

ALBERT HALL, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA

Documentation of pipe organ built by

Charles Brindley for the Mechanics' Institute, Launceston, installed 1860

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Investigated: 5-8 and 12 February 1979.

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Introduction

The documentation of the Charles Brindley organ in the Albert Hall, Launceston, forms part of the project funded by the Myer Foundation. This project on organ preservation has been carried out by the Organ Historical Trust of Australia on conjunction with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), who are acting on behalf of National Trusts.

Acknowledgements

The assistance given by the following persons and organisations is gratefully acknowledged.

- The Myer Foundation
- City Council of Launceston
- Mr Keith Davis
- Mr W. Meddings-Blaskett
- Mr D. Goldsworthy
- Mr W.A. Gourlay
- Mr Peter Dowde
- Ms Betty Stiller
- Mr John Henwood
- Mr John Maidment
- Ms E.N. Matthews
- University of Melbourne
- Mr Ian Robertson
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
- National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)

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1. THE BUILDING

Address: Tamar Street, Launceston, Tasmania

General details

During the investigation period, the Albert Hall was in the process of restoration. This made the measuring of the building for size, acoustics, etc., impossible. The original building in which the organ was placed, namely the Mechanics' Institute, was demolished several years ago.[1]

Position of the organ

The organ is sited behind the stage of the Albert Hall. Plates 1 a&b Only time will tell whether this position is favourable to the egress of sound from the organ in the restored hall.

Climatic conditions and heating

The interior of the Albert Hall remains cool, even on a hot day. While this is most favourable for the well-being of the organ, any proposed future installation of central heating will have to be considered in regard to its affect on the organ.

2. THE ORGAN

General condition

During the investigation period, the organ was being cleaned and repaired. The following refers to the condition of the various components in the dismantled state.

a. Pipework

Although the metal pipework has always been cone tuned, it is in relatively good condition. A great deal of it has been stolen in the past, particularly from the Choir division.

Due to lack of use in recent years, dust is present in the pipework in enormous quantities. Most of the smaller pipes do not sound at all until the dust is blown out. One is surprised to know that the organ made any sounds whatever prior to its recent dismantling.

b. Action

This has been rebushed and refelted, and should function quite satisfactorily, so long as no new friction points are introduced.

c. Soundboards

These can only be tested for runnings and murmurings once the organ has been re-erected.

d. Wind supply

The hydraulic blowing apparatus has been excellently repaired, and the double-rise bellows has been releathered. This entire section of the organ now functions perfectly.

e. Console

Several stop labels are missing, and the keys are in the process of being recovered. The music desk assembly will need to be repaired, as is also the case with the badly-made pedal-board (which isn't original) .

Case

Apart from dust removal and a light repolishing of the casework, no other work should be required here.

Current maintenance

The organ is being cleaned and repaired by Mr. Keith Davis.

3. HISTORY

1859: Organ built by Charles Brindley of Sheffield, England . 2

1860; Installed in the public Hall of the Mechanics' Institute Launceston.[3] Plate 2

1890: Presented to the Municipal Council, Launceston.[4]

1891: Installed in the Albert Hall, Launceston, opened 10th March 1891.[5] The organ had been "rebuilt" by Thomas Matanle, a former employee of "Foster (sic)& Andrews", and at that time in the employ of Fincham & Hobday. Plate 3

1906: A new pedal-board supplied by Geo. Fincham & Sons.[6]

4. DEGREE OF ORIGINALITY

a. Pipework

All pipework is original, with the exception of the top octave of the Choir Leiblich F1öte 4 ft, which is made up of Fincham pipes labelled "Har Fl", and C - B of the Swell Double Diapason 16 ft., which is a later addition.

b. Soundboards

These are entirely original except for the split relief pallets on the Great and Swell which were added in 1890/91.[8]

c. Action

When the organ was moved to the Albert Hall, the internal layout was altered somewhat. [9] This means that the present key action dates from 1890/91. The arrangements of stopknobs was also altered at some stage, probably 1890/91 -Plate 4 , which would require an alteration in the stop action. The same applies to the composition pedals, which were originally situated to the sides of the pedal-board, but which are now more conventionally placed in front of the pedalboard.

d. Wind supply

The Melvin hydraulic engine was supplied in 1890/91 by Fincham & Hobday who were agents for that make of engine. [10]

e. Console

Except for the rearrangements already mentioned above, all console fittings such as stopknobs, stop labels, keyboards, keyboard cheeks etc., are original.

f. Case

This dates from the 1890/91 "rebuild" of the organ." It would be interesting to know if the original organ had a case or not.

g. Swell box

This is original Brindley.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

This is one of the most historically important instruments in Australia, for the following reasons:

1. it is the largest surviving organ pre-dating 1860 in Australia,
2. it is a rare example of the work of Charles Brindley,
3. it is the only remaining organ in Australia which is blown by hydraulic power, and
4. it is the earliest surviving intact example of an organ showing the influence on English organbuilding of the eminent 19th century German organbuilder, Edmund Schulze, from whom Charles Brindley learnt the art of organbuilding. Nothing comparable is known to have survived in the United Kingdom. This makes it an organ of international historic value.

5.PIPEWORK

6. ACTION

Key action

All key action is mechanical with squares. The Choir action has an interesting two-sided roller board. C-B of the Great Open Diapason 8 ft were stood-off the soundboard at one stage, and operated pneumatically. During the present repairs, it is planned to place these pipes back onto the soundboard.

The pedal couplers operate by means of the usual backfall arrangements, and the Swell to Great coupler action is by means of intruding fingers.

Materials of key action: wood throughout.

Stop action

Usual trundle action, with wooden trundles and iron squares.

Combination action

The trace rods to the slider mechanism are moved by oppositely-situated wooden fans.

7. SOUNDBOARDS

Wind pressure: 70mm (2-3/4 inches)

Details of soundboards

Order of Channels	Great Chromatic	Swell Chromatic	Choir Chromatic	Pedal Chromatic	
Placement (distance from floor to bottom of chest)	1.96 m	2.9 m	0.88 m	-	
Width of soundboard	3.38 m	2.55 m	2.74 m	C-A# 2.7 m	B-f1 1.83 m
Depth of soundboard	1.09 m	84.5 cm	67 cm	84.5 cm	85 cm
Height of pallet chest	146 mm	124 mm	124 mm	123 mm	124 mm
Depth of pallet chest	486 mm	450 mm	334 mm	450 mm	440 mm
Height of note channels	77 mm	65 mm	55 mm	70 mm	73 mm
Thickness of base board	9 mm	5 mm	6.5 mm	8 mm	5 mm
Thickness of sliders	7 mm	2.5 mm	4 mm	3 mm	5 mm
Thickness of upper board	35 mm	33 mm	30 mm	30 mm	34 mm
Type of pallets	Split relief (double)	Split relief (double)	Simple	Simple	Simple

Split pallets are double-leathered, simple pallets are leathered and felted.

Order of ranks

Great

1. Mixture 5 ranks (front)
2. 15th. 2 ft
3. 12th 2-2/3 ft
4. Flöte 4 ft
5. Principale 4 ft

Swell

1. Clarion (front)
2. Oboe 8 ft
3. Horn 8 ft
4. Mixture 4 ranks
5. Gemshorn 4 ft

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6. Rohrflöte | 6. Flaut d'amour 8 ft |
| 7. Gamba | 7. Gemshorn 8 ft |
| 8. Open Diapason 8 ft | 8. Double Diapason 16 ft |
| 9. Double stop Diapason 16 ft | |
| 10. (Trumpet 8 ft) | |

Choir

Pedal

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Leiblich Flöte 4 ft (front) | 1. Trombone (front) |
| 2. Spitzflöte 4 ft | 2. Flute Bass 8 ft |
| 3. (Lieblich Gedact 8 ft) | 3. Bourdon 16 ft |
| 4. Dulciana | 4. Major Bass 16 ft |
| 5. Spitzflöte 8 ft | |
| 6. Piccolo 2 ft | |
| 7. Clarinette 8 ft | |

Slider widths

Ranks designations as above. All in mm.

	Great	Swell	Choir	Pedal B-f1	Pedal C-A#
Bearer	38	44	20	20	24
Rank 1	62	55	47	50	47
Bearer	65	45	29	71	67
Rank2	32	55	44	65	67
Bearer	18	20	71	132	135
Rank 3	30	54	40	97	95
Bearer	43	57	45	164	156
Rank 4	38	63	22	201	169
Bearer	18	43	50	48	86
Rank 5	58	48	74		
Bearer	45	44	76		
Rank6	76	44	31		
Bearer	43	30	34		
Rank 7	58	68	34		
Bearer	26	50	17		
Rank8	71	76			
Bearer	52	47			
Rank 9	112				
Bearer	77				
Rank 10	97				
Bearer	44				

8. WINDSUPPLY

One double-rise bellows with generators attached to hydraulic engine.

Dimensions of bellows: 1.81 m x 3.4 m

Height of bellows well: 21.5 cm

Bellows weights consist of iron blocks with no inscriptions.

No Tremulant or concussion bellows present.

Wind trunk measurements

Internal cross-section Thickness of timber

To Great	35 cm x 12.5 cm	12 mm
To Swell	29.5 cm x 10 cm	12 mm
To Choir	23.5 cm x 9 cm	12 mm
To Pedal	23 cm x 9 cm	30 mm

Safety valves: two small pull-up valves.

9. CONSOLE

Stopknobs

Diameter of face: 27 mm
 Vertical distance between stopknobs: 65 mm
 Horizontal distance between stopknobs: 90 mm
 Diagonal distance between stopknobs: 100 mm
 Length of head: 44mm
 Diameter of shank: 24 mm

Keyboards

3 manual keyboards of compass C-g3 (56 notes)
 White keys are covered in ivory, black keys are of ebony and have rounded fronts.
 Vertical distance between Manuals I & II: 77 mm [15]
 Vertical distance between Manuals II & III: 77 mm [16]
 Horizontal distance between Manuals I & II: 131 mm [17]
 Horizontal distance between Manuals II & III: 131 mm [18]
 Vertical distance between Manual I and Pedal: 718 mm [10]
 Length of one octave: 164 mm
 Pedal board has compass of C-f1 (30 notes)
 Dimensions of Pedal-boards *Fig. 8*
 Degree of concavity: 32 mm lower at d0
 Keyboard cheeks and arcades *Plate 31, Fig. 9*
 Width of keyboard cheeks: 27 mm
Music desk assembly lifts out to expose mechanism.
 The telltale has vanished completely.
 Nameplate of builder is absent.
 Swell-shutter control by iron hitch-down pedal.

10. CASE

The case was made when the organ was installed in the Albert Hall in 1890/1891.
 The display pipes are all zinc dummies, and are decorated in two basic styles. *Plate 36 and 37*.
 Material of casework: Blackwood
 Treatment: french polished
 Inside of the casework is the inscription "c/o C.W. Joscelune", who was Fincham & Hobday's agent in Tasmania, and was responsible for erecting the organ case.

11. SWELL BOX

The Swell box contains eleven horizontal shutters, each 14.5 cm x 1.68 cm, thickness of timber: 31 mm [20].

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