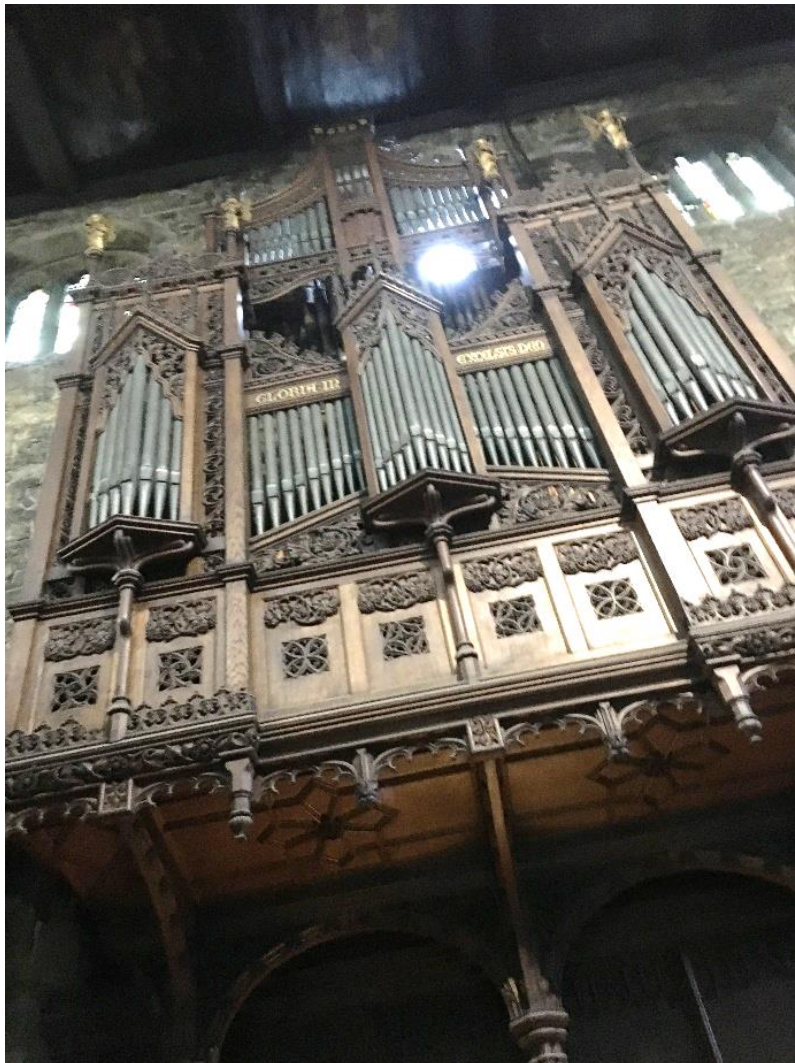




The Organs of Halifax Minster



This booklet was compiled by Margaret Whiteley, Assistant Organist in 2001.
It was revised in 2019 by Alan English for The Friends of Music.

A Short Historical Guide

Background

The origin of the organ, the 'King of Instruments' is lost in antiquity. Its development can be traced from Syrian instruments or from the Pan-Pipes of at least the second century BC.

Historical documents suggest that organs existed in English and German churches in the tenth century AD, possibly constructed by monastic communities. They consisted of little more than a row of pipes (not more than eight), standing upon a pair of bellows, hence medieval organs were often referred to as 'a payre of organs'.

Keyboards were introduced in the eleventh century, but it was not until the fifteenth or sixteenth century that pedals were added.

Evidence suggests that organs were in use in churches in the West Riding of Yorkshire, from the fifteenth century. However, during the Civil War and the Commonwealth, orders from Parliament led to their destruction.

The earliest reference to the establishment of an organ in Halifax Parish Church (it did not become a Minster until 2009) is found in the will of John Dayne, dated 7th June, 1502 which states, 'I leave twenty shillings to the buying of organs to be used in the church.'

The First Organ

In 1764, a decision was made that an organ should be built in Halifax Parish Church. There was opposition, but in 1776, a Faculty was obtained for the construction of an organ in the west gallery.

John Snetzler was born in Schaffhausen, Switzerland in 1710 and died there in 1785. He trained in Passau, Germany with the firm of Egedacher and came to London c. 1741. He built organs around the country, notably Fulneck Moravian Church (1748), St. Margaret's, Kings Lynn (1754), St. Paul's, Sheffield (1755), Holy Trinity, Hull (1756 and 1758), Buckingham Palace (1760), (Moved to Eton College Chapel and the Chapel Royal, St. James' Palace), St. Lawrence Church, Ludlow (1764) and Peterhouse Cambridge (1765). Other organs constructed by him are still to be found both in the UK and in America. He was appointed to build the organ in Halifax and was paid £525 'for the organ as per contract', and £25 5s 0d (£25.25) 'for the additional stop, the Vox Humana'.

Folklore suggests that the gallery singers (an itinerant group of musicians) tried to block the delivery of the organ and it had to be 'smuggled in' at night. However, the organ was installed, and first used for 'Divine Service' on 11th July 1776.

Snetzler's Organ Specification for Halifax

3 MANUALS (No Pedals)

	Length (Ft)	Pipes
<u>GREAT ORGAN GG to E</u>		
1 Open Diapason	8	57
2 Open Diapason	8	57
3 Stopped Diapason	8	57
4 Principal	4	57
5 Twelfth	$2 \frac{2}{3}$	57
6 Fifteenth	2	57
7 Sesqualitera (IV Ranks)		228
8 Furniture (III Ranks)		171
9 Mounted Cornet (V Ranks to Middle C)		145
10 Trumpet	8	57
11 Clarion	4	28
Total		971

CHOIR ORGAN GG to E

12 Open Diapason	8	57
13 Stopped Diapason	8	57
14 Vox Humana	8	57
15 Principal	4	57
16 Flute	4	57
17 Fifteenth	2	57
18 Bassoon (Treble and Bass)	8	57
Total		399

ECHO ORGAN Middle G to E (the enclosed Swell Organ)

19 Open Diapason	8	34
20 Stopped Diapason	8	34
21 Principal	4	34
22 Sesqualitera (III Ranks)		102
23 Oboe	8	34
24 Trumpet	8	34
Total		272

Total Number of Pipes 1642

Early Developments

In 1776, Interviews were held to appoint an organist. John Snetzler himself was present at the 'trial' (Interview). William Herschel was the successful candidate. It is said that he realised the limitations of the instrument and used lead weights to operate lower voice keys to deepen the tone of the organ which impressed Snetzler.

Frederick William Herschel, was born on the 15 November, 1738 of German and Czech-Jewish origin.



Born in the Electorate of Hanover, one of ten children of Isaak Herschel by his marriage to Anna Ilse Moritzen, of German ancestry. His father's family traced its roots back to Jews from Moravia who converted to Christianity in the seventeenth century, and they themselves were Lutheran Christians. His father was an oboist in the Hanover Military Band. In 1755 the Hanoverian Guards regiment, in whose band Wilhelm and his brother Jakob were engaged as oboists, was ordered to England. At the time the crowns of Great Britain and Hanover were united under King George II. As the threat of war with France loomed, the Hanoverian Guards were recalled from England to defend Hanover. After they were defeated at the Battle of Hastenbeck, Herschel's father Isaak sent his two sons to seek refuge in England in late 1757. He was nineteen years old, at this time, and was a 'quick student' of the English language.

Herschel moved to Sunderland in 1761 where Charles Avison immediately engaged him as first violin and soloist for his Newcastle orchestra, where he played for one season. After Newcastle he moved to Leeds and Halifax where he was appointed as the first organist at St John the Baptist church. Herschel only stayed in Halifax for a short time (30th August to 30th November 1766) before moving on to become the organist at the Octagon Chapel in Bath.

Herschel was a prolific composer but is mostly known for his work as the King's Astronomer. He was remarkably successful and is best remembered for his discover of Uranus in 1781. In 1816, William was made a Knight of the Royal Guelphic Order by the Prince Regent and was accorded the honorary title 'Sir' although this was not the equivalent of an official British knighthood. He died in 1822.

Thomas Stopford, who was paid £30 per annum, succeeded Herschel. He remained as organist for 53 years until his death in 1819, aged 77. Stopford was a friend of Jonah Bates, a Halifax man who was made a director of the London Concerts of Ancient Music. He helped to organise the Handel Festival commemorations held in Westminster Abbey from 1784-91. During Stopford's time at Halifax repairs were necessary to the organ and these were carried out in 1810.

John Houldsworth was appointed in 1819 and was instrumental in having a pedal board installed in 1825 by Greenwood of Leeds. The pedals had no pipes but 'pulled down' the lowest 17 notes of the Great manual. Houldsworth was responsible for the revision of 'Cheetham's Psalmody' in 1832. He particularly focused on music for choral singing and the church's music library contained a large amount of elaborate choral music. He left in 1834.

Robert Sharp was appointed organist in 1835. Proposals were made for alterations to the organ, but it was not until 1837 when John Gray, a London organ builder proposed adding 'an octave and a half of double open diapason pedal pipes from GGG to CC, 17 in number, together with a complete set of German pedals and a pair of large horizontal bellows with double feeders for the supply of the same', that his work was carried out. Couplers for the Choir and Swell to Great were also added at a cost of £242 13s 0d (£242.65).

Joseph Henry Frobisher was appointed organist in 1838. Further work was carried out consisting of coupling the Swell to the pedals, the addition of a Cornopean stop on the Swell and replacing the mahogany and black keys with ivory and ebony. During these alterations, John Snetzler's signature was found on the Swell soundboard and preserved. The cost of the work was \$212 17s 11d. (£212.94).

In 1862, **H.E Moore** was appointed as organist but asked to resign in 1868 for unknown reasons. He was succeeded by **J Varley-Roberts**, who was appointed at a salary of £60 per annum. He subsequently became organist at Magdalen College, Oxford. Another renovation of the organ was undertaken with tuning to an equal temperament, the addition of a 16 foot Gedacht to the Choir organ, the addition of a Dulciana, Clarion and Double Trumpet to the Swell and additions to the pedals. An engine and feeder for waterpower were also installed by Hill of London at a cost of £995 1s 7d (£995.08).

The Victorian Restoration

In 1878, the Church was in a dilapidated state and, after some persuasion by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, The Rev. Dr. Francis Pigou was appointed Vicar. He embarked on a major programme of restoration of the Church under the guidance of Sir George Gilbert Scott, who had recently designed All Soul's, Haley Hill. A number of local mill owners including Colonel Akroyd, Sir Henry Edwards and the Stocks family all helped to fund the works. The church was closed for over a year and dozens of men set to work removing half the roof and all the galleries. The pews were taken out of the building and cut down and the whole floor was cemented. There was dissatisfaction about the position of the organ. It was rebuilt in the chancel where new pews had been placed for a robed choir. The work was carried out by Isaac Abbott of Leeds who built a four manual organ with 52 speaking stops. J Oldroyd-Scott designed and crafted the magnificent chancel organ case. There is some disagreement about what happened to Snetzler's organ case whether it was destroyed or used as the north aisle case. When the church was re-opened after fifteen months, eight services were held on successive days to celebrate this and a special Organ Recital was given.

Varley-Roberts resigned in 1882 and **Fred Bentley** was appointed with a salary of £100 per annum. He only stayed until February 1883 and was replaced by **T Liddle** and then by **H Garland** in 1884. He recommended a thorough cleaning of the organ and the substitution of a Clarion 4 foot to replace the old two rank mixture of the Great organ at a cost of £15.

In 1896, Abbott and Smith, Organ Builders of Blackman Lane, Leeds dismantled the organ and rebuilt it with a tubular pneumatic action. It is thought that the Solo organ was added at this time.

Unfortunately, over the next few years fumes from the heating system corroded the brass work of the reed stops and the pipes became choked with dirt. In 1910 thorough cleaning of the pipes was undertaken and an electric motor replaced the old hydraulic blowing system. The mixture stop was also altered and the solo tuba was re-voiced. **F de G English** was organist at the time having been appointed in 1897. He remained in post until his death in 1924. **J Soar** filled the post from 1911 – 15.

In 1924 there were 60 applicants for the post of organist and **Dr T E Pearson**, former organist of St Bartholemew's Church, Armley, Leeds was appointed.

As there had been no major work on the organ, Dr Edward Bairstow of York Minster and Arthur Harrison prepared a report on the state of the organ and recommended a complete re-build at an estimated cost of £6,000. Mr J W Standeven gave £3,500 towards the cost.

The Harrison and Harrison Organ

Work began in 1928 by the renowned Durham organ builders. The best of the pipework of the current organ including all that remained of the original Snetzler organ was retained. The specification was drawn up by the builders in consultation with Dr Pearson.

There were to be four manuals, CC to A (58 notes). Two and a half octaves of radiating pedals, CCC to F (30 notes), 52 speaking stops, 17 couplers and 62 draw stops with solid ivory fronts. The opening recital was given by Dr Edward Bairstow.

No further work was done on the organ until 1976 when J Walker made the Great Mixture into three ranks (19, 22, 26). This work was undertaken by John Clough, who was employed by Walker's at that time. He also renovated and repaired the Ophicleide rank at a cost of £10,000. John has continued to look after the organ to the present day, nursing its aging mechanisms. Some minor repairs have taken place in the autumn of 2017 to the present day.

The Future

The Halifax Minster organ, described as 'A Rolls-Royce of an instrument' by Dr Simon Lindley, is recognised as one of the great organs in the country. Its tonal quality and integrity are renowned but sadly its tubular pneumatic mechanism is failing. Consideration is being given to the best way to preserve this historic instrument for future generations.



Specification of the Current Organ

	Length (Ft)
<u>PEDAL ORGAN</u>	
1 Double Open Wood (from number2)	32
2 Open Wood	16
3 Sub Bass	16
4 Geigen (from number 19)	16
5 Dulciana (from number11)	16
6 Octave Wood (from number 2)	8
7 Flute (from number 3)	8
8 Octave Flute (from number 3 and 7)	4
9 Ophicleide	16
10 Posaune	8
Great to Pedal	Swell to Pedal
Choir to Pedal	Solo to Pedal
 <u>CHOIR ORGAN (Unenclosed)</u>	
11 Contra Dulciana	16
12 Open Diapason	8
13 Gamba	8
14 Stopped Diapason	8
15 Dulciana	8
16 Gemshorn	4
17 Stopped Flute	4
18 Flautina	2
Swell to Choir	Solo to Choir
 <u>GREAT ORGAN</u>	
19 Double Geigen	16
20 Open Diapason No 1	8
21 Open Diapason No 2	8
22 Open Diapason No 3	8
23 Stopped Diapason	8
24 Hohl Flute	8
25 Octave	4
26 Harmonic Flute	4
27 Octave Quint	2 ² / ₃
28 Super Octave	2
29 Mixture (19, 22, 26)	
30 Contra Tomba	16
31 Tromba (Harmonic Trebles)	8
32 Octave Tromba	4

Great Reeds on Choir
Swell to Great

Choir to Great
Solo to Great

	Length (Ft)
<u>SWELL ORGAN</u>	
33 Double Diapason	16
34 Open Diapason	8
35 Leiblich Gedacht	8
36 Echo Gamba	8
37 Vox Celeste (Bass from number 36)	8
38 Principal	4
39 Leiblich Flute	2
40 Fifteenth	2
41 Mixture (12,19,22,29,29)	8
42 Oboe	8
43 Double Trumpet	16
44 Trumpet	8
45 Clarion (Harmonic Trebles) Tremulant (33 to 42) Octave	4
<u>SOLO ORGAN (Enclosed)</u>	
46 Viole d'Orchestre	8
47 Doppel Flute	8
48 Concert Flute	4
49 Cor Anglais	16
50 Clarinet	8
51 Orchestral Oboe Tremulant	8
52 Tuba (unenclosed: Harmonic Trebles) Octave	8
	Sub Octave

Accessories

Great and Pedal Combinations coupled
Pedal to Swell Pistons
Balanced Swell pedals to Swell and Solo

Pipework

Wood Pipes 1 -3, 6 -8, 17 (part), 23, 24, 33 (part), 35 (part)
& 47

Pistons

Thumb Pistons – 5 Great, 5 Swell, 3 Choir, 4 Solo

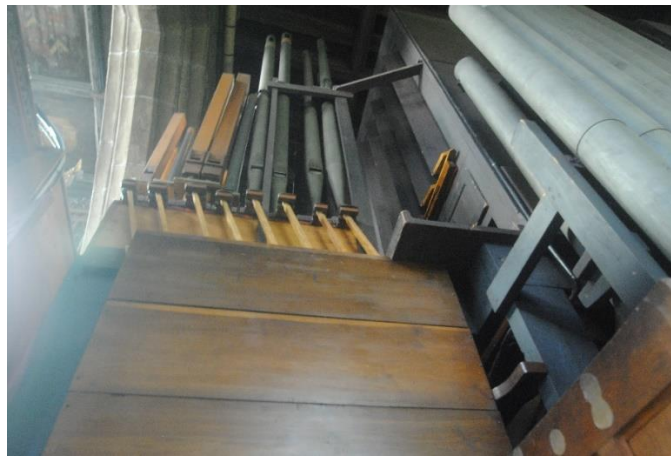
Toe Pistons – 5 Pedal

Reversible Pistons – Great to Pedal (2), Swell to Great, Solo to Great, Solo to Pedal

Compass

Manual: CC to A

Pedal: CCC to F



The Solo Organ



The West Facing Organ Case

Organists

William Herschel	Aug 1766	to	Nov 1766
Thomas Stopford	1776	to	1819
John Houldsworth	1819	to	1834
Robert Sharp	1835	to	1838
Joseph Frobisher	1838	to	1862
H E Moore	1862	to	1868
J Varley-Roberts	1868	to	1882
F Bentley	1882	to	1883
T T Liddle	1883	to	1884
H Garland	1884	to	1897
George Milligan	Feb 1897	to	Aug 1897
F de G English	1897	to	1911
Joseph Soar	1911	to	1915
F de G English	1915	to	1924
T E Pearson	1924	to	1929
R Tuskin Baker	1929	to	1937
Kenneth J Malcolmson	1937	to	1939
Vernon Rhodes	1939	to	1941
Shackelton Pollard	1941	to	1963
Robert Smith	1963	to	1965
Neil Wade	1965	to	1968
Cyril Baker	1968	to	1970
Philip C Tordoff	1970	to	2010
Christopher Brown	2010	to	2015
Graham S Gribbin	2016		