)      | 8         |
| <b>PEDAL</b>    |           | Cornoepan          | 8         | Oboe                | 8         |
|                 |           | Open Diapason      | 16        | Vox Humana          | 8         |
|                 |           | Bourdon            | 16        | Trombone            | 16        |
|                 |           | Violoncello        | 8         |                     |           |

In 1893 Crickmay of Weymouth designed and built the present organ chamber on the North side of the Chancel: the cost of this work was met by James B Dugdale; Mrs Rodgett's brother. The organ was moved by E. C. Bishop of Winchester. It is thought that some re-voicing was carried out at this time.

The organ was cleaned and overhauled in 1922.

In 1956 there was a major rebuild by Gray, Davison of London. The original tracker was replaced with electro-pneumatic action and a new console was constructed and detached to the south east end of the Nave: its present position. A Bass Flute was added together with an Octave Diapason to the pedal by extension. The Posaune on the Great was also made available on the Choir as a re-voiced solo reed.



In 1975 Anthony Scott undertook some repair work to the soundboards, re-voiced the Violin Diapason and brightened several stops. The Great Mixture was also recast.

In the late 1980's the action and the electrical transmission became unreliable and a decision was taken to rebuild the organ and to make some tonal and technical improvements. The Posaune was moved from the Choir and left on the Great; this work was carried

out by Bishop and White of Ringwood and was completed in 1990.

In 2017 a major overhaul was undertaken by Michael Farley of Colliton Raleigh. Funding was raised by local subscription and a major grant from the Viridor Land Fund.

Electrical/electronic transmission, including a 99 Channel Multiplex system, was installed, a Trompette was installed on the Choir and Clarinet was re-voiced, new electro-magnetic stop motors installed throughout; the swell expression shutters fitted with an electrical multi-variable motor; a new pedal board was also provided.

The current specification is as follows:

| <b>GREAT</b>              | <b>Ft.</b> | <b>SWELL</b>           | <b>Ft</b>         |
|---------------------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Double Diapason        | 16         | 10. Open Diapason      | 8                 |
| 2. Open Diapason no 1     | 8          | 11. Stopped Diapason   | 8                 |
| 3. Open Diapason no 2     | 8          | 12. Salicional         | 8                 |
| 4. Hohl Flute             | 8          | 13. Viox Celestes (TC) | 8                 |
| 5. Principal              | 4          | 14. Principal          | 4                 |
| 6. Harmonic Flute         | 4          | 15. Wald Flute         | 4                 |
| 7. Fifteenth              | 2          | 16. Flageolet          | 2                 |
| 8. Mixture                | IV         | 17. Larigot            | 1 <sup>1/2</sup>  |
| 9. Posaune                | 8          | 18. Mixture            | III               |
| Swell to Great            |            | 19. Contra Fagotto     | 16                |
| Swell sub to Great        |            | 20. Cornopean          | 8                 |
| Swell super to Great      |            | 21. Oboe (from 19)     | 8                 |
| Choir to Great            |            | Super-octave           |                   |
| Gt. and Ped. Combinations |            | Sub-octave             |                   |
|                           |            | Tremulant              |                   |
| <b>CHOIR</b>              | <b>Ft</b>  | <b>PEDAL</b>           | <b>Ft</b>         |
| 22. Open Diapason         | 8          | 32. Open Wood          | 16                |
| 23. Stopped Diapason      | 8          | 33. Open Diapason      |                   |
| 24. Bell Gamba            | 8          | (from 1)               | 16                |
| 25. Gemshorn              | 4          | 34. Bourdon            | 16                |
| 26. Lieblich Gedacht      | 4          | 35. Quint (34)         | 10 <sup>2/3</sup> |
| 27. Blockflute            | 4          | 36. Principal          | 8                 |
| 28. Sesquialtera          | II         | 37. Bass Flute (34)    | 8                 |
| 29. Mixture               | III        | 38. Fifteenth (36)     | 4                 |
| 30. Clarinet (TC)         | 8          | 39. Trombone           | 16                |
| 31. Trompette             | 8          | 40. Fagotto (19)       | 16                |
|                           |            | 41. Trompette (31)     | 8                 |
| Super-octave              |            | 42. Oboe (19)          | 8                 |
| Swell super to Choir      |            | 43. Shawm (19)         | 4                 |
| Swell to Choir            |            | Great to Pedal         |                   |
| Tremulant                 |            | Swell to Pedal         |                   |
|                           |            | Choir to Pedal         |                   |
|                           |            | Swell super to Pedal   |                   |

Six pistons to each manual: 6 General pistons; 6 Toe pistons to pedal organ: Toe pistons for pedal Trombone: Pistons for:- Gt/Ped\*; Sw/Gt\*; Ch/Ped; Ch/Gt; Sw/Ped; Sw/Ch; General Cancel and Ch Trompette. Multi-Plex transmission system. 64 Channel Memory system for pistons. Pistons marked\* are duplicated by toe pistons. Compass: Manuals C-G 56 notes; Pedal C-F 30 notes.

#### ORGANISTS:

1842: Mr Groves  
 1885: Henry Snelling  
 1886: C.E. Wood  
 1914: H.T. Williams  
 1935: E.C. Searle  
 1935: Marjory Howe FRCO, LRAM  
 1947: Philip Miles Mus.Bach., FRCO  
 1947: Arthur Wade  
 1952: Percy Gibbons  
 1964: Arthur Dewhurst BA  
 1965: Robert N.P. Farrow BSc  
 2000: {Maurice E Turner M.Phil., FRSA  
 {John Reynolds BSc., FIEE - 2017