

King's College, Cambridge

Work on the Chapel Organ

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Selective work on the Chapel organ completed by Harrison & Harrison in February 2009 involved three areas of the instrument: front pipes, some internal pipework, and the console. Three front pipes were repaired and re-gilded, several internal pipes were repaired, and the console was upgraded and overhauled. The organ was out of action from the beginning of January until mid-February.

The repaired front pipes are the three in the south-west tower of the organ case. These pipes, which are thought to be at least 300 years old, were collapsing under their own weight. They are no longer speaking pipes, so their deformation had not affected the sound of the organ; but it was obvious to the eye, and in time would have presented a hazard.



The collapsing front pipes before repair

The pipes were removed and taken to Harrison & Harrison's workshop in Durham where they were repaired, and strengthened by the insertion of zinc liners. (A detailed description and photographs of the repair process by Nigel Turner, one of Harrison & Harrison's metalhands, is available separately). After the pipes had been repaired they were re-gilded by specialists. These repaired pipes now match the three pipes in the northwest tower of the organ case which were repaired and re-gilded in the same way in 2002.



*The west side of the organ case
after repair of the south-west front pipes*

A small number of pipes inside the instrument also needed repair: these included several from the Great Posaune 8ft, the Solo Violes, the Pedal Ophicleide and the Solo Tuba. After many years, these pipes had begun to collapse under their own weight. (The Posaune, Ophicleide and Tuba constitute some of the loudest stops on the organ.) The pipes were removed and brought back to Durham for careful attention in the metal shop.



*Tuba pipes and parts of the Pedal Ophicleide
in the workshop in Durham*

A “stepper” system has been added to the console. This electronic system provides conveniently-located stepper pistons which advance through the various combinations of stops that have been selected on the general pistons. The memory system of the console has been upgraded so that the eight general pistons now have 512 levels of memory and the divisional pistons have 16 levels.

The keyboards and Pedal toe sweeps were removed and taken to Durham in order to make the necessary changes to the piston layout. At the same time the opportunity was taken to overhaul the four keyboards.



Three of the four keyboards in the workshop at Durham showing the pistons and the new fascia control panels