

St Paul's Church
Burton upon Trent

Before ...



&

After

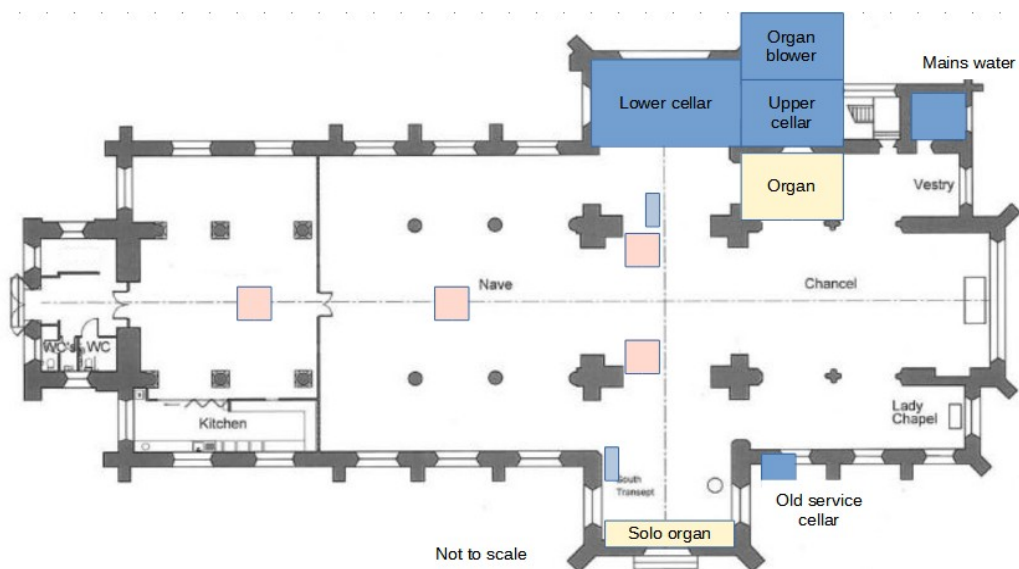
Clean up of

The Cellar

St Paul's cellar tidy up Oct 2025

A number of willing volunteers ventured down into the cellar at St Paul's church this month to tidy up. The cellar does get quite damp and the lower cellar can have a couple of hundred mm of water (a few inches). The task was to remove rotten wood and debris and to later discover where the water comes in. Damp and water is a cause for concern as it may add to organ tuning and maintenance problems as well as building damage.

Rough sketch plan of the cellars



The plan shows the approximate position of the cellars. The church originally had the cellar beneath the north transept serving as the boiler room. The upper cellar and organ blower room were added at the same time as the sacristy and are outside the original footprint of the church.

Also shown are the main organ positions inside the church, and example positions for heating grills.

Organ wind

The plan shows the position of the Hope Jones organ in the choir vestry area and the solo organ in the south transept. This instrument was one of the first electro pneumatic organs, which allowed the organ console to be remote from the organ pipes themselves. Air was produced at quite low pressure but high volume by a large wooden blower machine in the organ blower room. The blower was turned by a large electric motor and a connecting leather belt. A separate motor generator set provided low voltage power for the organ electromagnets and relays. Air from the organ blower room was piped through rectangular metal trunks to the main organ through the upper cellar. Because the church is built on a solid concrete raft foundation wind for the solo organ is fed right around the outside of the building, under the garden, in circular metal tube pipes; electric cable were more direct, being routed across the new rood screen.



Some of the old wind trunks, which took air under pressure from the blower to the great, swell and pedal organs (rectangular pipes) and the solo organ (round pipes).

Warm air heating

When the church was first built it was heated by an experimental warm air heating system. Hot air was produced in the boiler room in the lower cellar and routed by a tunnel to large square heating grills throughout the church. Cold air was returned to the boiler room through many smaller rectangular grills and another set of tunnels. The tunnel entrances are to the left wall of the lower cellar, now obscured by the later pipe manifolds. A coal chute is still visible outside and inside the lower cellar.

The system was not very successful, and a traditional hot water system was added after a few years, with radiators under the large square grills and some other radiators around the walls. The Victorian pipework was still in use with the 1970's gas boiler, but is now in a poor state of repair.

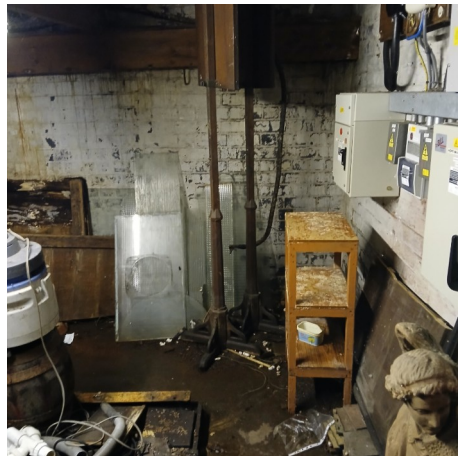


The upper and lower tunnel entrances hidden partly by the heating manifold.

Photographs before the tidy up



Come into my parlour... showing the screen and door entrance to the organ blower room in the upper cellar. Dangerous glass and rotten wood. Live electric cables.



Assorted junk, rotten wooden table tops and glass.



Some of the old organ pipes, and another bucket to collect rainwater leaking from the roof.



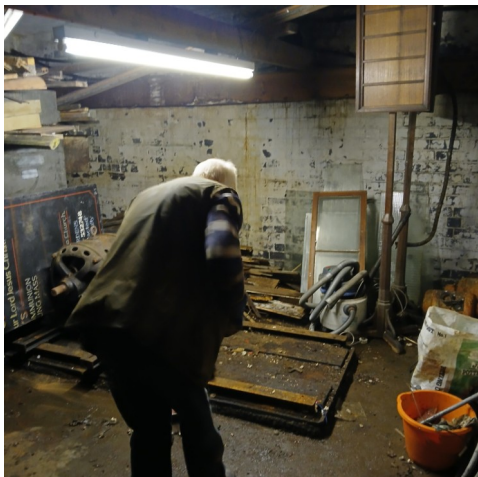
More scrap wood on top of the organ blower.

Photos during tidy up

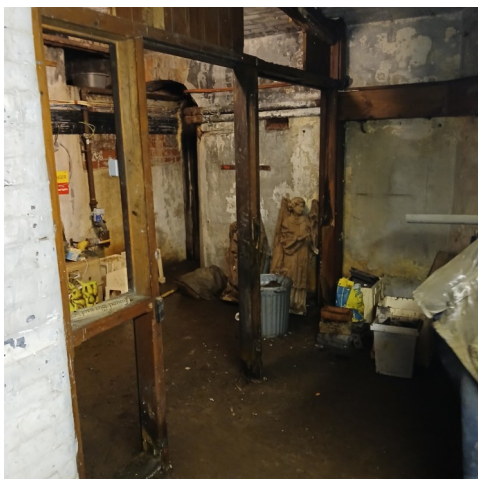


Stephen holding the remains of a Victorian funeral bier.
The notice on it (probably written by Ron Stone when it was exhibited in the 1960's) reads
"Funeral Bier used in St Paul's during the last century, also Top Hats worn by clergy".





Stephen working hard in the, already tidy looking, organ blower room



Passage and door (with step) between upper and lower cellar

Photos after tidy up

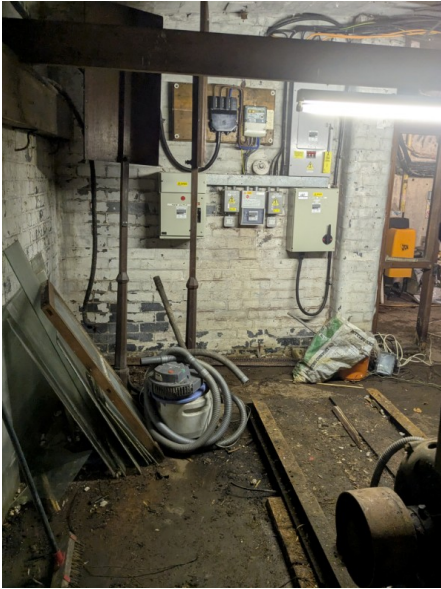


Upper cellar from the organ blower room.

Just visible statues of the Annunciation, Blessed Virgin Mary and Angel Gabriel, originally inside on the west wall of the church.

Lower cellar showing old heating boilers and pipes. Stepping stones in the few inches of water.

Boxes of Minton tiles saved from the repairs to the Lady Chapel floor.



The Hope Jones organ blower and motor
A bit of old glass, now removed.

And a pile of things for the tip



Separate piles of wood, metal, plastics and glass.



Try not to throw away the volunteers...
David, Tom (helper and van driver), John and Colin.
Stephen (organiser and photographer) not shown here.

Good job done. Thank you very much for the help

(c) St Paul's Church Oct 2025