



Detail of the organ case

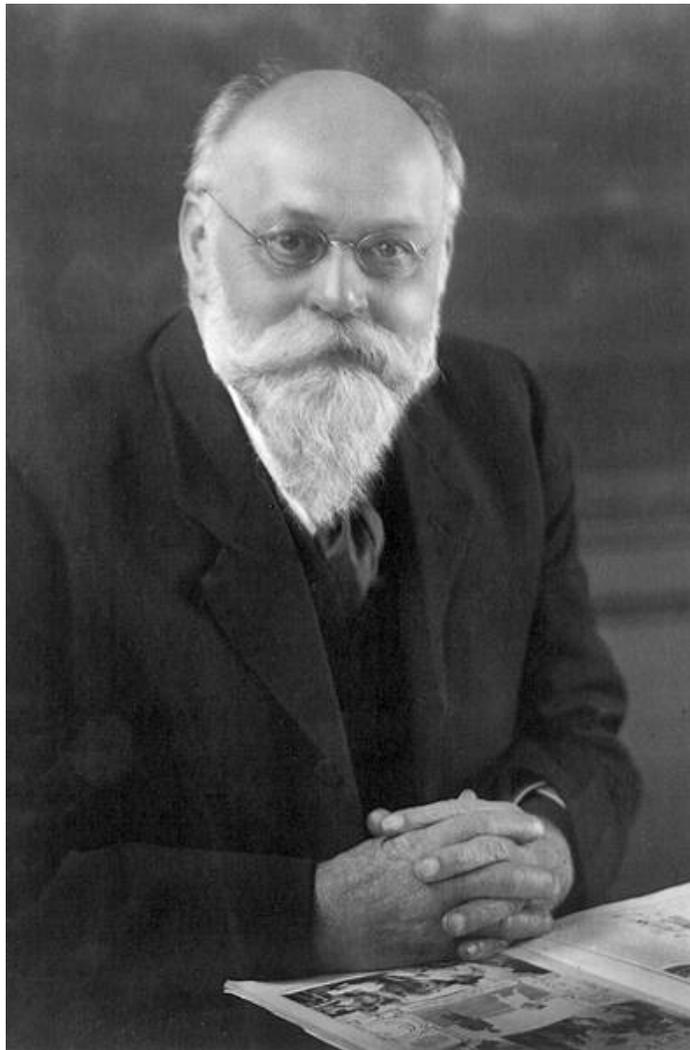
It became possible to focus attention on the provision of a suitable organ for the new church of St George, Headstone once the debt on the building had been cleared in the summer of 1913. Five first-class organ builders were invited to tender for a three-manual instrument, including Frederick Rothwell of Clifton Road, Willesden Junction, London NW, who had already installed a second-hand instrument in the temporary church in 1908 and transferred it to the new church in time for the consecration in 1911. (In 1922 the firm moved to Bonnersfield Lane, Harrow, where it remained until the retirement of Rothwell's last surviving son in 1960.)

The organ project must have been very dear to the heart of Ramsay Couper who, immediately before coming to Headstone, had served as curate and 'precentor' at the important musical church of St Anne, Soho (where Rothwell had rebuilt the organ). The tender of Frederick Rothwell was finally accepted with a view to completion by 1 December 1914. Progress was delayed by the outbreak of war, and the opening recital, played by Sydney Toms of St James's, Piccadilly, did not take place until 26 September 1915.



The new organ in 1915

Frederick Rothwell (1853 – 1944) was a long-standing friend of the distinguished musician and composer Sir Henry Walford Davies (1869 – 1941). Like Walter Parratt, his old master at St George's Chapel, Windsor, Walford Davies greatly admired Rothwell's skill as a voicer and finisher. Before starting out on his own, Frederick Rothwell worked for fourteen years (1875 – 1889) as voicer and finisher for the notable London firm of Gray & Davison. It was during this time that Rothwell undertook work for Parratt at Magdalen College, Oxford. He then went on to carry out work for him at St George's Chapel, Windsor, first with Gray & Davison and later on his own account. From Davies's time as pupil-assistant to Parratt to his tenure as Parratt's successor at St George's, Windsor, Frederick Rothwell built or rebuilt all the organs with which Walford Davies was closely associated.



Frederick Rothwell

Rothwell's rebuild of the Temple Church organ, in 1910, included a substantial amount of new pipework, a complete revoicing of old pipes, and also his patented stop-key control system whereby stop-keys placed above each manual replaced the conventional stop-knobs on either side of the console. H C Colles, Walford Davies's biographer, wrote of the Temple organ that it was 'the organ of Walford's dreams, and on it he made his dreams come true'. For George Thalben-Ball it was 'the most beautiful organ in the world'. Walford Davies became an enthusiastic advocate of the Rothwell control system which enabled the player, in Walford Davies's own words, 'to glide from stop-key to stop-key while still playing, without the slightest break in the musical thought and without the slightest turn of the head or any irrelevant muscular effort'. The Rothwell console also won the admiration and praise of such leading organists as George Thalben-Ball who developed his style of playing on the Temple instrument, and William

Harris who had one fitted at St Augustine's, Edgbaston. Walford Davies had twin patent consoles installed in St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1930, where Rothwell designed the organ in such a way to enable it to be played by two organists together and independently.



Walford Davies at one of the twin Rothwell consoles, St George's Chapel, Windsor

Walford Davies thought highly of the organ at St George's, Headstone. In the 1930s, Hope Milton, daughter of the then Vicar of St George's, had the task of bringing the key to the organ to Sir Walford whenever he called at the vicarage door:

'We always enjoyed the arrival of WD at the front door. He was always very courteous, perhaps a little shy, but had a wonderful repartee with children. He started what must have been one of the first broadcasts aimed at encouraging children to actually enjoy singing, and when I heard his voice, I felt I was listening to a real friend.'

The Headstone organ was the largest instrument built by Rothwell entirely as new. Over the years it has seen only minor modification; all the Rothwell pipework remains intact and the console is the earliest of the dozen or so patent consoles still in use. The case, by Frederick Rothwell, is one of the few in Middlesex listed in Clutton and Niland's 'The British Organ'. Included in the British Institute of Organ Studies' register of historic instruments of importance to the national heritage, the organ, played by Roger Fisher, is featured on a CD tribute to Walford Davies, selected in the Editor's Choice of 'Gramophone', October 2001.



Organ case designed by Frederick Rothwell

Specification

Great Organ
 Double Diapason 16
 Aeolian 8
 Wald Flute 8

Choir Organ
 Dulciana 8
 Lieblich Gedact 8
 Viola da Gamba 8

Open Diapason II 8	Saube Flute 4
Open Diapason I 8	Harmonic Piccolo 2
Harmonic Flute 4	Clarionet (originally enclosed) 8
Principal 4	Tuba (added 1985) 8
Super Octave 2	
Mixture, 3 ranks (12.19.22)	Pedal Organ
Trumpet 8	Trombone 16
	Bass Flute 8
Swell Organ	Open Diapason 16
Bourdon 16	Bourdon 16
Viol d'Orchestre 8	Sub Bass 16
Voix Celeste 8	
Rohr Flute 8	Couplers
Open Diapason 8	Swell to Great
Principal 4	Swell to Choir
Super Octave 2	Swell Super Octave
Mixture, 3 ranks (12.19.22)	Choir to Great
Oboe 8	Great to Pedal
Cornopean 8	Swell to Pedal
	Choir to Pedal

Accessories

5 combination keys and 5 combination pedals to Great and Pedal Organs combined

5 combination keys and 5 combination pedals to Swell Organ

5 combination keys to Choir Organ 5 combination pedals acting on the whole organ, including Couplers, through to Great manual

Automatic locking pedals to Swell and Choir Clarionet boxes (removed In 1966 and replaced by central balanced Swell pedal)

1 hitch down pedal operating Swell Tremulant

Detached console with Rothwell patent stop-key control

Manual compass: CC-C, 61 notes

Pedal compass: CCC-F, 30 notes