



DEDHAM Parish Magazine



February 2025

ORGAN REPLACEMENT PROJECT – FROM START TO FINISH



The re-furbished facade. Photo - John Goldsbrough.

Back in 2018, when it was quite clear that the existing pipe organ was on its last legs and was only kept going by the skill of our Organist, Antony Watson & Andrew Stevens the Organ Tuner, the PCC commissioned a small group of people to get together to prayerfully consider the options for replacing it. These included doing nothing (quickly discounted), installing a brand-new pipe organ, reconditioning an old, no longer needed pipe organ, or installing a digital organ.

After a lot of painstaking research, a Report and Proposal was presented to the PCC on the 23rd March 2020, and the recommendation was, “to obtain a fine pipe organ with a good pedigree from a redundant church for refurbishment and installation in Dedham Church”. The Report also identified a suitable organ which was no longer needed by Harvest Glasgow (formerly Mossspark Parish Church) and recommended that Nicholson & Co from Malvern be appointed the Contractors for the Project.

After lengthy discussions, hampered by the arrival of Covid and with concerns

about the funding of such a major project, the PCC agreed with the recommendation, subject to the project being agreed by the Diocesan Planning authorities, and it also being fully funded, and the proposal was taken to a meeting of Parishioners and other interested parties in Church on the 26th September 2021.

This confirmed that the project as recommended should go ahead, and following that the long process of applying for a Faculty, (Church speak for planning permission) started. An overall budget of £300,000 was set and over the next 24 months or so multiple fund-raising events were held; including concerts by the Kelvedon Singers, the Goldsbrough Consort, Piculet and the Colchester Chamber Choir and the never to be forgotten 24-hour Organathon!!

The required Faculty, which had been preceded by agreement from Historic England, was finally granted in October 2022. The contract with Nicholson & Co was also signed on the 21st October 2022, with a likely installation date of summer 2025.

In August 2022 Nicholson & Co had removed the console from Harvest Glasgow, as they had advised us that they no longer had room for it and were going to dispose of it. Very grateful thanks must go to Scott Hamilton and Harvest Glasgow as their advice and co-operation in the early stages of the project was invaluable, and in addition, they did not charge us anything for the organ.

Without this generosity the project might well not have gone ahead. In January 2023 all other elements of the Glasgow organ were dismantled and transported to storage in Kidderminster, pending elements being moved to the workshop in Malvern for repair and restoration as necessary.

The Organ Project

The skill and the craftsmanship of the Nicholson & Co staff is truly extraordinary, and they have advised that they spent 9,075 hours on the project covering all aspects required to get the new organ designed, built, and in place working in Dedham Church.

All the required work went extremely well; so much so, that in December 2023 we were contacted by Nicholson & Co to ask if they could bring the installation forward to the 4th quarter 2024. because of another project they were working on being put back, at the request of the Client.

We were very happy to agree to this, and accelerated certain things, such as a survey by Natural England of the Bats who roost in the Church, and cannot be disturbed at certain times of the year. Fortunately the 4th quarter of the year was acceptable for work to be completed in.

Nicholson & Co had also requested that the existing organ be removed as soon as possible, to allow them to complete the design of the new organ in the existing loft space and this was duly achieved in February 2024.

On Monday 7th October 2024 the first major elements of the new organ were delivered, and over the next 7 weeks they, along with all the other parts that had been delivered separately, were successfully installed in the existing organ loft, and part of the Bell Ringing Chamber. This phase of the installation was completed by 22nd November. The 'new' console arrived on 27th November and the next week work to complete the transmission cabling and system was completed. Week Commencing 2nd December saw the installation of the last remaining pipework, approximately 1500 in total, completing the "voicing" and tuning stage. This led to Nicholson and Co handing over the organ week commencing 9th December.

The new organ was played at the Dedham Primary School Carol Service that week, and then at the 9.30 a.m. service on Sunday 15th December, and the Carol Service in the evening of the same day. To say that those attending these services were massively impressed by the wonderful sound the new organ made is a huge understatement. Antony Watson recalls someone saying that the sound 'reaches deep into one's soul,' and Antony agrees.

It is a most incredible instrument, built to the glory of God. There are so many people to thank for the successful completion of this huge project, not least all those who gave their time and their talents for free, but without all the generous financial donations the project would never have got off the ground. 55 people kindly made donations, which contributed just under 70% of the total amount raised, and by March 2024 the project was fully funded. In addition, a number of local and national Charities and local Companies supported the project following grant applications being made to them. These were as follows:

The FSJ Trust, ON Organ Fund, Essex Churches Community Trust, The Friends of Dedham Church, The Benefact Trust, Williams Church Music Trust, Belstead Ganzoni Charitable Settlement, Fiducia Asset Management, Garfield Weston Foundation & The Duchy of Lancaster
A very grateful thanks to all of them.

A previous edition of the Parish Magazine mentioned that it was planned to hold a special Organ recital and a Dedication Service for the new organ in 2025. This has now been arranged for Saturday 10th May in the evening. The Dedication Service will be led by the Bishop of Colchester, followed by the Recital which will be given by the eminent Organist Jonathan Scott,

The Organ Project

described by BBC Radio 3 as “The leading British Organist”. A “must save” date for your 2025 diary and information regarding tickets, which will be free, will be in a future edition of the Magazine.

David Druitt

On behalf of the Organ Replacement Project Committee.

A selection of photographs of the completed organ. Photos - Nicholson and Co. and Margaret Kitson.

