

Iona Presbyterian Church, Port Chalmers

The first Presbyterian Church services at Port Chalmers were held in 1848, and the Port became a separate parish in 1857.¹ In 1852 the first church building (a 40 x 20 ft wooden construction with a square tower) with seating for 150 was opened on 17 October 1852.² It was the second Presbyterian church in Otago and the third in the South Island.³

The foundation stone of the second building was laid on 13 August 1871, and the building opened on 7 January 1872. The building was designed by Nathaniel Wales, with the plans drawn up by Thomas Stevenson, an employee of the firm Mason & Wales, who designed St Matthew's Anglican Church, Dunedin. It was built by the firm of Gordon & Scot for just over £1,000.⁴

It was designed to seat 300 people, however, within four years, a gallery was added owing to overcrowding. In 1882, plans from N.Y.A. Wales were commissioned for a larger building to seat 500 or 600 at a cost of £3,000. The foundation stone was laid on 23 November 1882 and opened just over a year later on 25 November 1883. The Gothic building was started by the firm of Kermode & Murray, but owing to supply problems with the Oamaru stone and delays as a result of plan changes, they withdrew from the contract and the building was completed by Bauchop & Borlase for a total cost of £6,584, with seating for 650.⁵ The second building became the Johnstone Hall and the third building was connected to it. Both the second and third building are built of local blue granite from the Wales's Quarry with Oamaru stone facings. Much of the stone came from the quarry across the road from the site.⁶ Being so close to the quarries had its own problems. In August 1894 a rock was hurtled through the roof of the church during blasting.⁷ The 165 foot spire was fitted with the clock in 1885 by W. Littlejohn & Son of Wellington.⁸ The clock was the property of the Port Chalmers Town Council and is still owned and maintained by the Dunedin City Council.



IONA CHURCH, PORT CHALMERS (PETER STOCKWELL 2016)

On 1 February 1964 the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations united, with the stained glass windows from the Watkin-Creed Memorial Church being installed in the corridor of Iona in 1974.⁹ The Congregational Church amalgamated a year later, after celebrating its centenary.

The first pipe organ in Iona was a Positive pipe organ purchased by the choir from Chas. Begg & Co. for £207.¹⁰ It was erected in the apse of the church, and opened on 19 August 1907.¹¹ From the specification it was a pattern 48 (opus number unknown):

MANUAL

Double Bass	16	transposing keyboard +1/-3
Open Diapason	8	composition knee lever
Melodic Diapason	8	foot and hand blowing
Salicional	8	
Gedeckt Bass	8	
Gedeckt Treble	8	
Dulcet Bass	4	
Dulcet Treble	4	

It was moved to the Sawyers Bay Presbyterian Church in 1930, where it was placed for three years until it was burnt down in an arson attack on New Years Day 1933.



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The next pipe organ to be installed in the church was a gift of Mrs Mary Mill as a memorial to her late husband John Mill. He was three times mayor of the town council and member of the congregation.

The organ was supplied by Hill, Norman & Beard (opus number 2727, Australian number 007), and dedicated on 24 March 1929 by Dr V. Galway.¹² However parts of the organ were far older than 1928. The instrument was first built by William Hill in 1854 for Sherborne School in Dorset (no opus number recorded). This was a two manual mechanical instrument.¹³

GREAT			SWELL (from TC)		
Open Diapason	8		Open Diapason	8	
Stopped Diapason (bass / treble)	8		Stopped Diapason	8	
Dulciana	8	TC	Principal	4	
Principal	4		Cornopean	8	
Flute	4	TC			
Fifteenth	2		Swell Coupler		
			2 Composition pedals		
PEDAL (2½ 8ves)					
Bourdon	16	1-12	Compass: 54/42/29		
			Action: Mechanical		

In 1878 it was revoiced and the console moved. The Swell was extended to CC, the Open Diapason sharing the common bass with the Stopped Diapason. The opus number for this work was 1694.¹⁴

GREAT			SWELL		
Open Diapason	8		Open Diapason	8	
Stopped Diapason	8		Stopped Diapason	8	
Dulciana	8	TC	Principal	4	
Principal	4	new	Oboe	8	new
Flute	4	TC			
Fifteenth	2		COUPLERS		
			Swell to Great Bass		
PEDAL (2 ½ 8ves)			Swell to Pedal		
Bourdon	16		2 Comps		

Compass: 54/29
Action: Mechanical

In 1898 it was rebuilt (opus 2226) as a tubular-pneumatic action instrument, with a new Swell Soundboard and pipework.¹⁵

GREAT			SWELL		
Open Diapason	8		Geigen Principal	8	
Hohl Flute	8		Gedackt	8	
Dulciana	8	new bass	Salicional	8	
Principal	4		Voix Celeste	8	from AA#
Suabe Flute	4		Wald Flöte	4	
Flautina	2		Oboe	8	
PEDAL			COUPLERS		
Bourdon	16		Swell Octave		
			Swell to Great		
			Swell to Pedal		
			Great to Pedal		
			ACCESSORIES		
Compass: 58/30			2 Composition pedals to Swell		
Action: Pneumatic			2 Composition pedals to Great		

In 1926, a new Hill, Norman & Beard three manual instrument (opus 2619) was installed in the School Chapel. The old organ was removed and installed as a temporary instrument in St Mary Abbots Church, Kensington, London, with the four foot flutes swapped between the two divisions.¹⁶ By 1928 it had been removed and rebuilt for Iona Port Chalmers, opus 2727. At least part of the Great Open Diapason comes from John Christie's Glyndebourne instrument.¹⁷ So it would seem that the Great soundboard and some of the Great Flautina are from the 1854 Hill.

The installation was not straightforward, as one of the six cases of organ parts was badly damaged by water.¹⁸ It was mentioned that the damaged parts were electrical, and would have to be replaced from Australia - so it would have been the blower (as it was the only electrical part of the instrument).¹⁹

According to the original drawings held in the British Organ Archives in the Birmingham University Special Collections, the instrument was intended to be erected behind the pulpit in the apse, with the blower underneath the platform. However, at the meeting of the Deacon's Court on 12 February 1929 it was decided, "that owing to dampness, the organ be not placed behind the Pulpit as originally planned, but that it be placed [in the] gallery."²⁰

GREAT		PEDAL	
Open Diapason	8	Bourdon	16
Stopped Diapason	8		
Dulciana	8	COUPLERS	
Principal	4	Swell to Pedal	
Wald Flute	4	Great to Pedal	
Flautina	2	Swell to Great	
		Swell Octave	
SWELL			
Geigen Principal	8	ACCESSORIES	
Gedeckt	8	Two composition pedals to Swell	
Salicional	8	Two composition pedals to Great	
Voix Celeste	8		
Suabe Flute	4		
Oboe	8	Compass: 58/30	
		Action: Pneumatic	
Tremulant			

In 1997 the instrument was removed and restored by the South Island Organ Company, who moved the Pedal Bourdon chest 250mm back from the instrument to allow better access for maintenance and tuning purposes. Borer damaged case panels were replaced and made removable for access to the instrument. The organ was reopened on 10 October 1998.²¹

- 1 Church, Ian, *A Guiding Light; The Port Chalmers Presbyterian Church and its People*. (Port Chalmers: United Church of Port Chalmers Presbyterian Parish, 2002), pp.4-5
- 2 Whyte, Rev. Alex., *The Second Church of Otago 1852 – 1916; Thanksgiving Sermon preached on 22 October 1916*, p.3
- 3 Church, op.cit., p.7
- 4 Ibid., p.9
- 5 Whyte, op.cit., p.7
- 6 Church, Ian, *What Mean These Stones; the Story of the Port Chalmers Quarries and Building Stones*. (Port Chalmers: Port Chalmers Early Settlers and Historical Society in conjunction with the Port Chalmers and District Lion Club, 2001)
- 7 Ibid., p.42
- 8 Church, Ian, *A Guiding Light*, op.cit., p.11
- 9 Hamilton, Derek & Judith, *Early Churches in and around Dunedin*. (Christchurch: Judith and Derek Hamilton, 2009), p.63
- 10 Presbyterian Archives - Iona Port Chalmers Deacon's Court Minutes 1904 – 1930, p.80 (meeting 1 August 1907)
- 11 *Evening Star*, 20 August 1907, p.6
- 12 McLintock, Robert, *Some of our Organs Past and Present*, p.19
- 13 Birmingham University, Special Collections - British Organ Archive. Hill Estimate Book, vol. 1, pp.324-5
- 14 Ibid., vol. 3, p.057
- 15 Birmingham University, Special Collections - British Organ Archive. Hill Shop Book, vol. 4, p.110
- 16 Birmingham University, Special Collections - British Organ Archive. HN&B Order Book, vol. 6, p.94
- 17 SIOC job notes on pipe markings and British Institute of Organ Studies, National Pipe Organ Register opus numbers
- 18 Iona Presbyterian Church, Deacon Courts Minutes, 20 November 1928, p.509
- 19 Ibid, 11 December 1928, p.511
- 20 Ibid., 12 February 1929, p.514
- 21 Church, Ian, *A Guiding Light*, op.cit., p.42