



## EDINBURGH SOCIETY OF ORGANISTS

### VISIT TO ABERDEEN – SATURDAY 26 MAY 2007

Aberdeen is Scotland's third largest city, with a population of just over 200,000. It is known variously as the Granite City, the Silver City (since much of the city was built of grey granite that sparkles after a rainfall) or the Oil Capital of Europe (since the discovery of North Sea oil).

The area around Aberdeen has had human settlement since at least 6000 BC when there were small villages around the mouths of the River Dee and River Don. It received Royal Burgh status from Robert the Bruce in 1124. The ancient area of Old Aberdeen is centred on the University of Aberdeen, founded in 1495. Aberdeen has always looked out across the sea rather than south to the central belt - the harbour remains one of the busiest in the UK – and as such retains the air of a northern city with a sense of outpost. Many locals still speak in the distinctive Doric northeast dialect.

The traditional industries of fishing, papermaking, shipbuilding and textiles have been overtaken by the massive development of the oil and gas industry, which continues the city's history of harvesting from the sea. Since the discovery of oil in the early 1970s money has poured into Aberdeen from around the world as the city has become a kingpin in the Scottish, if not British, economy. House prices are as high as those in Edinburgh are, although concern is mounting over the long-term future of the city once oil and gas reserves run out. The city has won the Britain in Bloom competition on no less than ten occasions, and the colourful parks and flowerbeds provide suitable contrast to a lively cultural scene.

Aberdeen has some interesting organs to see, although like many cities the portfolio of instruments has been hit by the prolific closure of church congregations. The northern lights have only inspired a few organ builders to work in Aberdeen. The earliest known builder is Joseph Wishart who worked in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was therefore a contemporary of James Bruce and David Hamilton of Edinburgh; and of Robert Mirrlees in Glasgow. Little of his work survives, unfortunately. Perhaps the best-known Aberdeen organ builder has been Ernest H Lawton, trading from 1898 to 1947, although few of his instruments have a good reputation. One of his better instruments is the IIP/19 organ installed in Bon Accord & St Paul's Church in 1923. Interestingly, this congregation dissolved in 1977 and the building is now home to the Bon Accord congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. The organ is therefore, of course, no longer used in public worship, but a member of the congregation plays it every week after their morning service! Ernest Wadsworth of Manchester had a workshop in Aberdeen at one stage; indeed, the many beautiful little Wadsworth instruments in the northeast of Scotland voiced by John Wardle of Stonehaven are among the best of those by the firm.

Until a few years ago, the Capitol cinema on Union Street was the last cinema in Scotland to retain its original organ in working order (1933 IIP/104 Compton). Sadly, the 1933 Art-Deco cinema was butchered in 2003 with the auditorium divided into two floors to create a bar, restaurant and nightclub. The organ is still in situ, although the grills face into two different premises and the huge console cable has been cut. The IIP/46 organ in the city's Music Hall was an early (1854) "Father" Willis instrument but has been altered considerably over the years. Little heard these days, a visit would have been interesting but did not prove possible. Two other interesting instruments that time precludes us from visiting are the 1971 IIP/19 R H Walker instrument in the University of Aberdeen's Mitchell Hall, and the 1925 IIP/33 J J Binns organ in the Cowdray Hall, both very much instruments of their time.

Our agenda for the day is:

9.00am St Machar's Cathedral  
The Chanonry

3.00pm Gilcomston South Church  
Union Street

10.30am King's College Chapel, University of Aberdeen  
College Bounds

4.30pm St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral  
Huntly Street

1.30pm Kirk of St Nicholas (Uniting)  
Union Street

Andrew Caskie

9.00am – 10.15am

ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL (Church of Scotland)  
The Chanonry, AB24 1RQ

Organist: Michael Thomson  
[www.stmachar.com](http://www.stmachar.com)

At the northern edge of the former burgh of Old Aberdeen can be found the Cathedral of St Machar. Legend has it that St Machar founded a site of worship here in 580 AD, having been told by St Columba (whom he accompanied to Iona) to establish a church where a river bends into the shape of a bishop's crozier before flowing into the sea. The River Don follows exactly such a course just below the present site of the cathedral. A Norman cathedral replaced St Machar's church in 1131. Bishop Henry Cheyne started to extend this church in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century; during this work, a quarter of William Wallace's body was buried within the walls. Pillars from this period are visible at the east end of the present building. The Norman cathedral was demolished in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century by Bishop Alexander Kininmund II who began the present nave and western towers. The roof was not completed until a century later.

The central tower and spire collapsed in a storm in 1688, destroying the choir and transepts. The cathedral today consists of only the porch and nave of the former building and is a fine example of a fortified kirk, with twin towers built in the fashion of 14<sup>th</sup> century tower houses. The flat panelled nave ceiling dates from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and displays the heraldic shields of both the contemporary kings of Europe and the chief earls and bishops of Scotland.

The earliest account of an organ in St Machar's dates from 1518 or 1519, when Hector Boece relates, "Whenever [Bishop Gavin Dunbar] entered the church he was greeted by the sweet harmony of voice and organ". We can presume that this organ disappeared when the Reformation arrived. The next record of an organ is not until 1891, when Henry "Father" Willis of London installed a three-manual 33-stop instrument with his patent tubular pneumatic action, although the unenclosed choir manual, Swell Vox Humana and Pedal Ophicleide were only prepared for (these were finally installed by Willis in 1898<sup>1</sup>). The organ cost the princely sum of £1,180 and the additions £370. It was installed in front of the East window following much discussion over the proposed location. Willis II cleaned the instrument in 1910.

During the course of a building restoration in 1928, the organ was relocated to its present north aisle position and overhauled by Rushworth & Dreaper of Liverpool. A new console and action was fitted, and the choir pipework was put under expression. The Swell 16ft Lieblich Bourdon moved to the Choir, and was made available on the Pedal organ at 16 and 8 ft pitches. A 16ft Contra Fagotto filled the vacant slide on the Swell.

Rushworth & Dreaper overhauled the organ again in 1945 and rebuilt it in 1956. At this time, a 3-rank mixture replaced the Swell Vox Humana, and the Pedal Open Wood was extended to 8 and 4 ft pitches (since removed). The present form of the organ dates largely from 1973, when N P Mander of London rebuilt the instrument under the supervision of the then organist, the late David Murray. The action was converted to electropneumatic; a 4 ft Clarion and new upperwork appeared on the Swell; the Pedal and Choir departments were remodelled; and the Choir box was removed. Console provision was made for new Pedal reeds at 8 and 4 ft pitch, for a Sesquialtera and Sharp Mixture on the Great, and for a 7-stop Positive department to be playable from the Choir manual; the pipework for these has never been installed.

A F Edmonstone of Perth overhauled the organ in 1990 after a cleaning of the building interior. The same firm renewed all stop switches and the piston system in 2002. Future plans include a proposal to undo the 1973 tonal changes to the Choir organ by reinstating the 8 ft Dulciana, 8 ft Claribel Flute and 4 ft Concert Flute in place of the Principal, Fifteenth and Cymbale stops which would form part of the Positive scheme.

Michael Thomson, organist at St Machar's, is unavailable during our visit but has graciously allowed us to discover this fine instrument ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Willis ledger book lists this as 1899, however.

ST MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL

(1891, 1898, 1910 Willis; 1928, 1945, 1956 Rushworth & Dreaper; 1973 N.P. Mander; 1990, 2002 A.F. Edmonstone)

\* only speaking stops listed below \*

*GREAT*

1 Double Diapason	16	1891 Willis
2 Open Diapason I	8	1891 Willis
3 Open Diapason II	8	1891 Willis
4 Claribel Flute	8	1891 Willis
5 Principal	4	1891 Willis
6 Harmonic Flute	4	1891 Willis
7 Fifteenth	2	1891 Willis
8 Mixture (17:19:22)	III	1891 Willis
9 Bombarde	8	1891 Willis
10 Clarion	4	1891 Willis

*PEDAL*

11 Sub Bourdon	32	1928 R&D; bott. 5 notes resultant via 14
12 Open Wood	16	1891 Willis (called O. Diapason pre-1973)
13 Violone	16	1891 Willis (bott. oct. from 1)
14 Bourdon	16	1891 Willis
15 Lieblich Bourdon	16	1928 R&D; from 36
16 Principal	8	1973 Mander; from 13
17 Violoncello	8	1891 Willis
18 Bass Flute	8	1928 R&D; from 15
19 Fifteenth	4	1973 Mander; from 13
20 Flute	4	1973 Mander; from 15
21 Mixture (22:26:29)	III	1973 Mander
22 Ophicleide	16	1899 Willis
23 Fagotto	16	1928 R&D; from 32

*SWELL (balanced pedal)*

24 Open Diapason	8	1891 Willis
25 Lieblich Gedact	8	1891 Willis
26 Salicional	8	1891 Willis
27 Vox Angelica	8	1891 Willis
28 Gemshorn	4	1891 Willis
29 Flageolet	2	1891 Willis
30 Mixture (15:19:22)	III	1973 Mander
31 Sharp Mixture (22:26:29)	III	1973 Mander
32 Contra Fagotto	16	1928 R&D
33 Cornopean	8	1891 Willis
34 Hautboy	8	1891 Willis
35 Clarion	4	1973 Mander
Tremulant		

*CHOIR (unenclosed)*

36 Lieblich Bourdon	16	1891 Willis; on Swell until 1928
37 Lieblich Gedact	8	1899 Willis
38 Viola da Gamba	8	1899 Willis
39 Principal	4	1973 Mander
40 Lieblich Flute	4	1899 Willis
41 Fifteenth	2	1973 Mander
42 Piccolo	2	1899 Willis
43 Cymbale (26:29:33)	III	1973 Mander
44 Corno di Bassetto	8	1899 Willis; called Clarionet pre-1973
Tremulant		
45 Bombarde	8	1891 Willis; from 9
46 Clarion	4	1891 Willis; from 10

### *ACCESSORIES*

Couplers: Swell to Great, Choir to Great, Swell to Choir, Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Choir to Pedal, Swell Octave, Choir Octave, Great & Pedal pistons, Generals on Swell toe pistons (with LED).

6 thumb pistons to Great, 6 thumb pistons to Swell, 7 thumb pistons to Choir (1 locked to Bombarde); 6 toe pistons to Pedal, 6 toe pistons to Swell, 6 general thumb pistons (96 general memory channels, 16 divisional memory channels). Reverser thumb pistons to 22, S/G, G/P, S/P, C/P. Reverser toe pistons to S/G and G/P and Gens on Swell TP.

1 setter thumb piston, 1 Swell cancel thumb piston, 1 Great cancel thumb piston, 1 Choir cancel thumb piston, 1 general cancel thumb piston.

10.30am – 11.45am

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
College Bounds, AB24 3DS

Organist: Dr Roger Williams  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/noblecollege](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/noblecollege)

The University of Aberdeen was founded in 1495 when the Pope granted such permission to William Elphinstone (1431 – 1514), then Bishop of Aberdeen. It says something of Elphinstone's vision that construction of the fine chapel started in 1498, with consecration taking place in 1509. At that time the college was essentially a collegiate foundation, self-sustaining behind walls that kept the outside world at bay. Students lived under strict discipline and college life centred on the chapel and the Great Hall. The living accommodation was serviced by a dedicated kitchen supplied by the college's own brewery and garden.

The chapel interior retains its original ceiling and intricate choir stalls (carved in 1509 by Scottish craftsmen to Flemish designs), while the windows date largely from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The daring crown tower collapsed early on and was restored in 1633. Elphinstone was buried in the chapel; his tomb was damaged by Covenanters in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is now marked by a 1911 replica outside the chapel.

Various sources refer to an organ in 1505, removed by the 1580s, although the case remained until 1642, and then a different organ installed around 1700 but removed by 1713. Messrs Norman & Beard of Norwich built a IIP/24 instrument in 1891, housed mostly on the rood screen, although nine stops (including the Choir manual) were only prepared for. These were eventually added in 1899. Henry Hilsdon of Glasgow rebuilt the organ in 1912.

This organ was removed in 1959, when Harrison & Harrison of Durham built a new IIP/15 instrument for the chapel. A new case was provided in 1959/1960, again built on the rood screen. The organ was designed by Reginald Barrett-Ayres, then Reader of Music at the university, together with Herrick Bunney of St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh; Barrett-Ayres' ideas were so idiosyncratic that Cuthbert Harrison, director of the Durham firm at the time, threatened to leave the organ without an H&H nameplate!

This organ was latterly tuned in Young's Temperament; restoration and minor revoicing was carried out by Harrison & Harrison in 1971 and 1992.

In 2004, a long-held ambition to have a new mechanical action instrument was fulfilled with the installation of a IIP/27 instrument by Bernard Aubertin of Courtefontaine, France. This was inaugurated by Gillian Weir on April 20 that year. Influenced by the French Classical style, and also tuned in Young's Temperament, this splendid instrument has quickly achieved wide renown. A fine new case on the rood screen was built to house the organ. The instrument features an unusual coupling capability; Manuals I and III can both be coupled onto Manual II, but Manual II can also be coupled to either of Manuals I or III. The organ has mechanical action throughout. There are no playing aids and none of the departments is enclosed.

ESO members may wish to look for the unlabelled lever that activates the "Bagpipe Drone"...

The 1959 Harrison instrument is currently being rebuilt by A F Edmonstone of Perth and will shortly be installed in St Kentigern's Episcopal Church in Ballater.

Dr Roger Williams, Master of Chapel and Ceremonial Music and Organist to the University of Aberdeen, will welcome us to the Chapel and demonstrate the instrument to us before ESO members have an opportunity to play.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN – KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL  
(2004 Aubertin)

*MANUAL I*

1 Flûte Traversière	8
2 Bourdon	8
3 Flûte	4
4 Flageolet	2
5 Quinte	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
6 Cornet (1.8.12.15.17)	V
7 Trompette	8
8 Voix Humaine	8

*PEDAL*

15 Principal	16
16 Octave	8
17 Prestant	4
18 Mixture	V
19 Buzène	16

*ACCESSORIES*

3-way coupler levers giving: I-II or II-I, II-III or III-II

Manual I to Pedal

Bagpipe drone

*MANUAL II*

9 Portunal	16
10 Montre	8
11 Gambe	8
12 Prestant	4
13 Double Tierce	3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
14 Mixture	V-VII

*MANUAL III*

20 Principal	8
21 Bourdon	8
22 Portunal	4
23 Nazard	3
24 Doublette	2
25 Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>
26 Mixture	III
27 Cromhorne	8

1.30pm – 2.45pm

KIRK OF ST NICHOLAS (UNITING) (Church of Scotland and URC)  
Union Street, AB10 1JZ

Organist: Alan Ritchie  
[www.kirk-of-st-nicholas.org.uk](http://www.kirk-of-st-nicholas.org.uk)

The earliest mention of a church on the present site of the Mithers Kirk of Aberdeen is found in a Papal Bull of 1157. Legend links St Nicholas with the miraculous rescue of some storm-stricken sailors, and so St Nicholas is the patron saint of the seafaring city of Aberdeen. Indeed, severe penalties were issued in medieval times to those in the city who were unwilling to participate in the celebration of his feast day.

Bishop Elphinstone (who also founded King's College) dedicated an enlarged building in 1498. Over subsequent years, prosperous Aberdonians benefited many gifts upon the city's Kirk, which became the largest church in Scotland and a masterpiece of Gothic architecture by the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When a mob attacked the building when the Reformation arrived in 1560, the thrifty folk of Aberdeen prevented the theft of the valuable lead from the roof!

From this time on, the building was divided into two: the Auld and New Kirks. The Auld Kirk met in the former nave, which collapsed in 1742. It was rebuilt as the West Kirk between 1751 and 1755 to Italian-style plans gifted to the burgh by James Gibbs. The New Kirk, which met in the former choir, was demolished in 1835 and replaced two years later with the East Kirk of St Nicholas in a Gothic-Revival building by Archibald Simpson. This building was destroyed by fire in 1874. It was subsequently rebuilt with a massive granite tower over the former crossing between the two buildings. A peal of 36 bells cast in the Netherlands was installed in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee. These bells were replaced in 1950 with a carillon of 48 bells, now the largest carillon in the UK.

The two East and West Church of Scotland congregations meeting under one roof united in 1980 to form the Kirk of St Nicholas. In 2002, this congregation united with the nearby St Nicholas' United Reformed Church to form the Kirk of St Nicholas (Uniting), and uses the former West Kirk as the main sanctuary. The former East Kirk is currently an archaeological site following an interior excavation in 2006.

There are early references to an organ in the Kirk in 1437, 1485, 1486, 1489, 1496. There were two organs by 1521, one of which was still there until 1574. Today there are three organs in the building. The former East Kirk sanctuary saw a IIP/26 instrument by Wadsworth installed in 1887. This was rebuilt in 1902 by Lawton of Aberdeen as a 3-manual 35-stop instrument, although 6 stops (including the Choir manual) were only prepared for. This organ was replaced with the present instrument in 1936, when an all-new IIIP/70 instrument by John Compton was installed. The organ is fully enclosed (Swell in one chamber; everything else in another) and retains its 1936 console complete with Compton's famous luminous stop buttons. All stops are extended from 12 ranks. Although it is currently in very poor playing condition, restoration plans are at an advanced stage.

The former West Kirk sanctuary, still used for public worship, is home to an instrument originally built as a 2-manual organ by "Father" Willis in 1880. This was overhauled by Hilsdon of Glasgow in 1905 and rebuilt by Willis III in 1927 as IIP/31, a Choir organ being added together with a new console. J W Walker rebuilt the organ in 1972 with some tonal changes, and further work was carried out in 1992 by A F Edmonstone of Perth. Sadly, recent overheating has caused considerable damage to the organ, which is now in very poor condition.

The main instrument of interest in today's visit is in the Middle Kirk, under the main tower between the two sanctuaries. This attractive meeting space is home to a charming 6-stop chamber organ built in either 1818 or 1825 by Bewsher & Fleetwood of Liverpool for a house near Glenshee. After lying forgotten for some years, the organ was restored by A F Edmonstone of Perth and installed here in 1991. The organ has an octave of pull-down pedals.

We will be met here by Alan Ritchie, one of the organists at the church, and Bob Williamson, duty steward for the day.

THE KIRK OF ST NICHOLAS (UNITING) – MIDDLE CHAPEL  
(1818 or 1825 Bewsher & Fleetwood, Liverpool; 1991 A F Edmonstone, Perth)

*MANUAL*

1 Open Diapason	8
2 Stopped Diapason	8
3 Dulciana	8
4 Principal	4
5 Fifteenth	2
6 Hautboy	8

3.00pm – 4.15pm

GILCOMSTON SOUTH CHURCH (Church of Scotland)  
Union Street, AB10 1TD

Organist: Andrew Bruce  
[www.gilcomston.org](http://www.gilcomston.org)

The building of Gilcomston South Church dates from 1868 when it opened as Gilcomston Free Church. The congregation had previously met in a now-demolished building in nearby Huntly Street, and had been formed out of the Disruption in 1843. In the early Gothic style, the fine 1868 building was designed by William Smith, then Town Architect of Aberdeen, and cost £4,786. The 145 ft spire was added in 1870 and cost an additional £1,000. A hall to the rear of the church was added in 1880. It would be interesting if such relative priorities pertained today!

The church was threatened with closure after the Second World War. However, the congregation was revived during the very long evangelical ministry of the late Rev William Still, minister of the congregation from 1945 to 1997.

By the late 1980s, the Aberdeen climate had wrought considerable wear on the stonework of the church, to the extent where the only safe and feasible option for the spire was demolition to the height of the tower followed by reconstruction. A £900,000 restoration of the external stonework was completed in 1991, partly funded by one of Historic Scotland's largest ever grants (80%). This work included the construction of a completely new replacement spire.

In 2005, a complete renovation of the interior of the building was concluded, costing £995,000. The modernised sanctuary now features cinema-style seats in the gallery!

There was no musical accompaniment to congregational singing at first, praise being led by a succession of Precentors. A 2-manual harmonium was hired in 1899 once a decision was made to install a pipe organ in the apse behind the pulpit. A 2-manual 18-stop instrument by J J Binns of Leeds was installed in 1902, costing £700. The "Inaugural Grand Recital" was given by the redoubtable Dr Alfred Hollins of Edinburgh on 11 December 1902.

The organ was cleaned and overhauled in 1959 by Rushworth & Dreaper of Liverpool, who also carried out some re-leathering in 1973. Paul Miller of Cumbernauld (ex Hill, Norman & Beard) carried out a comprehensive restoration in 2005 as part of the redevelopment of the sanctuary. The organ remains unaltered from its original 1902 condition and therefore retains Binns' patent charge pneumatic action. The instrument is a fine example of the solid craftsmanship and rich tone so typical of Binns' work.

Andrew Bruce, organist at Gilcomston South Church, is not available during our visit, but has kindly agreed that we can discover the instrument for ourselves. We will be met by Ian Walker, deputy organist, and David Strudwick.

GILCOMSTON SOUTH CHURCH

(1902 J J Binns; 1959, 1973 Rushworth & Dreaper; 2005 Paul Miller)

*GREAT*

1 Bourdon	16
2 Open Diapason	8
3 Dolce	8
4 Hohl Flute	8
5 Octave	4
6 Flautina	2
7 Trumpet	8

*PEDAL*

8 Contra Bass	16	
9 Sub Bass	16	bott oct shared with 1
10 Octave	8	from 8
11 Flute	8	from 9

*ACCESSORIES*

Swell to Great, Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Swell Octave to Great, Swell Sub Octave to Great, Swell Octave, Swell Sub Octave.

4 combination pedals to Great and Pedal, 3 combination pedals to Swell.

*SWELL (balanced pedal)*

Geigen Principal	8
Vox Angelica	8
Gedact	8
Salicet	4
Mixture	III
Cornopean	8
Oboe	8
Tremulant	

4.30pm – 5.45pm

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL  
Huntly Street, AB10 1SH

Organist: Ronald Leith  
[www.catholic-church.org/stmarys-aberdeen](http://www.catholic-church.org/stmarys-aberdeen)

As the See of the Bishop of Aberdeen, the Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption is the main place of worship for Roman Catholics in the Diocese of Aberdeen, itself in the Province of St Andrews & Edinburgh.

The granite cathedral was designed as a church by Alexander Ellis and was consecrated in 1860. The strong architecture of the building marked a return to prominence by the Catholic community, exactly three hundred years after Mass had been banned by the Scottish Parliament. The sanctuary is very tall, and is matched by one of the tallest spires in Aberdeen. Together with a peal of bells, the spire was added in 1877 by Robert Wilson, a partner of Ellis, to celebrate the elevation of the congregation to cathedral status.

The interior layout of the cathedral owes much to an iconoclastic Vatican II-inspired remodelling and simplification completed in the late 1960s. Recent years have seen effort towards a re-beautification of the sanctuary.

The main altar is made of Aberdeen granite, and murals of Scottish saints line the side walls of the sanctuary. A glass window at the main entrance commemorates St John Ogilvie, a local saint born near Keith in 1580 and martyred in Glasgow in 1615.

A 3-manual 26-stop organ was built for the cathedral in 1887 by the Sheffield firm of James Conacher. Most organs bearing the Conacher name in Scotland are from the Huddersfield firm of Peter Conacher, and this is therefore a rare Scottish example of the work of the former builder. James and his three sons had originally worked in the Huddersfield firm (which started trading in 1854) but removed to Sheffield in 1879 to start a new business, which was eventually put up for sale in 1902.

The organ enjoys a superior position in its own west end gallery, although is divided either side of a window. The action was originally mechanical throughout, except the Choir and Pedal departments which had pneumatic action activated by a system of trackers and chains under the floor from the console.

The organ was renovated in 1975 by David Loosely of Stirling. This wide-ranging work included the provision of a new console and electrification of the stop mechanisms. Tonal changes were made to the Choir and Pedal departments; the Choir 8 ft Dulciana was cut down into a 4 ft Principal; and the Choir 8 ft Gamba was replaced with a 1 $\frac{1}{3}$  ft Larigot, the Gamba being moved to the Pedal organ and extended to 4 and 2 ft pitches.

Since 1984 A F Edmonstone of Perth has carried out a rolling programme of work to the instrument, reversing nearly all the work carried out in 1975. The original console (which had been stored) has been reinstated; the Choir given a new soundboard and converted to fully mechanical action with new wooden trackers; the Pedal converted to electropneumatic action; a solid-state piston mechanism installed; the Great and Swell reeds re-tongued; the Choir 4 ft Principal replaced with s/h Peter Conacher pipework; the Choir 1 $\frac{1}{3}$  ft Larigot removed and a new Gamba reinstated; the Great and Swell re-winded with a new blower and Schwimmer valves fitted; a new Pedal Trombone 16 ft added; the Gamba rank removed from the Pedal organ; the Pedal 16 ft Bourdon and 8 ft Bass Flute converted from independent ranks to one extended rank; and the Pedal Open Diapason 16 ft replaced (except the bottom octave) with s/h pipework and extended up to 8 and 4 ft pitches.

The sympathetic acoustic in the cathedral enhances the restored musical sound of James Conacher's instrument to fine effect. The 17<sup>th</sup> (Tierce) is only present in the bottom half of each Mixture stop.

Future work will address the 1975 electric stop mechanisms; the solenoids for the Swell string stops are not functioning at present. We will be welcomed to St Mary's Cathedral by the organist, Ronald Leith.

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL  
 (1887 Jas Conacher & Sons; 1975 David Loosely; 1984-present A F Edmonstone)

*GREAT*

1 Open Diapason	8
2 Small Open Diapason	8
3 Stopped Diapason	8
4 Principal	4
5 Harmonic Flute	4
6 Fifteenth	2
7 Mixture (17:19:22)	III
8 Trumpet	8

*PEDAL*

9 Open Diapason	16	
10 Bourdon	16	
11 Flute Bass	8	from 10
12 Principal	8	from 9
13 Fifteenth	4	from 9
14 Trombone	16	new since 1984

*ACCESSORIES*

Swell to Great, Choir to Great, Swell to Choir, Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal, Choir to Pedal.

6 thumb pistons to Great, 6 thumb pistons to Swell, 6 thumb pistons to Choir, 6 toe pistons to Swell, 6 toe pedals to Pedal. 6 general thumb pistons.

1 setter piston. 1 general cancel piston.

*SWELL (balanced pedal)*

Lieblich Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8
Rohr Flute	8
Salicional	8
Voix Celeste	8
Gemshorn	4
Piccolo	2
Mixture (17:19:22)	III
Oboe	8
Cornopean	8
Tremulant	

*CHOIR*

Viol di Gamba	8	s/h, since 1984
Lieblich Gedact	8	
Principal	4	s/h, since 1984
Flute	4	
Octave Flute	2	
Corno di Bassetto	8	

## THANKS

We are grateful to all those who have assisted in making this visit possible:

Michael Thomson – Organist, St Machar’s Cathedral  
Roger Williams – Master of Chapel and Ceremonial Music and Organist to the University of Aberdeen  
Margaret Dundas – Administrator, Kirk of St Nicholas (Uniting)  
Andrew Bruce & Ian Walker – Organist and Deputy Organist, Gilcomston South Church  
Ronald Leith – Organist, St Mary’s Roman Catholic Cathedral

Thanks are also extended to Alan Buchan, John Kitchen, Ronald Leith, Robert Lightband, David Stewart, David Strudwick and Michael Thomson for their assistance in the preparation of these notes.

## DIRECTIONS

9.00am            St Machar’s Cathedral  
                      The Chanonry, Aberdeen AB24 1RQ

On arrival from Dundee (A90) at the first roundabout at the edge of Aberdeen, follow the signs for the A92 to Fraserburgh & Peterhead. This will take you over the River Dee onto the ring road (South Anderson Drive). If you pass Asda on the left, you are on the right road.

Continue straight on up South Anderson Drive, crossing over the A93 into Anderson Drive, and the A944 into North Anderson Drive. At the next roundabout, turn right onto Cairncry Road. Follow this down to a roundabout and go straight on, slightly to the left, onto Hilton Street (A978). This becomes Leslie Road. At the next roundabout, go straight on, slightly to the right, onto St Machar Drive (still the A978). Go straight across at the next roundabout. The Chanonry is then first on the left. St Machar’s Cathedral is on the left when the road veers to the right.

10.30am            King’s College Chapel, University of Aberdeen  
                      College Bounds, Aberdeen AB24 3DS

King’s College Chapel is about half a mile from St Machar’s Cathedral. Parking is more limited so you may wish to walk.

### Walking

Go back down The Chanonry from St Machar’s Cathedral, and cross over St Machar Drive into High Street. Keep walking down High Street, which becomes College Bounds. King’s College Chapel is on the left.

### Driving

Continue round The Chanonry past St Machar’s Cathedral and turn right into Don Street. Turn right at the crossroads into St Machar Drive. At the next roundabout, turn left into Bedford Road. Park in either of the two car parks on the left. Whichever one you park in, leave by foot in the same direction you drove down Bedford Road. Perpendicular to Bedford Road, adjacent to the further car park, is Meston Walk. Turn left onto this and then turn right at the end onto College Bounds.

11.45am            Lunch (own arrangements)

The remaining visits are all within walking distance of each other, so I suggest that we drive to the Kirk of St Nicholas and walk from then on.

Turn left out of the car park onto Bedford Road. At the end of Bedford Road, turn left onto Powis Terrace (A96). Then take the right hand fork into George Street. Carry straight on for some time. After crossing

John Street, take next left into St Andrew Street. At the end of this turn right into Loch Street, and then immediately right into the Bon Accord & St Nicholas Shopping Centre multi-storey car park (NCP). The current charge for up to 6hrs is £7.50.

Leave the car park through the centre (there are numerous food outlets) and leave the centre by the main exit onto Schoolhill. The Kirk of St Nicholas is directly across the road, although the main entrance is on the opposite side of the church.

1.30pm            Kirk of St Nicholas  
                      Union Street x Back Wynd, Aberdeen AB10 1JZ

3.00pm            Gilcomston South Church  
                      Union Street x Summer Street, Aberdeen AB10 1TD

Leave the Kirk of St Nicholas (on foot!) onto Union Street, and turn right along Union Street, crossing over the railway line. Gilcomston South Church is on the right about 400yds along. Please enter via the side door (third door back from Union Street) on Summer Street.

4.30pm            St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral  
                      Huntly Street, Aberdeen AB10 1SH

Leave Gilcomston South Church and turn left back along Union Street. Then take second left into Huntly Street. St Mary's RC Cathedral is then on the right.

To return to the Bon Accord & St Nicholas Shopping Centre car park, turn left out of the cathedral into Huntly Street and then left back along Union Street. Just before the Kirk of St Nicholas, turn left up Back Wynd and then right into Schoolhill, where the main shopping centre entrance is on the left.