

THE 'TROMPETE DE MARIS' AT PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL

by Simon L Ablett & David Price

The new *'Trompette de Maris'* or *'Trumpet of the Sea'* was installed this autumn at Portsmouth Cathedral with an inaugural concert held on September 30 and it was dedicated on October 1, 2017. The new fanfare of trumpets are intended for use at very special moments in the church's liturgical life such as Easter, Christmas and Pentecost, as well as enabling exciting improvisations and acoustical effects for recitalists and liturgical players alike.

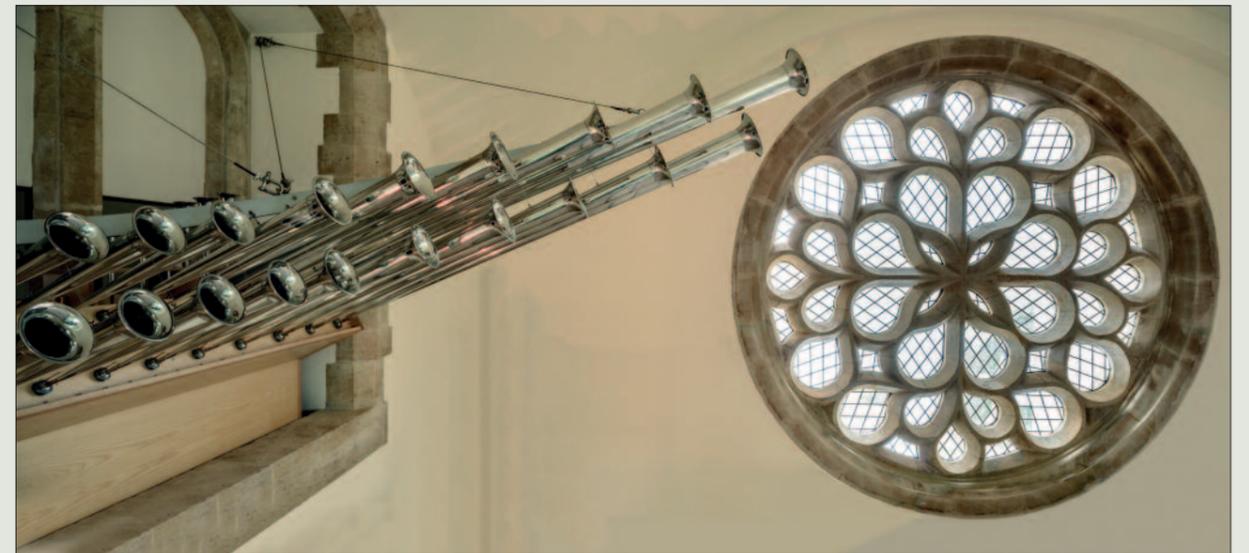
As the former parish church became a cathedral in 1927, design work commenced from 1932 to substantially enlarge the church to the designs of the architect Sir Charles Nicholson. Inevitably there were also alterations planned to the organ.

The parish had purchased an organ in 1718 at a cost of £628 and it is likely that this included one of Abraham Jordans' swelling devices. The case was probably executed by Francis Bird and has figures of cherubs and King David playing his harp. Over the years

this organ was restored, rebuilt and added to, but the major change was from 1939 when the organ was dismantled as part of Nicholson's alterations to the base of the tower to create a new wide opening at floor level to unite the early church with his new nave to the west of the tower. Above this, within the tower, an organ loft was formed. Although the Jordan case survived the Second World War, all the pipes, which had been stored in London, were destroyed.

In 1947 an organ built for St Michael and All Angels' Church in Landport in 1879 was brought to the cathedral and the Jordan case was positioned facing westwards into the partially completed nave (the War had stopped all work). This organ was repaired in 1957, 1960 and rebuilt in 1974, but by the 1990's the instrument was failing.

The organ we see today has an interesting history as it had been designed by Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley and built by John Nicholson for Manchester Cathedral in 1861. Inspired by 'en chamade' style



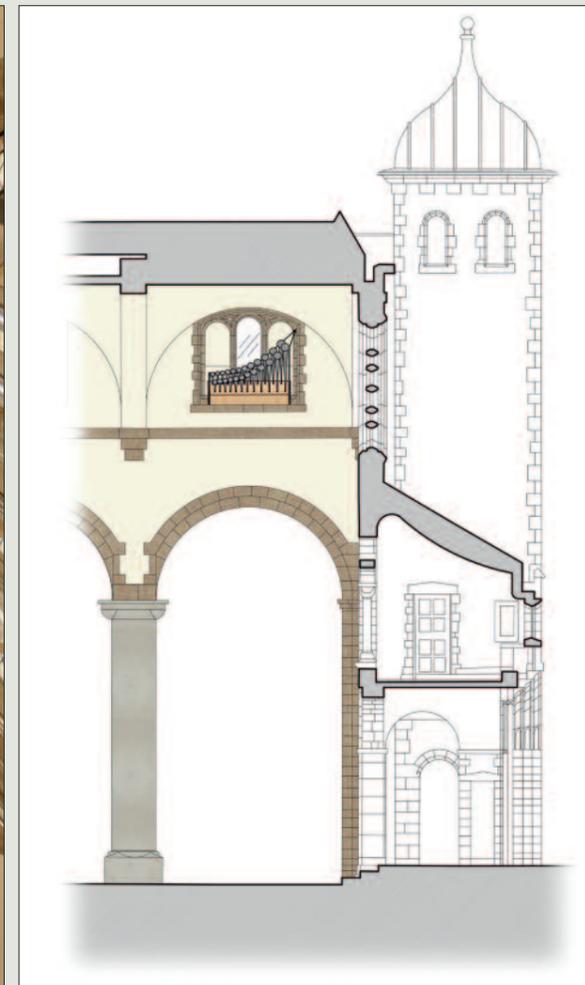
of trumpets at Toledo, Ouseley had incorporated them into the organ. 'En chamade' refers to powerfully voiced reed stops in a pipe organ mounted horizontally and projecting into the church, but at Manchester they were hidden within the case.

The two Great Mixtures (quints only) with separate Tierce and Larigot are unusual for the period (and unique amongst Nicholson's

work) and the provision of an *en chamade* Ophicleide was quite a spectacular departure from the common practice. It would also appear that this instrument was his only foray into pneumatics – the original specification listed pneumatic lever as the action, although it was not clear as to which departments of the organ this applied.

With the commissioning of a new instrument for Manchester, the Nicholson instrument was purchased by Miss Ann Hampson for Holy Trinity Bolton in 1874. When Holy Trinity was made redundant the opportunity was taken to purchase the remarkably intact Nicholson organ for Portsmouth and to locate this beneath the tower. All the existing pipework was included in the instrument and a number of stops, which had been removed in 1874 and 1905 were replaced. The Tierce and Larigot on the Great and the Gamba Octave on the Choir are new pipework, using metal from some of the redundant Portsmouth pipework and have been voiced and scaled as closely as possible to the style and fashion of the 1860s. In addition, the two 32' stops on the pedal are adapted from former Portsmouth ranks (Open Wood 16' and Bombarde 16') as well as the two 4' pedal ranks and the Bass Flute. In 1999 it was possible to add a Celeste and a 16 Double Trumpet, both to the Swell organ making the organ even more flexible and dynamic.

Following the completion of the nave in the 1990's to designs by Michael Drury and the relocation of the Jordan case to face eastwards, plans were made for a new division to be built behind the restored organ, facing into the nave and with the west stops playable from the existing console. In 2001 the West Great Organ built by >



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PROJECT



Nicholson's with a new west facing case designed by Didier Grassin and with decoration by Patrick Caulfield was completed but there were insufficient funds to include a solo stop, which was unfortunate as Ouseley's solo reed, within the case, could not be heard in the nave.

With a bequest from David Ritchie and many others who had given donations to realise the completion of the organ, the task of finding a solution to the trumpets commenced. Trumpets located at the west end would be acoustically best and various ideas of locating these within and around the singing gallery were raised and discussed.

The Drury design in completing the nave had provided blind windows at clerestory level to the north and south sides, with archive rooms behind, and these locations offered an opportunity. The cathedral architect's concept of opening up the blind windows was explored and a simple model of the trumpets projecting into the nave was built for the Fabric Advisory Committee and the Cathedral Fabric Commission.

Following acoustic tests and approval, the enabling works commenced in January 2017 to provide timber access hatches to both sides with oak lintols within the rooms, as well as measuring the win-

dow recesses to enable the construction of the wind chests and investigating routes for the control cabling. A second scaffold installed in July enabled the vault and west wall to be decorated and a working platform for Nicholson's to commence the build. A plain ash wind chest was selected to co-ordinate with the Grassin case and this fits neatly within the recesses. The two blowers each provide ten inches of pressure to play the reeds. Discrete LED spotlights provide a subtle illumination to the two sets of trumpets.

The 'Trumpet de Maris' provides a contemporary addition to the cathedral whilst enabling a stimulating expansion of the cathedral's musical development plan. ■

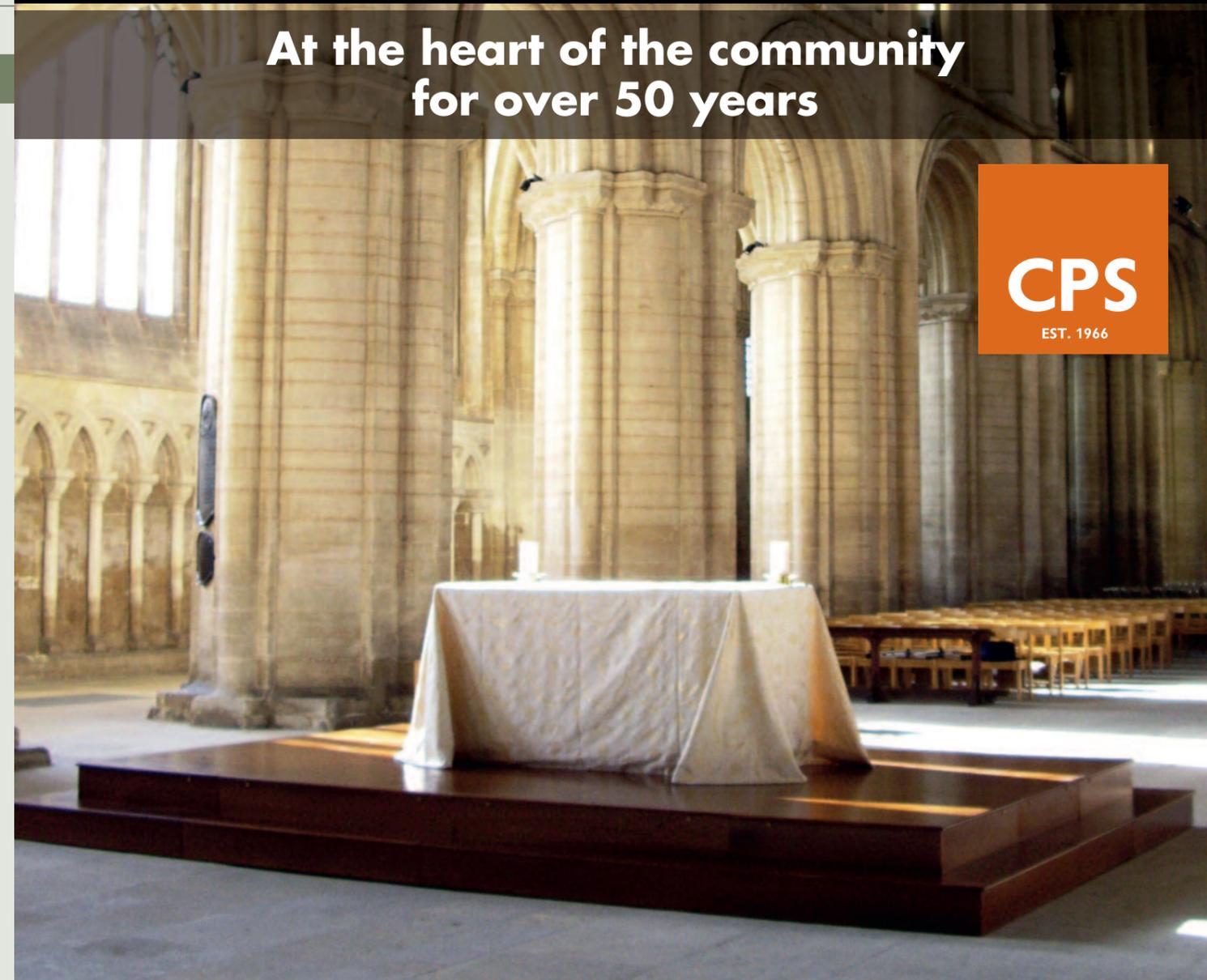
PROJECT TEAM:

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