



An oak front in Victorian Gothic style was attached to the lighter Regency pine case-front

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◁Noble and W.C. Mack, these last two being well thought of in Norfolk. It is thought that Street was responsible for the alteration of the compass from GG to C, since a note was found in the organ stating: 'This organ was cleaned and the action repaired attended by Samuel Street Organ Builder Norwich August 1851' at a time when conversions such as this were rife. Mack eventually transferred the organ to Cawston.

At this point records become a little thin on the ground, save for a piece in the *Norwich Mercury* from February 1870 which records the opening of the instrument on Thursday the 10th. It stated that the organ was built by Father Schmidt which, though it cannot be verified, was sufficient to establish a piece of local folk-

lore. Richard Bower's work has now proved that this instrument does contain a substantial body of material dating from the 17th century and might well be among the oldest surviving organs in the county. The link to Father Schmidt, however, remains tenuous.

The basis of the instrument is a GG-compass organ which originally had a derived Choir division. The soundboard has 105 pallets together with double sliders for each stop. This soundboard now serves for the Great. The pipework is substantially older than 1814, attested by the shape of the upper lips of metal pipes, which is characteristically rounded at the top and pressed in (later pipework tends to have just a flattened area above and below the mouth roughly triangular in shape).

Markings on the pipes are also strongly indicative of work from the 1600s. Little alteration appears to have been made to the voicing, which is bright and 'vocal' without being overpowering.

The Swell organ is undoubtedly by G.P. England and retains its 'Nag's head' shutters. The actuating mechanism uses a beam similar to one from an early Newcomen steam pumping engine and it is this which probably gave rise to the term 'Nag's head', since the end of the beam is shaped like the head of a horse.

In common with others of the time its compass only went down as far as tenor G, and in the most recent work the decision was taken to borrow notes from the upper octave and a half of the Pedal Bourdon to provide a stopped bass. This is made available on a separate drawstop so that the physical integrity of the England Swell is uncompromised while allowing at least the Swell Open and Stopped Diapasons to be used over a modern compass. Otherwise it remains an 18th-century Swell organ.

The casework presented something of a conundrum since the organ in fact possesses two casefronts, one behind the other. When or why this arrangement occurred is unknown but it appears not to be the work of an organ builder. England is thought to have provided a pine case-front in the Regency style of the early 1800s, with a central flat flanked by two smaller towers and two outer flats. The overall layout was retained; but on top of the expected rather light framing of the towers and flats with curved arches and finials, an altogether heavier and more woody oak front in high Victorian Gothic had been attached. It is a competent and attractive piece of work, but more akin to church furnishing of the 1840s and 50s than an organ case from 1800.

So what does the organ sound like? A first impression of the Great chorus is one of fullness, given the Sesquialtera which is powerfully voiced and tends to fill up textures. Without detracting from the quality of this particular stop, it perhaps hints at why tierce mixtures fell from grace as the century wore on; the radical changes to reed voicing techniques with the concomitant increase in power, smoothness and regularity making the trumpet