

Back to the 1870s...

St Barnabas Jericho - the Willis organ project

Martin Payne, 13 Nov 2022

historical material researched by Dr. Tom Edwards

St Barnabas Jericho - the Willis organ project

What I will cover today

- Why the quality of the church organ matters
- The history of organs in this church - and the design challenges
- The design scheme for a new organ
- Progress on the project - now over the half-way mark and looking to sign a contract and start building
- How you can help in this final stage

‘The King of instruments’

What a quality organ does

- Hundreds - or thousands - of metal and wood pipes, each creating a column of vibrating air when activated. Huge variety and power of sounds
- Technology dates back to ancient Greece. Long associated with accompanying the human voice. Used in major churches in the West since the Middle Ages
- In our context: hymns, hymns, hymns! And then improvisation / creating a mood. And accompanying choirs, performing, and teaching



Liverpool Cathedral Grand Organ, Henry Willis & Sons 1926

1872

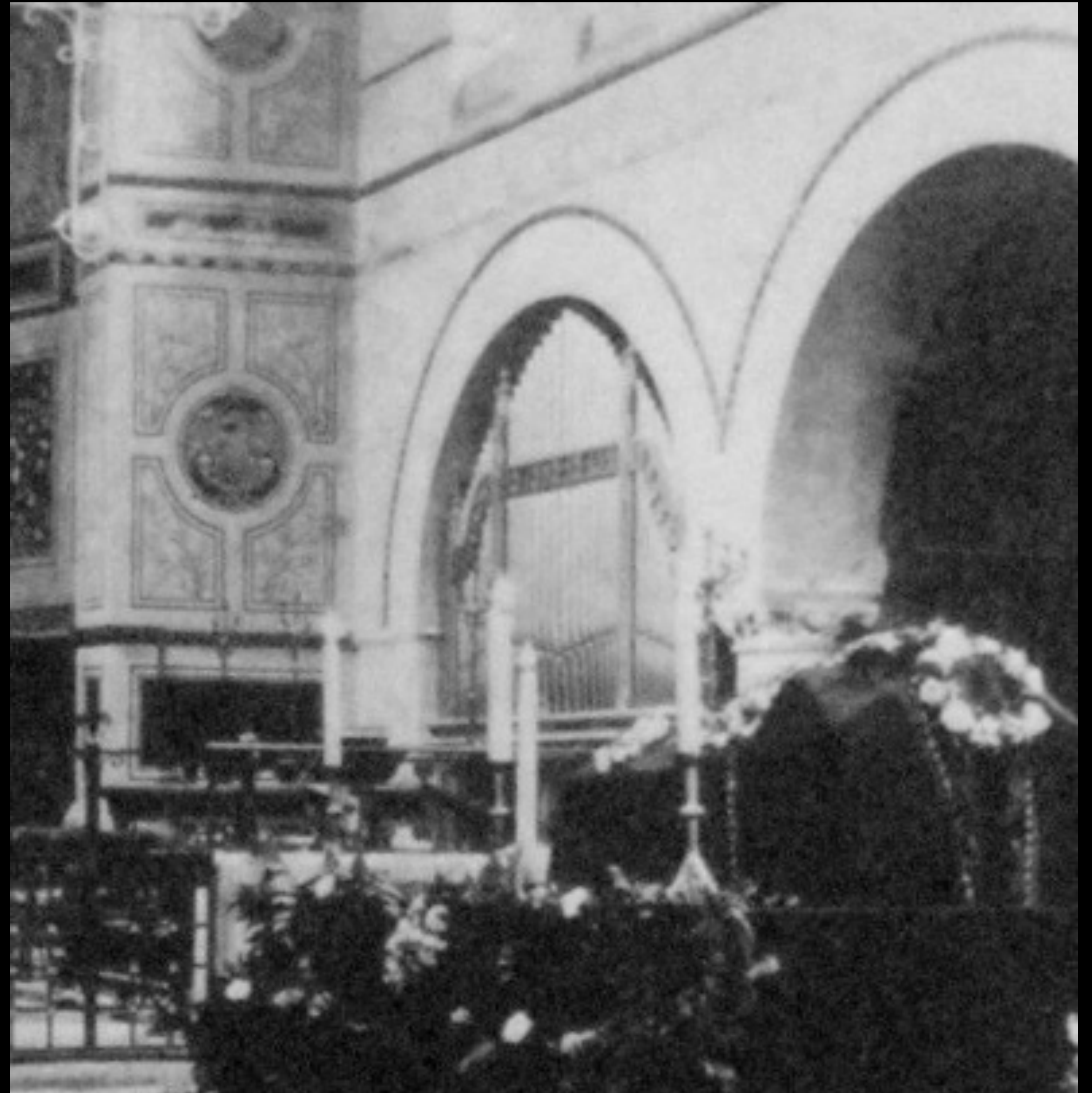
Organ by Robert Allen of Bristol

“at the consecration the Bishop of Oxford expressed his wish that ‘the offerings that morning would be liberal, so as to enable them to erect an organ worthy of such a church’”

Oct 1869

“On Friday evening, the eve of St Matthias, the new organ at St Barnabas was used for the first time. It consists of **two manuals... with two and a half octaves of pedals... and is prepared for 27 stops**, 19 of which are, however, only in present use. The effect of the instrument was very good indeed, every stop telling with great clearness and precision.”

Feb 1872

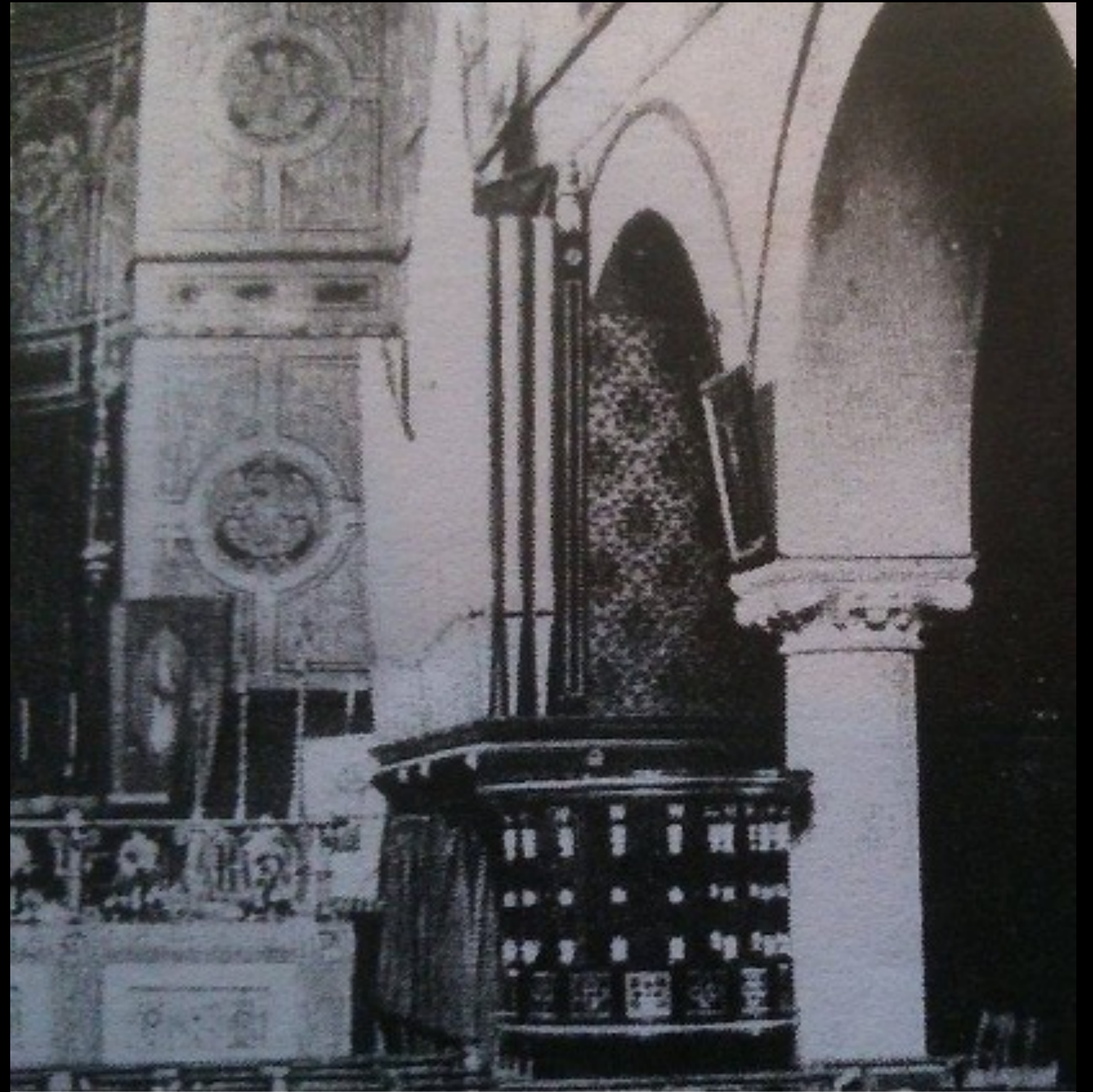


1877-1880

Rebuilds by Charles Martin

1877 - re-voiced and expanded by Martin

1880 “Mr Martin, of Pembroke-street, St Clement, is rebuilding and considerably enlarging the organ at St Barnabas’ church. The instrument will consist of four manuals and about forty stops. It will be finished by the end of September” [actually only 31 stops were provided]



1887

Relocation and expansion

“At St. Barnabas... the organ has been lifted off the floor to the level of the spring of the nave arches, and a sort of box projecting from the wall of the width of the aisle has been constructed. The organist sits in this den with the organ, which nearly fills it up, and I have heard a rumour that the brains of one man have already given way under the trial. I think it certainly is the most ugly and dreadful place in which I ever saw an organ put, and must simply be torture for the player”

Nov 1889



Early 20th century

Work by Martin & Coate, P.G. Phipps

1901: further expansion to 39 stops, new facade pipes

1907: electric blower installed in the tower

1916: substantial rebuild by ex-choirboy Percy Phipps

1918: Viole d'Orchestre added

1929/30 repairs and cleaning



The 1970s - a different approach

Nicholson and company

- ‘Classical’ design principles, strongly influenced by New College 1969 organ
- Position on rather than behind the arch allows it to speak directly into church - but much smaller than previous instruments
- Ground level console and electric action makes accompanying choir and congregation much easier
- Low wind pressures allowed for classical voicing - but design was compromised early on to achieve more volume

“The voicing is essentially English and none the worse for that. But the wide-scaled middle register of the Open Diapason has a seductive, almost Italian quality, that is really beautiful... the full flue choirs of this organ... has all the authentic shimmer of English choruses at their best. The Dulzian is of Clarinet formation. Such stops at 16ft pitch can be very useful and effective. I think this one should be louder and more solid in tone. Anyway, I understand it is to be replaced by a trumpet, which will show both losses and gains” *Organists’ Review*, 1976.

The design for a new organ

Henry Willis & Sons, using original 'Father' Willis material

- Re-make existing case and console. New pipe design and colouring within existing case to blend more with the surrounding architecture.
- Re-use Great and Swell soundboards and pipework from Bargeddie Church (Willis 1876) recently redundant
- Expand Great and Swell, and create Pedal organ, with restored chests and pipework from Bow Common (Willis 1877)
- This will provide an instrument of 2 manuals and pedals and 27 stops - probably fairly similar in design and tone to Robert Allen's 1872 concept



Bargeddie Great soundboard (left)
and external pipes (above)
Bow Common Great soundboard (right)



Project progress

(figures and dates are approximate)

Funds raised to date

- £22,000+ from individual regular giving since launch of appeal
- £4,000+ from parish events
- £180,000 from 3 major donations

Project activity

- 2018 selection of Willis as preferred contractor
- 2019 preliminary faculty application - positive response from heritage bodies
- £25,000 Phase 1 contract signed Dec 2019, secures historic pipework and initial design work

Next steps

- Construction contract with fixed price of £336,000 valid for one year
- Costs of preparatory and supporting work fall to us - scaffolding, accommodation, temporary organ if needed, etc. Estimate £24,000
- We have (or will soon have) around £185,000 in the bank - so **we're half way already** and keen to start spending before the money loses its purchasing power
- Final case design work and faculty application
- Construction and installation takes about 10 months
- Further fundraising - in particular, seeking grants from charitable bodies and more individual major donors

What we would like from you

- Spread the word! We need to get the word out to potential donors beyond the Parish, bring people along to our events, and build up interest
- Practical help with grant applications, preparatory work, clearing organ loft
- Direct giving, if this is a priority for you within the parish
- Prayer, support, and thankfulness