

The Harrison & Harrison organ (1937)

The Harrison & Harrison organ of Westminster Abbey was installed for the Coronation of King George VI in 1937. With four manuals and eighty-four speaking stops, it incorporated some of the pipework from the previous five-manual instrument, built by William Hill in 1848. The organ was expanded by Harrison & Harrison in 1982 and again in 1987, resulting in the ninety-four-stop five-manual instrument we know today.

The Harrison & Harrison organ

The earliest evidence of any organ in the Abbey dates from 1304, referring to 'a pair of organs' in the Lady Chapel. From the late sixteenth century there was an organ in the quire, of which no accurate details survive, but it was certainly played by [John Blow](#) and [Henry Purcell](#) - two of the most eminent names among the list of distinguished Organists of Westminster Abbey. A new organ, built for the Coronation of [George II](#) in 1727, was re-located and placed on the central screen at the entrance to the quire. This was replaced in 1848 by the Hill organ, built on the north and south sides of the nave screen where the Harrison & Harrison instrument now stands. The two organ cases, built originally for the Hill organ in 1895 by the architect [J L Pearson](#), were coloured and reinstated in 1959.

No significant changes were made to the original specification until a major overhaul in 1982. A second, unenclosed choir division was installed in the north case, and new stops added to the Great and Pedal divisions. At the console, a fifth manual was added in preparation for the Bombarde division located in the north triforium. Completed in 1986, this new department comprises fanfare reeds and a robust chorus, giving the organ a greater presence and supporting large congregations on major occasions.

The Harrison & Harrison organ's stops

2006 saw a complete overhaul of the console. The memory capacity was doubled to 512 channels; ten thumb pistons serve each of the four main manuals; new reversible thumb pistons are in place for 32' stops; and the music desk is now fully adjustable. In 2008 a new rank of pipes was added in the north triforium: a Violone 16', playable on the Bombarde and Pedal.