Appendix A

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LARBERT CHURCH ORGANS

I visited Larbert on 19th March 2025, and I wish to place on record my gratitude for the assistance and hospitality of both Robin Bell and Martin Fairbairn on this day.

My visit encompassed the Larbert West, Larbert East, and Stenhouse & Carron sanctuaries, in order to assess the situation with regard to each of the pipe organs currently in place, and against the backdrop of congregational re-organisation which has resulted in the Larbert East building being selected as the sole building for worship going forward. My observations resulting from this visit are now summarised.

LARBERT EAST

The organ in this building was manufactured and installed in 1902 by Abbott & Smith of Leeds, a firm who by this time were a well-established name in the organ building industry. The mechanism employed in this instance was a version of tubular-pneumatic, not applied as standard by any means, and incorporating "sliderless" soundboards and individual "membrane" valve control for every single pipe, and based on a system devised and adopted extensively in German organs at that time. Other than the re-leathering of primary soundboard motors (c.1995), these mechanisms survived without intervention until 2015, at which time electric transmission was introduced between the console and those mechanisms which control the pipework. The facilities for controlling rapid changes of stops at the console were also upgraded at this time, and by any standards this equipment is lavish for a comparatively small instrument. Additionally in the course of this work, numerous sundry mechanical repairs were carried out, together with attention to the pipework (which appears to be in good condition from what I was able to see).

In November 2024, a report and quotation was received from John Lightbown & Sons of Tynemouth, who carried out the work in 2015 and who continue to maintain the instrument. The following recommendations are made:

- The removal and dismantling of the Swell wind reservoir (bellows) for complete restoration and re-leathering, at a cost of **£5,860.00 + VAT**

- The removal and dismantling of the Great membrane mechanisms for full re-leathering, at a cost of **£4,650.00 + VAT**

These proposals and costings, prepared by a firm who know this particular instrument well, are all in order and certainly to be expected given that this is original leatherwork, now well past life expectancy. In view of the logistics involved, and the specialist nature of this work, the costs quoted are entirely reasonable. If the funding can be allocated in due course, this proposed scheme is worth undertaking for the resulting benefits, and particularly given the present irregularities in speech, tuning, and regulation of the Great pipes, in addition to some notes not sounding at all – which are all symptoms of the failing membrane leatherwork.

Looking further ahead, I was made aware during my time at Larbert East of some formative considerations being given to re-ordering of the sanctuary, and possibly necessitating the re-siting of the console from the present position to an area to one side. As a result of the work undertaken to the organ in 2015, certain technical logistics involved in such a process will be alleviated, although the following core requirements will nonetheless have to be factored in and ultimately costed:

- The provision of new casing for a detached console
- The provision of a platform if the console is to be mobile
- The provision of an electrically - driven Swell shutter mechanism (this is presently a direct mechanical linkage)

If at some point the church authorities decide to approach Malcolm Lightbown to quote for such work, the opportunity should also be given for him to advise on any other mechanical work which might be considered beneficial for the instrument, in order that it can be put on a thoroughly secure and reliable mechanical footing in every respect, for the next generation.

Although the organ is a modest instrument in terms of number of stops, it certainly benefits from the elevated position into which it was designed and installed, and it speaks without impediment into a spacious building.

LARBERT WEST

This organ dates from 1903, being constructed and installed by the illustrious firm of Norman & Beard Ltd., of Norwich – a firm who would later install the celebrated instrument at Edinburgh's Usher Hall.

Other than the subsequent removal of the console from a central position to the present location, the organ survives as installed, and although in need of some overhauling and repair it nonetheless gives a very good account of itself, particularly in view of the modest tonal provision of only thirteen speaking stops. The original tubular-pneumatic mechanisms, of robust and durable design, remain as a reminder of Norman & Beard's consistently reliable craftsmanship.

The appearance of the organ as seen from the pew is deceptive, as the front pipe display and casework conceal what is in fact an admirably compact layout within, with approximately four feet of dead space at either end of the instrument. This is largely due to the provision being made to supply a much larger sixteen-foot "Open Diapason" stop on the Pedal division, comprising very substantial wooden pipes. If this stop had been subsequently installed, then much of this dead space would have been taken up by pipes and windchests.

There is no doubt in my mind that this organ has the potential to be of valuable service, as a fulfilling musical instrument, in a re-homed scenario elsewhere.

STENHOUSE & CARRON

This organ, yet another in the district to be provided at the expense of Robert Dobbie, dates from 1902, and is the work of the Yorkshire enterprise, James J. Binns of Bramley (Leeds).

It is a textbook example of the firm's tonal and technical aesthetic in every possible way, and with twenty-two speaking stops it is a luxuriously resourceful instrument musically. The mechanism is tubular-pneumatic, however in this instance all operating with pristine purpose following a complete restoration of the instrument, undertaken in 2012 by the late Sandy Edmonstone.

For such a substantial instrument, the overall footprint is remarkably compact, and with the height kept to an absolute minimum for the space allocated to it. Although the far end of the instrument is partially disguised by the doorway through to the hall, it is essentially free-standing in layout.

The above attributes are certainly most beneficial in the context of such an instrument being considered for re-location elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

With future restoration work under discussion for the Abbott & Smith organ in the Larbert East sanctuary, the other two instruments summarised above are now at a point where any considerations are purely existential ones.

Both of the latter instruments have qualities, musical and logistical, which would make them attractive for careful re-location elsewhere. During my time at Larbert, Robin Bell and myself met with officials connected with the Dobbie Hall, in order to assess the feasibility of re-homing the Stenhouse & Carron Binns organ there. Whilst musically this organ would be well suited to the hall, the regrettable conclusion was that there was insufficient space to accommodate it without compromising other facilities and provisions which are required in that space.

The details of both instruments are now available online – worldwide - by virtue of an extensive list of redundant Scottish organs published (and regularly updated) by Alan Buchan, and which is also available via the Institute of British Organ Building's own redundant organs list on their website.

Perhaps the most ideal outcome for the two instruments might be a scenario where any future owner of the buildings can find a purpose for them, which would allow them to be retained in situ, as the bespoke installations which they undeniably are. In the meantime, and at a time of unprecedented threat to Scotland's pipe organ heritage, it is to be hoped that expressions of interest in these two instruments, with a view to their potential re-homing, will be ultimately forthcoming.

MATTHEW HYNES

2/4/2025

Appendix B1

John Lightbown & Sons
Organ Builders Limited
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CURRENTLY ACCREDITED IN
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CLEANING & OVERHAUL
REBUILDING

FAO Martin Fairbairn

10th November 2024

Organ at Larbert East Church

The Swell reservoir is in need of restoration, it is a double rise bellows. The ribs on the bellows are split causing a load wind noise and a reduction in pressure. The Swell pipes are now not speaking on the correct wind pressure.

The leatherwork is likely to be original over 80 years old and it is perished due to its age; it therefore requires fully restoring as it is splitting. There are cracks and leakage in the leather gussets and corners. The leather is perished and is leaking wind, the integrity of the bellows ribs is poor and they could become further detached.

It would be fully restored in the traditional manner. Best quality sheepskin leather would be glued to the bellows ribs using tradition pearl scotch glue. The double rise reservoir will be removed and completely stripped of old leather. All ribs and gussets will be recovered with new white sheepskin leather used to the same specification as the original. This bellows reservoir is effectively the lungs of the organ; it provides the correct wind pressure to the Swell division of the organ.

We could restore the main bellows reservoir for £5,860.00 plus VAT this includes all materials, removal, restoration and reinstallation.

We have restored dozens of bellows reservoirs over the last 40 years using traditional methods. Once restored the bellows reservoirs can be expected provide decades of further use.

John Lightbown & Sons holds nearly three hundred tuning contracts throughout the U.K. and is a corporate member of The Institute of British Organ Builders which means our work has been examined for quality for Tuning, Restoration, Rebuilding and Cleaning.
We have full employers Liability, and Public/Product Liability Insurance cover of £5 million, including goods in transit cover.

Our work is accredited by the Institute of British Organ Builders.

Yours Sincerely

Malcolm Lightbown
Director

THE INSTITUTE OF

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BRITISH ORGAN BUILDING

The IBO is committed to promoting, achieving and sustaining the highest standards in the building and care of pipe organs

Some ways in which we help organ builders and their clients:

1. By providing the means whereby those who have technical skills, ideas and experience, from Britain and elsewhere, can share them with our members

2. By establishing, and publicly confirming, that our members are skilled and competent in the areas of the craft in which they have been examined, and by encouraging them to develop and expand those skills

3. By vigorously pursuing the interests of organ builders-individuals and businesses-with administrative bodies at a local, national and international level

4. By setting up useful and active lines of communication, in business matters, in study, and socially, between craftsmen and their colleagues, the musicians and advisers they work with, and those who can offer other professional knowledge and advice relevant to organ building

5. By publishing and distributing an annual Register of Accredited Business Members, whose premises and recent work have been inspected and found to be of an appropriately high standard, and by suspending or removing from the Register any Businesses that fall below this standard

6. By being ready to offer a wide variety of advice to members and their clients; in particular to mediate in any instances of dispute or dissatisfaction between them, and then to advise clients whether their complaints are reasonable, or to advise and assist members to correct any shortcomings.

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Organ at Larbert East Church

The wind-chests for both manuals are sliderless construction, they are membrane ventil wind-chests. This type of action was very popular with organ builders Walcker of Ludwigsburg, they had patents for membrane and cone valve sliderless actions from the 1880's.

The Walcker membrane wind-chest was copied and adapted by Charles Haskell of Philadelphia in 1886 and Mr Carl Weigle of Stuttgart tried to patent an almost identical membrane wind chest in 1891.

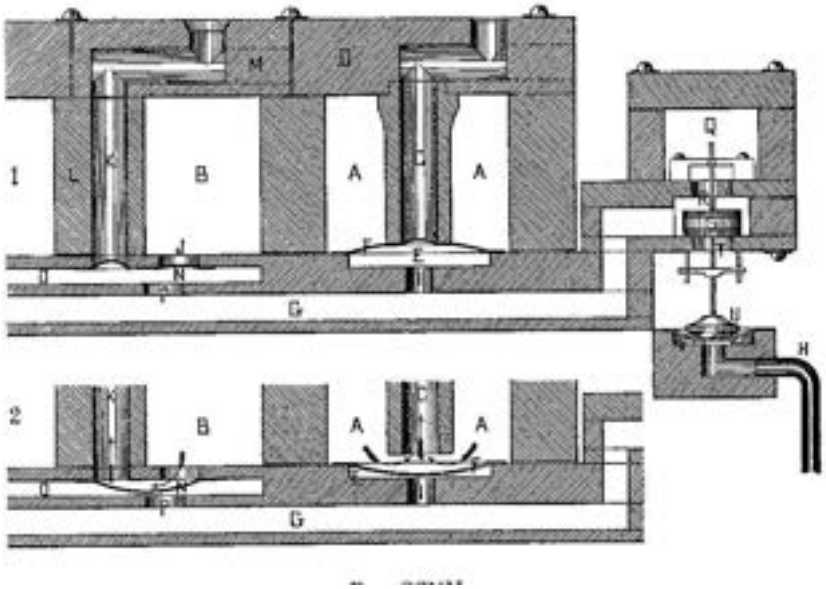
We have maintained Abbot and Smith organs with mechanical actions or sliderless wind-chests, but I was not aware that they had also built membrane wind-chests, perhaps Abbott and Smith were influenced by Charles Brindley, an organ builder of Sheffield founded in 1854. It is believed that he trained under Schulze in Germany prior to starting his own business. Shortly after Brindley started trading, he was joined by Albert Foster. Brindley's son, Charles Frederick Brindley took over from his father in 1887.
These soundboards were mass produced and machined in the factory, keeping the site time down and reducing costs. Sliderless soundboards are less prone to problems caused by humidity changes, compared to slider soundboards where the sliders can stick. As each stop has its own air chamber, there is no chance of stops robbing each other of wind, unlike slider soundboards. Sliderless soundboards were very popular in Germany, Walcker produced the first cone chest, invented in 1842. Charles Brindley of Sheffield took out a patent in 1887 for a sliderless design closely resembling the Walcker chest.

Many patents were granted in the 1880s and 90s with regard to the companies multi pallet sliderless chest with tubular pneumatic action. Brindley used the Diapason scales of Schulze producing powerful choruses and German stop names can also be found in surviving organs. The first important sliderless chest was made popular by Walcker of Germany. Each rank was winded by a separate channel, when a key was pressed a cone valve was raised allowing wind into the pipe.

The organ at Larbert East Church was built by the firm Abbott and Smith of Leeds. Isaac Abbot founded his own company in Leeds in 1869 after twenty years experience with Hill and Son in London. William Smith was Abbott's manager until the founders' retirement in 1889. He continued the business in conjunction with Abbott's son using

the title Abbott and Smith from 1889. The specification of the organ is contained on the national pipe organ register, it states the organ was built in 1902.

The majority of organs in the U.K are constructed with slider soundboards using a single pallet valve for each note. The wind-chests at Larbert East Church are of the sliderless membrane ventil type. This design of wind-chest has membranes beneath every pipe. The membrane is of soft and close grained leather, it is pressed tightly against the pipe-ducts by highly compressed wind. The instant a manual key is depressed a small primary motor raises a valve to allow the membrane on that note to exhaust freely, the membrane moves away and the compressed wind in the stop chamber rushes into the pipe ducts to allow the note to sound.



Membrane windchest diagram from George Ashdown Audsley first published 1905

The Great leather membranes for each note on the soundboard require restoring. They are now not flexible enough to operate quickly enough or move the correct travel.

The membranes are not always allowing the correct amount of wind flow into the pies. This causes the pipes so sound flat and out of tune. The membrane boards would be removed from the organ on the Great soundboard. The old leather would be removed and the boards cleaned. New sheepskin leather would be used together with traditional pearl scotch glue. Once restored the membranes would be re-installed into the organ and tested.

We could restore the great leather membranes at a cost of £4,650.00 plus VAT this includes all materials, removal, restoration and reinstallation.
We have full employers Liability, and Public/Product Liability Insurance cover of £5 million, including goods in transit cover.

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Yours Sincerely

Malcolm Lightbown
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