

St. Andrew's at Rangi Ruru Presbyterian Church, Merivale



ST. ANDREW'S AT RANGI RURU CHURCH, MERIVALE (C.T. TEMPLETON 2016)

Well before the Canterbury Association was founded and planning a Church of England settlement in Canterbury, the Canterbury Plains were home to Scotch Presbyterians. As early as 1840 there was a short lived settlement of a year and a half of Scottish Presbyterians, and in 1843 William and John Deans settled on the plains as permanent residents.¹ It was not until October 1853 that there was the first Presbyterian Service held in Christchurch.² In October 1855, a Crown grant of triangular plot of three acres at the top of Tuam Street was given to St. Andrew's and the first building was started. The design of the architect, Henry John Cridland³ was modified to reduce costs and the tender let in December 1855 to James Johnston. The building, of "Carpenter Gothic" design, was opened for public worship on 1 February 1857.⁴

In 1862, transepts were added almost doubling the size of the building, and fifteen years later a new west porch and nave extension built. In 1892, Robert William England ⁵ designed an extensive rebuilding of St. Andrew's, with a new nave, modified transepts, and the original nave roof lifted up to form a clerestory.⁶ In 1902, further additions were made, with an extra bay added for the pipe organ.

With the inner city congregation declining, after two years of discussions, the building of St.

Andrew's was moved to the Rangi Ruru Girls' School (an independent Presbyterian school), for use as their place of worship during the week. The last service on the old site was on 3 August 1986.⁷ The building was then cut into four pieces: the organ chancel and vestry, the transepts, and two sections of the nave (each of three bays). It was moved on Sunday 31 August 1986, and re-erected on the new site in the school grounds. An extra bay was inserted into the nave, increasing the seating capacity, and a new main entrance porch added to the old west end.⁸ The building was rededicated on 29 March 1987, (with the first service being a wedding of a Rangi Old Girl, eight days prior.)⁹



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Rangi Ruru Girls' School had been founded in 1889 by Helen Gibson, and started in premises on Papanui Road, then Webb Street before moving in February 1924 to the current site on Hewitts Road, Merivale. Based around 'Te Koraha' the 1884 (extended 1890) house of Arthur Rhodes, Rangi Ruru School at that stage was Anglican, with the pupils attending St. Mary's Merivale. In 1946, the school was sold to a group of Christchurch Presbyterians and became the Rangi-Ruru Presbyterian Girls' School.

Unfortunately, misunderstandings and differing expectations of the relocation of the church building and centre of worship to the school appeared soon afterwards, culminating in a hearing in 1990 of the Commission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church involving representatives of the Rangi Ruru Board of Governors, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Christchurch Presbytery, and Knox Church (since St Andrew's was now sited right in the middle of the Knox parish). This resulted in a new agreement between St. Andrew's Session and the School's Board of Governors on 9 August 1990.¹⁰

*The organ in St. Andrew's was built by the London firm of Gray & Davison in 1902, (job no 10750). At the time of building, their address was 6 Pratt St, London. It was shipped to New Zealand in two shipments, on 1 and 22 April 1902 and erected in the Church by E.H. Jenkins, the local organbuilder.¹¹ It was opened on Monday evening 4 November 1902 at a recital and social. Alex Law, the newly appointed organist, officiated.¹²

Dr John Bradshaw, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Christchurch Cathedral, was asked to perform the opening recital but following an inspection of the instrument he refused to oblige

“even for a fee of ten guineas.” A report was immediately sought from Edgar Jenkins in which, amongst an extensive report, he says “But it is of the large pedal pipes of which I wish to speak more particularly and I am bound to say without fear of contradiction that they are lamentably deficient both in regard to the quality of material employed as well as the bad workmanship. They are made of the same kind of timber as the packing cases, split and with rough knots badly put together, crooked and in the winding, joints unsound for lack of glue, unequal in tone and practically unvoiced, indeed in all my experience it is the worst piece of work I have ever seen coming from an organ builders factory of any repute.....”¹³

It is a damning report, backed up by N. T. Pearce who was brought up from Invercargill especially to report on the organ.¹⁴ There is no record of what ensued but the organ is still working. The original Cornopean pipes had been replaced with those from the 1926 HN&B organ in St. Mary’s, Merivale (after the stop was removed from St. Mary’s during an enlargement in 1936). There is no explanation as to why¹⁵ and the replacement pipes were never satisfactory.

In 1962, along with the interior of the church, the organ was ‘modernised’. The console was shifted from its place within the organ to a free standing position just west of the north transept. It was sited in a ‘well’ about 12 inches below floor level with the organist facing forwards. At this time, the entire action was converted to electro-pneumatic and a new console was provided. The Swell pedal action remained mechanical. All parts were supplied by George Croft & Son Ltd, Auckland and installed by Bernard Bicknell, (a Christchurch organ enthusiast).¹⁶

When the building was re-located in 1986, from its original site beside the public hospital, the console was raised to floor level & rotated 90 degrees to its present orientation. A Trumpet unit, with parallel shallots, was added which is available on the Great and Pedal at 16 & 8 ft pitches. As well, the Great Clarionet 8 was replaced with a two-rank Mixture and the Swell Cornopean 8 pipes were replaced. As a centenary project, in 2002, a Double Open Diapason 16 rank was added to the Great Organ and this is available on the pedal at 16, 8, & 4ft pitches. This rank is from the George Fincham 1867/1883 instrument that was in St Matthew’s Anglican Church, Prahran, Melbourne. Two years ago, John Dodgshun added a Clarinet 8 stop to the Great Organ, the pipes of which came from the 1931 HN&B organ in Knox Church, Dunedin. In July 2016, an Ophicleide 16 stop was added to the Pedal organ. These pipes came from the 1907 N&B organ in First Church Dunedin.

The organ is well used and the South Island Organ Co Ltd keep it maintained to a high standard.

GREAT			PEDAL		
Double Open Diapason	16	A	Acoustic Bass	32	C/D
Open Diapason	8		Open Diapason	16	C
Hohl Flute	8		Violone	16	A
Dulciana	8		Bourdon	16	D
Principal	4		Principal	8	A
Wald Flute	4		Bass Flute	8	D
Twelfth	2 $\frac{2}{3}$		Choral Bass	4	A
Fifteenth	2		Flute	4	D
Mixture 19.22	II		Ophicleide	16	
Double Trumpet	16	B	Trombone	16	B
Trumpet	8	B	Trumpet	8	B
Clarinet	8				

SWELL			ACCESSORIES		
Bourdon	16		Balanced, mechanical Swell Pedal.		
Violin Diapason	8		Muldersoft multilevel capture system		
Lieblich Gedact	8		Five thumb pistons to Swell		
Salicional	8		Five thumb pistons to Great.		
Voix Celeste	8	TC	Ten General thumb pistons.		
Principal	4		Five toe pistons to Swell.		
Mixture 15.19.22	III		Five toe pistons to Pedal.		
Cornopean	8		Reversible thumb pistons. (Sw to Ped, Gt to		
Oboe	8		Ped, Sw to Gt)		
COUPLERS			Reversible toe pistons. (Gt to Ped, Sw to Gt)		
Swell Octave			Restore, Next & Last thumb pistons.		
Swell Sub Octave			Next toe piston.		
Swell to Great			General Cancel thumb piston.		
Swell to Pedal			Great and Pedal pistons coupler.		
Great to Pedal					
			Compass: 58/30 (61/30 at console)		
			Electro-pneumatic action		

Wind pressures: 3 ½ and 4 inches with 7 inches for the Ophicleide, unit A 1-32 4 inches

- This section compiled with organ information by John Dodgshun. (Notes by C. Templeton)

- 1 Miller, Graham M., *Centennial History of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1856 – 1956*, p.6
- 2 Ibid., p.9
- 3 McIntyre, David W., *Shifting Starr - A Presbyterian Drama. St. Andrew's at Rangi Ruru 1956 - 2006*. (Christchurch: Jubilee Committee of St. Andrew's at Rangi Ruru, 2006), p.17. Henry John Cridland (1821 - 1867) also designed the first St Peter's Anglican Church, Te Aro, Wellington in 1848, and St James's Church, Lower Hutt in 1849. He designed the first Anglican church building in Christchurch, which became the first St Michael and All Angels.
- 4 Miller, op.cit., pp.16-17
- 5 He also designed 'Fitzroy,' in Merivale, and 'Holly Lea' in Manchester Street (still standing at the time of writing)
- 6 McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 21-23
- 7 Ibid., p. 87
- 8 Ibid., p. 92
- 9 Ibid., p. 93
- 10 Ibid., chapter 8
- 11 *Papers Past – Star*, 5 September 1902, p.3
- 12 *Press*, 5 November 1902, p.9
- 13 St Andrew's Archives, undated letter (c. December 1902) E. H. Jenkins to the Revd J. Mackenzie, Chairman of St. Andrew's Church Organ Committee
- 14 St Andrew's Archives, letter 16 February 1903, N.T. Pearce to Organ Committee of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
- 15 South Island Organ Company Archives, HN&B Collection. The Organist Mr Venables ordered a new Horn stop late October 1938 (Letter A - 006) and the Cornopean which was described as "only junk" by W.A.F. Brodie (letter A - 008) was sold to Mr Venables along with some scrap tubing in December 1938 (letter G - 037)
- 16 *Christchurch Star*, 24 February 1962