



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORGANS OF  
THE ROYAL MEMORIAL CHAPEL  
ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORGANS OF THE ROYAL MEMORIAL CHAPEL

### The Old Chapel

The first chapel of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, built in 1813, formed part of the Old College building and, following the construction of the newer and larger chapels, it was used variously as a dining hall and museum. It is now known as the Indian Army Memorial Room. The first organ in this 1813 chapel, and the College, for that matter, was a modest and unpretentious two-manual instrument. It was built soon after the completion of the chapel by Thomas Elliott of London for £500<sup>5</sup>. On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1813 the Organist and Choir from Windsor (presumably St George's, Windsor Castle) came to lead the worship (with the Band of the Royal Sussex Militia) for the consecration of the first pair of Colours. This organ was originally placed on the south-east floor of the chapel and, although there are no records of the specification, it was later criticised in 1866 as *"being of an old-fashioned make (intended to look as large as possible) it takes up a great deal of unnecessary room"*<sup>5</sup>. It would also appear that the organ was subsequently in the care of Elliott and Hill (1829-32) and Hill and Son (1832-1878).

The first organist was by name a Mrs Elizabeth Timme, who was in post from December 1815-1872 (a total of 57 years!). She was succeeded by Hautrie West (1872-1873) and then John William Porter (1873-1875).

By the 1860's it was decided that to make more space for officers and cadets and to enable better musical communication between the band, the 'singers' (who were situated in a gallery at the western end of the chapel) and the organ (and organist), the organ should be moved into the gallery. This was carried out, but not before the organ was thoroughly overhauled. The bellows had been severely damaged by hungry mice and several of the front pedal pipes were beginning to collapse; the pedals were also very worn and noisy. William Hill and Son quoted £40 to correct these defects and by late 1864 the work was sanctioned by the War Office and the organ was resited in the west gallery. The gallery however became unsafe and in 1869 there was grave concern that it might collapse and the staff were instructed not to use it. Both the organ and the gallery on which it stood have long since disappeared though legend and tradition has it that inmates from Broadmoor Hospital were permitted seats in this gallery along with the organ, organist *et al*.

### The Second Chapel – Christ Church

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it became apparent that the first Chapel was inadequate in many respects and, as there was no way of enlarging it, a new site and building had to be found. It was decided that the ground behind Old College was to be the site of the new chapel. The second Chapel to be built is actually 'contained' within the third, present and most recent structure, though the latter was cleverly positioned, at right angles, around the existing chapel of Christ Church. This second edifice (named Christ Church) was built in 1879 and many of the features of that building, a narrow rectangular shaped structure, can be clearly seen around the present building.

The organ in the 1879 chapel, a modest instrument of two manuals and pedals, was built in 1878 by the London firm of Bevington. This instrument was located in the then south chancel behind the choir. (This is now the area to the West of the South African Chapel and immediately outside the Chaplain's Office). According to contemporary records this instrument was beginning to fail long before the onset of the Great War and whilst it was admired for its tone, it was audibly showing signs of wear.

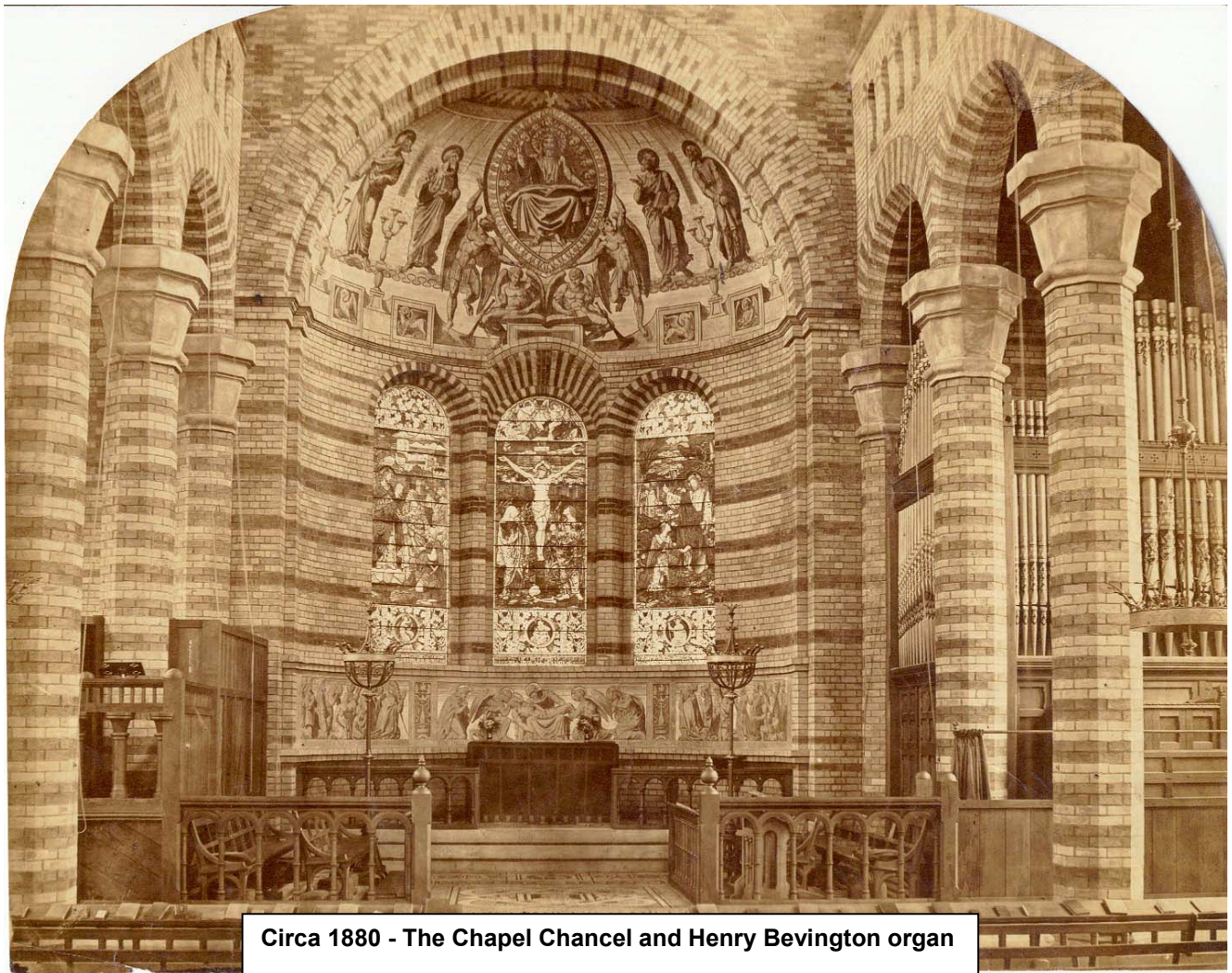
A contemporary account notes:

*"It should have been repaired a long time since, but the organist, with praiseworthy unselfishness, has contrived to hide its defects by the magic of his art!"*<sup>4</sup>.

#### **1878/79 – Henry Bevington and Sons (London)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>PEDAL</b>		<b>SWELL</b>	
Open Diapason	16	Open Diapason	8
Bourdon	16	Stopped Diapason	8
		Gamba	8
<b>GREAT</b>		Voix Celeste	8
Open Diapason	8	Principal	4
Clarabella	8	Flageolet	2
Salicional	8	Cornopean	8
Principal	4		
Harmonic Flute	4		





## The New Chapel

Following the Great War in 1919, plans were agreed for the construction of the present (and third) Chapel, an enlarged building, ingeniously incorporating the previous one. It was duly consecrated in 1921, although work continued on the new West End for a further 16 years. The Royal Military College Chapel of Christ Church became the Royal Military Memorial Chapel following the World War 1 modifications, and in 1965 was accorded the title of Royal Memorial Chapel, Sandhurst. In contemporary times, whilst its main function remains as the Academy's Chapel, as a Royal Chapel, and seating over 1000 people, it is, with the exception of Westminster Abbey and St George's Chapel, Windsor, the largest of all the Royal Chapels.

It was decided that to retain the Bevington instrument in its old position would render it totally inadequate for use in the new building and it was decided to lower by a few feet the existing gallery that was located in the old 'West End' and install a completely new instrument. Thus, in 1924 the existing instrument found a new home in the Baptist Church, Leavesden, Watford, Hertfordshire, where it was rebuilt twice (most recently in 1996) and where, to this day, it still resides.

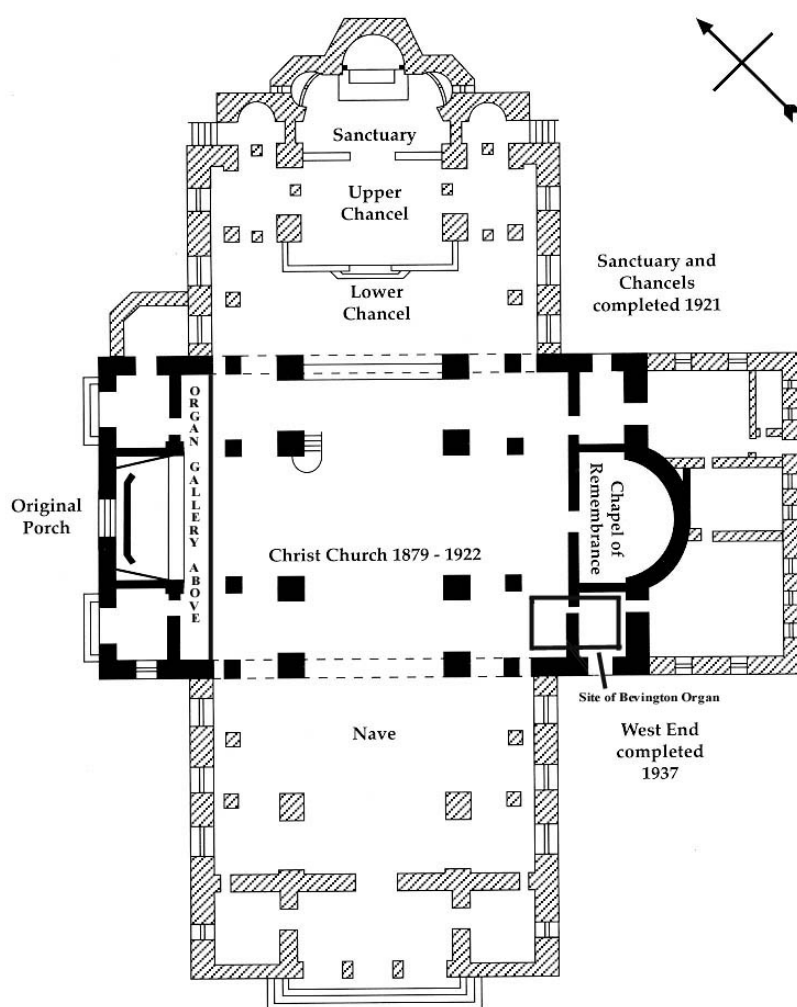
The task of selecting an organ builder for this completely new instrument was begun and several companies were asked to tender for this work, most notably Hill, Norman and Beard whose

predecessors, Hill and Son, maintained the instrument that was in the Old Chapel – now the Indian Army Memorial Room.

In 1924, after the usual deliberation, the task was given to the firm of Blackett and Howden (of Newcastle upon Tyne) to build a considerably larger three manual instrument, which was to be located in the gallery, especially enlarged and lowered for the purpose. The same company subsequently relocated the old Bevington organ to its new home in Hertfordshire.

The new organ was described as having *"three manuals and forty-eight stops, ten of which are couplers. Four of the stops have yet to be added when funds allow; they are merely prepared for. The Great and Choir Organs are placed on the right of the gallery, and the Swell and Pedal Organs on the left. The Console (detached) is placed in the central position in the gallery, so that the organist is able to be in complete touch with both the choir and the congregation. The action is tubular pneumatic throughout, and the wind is supplied by an electric motor. Funds did not allow any casework to the organ, which is just curtained in for the present"*<sup>2</sup>. Interesting to note that, at this time, the choir was located in this gallery, not in the chancel.

Plan of the Royal Memorial Chapel  
Sandhurst





## 1924 – Messrs Blackett and Howden (Newcastle upon Tyne & Glasgow) <sup>2</sup>

PEDAL ORGAN		SWELL ORGAN	
Acoustic Bass	32	Lieblich Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	16	Open Diapason	8
Bourdon	16	Lieblich Gedact	8
Violon	16	Viol d'Orchestre	8
Violoncello	8	Voix Celeste	8
Octave	8	Principal	4
Bass Flute	8	Rohr Flute	4
Trombone	16	Harmonic Piccolo	2
GREAT ORGAN		Mixture	3 ranks
Contra Gamba	16	Oboe	8
Open Diapason	8	†Vox Humana	8
Open Diapason	8	†Double Trumpet(H.P.)	16
Clarabella	8	Horn (H.P.)	8
Principal	4	†Clarion (H.P.)	4
Wald Flute	4	Tremulant	
Fifteenth	2	COUPLERS	
Mixture	3 ranks	Swell to Great	† Prepared for only
Tuba (H.P.)	8	Swell to Choir	
CHOIR ORGAN (enclosed)		Swell Octave	
Dulciana	8	Swell Sub-Octave	
Rohr Flute	8	Swell Unison Off	
Gamba	8	Choir to Great	
Harmonic Flute	4	Choir Sub-Octave	
Clarinet	8	Swell to Pedals	
Tuba (H.P.)	8	Great to Pedals	
<i>from Great Organ</i>		Choir to Pedals	
† Tremulant		Four composition pedals and pistons to Great and Pedal Organ.	
		Four composition pedals and pistons to Swell Organ.	
		Pedal and Piston to Great to Pedal "On and Off"	

## Toward the present day...

Following both WW1 and WW2 and the consequent increase in the size and number of memorials within the chapel (there are nearly twenty-seven thousand names inscribed within the building), the proposal was made to erect a memorial to the officers and men of the British Indian Army who lost their lives in WW2. The scheme proposed by the architect, Sir Hugh Casson, included the provision of a newly designed organ case mounted aloft of the main Memorial.

It must be acknowledged that the Blackett and Howden instrument was, for its time, fairly 'cutting edge technology' and considerably more than a 'modest' instrument. The pioneering use of tubular pneumatic action enabling the separation into two divisions within the gallery location and the anticipation of completing the instrument points to some daring and brave decisions being taken over the type of action and the style of instrument to be built. The Blackett and Howden organ had never acquired an organ case, (sadly, just a curtain), so there was presented, at long last, an opportunity to case the instrument and to greatly enlarge it.

In 1950, the Liverpool-based organ building firm of Rushworth and Dreaper was commissioned to rebuild and enlarge the instrument, using a lot of the pipework from the earlier Blackett and Howden instrument, updating the action to electro-pneumatic, the whole to be set into the case designs of Sir Hugh Casson. Both the Memorial inscriptions below, the organ and the organ case stand as a tribute to those officers and men of the British Indian Army and who gave their lives in WW2.

Although records cannot confirm this, it is thought that most of the reeds (with the exception of the swell Oboe) were new in 1950 and much of the flue work was retained from the old instrument.

Throughout the history of the chapel, music has always been of great importance and liturgical music, both choral and congregational (notably hymn singing) has been accompanied both by organ and military bands (The Royal Military Academy maintained it's own resident band, the Royal Military Academy Band Corps, up until 1984). Thus the organ has had a significant place in the worship within the Academy for over 190 years.



**A design sketch by Sir Hugh Casson for the organ case. Now displayed in the Choir Vestry, this design was never utilised.**

**1950 – Rushworth and Dreaper (Liverpool)** <sup>3</sup> incorporating Blakett and Howden (1924) with case design by Sir Hugh Casson and executed by H.H.Martyn and Company Ltd (Cheltenham)

#### PEDAL ORGAN

1. Contra Bourdon	32
2. Open Diapason (w)	16
3. Open Diapason (m)	16
4. Double Bass (Gt)	16
5. Bourdon	16
6. Dulciana (Ch)	16
7. Echo Bourdon (Sw)	16
8. Octave (w)	8
9. Principal (m)	8
10. Bass Flute	8
11. Octave Flute	4
12. Trumpet (Sw)	16
13. Trombone	16

#### GREAT ORGAN

14. Double Open Diapason	16
15. Open Diapason I	8
16. Open Diapason II	8
17. Open Diapason III	8
18. Stopped Diapason	8
29. Octave	4
20. Principal	4
21. Twelfth	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
22. Fifteenth	2
23. Mixture	III (17.19.22)
24. Posaune	8
25. Tuba (from Solo)	8

#### SWELL ORGAN

26. Lieblich Bourdon	16
27. Geigen Diapason	8
28. Lieblich Gedeckt	8
29. Viola da Gamba	8
30. Voix Celestes	8
31. Geigen Princpal	4
32. Lieblich Flöte	4
33. Fifteenth	2
34. Mixture	IV (17.19.21.22)
35. Oboe	8
36. Double Trumpet	16
37. Trumpet	8
38. Clarion	4

*Tremulant*

#### Wind Pressures:

Pedal 4"  
Choir 4"  
Solo 6"  
Great 4" Large Open, Octave, Posaune 6"  
Swell 4½" Chorus Reeds 8"  
Tuba 15"

#### CHOIR ORGAN

39. Open Diapason	8
40. Rohr Flute	8
41. Principal	4
42. Harmonic Flute	4
43. Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
44. Harmonic Piccolo	2
45. Cornet	III
46. Clarinet	8

*Tremulant*

#### SOLO ORGAN

47. Contra Dulciana	16
48. Dulciana	8
49. Dulcet	4
50. Orchestral Flute	8
51. Vox Angelica	8
52. Viole Celeste	8
53. Viole d'Orchestre	8
54. Trompette	8
55. Tuba	8

*Tremulant*

Great and Pedal combinations coupler

Adjustable thumb pistons (and double touch to Pedal)

8 to Choir/Solo

6 to Great

6 to Swell

Reversible thumb pistons: Ch to Ped, Gt to Ped,

Sw to Ped

Sw to Gt, Ped Trombone

General Cancel thumb piston

Adjustable toe pistons:

6 to Pedal

6 to Swell (duplicating)

Reversible toe pistons: Gt to Ped (x2)

Special switches in sliding tray:

3 cancel switches for double touch on Ch, Gt, Sw thumb pistons

3 ventill switches - Sw 16 Trumpet, Contra

Bourdon, Open Wood

Pupils' stop control "reducer" switch with key\*

2 balanced expression pedals

\*An ingenious device, fitted at the request of the RMA, to prevent less proficient organists having access to louder stops!

## The Present day...

In 1994, Rushworth and Dreaper undertook a few superficial changes and added a few stops by way of extension and borrowing, as well as a new Choir Tierce rank and an extension of the Great 8ft Posaune to 16ft. It also appeared that the original intention was to extend this rank down to 32ft on the pedal division but, for whatever reason, this was never implemented. The piston and transmission system was replaced by a solid-state system and the general layout of the console was altered, albeit somewhat idiosyncratically. Though the installation of 'double touch' pistons was envisaged, it was never implemented.

Over a period of several years the winding of the organ, arguably inadequate by design, was fast becoming a cause for concern. This serious problem was overlooked in 1994 and, given the increased likelihood of running short of wind on a grand ceremonial occasion was fast becoming a cause of potential embarrassment; the whole winding system was re-designed giving stable and sufficient wind. This very necessary work, involving the redesigning and re-siting the main regulation controls and the provision of an additional blower, was carried out during the winter of 2003/4.

The instrument is now under the care and supervision of Henry Willis and Co. and the blowing plant is maintained by the Duplex Pipe Organ Blower Co.

*The disposition of the organ within the casework is as follows:*

North-west bay: Solo and Choir divisions (enclosed)

Central bay: Great, Swell and Pedal Organs and Solo Tuba (and console *en fenetre*)

North-east bay: Pedal (with wind regulators, humidifier unit and H.P. booster blower)

(The main blowers are located in a basement room adjacent to the Chapel)



### *Refs:*

<sup>1,3</sup> various British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS) NPOR

<sup>2</sup> The Chapel of the Royal Military Academy 1924 (Chap. XI)

<sup>4</sup> The Chapel of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst 1922

<sup>5</sup> Archive material and letters (RMAS)

With special thanks to Dr Peter Thwaites

(The Sandhurst Collection),

Mr Ian McLean (Senior Verger), Mr John Score (former chorister),

Keith Petvin-Scudamore (Organ Builder).

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**Mr Peter Beaven,  
Organist and Director of Music,  
The Royal Memorial Chapel, RMAS  
at the organ console**



## THE ORGAN SPECIFICATION OF TODAY

**1950 & 1994 – Rushworth and Dreaper (Liverpool)** and incorporating Blackett and Howden (1924) with casework design by Sir Hugh Casson and executed by H.H.Martyn and Company Ltd (Cheltenham) (1950)

### Pedal Organ:

1. Contra Bourdon	32
2. Open Diapason (w)	16
3. Open Diapason (m)	16
4. Double Bass (Gt)	16
5. Bourdon	16
6. Dulciana (Ch)	16
7. Echo Bourdon (Sw)	16
8. Octave (w)	8
9. Principal (m)	8
10. Bass Flute	8
11. Octave Flute	4
12. Trumpet (Sw)	16
13. Posaune (Gt)	16
14. Trombone	16

- i Great to Pedal
- ii Swell to Pedal
- iii Choir to Pedal

### Great Organ:

15. Double Open Diapason	16
16. Open Diapason I	8
17. Open Diapason II	8
18. Open Diapason III	8
19. Stopped Diapason	8
20. Octave	4
21. Principal	4
22. Twelfth	2½
23. Fifteenth	2
24. Mixture	IIIrks (17.19.22)
25. Posaune	16
26. Posaune	8
27. Tuba (from Solo)	8

- iv Swell to Great
- v Choir to Great

### Swell Organ:

28. Lieblich Bourdon	16
29. Geigen Diapason	8
30. Lieblich Gedeckt	8
31. Viola da Gamba	8
32. Voix Celestes	8
33. Geigen Principal	4
34. Lieblich Flöte	4
35. Fifteenth	2
36. Mixture	IV (17.19.21.22)
37. Oboe	8
38. Double Trumpet	16
39. Trumpet	8
40. Clarion	4

- vi Tremulant
- vii Swell Sub-Octave
- viii Swell Unison off
- ix Swell Octave

### Choir Organ\*:

41. Open Diapason	8	
42. Rohr Flute	8	
43. Principal	4	
44. Harmonic Flute	4	
45. Nazard	2½	
46. Harmonic Piccolo	2	
47. Tierce		1⅓/5
48. Cornet		III
49. Clarinet	8	

### x Tremulant

- xi Swell to Choir
- xii Choir Sub-Octave
- xiii Choir Unison Off
- xiv Choir Octave
- xv Gt and Ped Pistons coupled

### Solo Organ (playable from Choir Keyboard)\*

50. Contra Dulciana		16
51. Dulciana	8 †	
52. Dulcet		4
53. Orchestral Flute	8	
54. Vox Angelica	8	
55. Viole Celeste	8	
56. Viole d'Orchestre	8	
57. Trompette	8	
58. Tuba	8	

### x Tremulant

### Pistons:

Great	6
Swell	6 (duplicated with Pedal pistons)
Choir/Solo	8
Pedal	6
5 thumb reversers	
2 Pedal reversers	
8 General Pistons	
8 levels memory (SSL)	

*\*(both Choir and Solo divisions are located within the same box and controlled via one expression pedal)*

### Wind pressures:

Pedal:	4½ inches
Great: Main:	4¼ inches
Open no.1 / Octave / Posaune	6 inches
Swell:	4½ / 8 inches
Choir:	4½ / 6 inches
Solo:	6 inches
Tuba	15 inches
Pedal Trombone	15 inches

Wind supplied by 2 main blowers and an additional HP booster blower.  
CCTV with one fully functional camera and one static camera.  
Audio relay via radio microphone.

† This stop has a plaque beneath it which reads:  
**‘Christian - 1918’**. Records do not show to whom this is dedicated but one can only guess that it was given in memory of a soldier who was killed in the Great War.

(From the Board in the Choir Vestry)  
**ORGANISTS AND MASTERS OF THE CHORISTERS  
 OF  
 THE ROYAL MEMORIAL CHAPEL SANDHURST**

1875 – 1884	E.K.Deacon	†
1884 – 1909	C.Martin	†
1909 – 1964	J.Spyer MBE.FRCO.	†
1964 – 1966	S.M.Allen BA.Bmus.ARCM(Hon.)	†
1966 – 1970	W.D.Bean	†
1970 – 1971	J.A.Sutton ARCO.ARCM	†
1971 – 1976	D.Hopkins D.Mus, FRCO,FRAM	†
1976 – 1992	D.Stannard AGSM.ARCM.LRAM	o
1976 – 1977	A.M.Lane ARCM.psm.	†
1977 – 1984	E.B.Smith psm.	†
1985 – 1988	D.C.Whittle BA.BPhil.	†
1988 – 1996	A.P.M.Hole OBE, Hon.RCM	†
1992 – 1993	J.W. Holl LRAM. ARCM. ARCO	o
1993 – 2001	C.R.Connett MA.FTCL.Dip.Ed.	† (Sub-Organist 1993-1996)
1996 – 2001	P.S.Hignett ACIB.	o
2001 –	B.A.Rayner BSc.	o
2002 –	P.R.Beaven GTCL.LRAM.ARCO.FRSA	†

o denotes Sub-Organist

† denotes Organist and Choirmaster / Master of the Choristers / Director of Music

Notes about the Choir, Organists and Directors of Music of the Royal Memorial Chapel

**Jesse Spyer** (1883 – 1971) is worthy of a special mention for he was, the longest serving Organist at the Royal Memorial Chapel in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He served from 1909-1964, a total of 55 years. [Note: Only Mrs Elizabeth Timme had served the College longer. From 1815-1872 – 57 years.] Jesse Spyer was reputed to be the youngest FRCO in the country before WW 1. (ARCO July 1905 / FRCO July 1906). He served in WW1 with the Berkshire Yeomanry later being commissioned in the Hampshire Regiment (as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant) and the South Wales Borderers (as a Lieutenant) serving in Mesopotamia, the Dardanelles and received the Gallipoli Medal. His post at the Royal Memorial Chapel was held open for his return, though shortly before returning to civilian life he went on tour with Peter Dawson as his official accompanist. He taught music at Camberley Grammar School, from whence came a number of the choir. He was actively involved in local music making generally, being the founder musical director of the local Gilbert and Sullivan Society. During Jesse Spyer's tenure the choir (all male) thrived and filled three stalls each side of the chancel. Evensong was still sung chorally every Sunday as well as weekly morning service. He retired in 1964 aged 81.

**Dr Douglas Hopkins** (1902-1992), who was Master of the Choristers from 1971 to 1976, had previously been Sub-Organist of St Paul's Cathedral, Organist of Peterborough and Canterbury Cathedrals and, immediately prior to his appointment at Sandhurst, Organist of St Marylebone Parish Church in London. He was, for many years, a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music and an examiner for the Associated Board.

The story surrounding his departure is somewhat amusing. It was on the Spring morning that the clocks went forward by one hour. The inevitable happened, and the redoubtable Doctor forgot to set his alarm to BST and dutifully appeared at the Chapel an hour late, just as the preacher entered the pulpit. Shortly after the service Dr Hopkins announced to Padre Brian Pugh that maybe the time had come to 'call it a day'. He retired shortly afterwards. Dr Hopkins was appointed in his sixty-ninth year and retired when he was seventy-four.

Following Dr Hopkins' retirement women were admitted to the choir and weekly Choral Evensongs were abandoned. The boys choir was shortly disbanded afterwards leaving a mixed, adult choir. Following Dr Hopkins' retirement the separate post of assistant or Sub-Organist was created.