

The English Organ, part 1: 1500-1830

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May, 2006

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The history of the pipe organ in England is a complex tale. The story weaves between times of boom and bust, periods of great innovation and complete stagnation. This history contains periods when English organs closely resembled continental European organs, as well as periods when the English organ was a unique type of instrument, and not found anywhere else in Europe.

The history of the English organ can be divided into three major periods. The first encompasses the Renaissance period and the turbulent times of the English Reformation. The second era will form the main topic of this article: the pipe organ in England between 1660 and 1830. The period covering the span between 1830 and the present is the third major era, and will be covered in a forthcoming article.

A study of the organ in Renaissance England is, by necessity, a study of records, rather than a study of existing instruments. In all of England today there is not a single organ in any religious institution (including cathedrals, churches and chapels) that is older than the 1660's. Compared to continental Europe, which has more than a few organs dating from the 16th century or earlier, England is a desert. Were there no organs in use in religious institutions in the country before the 17th century? Or was a disaster of great proportion responsible for obliterating the pipe organ from all corners of the country?

Pre-Reformation England, as a Catholic country, naturally used organs in the mass. The church organ of this period was similar to that of the continental organ, particularly that of southern Europe. Bicknell describes the typical English organ of around 1500 as consisting of “..a single-long compass keyboard, up to forty-six notes..with stops operating individual ranks and no mixtures.” (Bicknell p. 23) It should also be noted that these modest organs had no pedals. The organ of this period was used mainly for accompanying singing, and was, therefore, placed near the liturgical center of churches. Most organ music would have been based on plainsong (Gregorian chant), and in some cases the organ would alternate with the choir in performing the music of the mass. There was no requirement for a large sound, so all organs were small (by later standards). In large churches or cathedrals it was not unusual for there to be several organs in the building, each serving a different part of the room. Since no organs, and no exact stop lists, exist from this time, the following stop list reconstructed by Bicknell will be given as typical of the period.

1. Principal, 2. Octave, 3. Octave, 4. Superoctave, 5. Superoctave

To describe this little organ in modern terms, there are only stops of the Principal family, and these only appear in the equivalent of modern-day 8-foot, 4-foot and 2-foot pitch. There are no flute or reed stops, and no mixtures.

Why is there not a single organ of this type surviving in England today? To answer this question one must consider the history of the English Reformation. The disaster that wiped all organs from the church scene in England was the Reformation itself. The tremendous length and violence of the English Reformation was fatal to church organs, as well as stained glass, wall paintings, statuary, and other decorative elements of churches. The Reformation is said to have started with Henry VIII's "Declaration of Supremacy" (1534) and to have ended with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, a period of over 120 years. The history of the struggle between Protestants and Catholics, and later, between Protestants themselves (Puritans vs. Anglicans) is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that when the Puritan faction was in power organs were deemed inappropriate to the church service. During these periods, new organs were neither ordered nor built, and existing organs were removed from churches. Conversely, when the liturgical side was in power, be it Catholic or Anglican, organs were deemed necessary and either re-installed or built new.

Though the Reformation was eventually fatal to the organ in England, there were brief bright spots during the period. When the Puritan faction was out of power, organs were not only re-installed. Some innovation actually took place. The most important change from a typical Renaissance organ at this time was the creation of the English "double organ." This is a combination of two different types of instrument – the standard Renaissance type and the smaller positive organ. At first these appear to have been simply two separate organs placed near the organist so that he could choose between the two types, depending upon musical needs. Around the year 1600 the two types were combined into a single two-manual organ known in England as a double organ. These were also called "a pair of organs." An example of this type is Robert Dallam's 1613 organ for Worcester Cathedral.

Great (第 2 鍵盤)	Chair (第 1 鍵盤)
Diapasons 10' (2 列)	Principal
Principals 5' (2 列)	Diapason
Small Principals (2 列)	Flute
Twelfth	Small Principal 15 th
Recorder	22 nd

One can see that innovations include not only the two manuals, but the inclusion of

flute stops and mutations. Though a small step, this organ includes a great deal more color and variety than that of the Renaissance organ of 1500. Unfortunately for Worcester Cathedral, this organ was removed (and destroyed?) in 1649. Thereafter no organ sounded in the church until after 1660.

The peak of Puritan power came toward the end of the Civil War and during the Commonwealth (1649-1660). The death knell for church organs in England was Parliament's "Lords and Commons Ordinance" of 1644. It called for the speedy demolishing of all organs, images and other "matters of superstitious monuments" in all cathedrals, collegiate or parish churches and chapels throughout England and Wales. Thanks to this government sanctioned vandalism, soldiers of the Commonwealth army joyfully desecrated churches throughout the country. Soldiers are recorded as smashing metal pipes and burning organ cases in the streets. Until the end of the commonwealth in 1660 the only place one could hear the sound of the pipe organ in England was in secular settings – the court, and homes of the wealthy.

The second phase of the early English church organ begins in 1660 with the Restoration of Charles II to the throne. At this point the Church of England is restored, and with it, the organ and its music. At first organ building was conservative, and mostly consisted of rebuilding pre-Commonwealth style organs. Worcester Cathedral is a case in point. Dallam's son-in-law Thomas Harris installed a new organ in 1663 with a stop list that was nearly identical to the 1613 Dallam organ. By the turn of the century, however, a new and unique English organ began to replace its more conservative relative. Thomas Harris' son Renatus built an organ for St. Bride Church, London, in 1696 that is typical of this style.

<u>Great</u> (第 2 鍵盤:GG-c3, 50鍵)	<u>Chair</u> (第 1 鍵盤:GG-c3, 50鍵)	<u>Echo</u> (第3鍵盤:c1-c-3, 25 鍵)
Open Diapason 8'	Stop'd Diapason 8'	Stop'd Diapason 8'
Stop'd Diapason 8'	Principal 4'	Principal 4'
Principal 4'	Flute 4'	Twelfth 2 2/3'
Cornet V	Fifteenth 2 2/3'	Cart 2'
Twelfth 2 2/3'	Tierce 1 3/5'	Tierce 1 3/5'
Cart 2'	Vox Humane 8'	Trumpet 8'
Sesquialtera V		
Fourniture III		
Trumpet 8'		

Elements that were not before present in English organs include reed stops (on each manual), a mixture stop in the Great, and many mutations. Though this was a three-manual organ, one must be careful not to confuse it with the much larger organ of the same (Baroque) period in Germany. There was no independent pedal division. It

was not until the 1790's that an organ built in England had independent pedal pipes, and it was not until the mid 19th-century that they became common. When pedals existed, they were simply pull-downs connected to the bottom few notes of the Great manual. These pull-down pedals allowed the organist to play the lowest notes of a piece with his feet if the stretch was too large for the left hand. The compass of the Great organ extended about a fourth lower than the lowest C of modern organs (or of contemporary German organs), thus, having the assistance of the pedals might have been important. Another unique feature of the English organ of this period was the short-compass third manual. Without the left-hand range, this manual could only be used for right hand solo passages. Photographs of an organ of this type can be found in figures 1 and 2.

As move forward in time to the 1730's reveals another innovation in English organ building – the Swell. The so-called Swell organ was invented in 1712, and by 1730 all English instruments of average size included them. As the name implies, the presence of a Swell division allowed an organist to control the volume of sound issuing from this division. Though we take this feature for granted in modern organs, the inclusion of the swell division was a great stride in the expressive ability of the pipe organ. It is this two or three manual organ with its unique manual compasses, swell division and lack of pedals that reigned in England until the 1830's. Looked at from a 21st century perspective, the limitations of the organ might seem great – how does one play Bach on an organ without pedals, after all? To be fair to the early English organ, entirely different expectations were placed on it than those of contemporary Germany, for example.

Until roughly the mid-19th century, an English church organ had just two purposes. In local churches it had to accompany the congregation in their singing of metrical psalms and to perform voluntaries before and after the service. The works of J. S. Bach and other composers who wrote for German-style organs were either unknown or not in style, so the English organ of the day served its purpose quite adequately. In cathedrals, the organ's purpose was to accompany the choir as it performed the sung service. It was not necessary to fill the church with sound. Thus, whereas a continental cathedral organ was most often a very large instrument capable of filling immense spaces with sound, an English cathedral organ differed very little from a normal parish church organ. In fact, Bicknell calls the English organ of this period “perhaps amongst the quietest organs in the world.” This is the organ that remained the standard English organ for roughly 150 years between the late 1600's and the early 1800's. The questions of why it disappeared entirely from England in the mid-19th century, and what type of organ replaced it are subjects for the next article.