

Summer outing, June 2016.

Starting at the [Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield](#), an Anglican monastic community providing retreats, we could experience the calm and beauty of the church, which used much red sandstone like that in Liverpool Cathedral. The acoustic is wonderful and the impeccably voiced Harrison & Harrison organ provides a full range of organ music experiences.

This is a well-specified, 36 speaking stop, two manual instrument with some beautiful stops that suited the acoustic. What is unusual about the instrument is that it is totally open plan on the gallery at the south-west end, the church being aligned NE-SW and the altar being central beneath the tower. This provided a golden opportunity for Yours Truly to obtain images for our Organ Roadshow presentation.

Apart from the organ, together with its blower, the console also is situated on the gallery at an angle so that the organist can see what is happening below. If it had not been for the vast acoustic, many instruments would sound quite raucous being so exposed. Even so, it would have been wonderful to play the organ from a greater distance and play to the acoustic. (So, recommendation for the next round of improvements: a second, mobile console at ground level!) Our thanks go to Fr. Aidan Mayoss and the Community for hosting us and sharing this wonderful organ and building with us.



We reconvened at [Dewsbury Minster](#). As with Bradford and other Yorkshire towns, the original parish church was not representative of the growing size of the town during the industrial revolution, as well as in more recent years. It was recently renamed as a Minster and the church has been extensively re-ordered. The altar is now at the west end and the original chancel now houses a fine refectory, an exhibition area and a large upper meeting room. The furnishing of the main church is of modern appearance. The first organ had a single manual and six stops, which is now in St. Luke's House, Soothill, Batley. In 1896 Henry Willis built a 3-manual instrument which was completely rebuilt by Harrison & Harrison in 1920, being considered the finest organ in the "heavy woollen" district of Yorkshire. After re-ordering in 1978 (where the architects provided no space for an organ – easily missed, I suppose!), the organ was unsuccessfully re-sited and rebuilt, and in the early 1990s a Bradford Computing Organ was installed. After 20 years of good service it had to be replaced and it was decided to build a new pipe organ. A 2-manual 1866 Francis Booth (Wakefield) organ in St. Mark's, Dewsbury, later enlarged to 3-manuals by Peter Conacher, was bought in 2004 by the Minster. This had 32 speaking stops. Malcolm Spink, organ builder of Leeds (and fine Assistant Organist and pianist at Dewsbury Minster) used much of this instrument plus pipework that already existed in his workshop to build a new 3-manual organ of 63 stops, which was dedicated in 2007. The console is mobile but normally stands beside a fine, newish concert grand piano. I was told that the Lord's Prayer is accompanied by both instruments together. The organ has excellent balance and a full range of colours, so that all types of music can be played on it successfully.

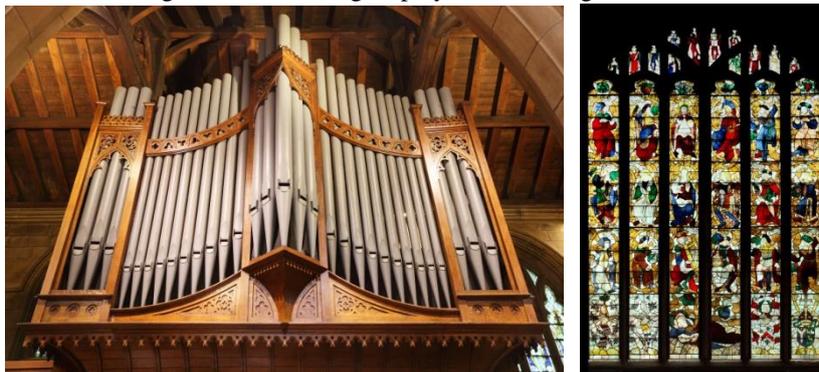
Malcolm introduced the organ to us and explained its history before giving us a short demonstration. All the members that played were very impressed. The console is comfortable and the distance from it to the organ at the back of the church only served to make the experience more enjoyable. Many thanks to Malcolm and to Dewsbury Minster for the all too short time that we spent there.



The party drove a few miles west to [St. Michael and All Angels Parish Church, Thornhill](#), an historic building that has received many grants for very sympathetic restorations, including a complete new floor made of semi-polished local stone flags in perfect square formation. The organ also has benefitted from grants, including the John Pilling Trust, and has just been restored by Malcolm Spink.

The J.W. Walker organ of 1876, rebuilt by Conacher in 1908 and overhauled by Walker in 1955 was replaced with a 1907 Binns organ from a redundant Methodist church in Huddersfield, and installed by Philip Wood of Huddersfield in 1979. J.M. Spink of Leeds rebuilt this and provided the console on a moveable plinth and able to be plugged in at several points around the church for various types of occasions.

This 24 speaking stop instrument has some new features that none of us had seen before. Apart from a full MIDI system, there was a button, illuminated by blue LED, that transferred the Great Trumpet to the Swell manual. The trumpet is loud enough that it can be accompanied on the remainder of the Great organ. The voicing and balance are superb. We're very grateful to Brian Pearson and Thornhill Parish Church for accommodating us and for letting us play their fine organ.



The last visit of the tour was to St. Martin's Parish Church, Brighouse. This is a really fine organ, built by Binns in 1905 and rebuilt by Conacher, it has 40 speaking stops. However, getting up to the lofty organ loft requires a certain amount of agility. On the gallery at the west end is a privately owned two manual 1968 Wood of Huddersfield. This had a certain baroque charm, which I'm sure would sound very well down the church. Many thanks to St. Martin's for letting us come and play both instruments.

John Chapman.