

VOX and FOX

Anniversary Essay

In its 149 years Clifton has been served by several organs. Much money and loving care has been expended on them, though on occasion they have been treated unkindly. Some new evidence about them has come to light in the preparation of this exhibition.

When the School opened in September 1862 there was as yet no Chapel; services were held in Big School, and they were unaccompanied. However at the start of 1864 W.F. Trimnell was appointed Organist and Choirmaster, and he was authorised to hire an organ which had recently been in St Andrew's Church (itself to be destroyed in the Blitz). The Head Master John Percival undertook to pay half the hiring fee of £20. The instrument may have been no more than a harmonium; but conceivably it was the source of the 18th-century pipe-work incorporated in the present organ. At the building of the Chapel in 1867 a new instrument was bought, wholly at the Head Master's expense. In the following year Sunday recitals were introduced by E.M. Oakeley, a Classics master and prolific composer, who also compiled the first Clifton Hymn Book. This organ stood originally to the north of the chancel; when the building was first extended in the 1880s it was moved to the nave. It was however unsatisfactory, and was not deemed complete until 1890. It was the work of the great Henry Willis, reverentially known as 'Father', though he refused to maintain it after alterations were made by another builder.

This is not, however, the Willis organ chiefly remembered at Clifton. At an early stage a Choral Society had been founded, whose performances in Big School had been helped by the organ hired primarily for services. But when the Chapel opened this disappeared, and it was soon realised that Big School needed an organ of its own, especially for concerts involving large choral works. So the Society set about raising funds from ticket sales and direct donations; in December 1871 the Council authorised their plans, and by March 1874 Clifton's second Willis had been installed at a cost of £715. The Society then regulated its use, on the understanding that the Council would insure it.

Although Willis organs are famed for their mechanical as well as their musical fluency, this one misbehaved badly at its first public performance in December 1874. Such stops as Trimnell managed to pull immediately retracted of their own accord, and the *Cliftonian* reviewer observed 'violent contortions and spasms' which eventually brought the machine to a standstill.

Thereafter it was tamed and served Clifton well for many decades. It stood in two simple but elegant cases either side of and equal in height with the south window; the Great and Swell with the console to the right, the Pedal stops to the left. The original specification was:

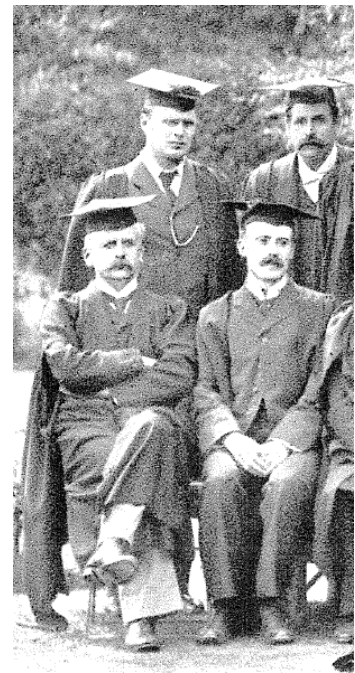
GREAT		SWELL		PEDAL	
Contra gamba	16	Lieblich bourdon	16	Open diapason (w)	16
Open diapason	8	Lieblich gedeckt	8	Violone (m)	16
Open diapason	8	Open diapason	8	Bourdon	16
Viola	8	Gamba	8		
Salicional	8	Vox angelica	8	Couplers	
Claribel	8	Gemshorn	3	Swell to Great	
Flute harmonique	4	Mixture (9,22)	2 rks	Great to Pedal	
Principal	4	Hautboy	8	Swell to Pedal	
Super-Octave	2	Cornopian	8	Great and Pedal	
Posaune	8			combination coupled	
Clarinet	8				

When Trimnell left in 1896, in his place came Arthur Peppin with the larger title of Director of Music. Peppin had been secretary to Sir George Grove, first Director of the RCM and editor of the great *Dictionary* which bears his name. Peppin's connexions in the musical establishment helped to raise the profile of Clifton music. The Music School was begun soon after his arrival and was completed in 1898.

Sir Charles Nicholson's further enlargement of the Chapel in 1910-11 would have been a challenge for the existing organ, which was already showing its age. Well before the Chapel rebuild began, Peppin started making his own plans. In October 1908 he approached the Durham organ builders Harrision and Harrison. This firm, founded in 1861, and now run by the brothers Harry (the designer) and Arthur (the voicer), had rapidly established its reputation. Peppin had admired their new instrument in Ely Cathedral, and had received personal recommendations from fellow organists. By the end of the month Arthur Harrison had visited Clifton and designed a four-manual instrument costing £2,000; unfortunately this was about twice the likely budget, and a less ambitious three-manual was then considered, allowing room for later expansion. Although it was agreed in June 1909 to reduce the compass to 58 notes, Peppin began to voice his concern that Harrison's scheme was still too extravagant, with 'some things which are not exactly necessary for our purposes'. In particular he thought the proposed five reeds (two Great Trombas, Swell Trumpet, Double Trumpet and Clarion) were 'much of the same general character'. Peppin's reservations became more and more trenchantly expressed until a virtual state of war existed between Clifton and Durham; by then Sir Walter Parratt had also entered the fray.

Nevertheless on 21 July 1909 Peppin was able to commission Harrisons to 'undertake the Chapel organ' for an initial cost of £1,400, though as Arthur Harrison explained by return, that meant 'the Solo organ would have to go' and the old Willis would be cannibalised for the smaller and less important stops. Peppin still hoped that a further £600 might yet be raised to complete the original scheme, and indeed hinted that this 'may come in soon'. Just three days later he was able to report that there was now a conditional offer of the full £2,000 from 'a friend'. This was duly revealed to be Herbert Henry Wills (Town 1872-4), who proposed to donate the organ in memory of his brother Maitland (NT 1871-7), killed in a climbing accident in 1885. Wills's generosity enabled a return to the four-manual scheme, but his conditions were stringent. The contract was to be made directly with the donor; the specification was to be vetted by Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the King's Musick, and on completion the organ was to be again 'passed' by an expert nominated by the Head Master; the case was to be plain and paid for by the College; otherwise the expenditure was not to exceed the £2,000, so that it should remain absolutely Wills's gift.

These terms were accepted, and battle was joined. Peppin forwarded and endorsed Parratt's criticism of the proposed specification. He pressed for a separate 2 ft Swell stop on a separate slide to the 15.19.22 Mixture, to be used alone. Peppin noted that this was specifically prescribed in some of Widor's music. Arthur Harrison was at first adamant in defence of his original ideas; eventually he relented, extracting the desired rank through a redesign of the Mixture to its current 12.19.22 composition. Peppin then wanted the Clarinet displaced from the Solo on to the Choir. This thoroughly riled Harrison, whose only accommodation was to provide a third Swell box, just for the Clarinet (which he insisted must be enclosed). Even this solution Harrison himself condemned as 'one of the absurdities of organ building which I



*Arthur H Peppin (1900)
(top left)*

*Director of Music
throughout the process of
commissioning and
installing the 1911 organ*

thought no one would suggest now-a-days'. Harrison fended off this attack in the end, retaining the Clarinet on the enclosed Solo.

Parratt/Peppin also wanted a Contra-Fagotto in place of the Swell Double Trumpet, which they thought would create too much 16 ft manual work on an organ with no 32 ft. Harrison defended his tonal designs at some length, explaining how the only other proposed 16 ft, the Choir Double Salicional, was not to be used with the full organ but only with the Choir, itself a separate Great in miniature. Eventually a softer 16 ft reed ended up on the Solo as the Orchestral Bassoon, and the Swell Double Trumpet was retained, a concession Peppin accepted in March 1910.

At its most colourful the correspondence enlarges into the broader aesthetics and philosophies of organ building. At one point Arthur Harrison assured Peppin that 'if the player has the necessary technical knowledge ... he would consider the general balance and blend as much as the builder does.' He credited W.T. Best as being first in this country to insist on organs having 'a well balanced and dignified ensemble', and as fighting against 'the only too common custom of sacrificing the greater for the lesser good.' Willis, he concluded, was about the only builder to have profited from Best's teaching.

Meanwhile there was equally lively discussion about the case; Sir Charles Nicholson's enthusiasms had to be tempered to meet the donor's wish for simplicity. One sketch of a rejected design has come to light, and is exhibited today.

In May 1910 the final specification was proofed, Harrisons' craftsmen duly set to work,

CLIFTON COLLEGE CHAPEL,
Monday, May 22nd, 1911.

Programme of Organ Recital

— BY —

Dr. W. G. Alcock
(Organist and Composer to H.M. Chapels Royal).

1. SONATA, No. 6	...	Mendelssohn.
1. Chorale with variations.	2. Fugue.	3. Andante.
2. REQUIEM AETERNAM	...	Basil Harwood.
3. MARCH	"Floreat Cliftona"	E. M. Oakeley.
	(By Special Request.)	
4. (a) PRELUDE	...	Rachmaninoff.
(b) IDVLL	...	W. Faulkes.
5. FUNERAL MARCH and HYMN OF SERAPHS		Guilmant.
6. BASSO OSTINATO (5-4 time)	...	Arensky.
7. RHAPSODIE in A minor	...	Saint-Saëns.
8. FANTASIA and FUGUE on the name BACH	...	Liszt.

Organ by Messrs. Harrison & Harrison, of Durham and London.

The inaugural recital, given by the appointed 'examiner'

and on Candlemas Day 1911 their creation arrived by train. The installation took about seven weeks, held up a little by some problems with the Coupler chests; by 21 March all that remained was for the case to be stained and the front pipes to be silvered. There was however still the final 'examination' which Wills had stipulated, and this was performed on 22 May by Dr Walter Alcock, Organist of the Chapels Royal, who gave an inaugural recital the same day. By special request his programme included E.M. Oakeley's *Floreat Cliftona*. Afterwards the Head Master (J.E. King) wrote warmly to Arthur Harrison, reporting Alcock's approval and enclosing Wills's cheque for the final £500 due. The HM was confident that the organ would be 'a valuable and permanent possession of the School ... housed in a building which will do justice to its sweetness and power.'

During the rebuilding of the Chapel services were held in Emmanuel Church, whose Organist offered free use of his instrument. Though Peppin felt some payment should nevertheless

be made, the Finance Committee saw 'no reason why Mr. Peppin should not avail himself of the courteous offer of the Organist.' In more generous vein the Committee allocated 10 guineas for the inaugural recitals.

THE NEW ORGAN

IN

Clifton College Chapel.

1911.

The organ is the gift of H. H. Wills, Esq., of Barley Wood, Wrington, Somerset, an Old Cliftonian. The specification has been drawn up by the builders, Messrs. Harrison & Harrison, of Durham and London, in consultation with A. H. Peppin, Esq., B.A., organist of the College. The organ stands in a gallery at the West end of the Chapel, and is enclosed in a handsome carved oak case designed by Sir Charles Nicholson. The best pipe-work of the old Willis organ has been incorporated. There are four manuals, CC to A³, 58 notes, and two and a half octaves of radiating and concave pedals, CCC to F, 30 notes; 42 speaking stops and 19 couplers, etc., making a total of 61 drawstops.

PEDAL ORGAN, 7 Stops, 4 Couplers.

	FEET.
1. Open Wood	Wood, 16
2. Open Diapason ... (18 from No. 15) ...	Metal, 16
3. Sub Bass ... (12 from No. 8) ...	Wood, 16
4. Geigen ... (from No. 14) ...	Metal, 16
5. Octave Wood ... (18 from No. 1) ...	Wood, 8
6. Flute ... (18 from No. 3) ...	" 8
7. Ophicleide	Metal, 16

I. Choir to Pedal.

II. Great to Pedal.

III. Swell to Pedal.

IV. Solo to Pedal.

CHOIR ORGAN, 6 Stops, 2 Couplers.

	FEET.
8. Double Salicional (17 closed wood) Metal & Wood, 16	
9. Viola da Gamba	Metal, 8
10. Stopped Diapason	Wood, 8
11. Dulciana	Metal, 8
12. Flauto Traverso	" 4
13. Flageolet	" 2

V. Swell to Choir.

VI. Solo to Choir.

GREAT ORGAN, 11 Stops, 4 Couplers.

	FEET.
14. Gross Geigen	Metal, 16
15. Large Open Diapason	" 8
16. Small Open Diapason	" 8
17. Hohl Flöte	Wood, 8
18. Octave	Metal, 4
19. Wald Flöte	Wood, 4
20. Octave Quint	Metal, 2½
21. Super Octave	" 2
22. Harmonics, 17, 19, 21, 22	" —
23. Tromba ... (harmonic trebles) ...	" 8
24. Octave Tromba ... (" ") ...	" 4

VII. Reeds on Choir.

VIII. Choir to Great.

IX. Swell to Great.

X. Solo to Great.

SWELL ORGAN, 12 Stops, Tremulant, and 2 Couplers.

	FEET.
25. Open Diapason	Metal, 8
26. Lieblich Gedeckt	Wood, 8
27. Salicional	Metal, 8
28. Vox Angelica	" 8
29. Gemshorn	" 4
30. Lieblich Flöte	" 4
31. Fifteenth	" 2
32. Mixture, 12, 19, 22	" —
33. Oboe	" 8

XI. Tremulant.

34. Double Trumpet	Metal & Wood, 16
35. Trumpet ... (harmonic trebles) ...	Metal, 8
36. Clarion ... (" ") ...	" 4

XII. Octave.

XIII. Solo to Swell.

SOLO ORGAN, 6 Stops, Tremulant, and 3 Couplers.

	FEET.
37. Orchestral Bassoon	Metal, 16
38. Clarinet	" 8
39. Viole d'Orchestre	" 8
40. Harmonic Flute	" 8
41. Concert Flute	" 4

XIV. Tremulant.

37 to 41 in a swell-box.

42. Tuba	Metal, 8
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XV. Octave.

XVI. Sub-octave.

XVII. Unison off.

COMBINATION COUPLERS.

XVIII. Great and Pedal Combinations coupled.

XIX. Pedal to Swell Pistons.

ACCESSORIES.

Five combination pedals to the Pedal organ.
Three combination pistons to the Choir organ.
Four combination pistons to the Great organ.
Four combination pistons to the Swell organ.
Three combination pistons to the Solo organ.
Reversible pedal to *Great to Pedal*.
Reversible pedal to *Swell Tremulant*.
Reversible pedal to *Solo Tremulant*.
Two crescendo pedals to Swell and Solo organs.

WIND PRESSURES.

Pedal flue-work, 2½ to 4 inches; reeds, 12 inches.
Choir, 2½ inches.
Great flue-work, 4½ inches; reeds, 12 inches.
Swell flue-work, and "Oboe," 4 inches; other reeds, 7 inches.
Solo flue-work and orchestral reeds, 5 inches; Tuba, 12 inches.
Action wind, 10 inches.

The draw-stop jams are at an angle of 45 degrees to the key-boards, and fitted with ivory bushes. The stop-handles have solid ivory heads, the speaking stops being lettered in black and the couplers, etc. (indicated above by italics) in red. The latter are grouped with the speaking stops of the departments they augment. The combination pistons have solid ivory heads.

The builders' latest systems of tubular-pneumatic and electro-pneumatic action are applied to all the mechanism except the manual to pedal coupling action, which is mechanical.

Spotted metal has been used for all trebles, and harmonic, covered, and cone-tuned pipes. The new Great Diapasons are of special plain organ-metal, of great weight and substance, with hardened feet.

The blowing apparatus consists of a 7 H.P. electric motor and rotary fans, and there are eight separate reservoirs within the organ.

The completion of the organ marked the climax of Peppin's work at Clifton, and in 1915 he moved to Rugby. Before long his successor R.O. Beachcroft was facing a troubled inheritance.

The Chapel organ had been fitted with the latest type of AC motor; but this was still primitive and unequal to the task. Its defects were identified by the Head of Physics, David Rintoul, who advised that better models were now available. One of these was duly bought in 1916 for £16, but within a year it needed a new rotor which cost more than the motor itself.

Two years later the Big School organ was the main concern. Beachcroft reported that it was 'liable to break down at any time', and the Council agreed to spend up to £300 on repairs. Within a year it had become so unreliable that replacements had to be hired. Discussion of repairs dragged on until 1922, by which time the cost had risen to £800. Understandably the Council rejected Beachcroft's proposal to add a pipe to each of the 8 ft manual stops for a further £180.

No sooner had the Willis been fixed than the Chapel organ was again over-heating. In March 1924 Harrisons reported that it had been 'baked' and respectfully suggested that the architect had not left proper clearance for ventilation.

When Beachcroft retired in 1926 the Head Master (Norman Whatley) appointed William McKie, then Director of Music at Radley. Despite his youth he was strongly recommended by former HM Michael Glazebrook and other senior figures. McKie soon found much amiss with the Chapel organ, and was not satisfied with Harrisons' first attempt to re-face the keys, which left some considerably overhanging the others. Arthur Harrison himself pronounced the instrument 'much dirtier than I expected to find it', and a programme of overhaul and repair was agreed for £450. Before this could be implemented McKie had vacated the loft.

Despite his subsequent reputation for toughness, Clifton was seemingly too much for him, and he was angling for a job back in his native Australia. Early in 1930 he asked for a long period of leave to seek out that prospect; and when this was understandably refused he appears to have had a breakdown. 'This is the climax of six unpleasant months' he told Whatley in June, 'it's not fair to the School music to try to carry on like this'. And so he went, having secured the coveted post as City Organist at Melbourne. He would return to England in 1938 as Organist and Informator Choristarum of Magdalen College, Oxford, and was then Organist and Master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey from 1941 to 1963. He directed the Music at the Coronation in 1953, for which he was knighted. Perhaps Clifton would not have kept him long in any case; but his sudden departure led to the appointment of a figure of legendary stature, and the more honoured as *Cliftoniensis natus*.

Douglas Fox was actually born in Putney in 1893 and began learning the piano from his mother at the age of four. In January 1902 he entered the Clifton Preparatory School, moving up to the South Town. His musical gifts flourished, and he was the first boy to be awarded an academic Star for a musical performance (Bach's two-part Invention in C major). Peppin arranged for him to be heard by Parratt at Windsor Castle. Parratt was impressed by the little boy's 'keen musical organization ... good taste and considerable power of expression', recommending that he should be introduced at once to the organ, with the likely prospect of an Oxbridge scholarship. At the Trafalgar centenary concert of 1905, when Sir Charles Stanford conducted his *Songs of the Sea* – words by Sir Henry Newbolt (ST, NT 1876-81, sung by Harry Plunket Greene (NT, OH 1877-81) – the infant Fox also performed and Stanford turned his pages. Fox was an all-round scholar, as his Greek and Latin compositions show, and his termly reports rarely descended from 'excellent' to merely 'good'.

On leaving Clifton in 1910 he went straight to the RCM with an organ scholarship, and became the star pupil of the College's Director, Sir Hubert Parry. Letters from our Archive demonstrate the closeness of their relationship; the great man rushes round to congratulate the pupil on passing a piano exam, and invites his opinion on some bars added to an organ piece. Having collected the Sawyer and Lafontaine Prizes, and a first place in the FRCO exam, Fox

went on to Keble College, Oxford in 1912 as Organ Scholar (towards which Parratt had pointed him years before).

At the start of the war Fox joined the University OTC, and then determined to volunteer for the Army. Peppin had done his best to dissuade him ('you will really be of more use to the community by staying as you are') but in 1916 he was commissioned into the 4th Battalion, the Gloucestershire Regiment and was sent to France. On 27 August 1917 he was wounded so severely in the right arm that it had to be amputated the following day; that saved his life but the life could no longer be the one for which he had been preparing. Among those who wrote with their sympathy, Parry felt the wrecking of Fox's glittering prospects as a particularly cruel blow. By contrast Stanford took a jaunty tone, affecting to belittle the difficulty of playing and conducting single-handed. Many of Fox's friends encouraged him to realise that his musical gifts could yet find useful expression. Glazebrook suggested that he might be a great composer; in fact he was to become a great teacher. After convalescence he was appointed Director of Music at Bradfield, where he spent twelve highly successful years.

With the professional discipline that informed his entire career, he had taught himself to play masterfully with his remaining facilities. At the organ he could pick out a tune on one manual and harmonise with the remaining four digits on the manual below. With skilful arrangement he was able to give the pedals more of the work, though the story that he would occasionally dab a key with his nose is probably apocryphal. In time he was able to play again much of the standard repertoire. The piano was necessarily less easy to customise, but pieces were specially written for him by Frank Bridge, Balfour Gardiner and others. He gave many performances of the Ravel concerto for the left hand, written for Paul Wittgenstein (the philosopher's brother), who had also lost his right arm in the war.

Peppin had encouraged Fox to apply for the Clifton Directorship in succession to Beachcroft in 1926. The Precentor of Eton, Henry Ley, while recommending McKie above two other declared candidates (both OCs), had enquired if Fox was in the running. For reasons unexplained he was not, and McKie walked home. But when four years later McKie gave up there was no contest. Somewhat improbably Fox was staying in a five-star hotel in Switzerland when he received Whatley's offer of the Clifton post; with characteristic coolness he did not reply until he had been for his scheduled mountain hike.

While still at Bradfield Fox asked for some further accessories to the Clifton Chapel organ – a Sub-Octave coupler on the Swell and a cancelling piston or pedal to all stops. Arthur Harrison tactfully agreed that these would be 'specially useful to Mr. Fox' and a pedal more so than a piston. Fox was appalled to learn that the coupler alone would cost £92, and offered to pay half its cost; the canceller would not be needed if a boy could help with registration. Rather meanly the Council took him at his word, so he paid the equivalent of two months' starting salary before taking up his post January 1931.

In fairness (as the Council pointed out) a large sum had already been committed to the Chapel organ – £450 for the overhaul arranged by McKie. These were difficult times for the College as everywhere else, and in some eyes Clifton's two organs were an expensive luxury. Harrisons were contracted to tune them, usually twice each term, for £46 16s *per annum*, and the Bursar wondered if this could not be done more cheaply. Fox undertook to find out, and by darkly suggesting that the contract might be given to another firm, persuaded Harrisons to reduce their fee by 25%.

Harrisons could afford to be generous because Fox had already engaged them to overhaul the Big School organ, retuning it to concert pitch. This work was completed early in 1938. Also that year Fox had the satisfaction of advancing his most distinguished pupil David Willcocks (WaH 1934-8) to the Organ Scholarship at King's College, Cambridge. Fox's testimonial was fulsome but not over-stated; having written 'He is a very reliable and tactful accompanist' he then crossed out 'very'.

When Clifton evacuated to Bude, the neighbouring church of Poughill had to represent Clifton Chapel, and its one-manual organ deputised for the larger instrument left behind. Despite the reduced circumstances Fox sustained the musical life of the School in exile, and through concerts helped to develop good relations with the local people.



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*From a photograph taken by Myles Glover
(also in Douglas Fox: A Chronicle (1976) by Winifred Fox)*

Fox retired in 1957, and in the following year he received the OBE. Further honours included the Fellowship of the RCM and an honorary Doctorate in Music from Bristol University. Retirement was only partial, as he soon found new employment in Cambridge as organist of Great St Mary's.

Fox's contribution to Clifton's musical life, so broad in scope and long in influence, is not easily epitomised. It can be measured in the 60 scholarships his pupils won at Oxford and Cambridge, the RCM and the RAM, and is remembered in the Music Club he founded and the House Singing Competition which he revived. Being so well connected from his early days, he

brought a host of musical celebrities to perform at Clifton. Although he did not himself become the great composer foreseen by Glazebrook, Stanford's prediction that he would be a masterful and inspiring conductor was fully realised. At the heart of his talent lay a brilliant mind and an intuitive understanding of the music he loved, focused by formidable self-discipline. His professionalism is evident from the detailed notebooks in which from an early age he defined his craft, and his scholarship is demonstrated by the Edinburgh D.Mus. he gained by examination. He also left a comprehensive record of his own life and achievement; indeed no other individual is so well represented in our Archives. While this exhibition was being prepared an even larger deposit of his papers was discovered at Keble, including many of the letters used by his sister Winifrid in her privately printed memoir (1976). Douglas and Winifrid Fox also gave generously for the endowment of a Music Scholarship, to carry the names of Douglas and his successor Evan Prentice (WiH 1936-40; staff from 1947, Director of Music 1957-66†).

Under Prentice's successor David Pettit (Director of Music 1967-81) the Chapel organ was given a major overhaul, overseen by Mark Venning of Harrison and Harrison. The work included upgrading to solid-state technology, reed revoicing, new keyboards and accessories. The pitch was raised from c 516 to standard.

Before the contract was signed in 1977 Peter Hurford was invited to comment on the proposed musical modifications, but many of his suggestions failed to win approval. He wanted, for example, to remove the 16 ft Double Salicional on the Choir, to retain only two of the original ranks and to add new 4 ft, $2\frac{2}{3}$ ft, $1\frac{3}{5}$ ft and 1 ft stops, with a Tremulant as well. This would have radically skewed the tonal balance of the organ. In the fashion of the time Hurford was seeking to turn an Edwardian lion into a neo-classical gazelle, but eventually a true Cliftonian compromise was reached. The additions were limited to a more sympathetically-scaled 4 ft Principal, a $1\frac{1}{3}$ ft Nasard and a 3-rank Mixture, while the 16 ft was reprieved. The final bill was over £30,000.

Further improvements in 1993-4 were made possible by the generosity of R.G. Strachan (SH 1925-9), who left a third of his residuary estate for the general purposes of the Chapel. From this source £78,000 was allocated to immediate work on the organ. The larger part of the sum went towards re-leathering and general repairs; perhaps the most intriguing decision was to move the Pedal Ophicleide to make space for a future 32 ft extension.

Meanwhile the Willis organ in Big School was facing larger upheavals. It had been neglected during the War, and thereafter it was little used except at OC reunions. Its fate had in fact been determined in the Headland Cafe at Bude, where of necessity Clifton's Houses combined for their refectations. On the return to Bristol the economic argument for 'central feeding' could not be resisted, and, after much debate it was accepted that this could only be achieved by radically restructuring Big School. As a result the organ was dismantled in 1969 and stored in the Crypt. From there it rose again, thanks to the great generosity of J.H. Britton (ST 1919-23), President of the College, who in his previous capacity as Chairman of Council had reluctantly authorised its removal. At cost of £10,000 the instrument was carefully restored by Percy Daniel and Co. of Clevedon, with new action and a new console. In the constricted space there was no room for the original 16ft Open Diapason on the Pedal, but overall three new stops were introduced. The re-opening recital on 17 January 1973 was given by Richard Popplewell (WaH 1949-53), who included works by Richard Drakeford (DH 1950-5) and David Willcocks in his programme.

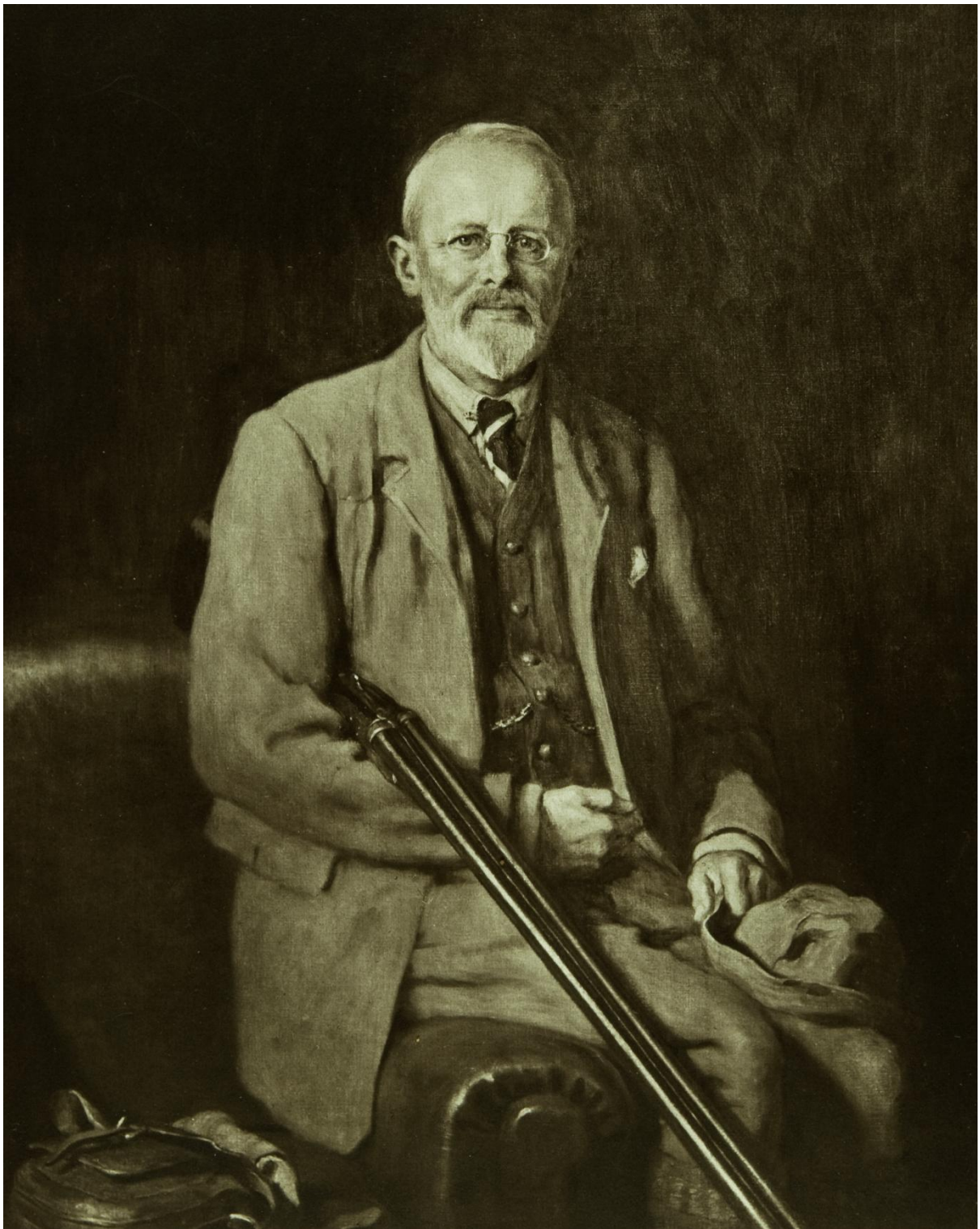
The loss of one 16ft pipe was not the only indignity suffered by the old lady in what proved to be her final years at Clifton; cream buns and other unsuitable items were stuffed into her all too accessible orifices. Worse was to follow. 'Here at Clifton', J.L. Birley had written in 1951 'is an organ unspoiled so far; let us hope that the means and the enlightenment will always be at hand to keep it so'. Half a century later Clifton found itself deficient in both commodities, and when Big School was further comparted in 2005 the Willis organ was dismantled once more.

It would be born again, but this time on a Shropshire hilltop. The church of St Mary Magdalene, Bridgnorth was only too happy to give £7,500 for the instrument Clifton could no longer accommodate. Its true value is represented by the £143,000 which the whole installation cost the parish. After four years in limbo the organ was splendidly restored and enhanced, with the severed 16ft reconnected.

Without the Willis organ the traditional singing of the School Song at OC reunions in Big School became a shambles. To resolve this, in 2010 the OC Society handsomely gave £9,000 for the purchase of a new electronic organ. This is the latest feature of the organic development in Clifton music which we celebrate today.

Text: C.S. Knighton and J.R. Drinkwater
Opinions expressed are those of the writers

We are grateful to Mr M.J. Butterfield, Mr J.A. Davenport and Mr G.V. Hardyman; to Dr J.L. Turnock for kindly allowing us to film him playing the Father Willis in Bridgnorth; to Messrs Harrison & Harrison for access to their Archives and much other assistance; to the staff of Durham County Record Office; to the University of Bristol Library, Special Collections, for portrait of H.H. Wills; to the Warden and Fellows of Keble College, Oxford, for the loan of items from the Fox Archive, and to their Archivist Mr R. Petre for copies of many other documents



*Henry Herbert Wills (Town 1872-4), donor of the Chapel organ
University of Bristol Library, Special Collections, DM 311*