

## The Hope-Jones Organ

Sutton Church had just had a new organ built by the firm of Hope-Jones. The action was entirely electric—console separate from the organ itself and a set of diaphones of 16, 8 and 4 foot pitch placed separate from the rest of the organ in the tower. I had the pleasure of meeting Hope-Jones himself on several occasions. He was a charming man and very clever. He was in fact the pioneer of the application of purely electric action to the organ. By a system of contacts, practically all the trackers or zinc tubing became unnecessary. It was possible to place parts of the organ in different places and play from a console which could be moved. Of course also the action was to all intents and purposes instantaneous, however far the console might be separated from the speaking pipes.

Theoretically, the scheme was perfect, but from a practical point of view it left much to be desired and the annoyance and expense which that organ caused was stupendous. It is a fact that all the organs he built—among others, Worcester Cathedral, Stratford-on-Avon, All Saints, Upper Norwood and All Saints, West Dulwich—had all to be either taken out altogether or re-conditioned by another firm of organ builders. Norman & Beard took over the Sutton organ and after the moving of the contacts out of the console and placing them in a separate contact box where they were more accessible, much, but by no means all, of the trouble ceased. I have always maintained, and still do, that the electro-pneumatic action, even then in use, was the ideal and what slight lag there might be in the action operation was more than offset by its dependability. During the eight years that I played the Rushworth organ at Skegness Parish Church, only once was there a failure in the action of any kind and that was due to the sticking of the Choir stop slides swollen by damp; a few shavings taken off with a plane cured that for good and all.

To get back to the Sutton organ, when it was good it was very very good, but when it was bad it was horrid. The voicing, especially of the lighter stops, was delightful and most delicate. But it was not an easy organ for a stranger to manipulate—too many terrifying gadgets the effects produced by which being sometimes unexpected and occasionally quite astonishing. I refer specially to the double touch, quadruplex composition keys, and, most of all, the stop switch. Until one fully understood the effects to be expected following the use of these weird and wonderful arrangements, the situation of the proverbial cat on hot bricks would be one of comparative comfort compared with that of the individual occupying the organ stool. One weekend the blind organist, Wolstenholme, happened to be in Sutton and consented to give a short recital on Sunday evening after the service. I had the job of showing him the organ during the afternoon and although he only had an hour at it he mastered it sufficiently to play several pieces without the slightest slip. Such

a feat of memory and concentration would be altogether beyond the power of ordinary mortals and was one of the most astonishing things I have seen in my life. I was sitting with him at his recital; only once did he ask me to depress a stop key for him and explained afterwards that he felt pretty sure which it was but was not quite certain. I do not think we realize even faintly to what lengths the sense of touch can be developed, and hearing also. He told me, I remember, that when in the road, he could distinctly detect the position of the curb by the sound it made, and if there was no noise could walk about a room without colliding with even a footstool.

The organist was W. Eardley, who had already been there some time and retained the job as long as he lived—that is till about 1928. He had quite a good choir—fifteen boys and twelve men, all of whom used to attend fairly regularly. The service was of the cathedral type with settings for the canticles (of which we had seven or eight in use) and occasional anthems. One of the men, Ralph Vale, a very big chap and real good fellow, who used to sit next to me, is still an active member.