

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ORGAN IN LITTLE GLEMHAM CHURCH

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PARISH CHURCH ORGANS were something of a rarity in 18th-century England. Even before their silencing by law in 1644, they had undergone a century of neglect and even outright hostility. Following the Reformation, with a considerable party in the Church of England favouring thoroughgoing reform on Calvinistic principles, organs were felt to detract from the true worship of God in its purest and most spiritual form. In February 1563, a resolution before the Lower House of Convocation calling for the removal of all organs from churches was lost by only one vote (Sumner 1962, 135). There followed a period of gradually spreading puritanism during which many organs were dismantled or allowed to fall into disrepair, a process which culminated in the 1644 Parliamentary Ordinance for the demolition of all organs in places of worship, 'the better to accomplish the blessed reformation so happily begun and to remove offences and things illegal in the worship of God' (Clutton and Niland 1963, 150–51).

Though some organs undoubtedly survived the excesses of the mid-17th century, they were slow to re-appear in most parish (as opposed to cathedral) churches after the Restoration, perhaps because of financial difficulties, and possibly largely through a lack of serious appreciation of their usefulness. The music in most churches probably remained much the same as it had been under the Commonwealth, confined to metrical psalms led by the parish clerk. After the Toleration Act of 1689 church rates, too, may well have been an issue, with Dissenters, who were equally liable with members of the Established Church, reluctant to subsidise the cost of organs, the use of which was anyway against their principles (Scholes 1955, 37). Whatever the reasons, parish organs long remained the exception; as late as 1733, almost three-quarters of a century after the Restoration, even a city the size of York had only one.¹ Closer to home, in Suffolk there were apparently only about fifteen church organs before 1800 (Bumstead 1993, 1).

The discovery, therefore, that an organ was installed in the small rural Suffolk parish church of St Andrew, Little Glemham as early as 1736, is of considerable interest. The following receipted bill was found among more than two hundred bundles of estate and household bills and vouchers of the North family of Glemham Hall:

Agreed with Dudley North Esqr. for the altering and putting up an Organ	21 . 0 . 0
in Glemham Church at	0 . 17 . 6
1735/6 March 23 ^d . For bringing the Organ from Beckles to Glemham	0 . 2 . 4
For a piece of Cloth to put up behind the Organ	0 . 8 . 0
For painting the Organ	0 . 4 . 2
For Will Daniel blowing the Organ 16½ days	22 . 12 . 0
Recd in part	14 . 4 . 0
	8 . 8 . 0
Paid Mr Grinling more for adding pipes and other accidents to make him	4 . 4 . 0
satisfaction	12 . 12 . 0

June 23^d. 1736 Recd of Dudley North Esqr. the sume of twelve pound twelve shillings which with fourteen pounds four shillings as above-mentioned amounts to the sume of twenty six pound sixteen shillings in full satisfaction for altering and adding to the Organ & all other accounts by me

[signed] Ro. Grinling²

Disappointingly, but not surprisingly, no specification of the organ has survived; such a survival would have been a rarity indeed. From the available evidence, all that can be said about the size of the instrument is that it must have been something more substantial than a mere chamber organ of the kind originally designed for private houses. It was altered and enlarged by the addition of extra pipes, either in the form of an extra rank (stop), or by extending the compass of the keyboard(s); either addition would have been difficult to achieve within the confines of a small chamber organ case. Moreover, the organ blower was paid for sixteen and a half days' attendance, and it is difficult to see how it could have taken so long to set up, voice and tune a small chamber instrument.

It is certain that the organ, before its alteration, had not already stood in Little Glemham church. Not only is it stated to have been brought from Beccles, but the parish glebe terriers and inventories of church goods, which survive at regular intervals from the late 17th century onwards, make no mention of an organ up to and including June 1735. The next inventory in the series, drawn up for exhibition at the episcopal visitation of 23 June 1740, is the first to mention 'an Organ in the Gallery'.³ The instrument appears, therefore, to have been a second-hand purchase. It was not, however, bought from St Michael's church, Beccles, for the new organ opened there on 5 June 1735⁴ was not a replacement for an earlier instrument; the 1735 inventory for that parish makes no mention of an organ, which is first referred to in the inventory for 1740.⁵

The Little Glemham organ stood in the west gallery (in the 18th century the usual, and acoustically the best, position for an English church organ) at least until the date of the 1845 inventory,⁶ although when David Elisha Davy visited the church on 4 November 1805 he referred only to the presence of the organ case, and noted that 'the organ is not in repair'.⁷ The succeeding inventory, drawn up in 1865, refers to 'an organ in the chancel'.⁸ The organ's eastward migration thus agrees with the date of the 1858 restoration of the church by J.R. St Aubyn (Munro Cautley 1982, 396), and doubtless took place under the influence of the Oxford Movement, which romanticised the Anglican cathedral choral service and sought to convert parish churches into miniature cathedrals, with a surpliced male choir positioned on either side of the chancel and the organ near at hand. We may surmise that the organ was restored at the time of the move, or that a replacement instrument was installed. Finally, a new organ with two manuals and pedals, provided by F.W. Durham, was installed in a specially-constructed organ chamber in September 1884 (Budgen and MacKinnon 1969; White 1885, 280).

Little is known of Robert Grinling, described in an endorsement to his agreement with Dudley North as 'organ maker'. Most organ building at this period was centred on the London area, but it seems unlikely that Grinling was based so far afield, for nearly three years earlier he had been employed by North to tune a harpsichord at Glemham Hall;⁹ it is hardly conceivable that it would have been necessary to summon a tuner all the way from London. He was subsequently paid for repairs to the organ in 1738, 1746 and 1747.¹⁰ Grinling is not a common name in Suffolk, and examples of it in the index to wills proved in the Court of the Archdeacon of Suffolk are confined to the farming community around Huntingfield, Laxfield and Stradbroke in the north of the county. The organ builder can almost certainly be identified with Robert Grinling, organist of Beccles church. When the new organ at Beccles was opened in 1735, a concert was held on 5 June in the Guild Hall and Assemblies took place on 3 and 4 July, all for the benefit of 'Mr Robert Grinling, Town Organist'. The concert tickets were available from his home.¹¹ His

organ-building works were therefore presumably located in Beccles, from whence the organ is known to have been conveyed to Glemham.

Meanwhile, even before the organ was installed, enquiries were under way to find a suitable organist. Dudley North's agent in the search was Luke Hill, curate of Little Glemham.¹² The letter which Hill wrote to his patron on 12 January 1735/6 is worth quoting at length for its information on the organist's conditions of employment:

According to your desire I enquir'd of Mr Echard for an organist, & he this day sent a young man to me, whose name is Javelleau & lives att Framlingham a very likely young fellow & plays very prittily. I have inclosed Mr Echard's letter that you may see what character he bears – I told him your proposals, which you orderd me, were five shillings a time, that he was to stay only mornings, that as you had no family here he must not expect to stay dinner, that he might put his horse in your stables, & you would order your servant to take care of him – but that I could give him no positive answer till I had heard from you . . .¹³

North was sufficiently impressed with Echard's character reference to give 'young Abraham Javelleau' a trial; in thanking Hill for his assistance, he wrote from London on 19 January, 'I do not chuse to say directly weather [*sic*] he shall play or no for a continuance til I have spoke to him, but if he pleases I would have him play till I can speak to him att five shillings a Sunday.'¹⁴ We may note, in passing, that the Revd Luke Hill fell from favour with the Norths three years later, for appearing in the family chapel the worse for drink. In July 1739 he wrote to Dudley North an abject letter of apology, begging him to believe that 'when I went by you to Chappel I thought myself capable of doing duty, till the candles & closeness of the room unhappily turn'd me so sick; I will say no more in excuse for myself as knowing that the least degree of Liquor is too much to appear there. . .'.¹⁵ Whether or not as a result of this incident, Hill departed shortly afterwards; the 1740 glebe terrier was signed by Frederick Keller as curate.¹⁶

Abraham Javelleau's probation evidently proved satisfactory, for his post was made permanent. The annual receipts for his salary at 5s. a service survive among the North vouchers for the period February 1739 to Michaelmas 1756;¹⁷ a service on Christmas Day was normally included among his duties, and charged for. In 1747 he received an additional 8s. 'abt meating ye man as tune'd ye organ'. (This year was the last occasion on which Robert Grinling is recorded as having performed this service.) In February 1752 Javelleau himself was paid £3 3s. for tuning the organ in 1749, 1750 and 1751 at a guinea a time. He continued to tune it annually in May from 1752 to at least 1756, presumably having learnt the technique in the course of his attendance on Grinling during the latter's visits to Glemham.

Abraham Javelleau was the son of Abraham Javelleau of Framlingham, a peruke-maker, and Sybilla his wife. He himself is described in his father's administration bond of 24 February 1745/6 as 'barber';¹⁸ father and son were evidently in business together, the son combining his trade with the secondary employment of organist at Glemham. A Framlingham rating valuation shows that in 1744 the father was rated for a shop in the street.¹⁹ Their surname is suggestive of a family of Huguenot extraction, in the century after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The father died at the beginning of February 1746.²⁰ His probate inventory contains no reference to the presence of any musical instrument in the family home, and it is tempting, if fruitless, to speculate that Abraham junior may have received his musical training on the celebrated Thamar organ presented to Framlingham church by the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1708. The inventory does, however, furnish evidence of a home of some culture, possessing books, pictures and prints.²¹

We have seen that during the installation of the organ William Daniel was paid for blowing the instrument for sixteen and a half days. His post, too, was made permanent, for his salary receipts (£1 6s. a year, or 6d. a week – it is evident from Javelleau's terms of appointment that the organ was used only for morning service) survive for the period February 1736/7 to February 1749/50, usually signed on his behalf by his mother, Elizabeth ('Betty') Daniel.²² She evidently kept a

general shop in the village, for her name occurs frequently among the North bills and vouchers, as the supplier of such goods as pipes, tobacco, soap, brimstone and thread to the Hall.

It is noteworthy that the organ was provided, not at the expense of the parish authorities, but by the North family of Glemham Hall, and that it was the Norths, too, who undertook the long-term responsibility both for the maintenance of the instrument and for the salaries of organist and blower. Indeed, the terms of the organist's employment, quoted above, indicate that he was considered very much the servant of the Norths. One can understand the reluctance of a small country parish such as Little Glemham to support the expenditure on a church organ for which the majority of the parishioners may not have felt the need, but why should a private family have been willing to supply the omission?

The Norths were a family of considerable wealth, prestige and influence. Dudley North (1706–64), the purchaser of the organ, was the grandson of Sir Dudley North (1641–91), fourth son of Dudley, fourth Baron North. Sir Dudley, apprenticed in his youth to a Turkey merchant, was based for some years in Smyrna as agent for his master's firm. In about 1662 he took up the management of a business house in Constantinople, where he rapidly became the leading merchant in the Turkey Company, and subsequently its Treasurer. Having amassed a large fortune he returned finally to England (where his brother Francis, the future Lord Keeper, was by now Chief Justice of the Common Pleas) in 1680; he himself was chosen Sheriff of London, under pressure from King Charles II, in 1682, during the Exclusion crisis. At about this time he married Ann, the only child of Sir Robert Cann, a wealthy Bristol merchant, and widow of Sir Robert Gonning of Cold Ashton, Gloucestershire (*D.N.B.*).

It was their son, another Dudley (1684–1729), who purchased the Glemham estate (and the patronage of the living of Little Glemham) from Thomas Glemham in 1708–09. His wife Catherine was a daughter of Elihu Yale, founder of Yale University, who had acquired considerable wealth as the East India Company's Governor of Madras. This Dudley served as Member of Parliament, first of all for Suffolk and afterwards, in 1722, for the borough of Orford. He divided his time between Glemham Hall (which he remodelled and refurnished about 1722) and his house in Soho Square, London, which he leased from Sir John Stonhouse (*S.S.C.* 1953, 20–21).

His son Dudley, with whom we are concerned as the purchaser of the organ, must therefore have spent a considerable time in London during his formative years. Moreover, the family bills and vouchers already frequently cited in this paper show that as an adult he himself, with his wife Barbara, daughter of Thomas Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, maintained a London residence, in Grosvenor Square. Indeed, he was resident in London at the time when he was in correspondence with the Revd Luke Hill about the appointment of the organist at Glemham, who was to be deprived of the opportunity to dine at Glemham Hall on Sundays because North 'had no family here'.

The Norths had thus become accustomed, over several generations, to the cosmopolitan cultural life of the capital which, one need hardly say, would have included a higher standard of church music, at least in the fashionable churches, than that which would have been available to them when resident in Suffolk. This was the era of the church orchestra or band, usually occupying the west gallery in company with a small choir; the description of the arrangements common in Suffolk given by a local clergyman in 1764 goes far to explain Dudley North's probable dissatisfaction with the musical provision at Little Glemham church:

The performers are placed in a Single Seat, sometimes a raised seat like a stage. Here they form themselves into a round Ring, with their Faces to each other and their Backs to ye Congregation. Here they murder anthems, chuse improper Psalms, leave off in ye middle of a sentence, sing Psalms of all kinds to new, jiggish tunes. If ye Minister offers to direct them, 'He may mind his Text; he may sing himself, they will sing as they list or not at all' (Scholes 1955, 37).

It was therefore probably an attempt both to raise the standard of the music and to improve

the level of decorum in his parish church that induced Dudley North to purchase the organ for Glemham.

Dudley North died without issue in 1764, having outlived his wife. His fortune was bequeathed to his sisters Anne (who married the Hon. Nicholas Herbert) and Mary (who married Charles Long of Saxmundham). Anne succeeded to the Glemham estate but, having outlived her children, left it on her death in 1789 to her sister's son Dudley Long, who assumed the surname North. On Dudley Long North's death without issue in 1829, the estate reverted to the senior branch of the North family and became the property of the eighth Earl of Guilford.

The North family papers make no reference to the organ after 1756, and though we have seen from the church inventories that it remained *in situ* until the mid 19th century, it was disused and out of repair by 1805. How long it had then been silent is not known, but the implication must be that the family lost interest after Dudley North's death and ceased to provide for its upkeep. There is no evidence in the Glemham churchwardens' accounts to suggest that the parish took over responsibility for the instrument, and it was probably allowed to deteriorate from the mid 1760s until it finally became unplayable.

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NOTES

(All manuscripts cited are in the Ipswich Branch of the Suffolk Record Office unless otherwise stated. Quotations from the North archive (HA 49) are made by permission of the Record Office.)

- 1 It had come from a Roman Catholic chapel, the curators of which had purchased it from Durham Cathedral (F. Drake, *Eboracum* (York, 1733), cited in Sumner 1962, 139).
- 2 HA 49/C2/4/49.
- 3 FF 569/G19 (1740).
- 4 *Norwich Gazette*, 25 May 1735; Mr P. Bumstead, *pers. comm.*
- 5 FF 569/B173/7 (1735); FF 569/B173/8 (1740).
- 6 Terrier and inventory of 25 Apr. 1845, FF 569/G19. The entry is struck through; this was probably done when the inventory was used as a draft for its successor.
- 7 Davy, Suffolk Collections, Plomesgate Hundred (B.L. Add. MSS 19, 101, f. 23; microfilm copy in S.R.O.I., J 400/11).
- 8 Terrier and inventory of 23 June 1865, FF 569/G19.
- 9 On 11 June 1733, HA 49/C2/4/34.
- 10 8 Jul. 1738, 28 May 1746 and 22 May 1747, HA 49/C2/4/56, 101 and 102 respectively.
- 11 *Norwich Gazette*, 25 May and 21 June 1735; Mr P. Bumstead, *pers. comm.*
- 12 He signed the 1735 glebe terrier as 'Curate to Wm Gordon Rector', FF 569/G19.
- 13 HA 49/C2/4/115.
- 14 HA 49/C2/4/115. Unfortunately, this letter indicates that Echard's reference was returned to Hill; it does not therefore survive among the North papers.
- 15 HA 49/C2/4/115.
- 16 FF 569/G19.
- 17 HA 49/C2/4/131.
- 18 IC/AA4/20/76: Javelleau junior's signature on this document is identical to that on his organist's salary receipt of 25 January the same year, and identifies him conclusively.
- 19 FC 101/F1/1.
- 20 He was buried on 5 Feb., Farmlingham parish register of burials in woollen, FC 101/D3/3.
- 21 FE 1/28/40.
- 22 HA 49/C2/4/53, 56, 59, 101, 102, 113.

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Abbreviations

- B.L. British Library.
- D.N.B. *Dictionary of National Biography*.
- S.S.C. *Six Suffolk Characters 1500–1900* (Ipswich and East Suffolk Record Office exhibition catalogue for the Aldeburgh Festival, 1953).