

SAMUEL JOSCELYNE (1802-1877)

19th century Tasmanian organbuilder

by John Maidment

Samuel Joscelyne was born at Bocking, Braintree, Essex on 23 Janray 1802. He was the sixth of the 15 children of Benjamin Joscelyne who had been a cabinet-maker at Braintree since 1778. Samuel was baptised at the Independent Chapel, Bocking on 9 June 1803 [1] and presumably trained in the craft of cabinet-making with his father. He later moved to Sudbury, Suffolk where he was listed as a cabinet-maker at Market Hill in the 1830 and 1844 county directories. [2] His son, Charles Walter Joscelyne, was born in 1848. [3]

Joscelyne's work in England thus covered three periods of furniture design: Regency, William IV and Victorian. It is not known whether Joscelyne made organs at this time; maybe he did so for his Independent brethren, or perhaps for his home? However, it seems certain that he must have been fully conversant with their principles of construction and conventions of case design.

In 1852, Joscelyne emigrated to Australia, coming first to Melbourne, but proceeding shortly afterwards to Launceston, Tasmania. [4] In this city he established a furniture warehouse which was located first in Charles Street and later in St John Street. [5] He both imported furniture and fittings and made 'colonial furniture' on the premises. Additionally, he acted as an undertaker, where his cabinet-making expertise could be exercised readily. [6]

Joscelyne played a vital role in the Launceston community. He was a committee member of the Launceston Mechanics Institute (where the Charles Brindley organ in the Albert Hall was initially housed), an organist, and also a performer on the viola, violoncello and double bass, [7] for which his talents were frequently in demand.

Samule Joscelyne died on 20 June 1877, aged 75, from congestion of the liver. [8] His son, C.W. Joscelyne, became the Launceston agent for George Fincham, the Melbourne organbuilder, and undertook minor work on his behalf. [9] Samuel Joscelyne's grandson Stan Joscelyne ran a music shop in Launceston for many years and was a music critic in that city before his death in the 1970s. [10] A number of descendants survive in Victoria and Tasmania.

In the 1850s and 1860s Samuel Joscelyne built at least three pipe organs, making most of the wooden pipes, parts and casework himself, but obtaining the keyboards and metal pipes from England. The internal woodwork, and especially the cedar casework, of his instruments is of superlative quality and testifies to his skill as a furniture designer and cabinet-maker.

Joscelyne's earliest Tasmanian organ was a small single-manual tracker action instrument built for his own home. This was later lent to A.W. Biggs, of Scottsdale, and has subsequently been broken up. [11] His second organ is thought to be the instrument in St Michael's Anglican Church, Bothwell, which bears the date 1862. His third organ was again built for his home, in York Street, Launceston, but its precise date of construction has not been found. This instrument remained in the Joscelyne home for many years after Samuel's death and continued to give great aural and visual pleasure. At least one further Tasmanian organ – now at St Luke's Anglican Church in Latrobe – may have been built by Joscelyne, but there is no documentary evidence to support this claim; the casework of this instrument, while splendidly designed, has been constructed in pine.

The Bothwell organ was initially placed in an earlier church in that town used jointly by the Anglican and Presbyterian congregations. It was moved into St Michael's Church, designed by Alexander North, in 1891. The organ was restored in 1967 by Keith Davis & Son, Launceston. [12] Its casework is based upon a typical 18th century motif of three towers with two intervening flats of harp shape. The detailing, however, is distinctively Victorian, notably the mouldings, cornices and corbels.

The specification of the St Michael's organ is as follows:

MANUAL

Open Diapason	8	
Stop Diapason Bafs	8	GGG-BB
Clarabella	8	TC
Keraulophon	8	TC
Dulciana	8	TC
Principal	4	
Flute	4	TC
Fifteenth	2	

PEDAL

Bourdon Coupler	16	CCC-FFF#
Stop Diapason Coupler	8	CC-FF#

Manual compass: GG-f³

Pedal compass: CCC-C (2 octaves)

The pedal has independent pipes for the bottom seven notes and pulldowns from GG upwards [13]

Few Australian-built organs can equal Joscelyne's instruments for their sheer visual appeal. It would be fascinating indeed to inspect examples of Joscelyne's furniture which would doubtless exhibit a level of design and execution comparable with his organs. However, it would be very difficult to identify specimens as very few cabinet-makers signed their work. So it is to the two organs, at Bothwell and East St Kilda, that one must turn to appreciate Joscelyne's skill. These instruments would rate among the largest and finest examples of Australian colonial cabinet-work and, as such, are of considerable importance in the history of Australian craftsmanship.

REFERENCES

1. Information supplied by A.W. Joscelyne, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, February 1983
2. Information supplied by Mrs J. Agate, Hon. Secretary, Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, 15 November 1982
3. Information supplied by A.W. Joscelyne
4. Interview with Stan Joscelyne, Melbourne, 3 January 1971
5. Information supplied by Denis Hodgkinson, Launceston, January 1982
6. Advertisement in *Wood's Tasmanian Almanack* for 1857. Launceston: Charles Wilson, 1857, p.142
7. Interview Stan Joscelyne
8. Death certificate
9. Information supplied by E.N. Matthews
10. Information supplied by Denis Hodgkinson
11. Interview with Stan Joscelyne
12. B.A. Clark & J.M.S. Johnson. *Pipe Organs of Tasmania*, rev 2nd ed. Hobart: Hobart Guild of Organists, 1981, p.67
13. Specification noted by John Maidment November 1970

Samuel Joscelyne's work is also discussed in the important work on Australian furniture: Kevin Fahy, Christina Simpson, Andrew Simpson, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, Sydney, NSW: David Ell Press, 1985, pp. 133-134, 138, 260.

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