

## South Island Organ Company, Ltd, Washdyke

### (1) 'Blitz' organ



THE 'BLITZ' ORGAN, SIOC LTD, TIMARU (C.T. TEMPLETON 2016)

The 'Blitz' organ was built by Henry Willis & Sons in 1950 and purchased by the Te Awamutu Methodist Church. It was installed by George Osborne and opened on 25 June 1951.<sup>1</sup> However, the instrument is an early example of re-cycling and improvisation. After the war, with Government embargo of the use of new materials in organbuilding, the instrument was built using salvaged materials. The basis of the organ, the soundboard - was from Wallasey Town Hall. How this came to be is that on the night of 31 August 1940, Wallasey Town Hall was hit in a German bombing raid and the organ in the Hall severely damaged. So much so that the remains of the instrument were purchased and removed by Henry Willis & Sons (Liverpool branch) for £25. But the soundboard was already secondhand when it was installed in the Wallasey Town Hall. It was part of the 1899 organ built by Henry Willis & Sons for the Royal Dublin Society Lecture Theatre and Concert Hall at Leinster House (later a part of Dublin University). After the partition of Ireland, the organ was removed in 1924 and stored, awaiting installation in a new hall that was being built. Unfortunately the architects had designed and had the hall built before consulting the organbuilders, and the space allowed for was grossly inadequate for the instrument. The organ was then sold to Henry Willis & Sons, who sold it to the Wallasey Council, and it was installed in the town hall in 1926.<sup>2</sup>

The Choir soundboard was used as the core of the Te Awamutu instrument. It was converted from a pneumatic action to mechanical, and partitioned into two divisions with a two stop clamp added to both the front and back of the soundboard. The mechanical action work is from at least two different sources, with an older style balanced rollerboard used on the Great. The

keyboards and pedalboard are not Willis - indeed the pedalboard (although radiating and a shallow concave) was of a very poor and fragile design. The reservoir is a small single-rise design, and the tremulant can accurately be described as a flexible stick with a lead weight at the end of it! Since the instrument was located in a chamber, the Te Awamutu casework was a front only, of deal panels and recycled mouldings that had been grained to resemble oak. Of the pipework, only the wooden bass of the Swell Open Diapason can be positively identified as being Willis pipework, and perhaps the Lieblich Flute.<sup>3</sup> The Te Awamutu Methodist congregation purchased the instrument through the efforts of an organist in the congregation - David Glass. He was on holiday in Liverpool visiting his brother Alfred Glass, who was an accountant in that city. He contacted the Liverpool branch of Henry Willis & Sons and inspected the instrument in the factory.<sup>3</sup> The organ was held up by waterfront strikes in both England and New Zealand.<sup>4,5</sup> At the Annual Church meeting in July 1981 it was voted to purchase a digital 225 Allen Organ,<sup>6</sup> and in 1984 the pipe organ was sold to the South Island Organ Company.

It was kept in storage until 2009, when it was erected in the factory in time for the New Zealand Association of Organists Congress in 2010 - which was held in Timaru. After the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes that devastated the Christchurch organ stock,<sup>7</sup> the 'Blitz' organ was installed in St Michael and All Angels Anglican Church while their instrument was under repair. With the reinstatement of the Bevington/Hobday organ back into St Michael's, the 'Blitz' was removed back to Timaru. The Parish of St Mary's Catholic Basilica in Invercargill expressed an interest in the instrument for the gallery of the Basilica (another Petre designed building). The new casework was designed and coloured by Zack Bennett (the lyre being a nod to the casework in Wallasey Town Hall). The pedalboard was replaced with a standard design, and side panels added since the instrument will be free standing.

GREAT		SWELL	
Open Diapason	8	Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8	Aeoline	8
Dulciana	8	Lieblich Flute	4
Principal	4	Hautboy	8
		Tremulant	
PEDAL		COUPLERS	
Bourdon	16	Swell to Great	
		Swell to Pedal	
Compass: 58/30		Great to Pedal	
Mechanical action			

The organ will be installed in the Basilica once structural work is completed on the gallery.

- 1 Lydford, David Paul, *Rose petals for G-D Puti puti me-te Atua; Being a history of Methodism in the Waipa-Pirongia-Te Awamutu; 150 Years 1841- 1991*, p.12
- 2 Personal e-mail, David Wyld, Managing Director, Henry Willis & Sons, 1 August 2014
- 3 Personal e-mail, David Wyld, Managing Director, Henry Willis & Sons, 20 August 2014
- 4 Lydford, op. cit., p.11
- 5 This would have been the 1951 waterfront dispute that lasted 151 days in New Zealand from February to July. The biggest industrial confrontation in New Zealand's history, it resulted in the crushing of the Waterside Workers Union, blacklisting of the members, and the electoral gains of the National party who declared a snap election on the back of crushing the "communist dominated" and "terrorist" unions.
- 6 Lydford, op. cit., p 42
- 7 Only 24 out of 75 pipe organs in Christchurch in 2009 remain playable at the present time

## (2) Hathaway organ

The one manual and pedal organ built by Alfred Henry Hathaway (1859 - 1927) was built in 1902<sup>1</sup> for the Sisters of Our Lady of Missions in Timaru and installed in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Timaru. Hathaway was apprenticed to Brinsmead Pianos and emigrated to Dunedin under contract to G.R. West, music instrument retailer, in 1882.<sup>2</sup> He erected the organ in St Mary's Timaru, and in 1889 settled in Timaru with his wife and worked for Charles Begg & Co.

The Sacred Heart organ would seem to be his third instrument. His first built in 1890 had paper pipes and was shown at the Beggs showroom.<sup>3</sup> No other information is available about this instrument. His second was for the Timaru Wesleyan Church (Bank Street Methodist).

His instruments incorporate pneumatic action, of ingenious design, but a nightmare for maintenance. They employ a high pressure exhaust system, with individual vents for each stop. Each note sits over a grooved channel that is sealed closed by a leather purse. The purse is activated through a higher pressure feed, so that when the key is depressed, it is exhausted. This collapses the purse and allows the pipe wind to flow up the grooved channel and activate the pipe. To access the channels involves taking the bottom off the soundboard, or through the top of the soundboard. There are no upperboards, the top of the reservoir being sealed with blue paper and full strain leather, the pipes sitting on the leather. The higher pressure for the action comes from a second reservoir, built inside the main reservoir. This causes a lot of problems for those maintaining his instruments over the years, as it was assumed that the action pressure came from the main reservoir, and so any repairs or adjustments made on that assumption. Some of the internal pipework show faint traces of diapering that indicates that they are possibly from an earlier organ.

In 1981 the Sacred Heart Convent was closed, and Trevor Lord of Christchurch restored the instrument, before it was installed in the Convent Chapel of Sisters of Mercy in Colombo Street Christchurch. It was then that the front pipes were painted gold, as the original silver had deteriorated.<sup>4</sup> When this convent closed in 1993, the organ was purchased at auction by Ron Newton, who offered it to St Thomas's in Christchurch<sup>5</sup> (part of the St Barnabas parish). Here it remained until the earthquakes of 2010-11 when the organ was removed owing to foundation and land damage under the wooden building. The organ received some slight damage to the building frame and case from the earthquakes, and has been set up in the SIOC factory, rather than packed away into storage with the other Christchurch instruments.

MANUAL			PEDAL (permanently coupled)	
Open Diapason	8		Bourdon	16
Stopped Diapason	8	CC-BB		
Rohr Flute	8	TC	Compass: 54/29	
Dulciana	8	TC	Lever swell pedal	
Principal	4			

- 1 Reservoir inscription "A. H. Hathaway Timaru NZ Mar 26th 1902"
- 2 Newton, Dr. R., *Organ Building in New Zealand 1895 - 1930: A Documentation of Cultural Context* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Canterbury, 1996), p.861
- 3 *Timaru Herald*, 15 July 1890, p.2
- 4 Personal comment - T. Lord
- 5 'New home for historic organ', *Organ News*, vol. 30, no.3 (November 1994), p.81



THE HATHAWAY (REAR) AND CONTINUO ORGANS (FRONT), SIOC LTD, TIMARU (C.T. TEMPLETON 2016)

### (3) Continuo organ

This was built by the South Island Organ Company and was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Bernard Bicknell and donated to the Christchurch Town Hall Board of Management, in November 1975.<sup>1</sup> It is a one-manual instrument with mechanical action and an internal blower.

It was stored in the basement of the Christchurch Town Hall, and in the February 2011 earthquake was subjected to the liquefaction of silt and water that entered the basement. The instrument was eventually retrieved from the basement and wheeled outside the hall where the organbuilders were waiting. The hall had been declared a bio-hazard worksite, owing to some of toxic fungal spores found inside the building. This required that the organ be cleaned and treated with a bleach based solution to eliminate any spores and the metal pipes had to be re-burnished as a result of the metal blooming in the damp conditions. The water that rose above the floor came within two centimetres of the blower unit. The organ was overhauled, re-polished, and the panels were replaced and the piercings redesigned for greater sound egress. The organ was later sold back to the builders.

#### MANUAL

Gedackt	8	
Principal	4	
Chimney Flute	4	
Octave	2	Mechanical action
Quint	1 $\frac{1}{3}$	Compass: 61 notes
Scharff	II	

- 1 Commemorative plaque