

St. Patrick's Catholic Basilica, Oamaru

The first Catholic church in Oamaru was built before the congregation had its own residential priest. It was designed by R. A. Lawson of Dunedin and was a Gothic design of Oamaru stone with bluestone foundations.¹ The foundation stone was dedicated on 13 December 1868 and the 200-seat building consecrated with a full congregation. It was not until the beginning of 1873 that there was a resident parish priest.² By the 1880s St. Patrick's church was becoming too small and a new church-school was started on 7 May 1882 and opened on 27 April 1884. The architect was the local James Johnston and the builder John McCombe. This coincided with the foundation of a Dominican Convent in Oamaru.³

By 1892 plans and funds were underway for the present Basilica of St. Patrick's. On Trinity Sunday, 28 May 1893 the foundation stone was laid by Bishop Moran of Dunedin and was opened on 18 November 1894 by Bishop Grime of Christchurch.⁴ The building architect was Francis W. Petre of Dunedin and the contractor was J. D. Woods. It was completed in stages, with the first stage costing £3,460 (excluding the sanctuary and dome). The design is classical Corinthian, with the portico and dome added in 1903 and the building finally completed in 1918. In 1962 steel girders were inserted in the flat arches across the top and sides of the sanctuary, and side confessionals and under-floor heating installed. After the Second Vatican Council, the main altar was replaced and the large crucifix mounted on the wall in 1981.⁵



ST. PATRICK'S BASILICA OAMARU (C. T. TEMPLETON 2016)

In 1900 the Dominican Convent was built alongside the Basilica and Presbytery. This building took 18 months for the contractors A. Gillies (builder) and J. Crombie (stonemason) and was also designed by Petre.⁶



ST. PATRICK'S, BASILICA, OAMARU – POITIVE ORGAN (C.T. TEMPLETON 2014)

The first pipe organ in the Basilica was opened on 14 October 1915 by Thomas Richie of Dunedin.⁷ This is the Casson Positive in the centre of the gallery. It is a pattern 64 opus 912, and was purchased through Messrs Begg & Co., music retailers, who had the sole New Zealand agency for the Positive Organ Company, at a cost of £375.

MANUAL CC - a 58 notes

Bourdon	16		Tremulant
Double Bass	16	Melodic	
Open Diapason	8		
Melodic Diapason	8		Octave coupler
Gedackt Bass	8		Transposer +1 / -3
Gedackt Treble	8		
Salicional	8		Knee swell action
Viol	8		
Melodic Viol	8		Compass: 58 notes
Dulcet Bass	4		Mechanical and tubular-pneumatic action
Dulcet Treble	4		

At some stage the Swell shutters have been removed from the front of the swell box, and stored behind the instrument.

The newer organ to be erected in the Basilica survived an earthquake which condemned the building it was placed in. This instrument was built for St. Matthew's Anglican Church in Masterton in 1899 by Hobday & Sons.

MANUAL (Enclosed except the Open Diapason)			PEDAL	
Diapason	16	prepared for	Bourdon	16
Open Diapason	8		COUPLER	
Rohr Flute / Claribel	8		Swell to Pedal	
Gamba	8		ACCESSORIES	
Celeste	8		Balanced Swell Pedal	
Principal	4		Three combination pedals	
Piccolo	2			
Horn	8	prepared for	Compass: 56/30	
Hautboy	8		Tubular-pneumatic action	

"Lower octave of the open diapason is always on, unless shut off by drawing out a stop for the purpose. This is to give prominence to the bass for accompanying." ⁸

The instrument was enlarged by Hobday & Son in 1909 and dedicated on 25 March.⁹

GREAT			SWELL		
Bourdon	16	prepared for	Double Diapason	16	prepared for
Open Diapason	8		Open Diapason	8	
Claribel	8		Rohr Flute	8	
Dulciana	8		Gamba	8	
Principal	4		Celeste	8	
Flautina	2		Principal	4	
Trumpet	8	prepared for	Mixture	III	prepared for
			Horn	8	prepared for
			Oboe	8	
PEDAL			Tremulant		
Grand Open Diapason	16	prepared for			
Bourdon	16		COUPLERS		
Bass Flute	8	prepared for	Swell to Great		
Balanced swell pedal			Swell to Great Super-Octave		
Three composition pedals to Great			Swell to Great Sub-Octave		
Three composition pedals to Swell			Great to Pedal		
			Swell to Pedal		
Compass: 56/30					
Tubular-pneumatic action					

It was enlarged by A. A. Hobday and reopened in a new brick church building on 21 September 1913. He added two new fronts, on the chance and nave, the nave front being the new Pedal Open Diapason 16. The pedal pneumatic action was replaced, as was the drawstop action, and thumb pistons replacing the combination pedals.¹⁰

GREAT		GREAT (cont.)	
Open Diapason	8	Flute	4
Claribel	8	Flautina	2
Dulciana	8	Clarionette	8
Principal	4		

SWELL	
Double Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8
Rohr Flute	8
Gamba	8
Celeste	8
Principal	4
Lieblich Flute	4
Horn	8
Oboe	8

PEDAL	
Grand Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Bass Flute	8

COUPLERS	
Swell to Great	
Swell to Great Super-Octave	
Swell to Great Sub-Octave	
Great to Pedal	
Swell to Pedal	
Swell Tremulant	
Tubular-pneumatic action	
Balanced swell pedal	
Three Great thumb pistons	
Three Swell thumb pistons	

At 11.17 pm on Saturday 24 June 1942, a magnitude 7 earthquake struck the lower North Island, with the epicentre eight miles from Masterton.¹¹ St. Matthew's Church was severely damaged. Photographs show the organ front pipes lying over the Great pipework and amidst the rubble of the partially collapsed building.¹² The instrument was retrieved and stored in the safer church hall, and on the evening of Thursday 29 June, NZ Army Sappers set demolition charges to demolish the compromised building. It took them two attempts with three charges of gelignite (the largest over 50lbs in weight) to bring down most of the church building.¹³

A new church building was opened in 1958 and the organ installed there. It was rebuilt by the firm of Matla & Son with new soundboards and console. The layout of the organ and church acoustic never provided a satisfactory result, and in 2005 the pipe organ was purchased by St. Patrick's Parish. The New Zealand Organ Manufactory under Dr. R. Newton dismantled and moved the instrument to Oamaru,¹⁴ and over the next six years the organ was erected at either side of the choir gallery.

GREAT	
Open Diapason	8
Clarabella	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Flute	4
Twelfth	2 $\frac{2}{3}$
Fifteenth	2

PEDAL	
Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Octave Bass	8

COUPLERS	
Swell to Great	
Swell to Great 4	
Swell to Great 16	
Swell to Pedal	
Great to Pedal	

Compass: 56/30
Electro-pneumatic action

SWELL (now unenclosed)	
Double Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8
Rohrflöte	8
Gamba	8
Voix Celeste	8
Principal	4
Lieblich Flöte	4
Horn	8
Oboe	8
Tremulant	

ACCESSORIES	
Five Great thumb pistons	
Toe Pistons:	
- Great to Pedal	
- Swell to Pedal	
- Swell to Great	
- Swell to Great 16	
- Swell to Great 4	
- Tutti	

- 1 Scanlan, Ian, B. J. *Pioneering Days of the Church in North Otago 1840 - 1900; A Diocesan Centennial Project*. (Dunedin, 1973), p.8
- 2 Ibid., p.18
- 3 Ibid., p.26
- 4 Ibid., p.34
- 5 Church pamphlet
- 6 Scanlan, op.cit., p.28
- 7 *Oamaru Mail*, 15 October 1915, p.6
- 8 *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 13 November 1899, p.3
- 9 *Wairarapa Age*, 26 March 1909, p.5
- 10 *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 20 September 1913, p.6
- 11 Rogers, Anna, *New Zealand Tragedies, Earthquakes*. (Wellington: Grantham House Publishing, 1996), pp. 124-125
- 12 Ibid., title page, p.129; also McLaren, Jan. *A Night of Terror; Wairarapa's 1942 earthquakes*. (Masterton: Wairarapa Archives, 2002), pp.36-37
- 13 McLaren, op.cit., p.74
- 14 Cox, Michael, 'St. Mathew's Revisited', *Organ News*, vol.40, no. 4 (March 2005,) pp. 98-103