

Guidelines for organ maintenance and blower maintenance

Organ maintenance

Over the past three decades there has been a considerable amount of unsatisfactory organ maintenance in the Diocese of Wakefield (and in adjoining Dioceses and in the churches of other denominations in our area). In recent years organ builders have had to be called in to attempt to rectify the bad work of others, and there are a number of instruments in the Diocese which are suffering from the results of unprofessional maintenance and bad restoration.

Cheapness is not necessarily best and though many churches which are strapped for cash might be tempted to go for a cheaper maintenance quotation it is important that they should each be aware of the possible pitfalls in that area.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee advises churches to engage organ builders who are accredited members of the Institute of British Organ Building (IBO). Organ building in Britain is generally well-regulated, and in order to achieve accreditation in any or all of the various categories it is necessary that organ builders submit examples of their work, their workshops are inspected and the skills of their workforce noted. Their work is then monitored and they are responsible to the central body should it be necessary for any complaint to be made.

Non-members have no such restrictions or checks.

Common sense suggests that only those who are highly skilled and answerable should be

employed for such important work. Pipe organs are a long term, value-for-money investment, instanced by the fact that many of our Diocese's pipe organs still giving fine service after 100 years. Therefore good maintenance is of paramount importance.

Listed at the end of this paper are the company names and addresses of five specialist organ building firms within easy reach of churches in the Wakefield Diocese. All, as can be seen, are accredited members of the Institute of British Organ Building and their levels of accreditation are noted with their details.

Blower maintenance

The blowing apparatus of pipe organs is usually a rotary fan driven by an electric motor, either by a belt drive or much more commonly by direct shaft drive. This apparatus is usually hidden away, and 'hidden away' can mean 'out of sight out of mind'.

Well-made blowers, which are relatively simple devices, can last seemingly for ever, until one day the motor burns out or the fan comes off the shaft, or the shaft bearings start running hot.

The easy way to avoid such problems is regular maintenance.

Organ blowers should be serviced at least every two years by a qualified mechanical and electrical engineer. Such maintenance will pick out any potential danger, especially the fire hazard from either a burning-out motor or hot bearings. The maintenance visit should be expensive. Names and addresses of recommended firms are at the end of this paper, although most mechanical and electrical engineers would be able to make a reasonable assessment of a machine.

Another hazard occurs where the blower is situated in a crypt or separate room which is also used for the storage of junk (particularly when the 'junk' is combustible materials such as cardboard boxes, old chairs or blankets (to keep the blower quiet)! All these constitute a possible and serious fire hazard.

All organ blowers (which are not within the organ space itself) should be **kept free from junk of all types**. No items should be placed on the blower, or in the space nearby.

Reputable and well-established organ builders

These organ builders are all members of the Institute of British Organ Building (IBO). The categories in which they are accredited are shown below.

Categories:

1. Tuning and maintenance.
2. Tuning, maintenance, clean and overhaul.
3. Tuning, maintenance, clean and overhaul; rebuilding (of any size, style or action including, on occasion, virtually a new organ using older pipework).
4. Historic restoration (restoring organs to their original concept, or if untouched, as they are).
5. Tuning, maintenance, clean and overhaul, rebuilding, new organs electric/pneumatic.
6. Tuning, maintenance, clean and overhaul, rebuilding, new organs tracker.

Members of the Institute of British Organ Building

A J Carter

145 Canal Lane, Stanley, Wakefield WF3 4EE
01924 822368 & fax
Categories 1, 2 and 3

John R Clough and Sons

80 Moorcroft Drive, Bradford BD4 6NJ
01274 683429 & fax
Categories 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Principal Pipe Organs

The Raylor Centre, James Street, York
YO10 3DW
01904 412621 & fax
Categories 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6

J M Spink

120 Middleton Park Road, Leeds LS10 3SD
0113 271 7486 & fax
Categories 1 and 2

Wood of Huddersfield Ltd

St Andrew's Road, Huddersfield HD1 6RZ
01484 533374 & fax
Categories 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6

Blower Engineer

Allfab Engineering

Hilltop
Morland
Penrith
Cumbria

01931 714225

Mobiles: 07768 726905
07768 781277

This firm is also in Leeds, although it is recommended to ring the Cumbria number or the mobiles.

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