



If you asked most people who are interested in the history of C19 organ building in Britain, ‘What do you know about the work of Bevington’s workshops in Soho in London?’, they would say something like, ‘They made a lot of small organs, didn’t they?’. That’s true of course – the firm did just that, and they can be found in many churches and chapels up and down the country. But just to say ‘Bevingtons made small organs’ does not tell the whole story, as we will see.

This morning I’d like to concentrate on the more unusual aspects of the work of the firm, onwards from 1839 when Henry Bevington senior died. For the next 45 or so years, it was Henry Bevington junior who directed the business, later together with his younger brother Martin. But first we need to look at the general background to their work.

Background

OLDER GENERATION 1820s		
Bevington & Sons Henry Bevington (d1839)	53 Greek Street, Soho	1815-1816
England & Son George Pike England (c1768-1815)	Woods Close, Clerkenwell 31 Theobalds Road	1763-? 1776-?1788
Hugh Russell (c1791-1825) partnered with Englands in 1770s	28 Theobalds Road 2 Terrace Grays Inn Lane	1802-1825 - c1828
Elliot (c1759-1832) & Hill (1789-1870)	12 Tottenham Court, New Road	1825-30s
John Gray (c1787-1849)	6, New Road, Fitzroy Square, then 9-11 Quickset Row, New Road, Fitzroy Square	1824-1835 - 1849
NEW GENERATION 1840s		
Bevington & Sons Henry (1813-1887) & Martin (b1821)	12 Greek Street, Soho 48 Greek Street, Soho	1822-1841 1842
Timothy Russell (1823-1861)	2 Grays Inn Terrace	1832-1861
NEW PARTNERSHIPS		
Hill & Davison	12 Tottenham Court New Road	1837-8
Gray [3 rd generation] & Davison	9&11 Quickset Row, New Road, Fitzroy Square	1845-1853
NEW FIRMS		
Joseph William Walker (1802-1870)	5 Bentinck St, Soho 166 High Holborn 27 Francis Street, Tottenham Court Road	1827-1831 1831-1837 1837-1925
Willis & Sons Henry Willis (1821-1901)	Foundling Terrace, Grays Inn Road	1848-1850
George Maydell Holdich (1816-1896) [with Bevingtons until own workshop]	12 Greek Street Soho 4 Judd Place East, New Road	1842-1848 1851-1857
James Bishop (c1783-1854)	1 Lisson Grove South 17 Albert Terrace, Westbourne Grove	1829-1841 1852-1855

Like the 1820s had been, the 1840s had been another pivotal period in London organ building, when new generations in their family firms took over control, or new partnerships (such as Hill & Davison,

then Gray & Davison), or new businesses such as Walkers, Willis and Holdich came to the fore – among a plethora of others. In the 1840, a new market for organs for both restored and newly-built churches was beginning to open up.



Then the Great Exhibition in 1851 drew the attention of businesses to the possibilities of much wider export markets – and the standards and efficiency these demanded of organ builders. The scene was set for the rest of the dramatic opera of typical Victorian semi-industrialised organ building, with its cast of often larger than life characters and their supporting choruses of pundits and players.

Henry Bevington's Apprenticeship

Jonathan Ohrman (born c1747)

16 May 1777 apprenticed to **James Jones** for seven years, (last business partner of **John Snetzler**, Rose Yard, Soho.)

28 April 1786 John [sic] Ohrman & John Nutt organ builders insured property at 16 Denmark Street in Dwelling House of Jupp, Frame Maker.

Ohrman & Nutt

1794 in partnership in Rose Street, Soho.

1795 St Anne's, Soho vestry minutes record 'these Gentleman had Removed from the Parish to a distant Part of the Kingdom'.

1797 At 3 South-Gate, St Mary's, Manchester.

1799 back in London at Tottenham Court, New Road 1799.

Henry Bevington

c1778 Birth of Henry Bevington, if he was apprenticed at fourteen.

10 September 1792 apprenticed to Ohrman & Nutt, being indentured for seven years 'from 12 August last'.

30 May 1812 Henry Bevington married Elizabeth Ling at St George's, Hanover Square.

1839 Henry Bevington appears in register of deaths for the second quarter.

12 February 1850 Elizabeth Bevington from 48 Greek Street buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, aged 65.

Information kindly supplied by Paul Tindall



Henry Bevington c 1778-1839
miniature c1816

By kind permission of Anthony Bevington

Bevington's firm was well-established by 1851; it was founded by the first Henry Bevington during the last few years of the C18, almost certainly in Soho. He had been apprenticed in 1792 to Jonathan Ohrmann and John Nutt, the former of whom had previously been apprenticed in 1777 to James Jones, the last business partner of John Snetzler. Ohrmann and Nutt were working from Rose Street, Soho, in 1794, perhaps having taken over there from James Jones in those premises previously

occupied by John Snetzler. Their work took them to Manchester among other places in the following years, and presumably Henry Bevington went with them. He would have finished his apprenticeship in 1799, by which time, Ohrmann and Nutt were in Tottenham Court, New Road. But this is only a short distance north of their Soho address in Rose Street, and so the business presumably continued in workshops at this address.

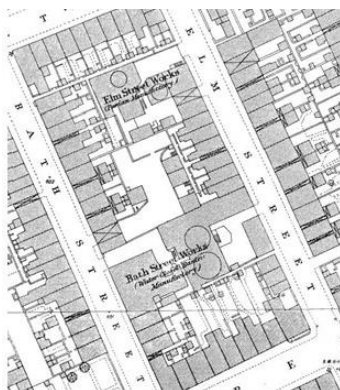
Bevington & Sons, leather manufacturers
Neckinger Mills, Bermondsey, London



Col Samuel Bourne Bevington 1832-1907
Head of Bevington & Sons leather manufacturers,
grandson of Samuel Bevington the firm's founder



When I speak of the 'innovative Bevingtons', I am not talking only of the organ builder's side of the family. As I reminded the participants in the Barber conference in February 2019, other members of his family had also founded businesses under the same difficult circumstances of the 25 years of war between the revolutionary French and Napoleon and the rest of Europe.



The Potter Bevingtons
Stoke-on-Trent

Samuel Bevington 1808-1863
Established the Swan Works in
Elm Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent



Thomas Bevington b1845
Burton Works, Hanley



John Bevington 1835-1892
Elm Street Works until 1870



By 1795 Samuel Bevington had established a leather-manufactory in Bermondsey on the site of former paper mills on the Neckinger river in Bermondsey; this became Bevingtons Neckinger Mills in 1801. By 1808, another Samuel Bevington (son of Richard) had established the Swan pottery works in Hanley near Stoke-on-Trent and he would go on to produce fine pottery in several places in that area.

Times, Friday 29 April 1808:

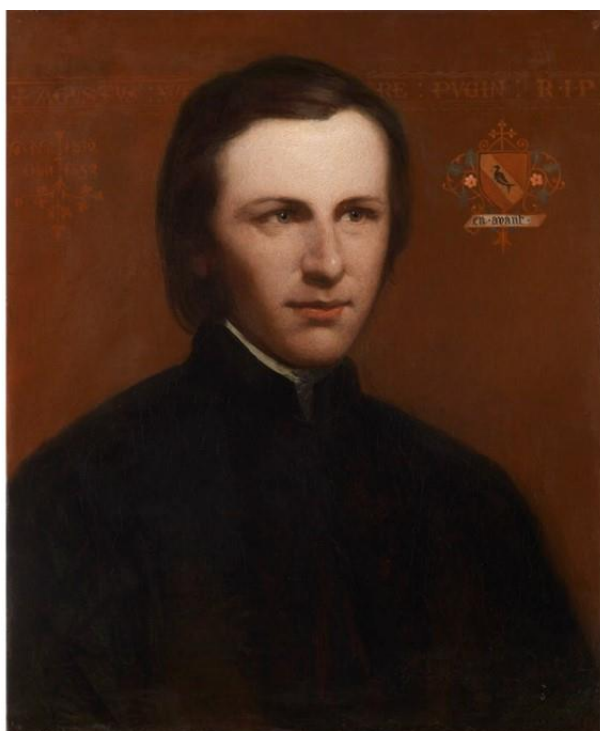
PATENT CHAMBER ORGANS – BEVINGTON and GOYER, Organ-builders, 42 Newman-street, Oxford-street, most respectfully inform the Nobility and gentry, that, being long aware of the trouble of blowing with foot in Chamber Organs, they have invented and added to that Instrument a MACHINE to blow the Bellows, so as that noble Instrument may be played with as much ease as a Piano-forte.

Instruments for inspection.

In 1808, Henry Bevington and his then associate, Mr Goyer (a picture frame maker), advertised an innovation: a special contrivance to make blowing an organ more easy. What this was is not at all clear, especially what was meant by the phrase about making the organ as easy to play as a piano. This sounds rather as if the Machine was operated by someone else – perhaps a house-servant – rather than the player, who would then have just the two piano-like small pedals to operate (the ones for the swell-shutters and for changing stops) instead of a third and much more tiring blowing pedal.

Such a machine might have been used in a forge, perhaps, rather than the more normal organ-like bellows. Or might it have been a machine used in the theatre to blow stage smoke across the scene? Soho is very close to theatre land now and it was then.

Theatre-land – Pugin and the Bevingtons



Augustus Welby Pugin

born 1812 **Bloomsbury** London

died 1852 The Grange, Ramsgate, Kent

Henry Bevington married **Elizabeth Ling**
(c1778-1839) 1812 (1787-1850)

Henry Elizabeth Alfred **Martin** Charles
b1813 **Soho** b1821 **Soho**
d1887

Henry Bevington married Elizabeth Ling in 1812. In the same year, and in the same part of London, Augustus Pugin was born, and he was to have a very considerable influence on his younger contemporaries, Henry Bevington junior and Martin. Augustus Pugin's short and turbulent life was certainly spent being inventive and energetic. In his later teens, he was already haunting the demi-monde of the theatres as well as designing furniture for Windsor castle. In 1831, at the precocious age of 19, he was commissioned to design the scenery for the London première at Covent Garden of 'Kenilworth', the opera by Donizetti based on Walter Scott's novel. He forthwith lost no time in marrying an actress.

The course of Pugin's architectural life would lead him to design many churches, most of them Roman Catholic (including five cathedrals), but a few Church of England ones as well. Naturally, all these needed organs, as did Pugin's own houses and his large private church at Ramsgate. And very many of the organs for these places were made by the younger Bevingtons – about 15 in all. They also made an organ for the church of the ancestral birthplace of Pugin's mother, Catherine Welby, at Denton on the Leicestershire-Lincolnshire border near Belvoir castle and one for the church at Wymeswold in eastern Leicestershire that AWN Pugin restored for Henry Alford. Although – as with everyone else – Pugin occasionally expressed his exasperation with the Bevington brothers, the three men seem to have had faithful and even cordial business dealings. This association with Pugin could well have been further inspiration for the innovative tendencies of the Bevingtons.



© National Portrait Gallery, London No. 1404



Northeast chapel
St Giles RC church
Cheadle, Staffs

In fact, in the 1830s any idea that overall architectural taste would change from classical to Gothic would have been almost revolutionary. But this innovative transition did take place, quite suddenly and it was pioneered by Pugin. The catalyst for this architectural revolution was the choice of what was then called 'Elizabethan Gothic' for the new houses of parliament. And it was the 'gothic' drawings by Pugin for these buildings that enabled Charles Barry to win the competition for their design. The parliament buildings were constructed throughout the 1840s on the largest building site in Europe. And, as is well known, almost their entire decorative and furnishing schemes were also designed by Pugin, right up to his death in 1852.

'America' at the Great Exhibition, with its centrepiece Gray & Davison organ

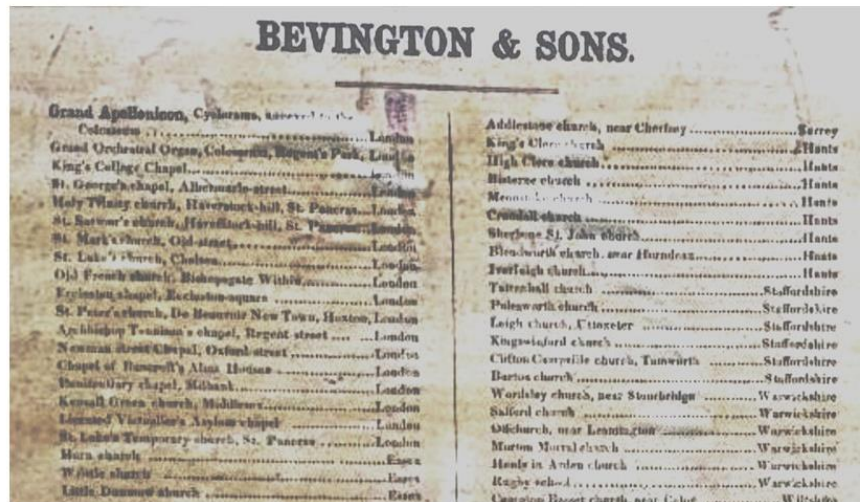


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The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851 was the brainchild of the inventor and engineer, Henry Cole, and was the first of its kind. This Exhibition formed the book-end to the pivotal decade of the 1840s; inevitably and rightly it was Pugin who designed its highly-influential medieval court. Although it is not certain that the Bevingtons exhibited, it is surely the case that they did. Their absence from the records of the jury might well be due to the fact placing organs for six months in the humid and hot climate generated by the glass-house design of the Crystal Palace would have been dangerous for them. A safer ploy would have been to exhibit a series of small organs. By changing these from time to time, their organs would have suffered much less harm, and perhaps that it what the Bevingtons did.

However, it seems that the Bevingtons did not lose the opportunity the Great Exhibition gave them for publicity. A list of about 250 organs made and installed by the firm, dateable from internal evidence to about 1851, was found by Andrew Cooper.

Organ list c1851 found by Andrew Cooper in the Bevington one-manual barrel and finger organ at St Andrew's Rockbourne, Hampshire



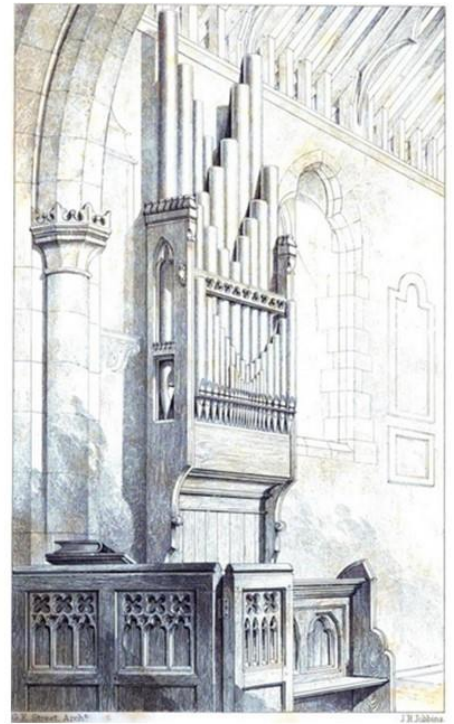
Grand Apollonicon, Cyclorama, installed in the Colosseum.....London
 Grand Orchestral Organ, Colosseum, Regent's Park. London ¹¹ etc

It had been pasted to the back of the music desk of the one-manual Bevington barrel and finger organ installed at Rockbourne church in Hampshire in 1851. This organ is not on the list, which suggests that someone may have bought the organ as a result of having seen this advertisement.

The organ at Rockbourne is described in the list as a Church Barrel and Finger Organ. It is one of the last of its type, with a 'gothick with a k' style of casework with gilt dummy front pipes.

Bevington small organ prices list		
Church Finger Organs	Five Stops, German and Composition Pedals, Venetian Swell, Gothic or Grecian Cases	£100
Church Barrel and Finger Organs	Full compass, German and Composition pedals, complete	£100 to £200
Church Finger Organs	Two rows of Keys, Swell and Great Organs, Full Compass with German and Composition Pedals, complete	£120
House or Chamber Organs	In elegant Rosewood and Mahogany cases, containing Stop Diapason, Treble and Bass, Dulciana, Principal and Flute, with Octaves of Pedals	60 and 70 Guineas
Small sized Church Barrel Organs		30 Guineas
All descriptions of Church and Chamber Organs made to order. Barrels made and re-set. Organs tuned and repaired by contract in every part of the United Kingdom.		

At the end of the list, is the first description of the various kinds of small organs, already fully worked out, that were to become the typical Bevington 'chancel' organs of later years, although they are not described as such there.



'Mediaeval' organ built by Gray & Davison for 1862 International Exhibition designed and decorated by John Seddon (1827-1906), Stowlangtoft, Suffolk

'Mediaeval' organ design by George Street from 'Scudamore Organs' by Rev John Baron, 1858

Following the Great Exhibition, the style of small organs changed quite radically. Their new designs were based on the 'medieval' organs exhibited at the Exhibition which had been decorated by various artists, and on the much plainer designs by George Street which were illustrated in John Baron's 'Scudamore Organs' book.



High quality painting of pipes on 3-manual Bevington organ of 1855-6: St Saviours Chalk Farm

1873 House organ now at St John's Downshire Hill, Hampstead



Bevington pipe decoration

All Saints Parish church Wellington NZ 1879

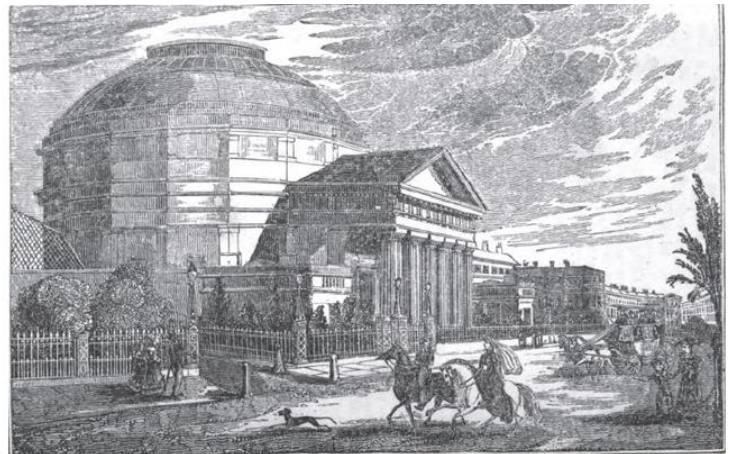


The Bevingtons certainly adopted the general forms of George Street's simple designs, but for the next three decades they also decorated the front pipes and cases of their organs of all sizes, to the extent that this became almost their trademark or signature, as we will see.

Colosseum

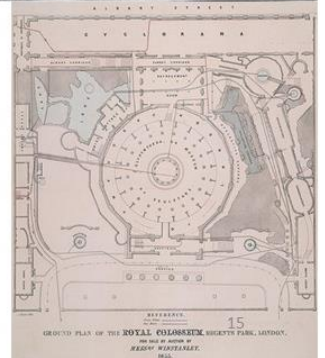


Royal Colosseum and Cyclorama, Regents Park



Installed organs listed by Bevington:

- 'Grand Apollonicon, Cyclorama, Colosseum'
- 'Grand Orchestral Organ, Colosseum'



But before the 1851 Great Exhibition, the Bevingtons had already made a name for themselves in another large and permanent exhibition in London. At the head of the c1851 list came their two organs at the Colosseum in Regent's Park: 'The Grand Apollonicon, Cyclorama, removed to the Colosseum', and 'The Grand Orchestral Organ at the Colosseum'. The Colosseum was an enormous domed round building on the south-east side of Regent's Park, designed in grand classical style by Decimus Burton.



Panoramic View of London, completed 1829 in the Colosseum by Thomas Horner



The original sketches were made in 1821-2 at several feet above the lantern of St Paul's Cathedral

It was built from 1823 to 1827 to house what was then (and since) the largest painting in the world. This was a view of the whole of London, drawn by Thomas Horner from the top of the lantern of St Paul's cathedral while its cross and ball were being replaced in 1821-2. The Colosseum was like an indoor theme park, and its various exhibitions and shows were major attractions in London. Although it went through the hands of various impresarios, it lasted until 1874-5 when it was demolished.

The Apollonicon at the Colosseum

***The Illustrated London News* (20 Dec 1848):**

The apollonicon, built by Messrs. Bevington & Sons, of Greek Street, Soho, is an instrument of great compass and variety of effect, containing contra-bass, violoncelli, violini, corni, tromba, fagotti, hautbois, clarionetti, flauto, piccolo, flageolet, &c. It has four distinct organs, and has nine composition pedals, with three coupling movements, sixteen pedals, fifty-three stops, and two thousand four hundred and seven pipes.

***London Journal* (20 Jan 1849):**

[The Apollonicon organ] is of enormous dimensions, being thirty feet in height and in depth, and fifteen in width, and in its loudest tones it is so deafening that the proprietors of the Colosseum have found it incumbent to place it in a room seventy feet in length.

The organist of the Apollonicon

***The Times* (25 Dec 1848):**

It was operated by one man—the church and theater organist Mr. Pittman—who also deployed the apollonicon's "set of Kettle Drums, Triangle, and Effects for the Storm," and machinery to trigger a drum roll.

Hamilton's Catechism of the Organ:

Mr. Pittman was a lecturer at the London Institution; organist of churches at Sydenham, Tooting, Spitalfields, and Lincoln's Inn; and accompanist at Her Majesty's Theatre and Covent Garden. He subsequently (in 1865) became accompanist at Her Majesty's Opera, and from 1868 until his death he had the same position at Covent Garden, composing music for operas, and assisting in the translation of librettos.

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We cannot find an illustration of either of these two organs, but what the press called 'the Grand Apollonicon organ' was described with a few useful details. However, it is not certain which of the two Colosseum organs is being described here, partly because the title of 'Grand Apollonicon' seems to have been used for any large organ made for public exhibitions, ever since the first of these was made by Flight & Robson around 1817. We need to remember that no other organ had previously been made in Britain larger than about 30-35 stops, so anything over 40 stops was regarded as highly unusual and adventurous. It ought also to be said that it seems that these organs worked, in contrast with the Cavallé-Coll brother's large organ at St Denis near Paris which was being built at about the same time. This and all other large continental organs were subsequently made to work only by applying techniques developed in England in the first decades of the 19th century and taken abroad by John Abbey and (later) Charles Barker.



St Martin-in-the-Fields

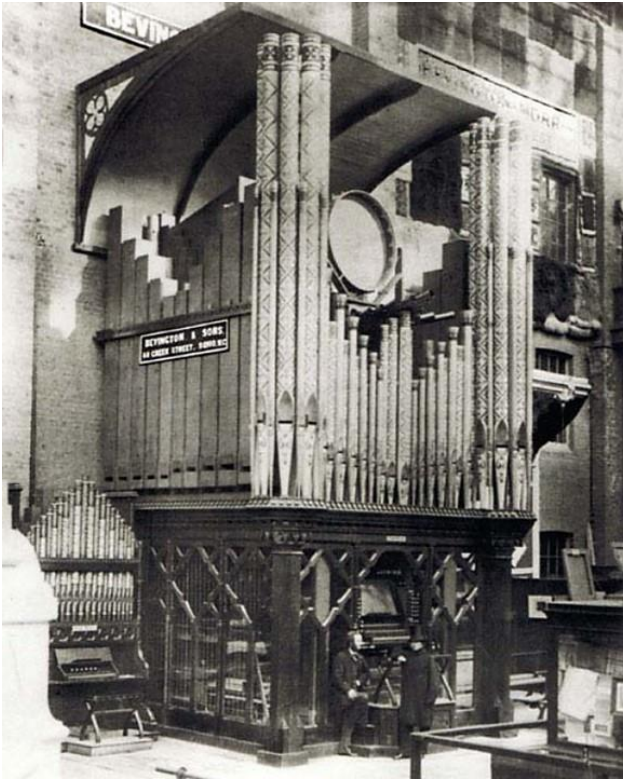
This Organ, built by Messrs. Bevington, for the Parish Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, erected by voluntary subscription, 1854, contains 3 Manuals, from CC to G in alt. (56 keys), and Pedal Organ, 2½ Octaves (30 keys); Two Pairs of double-action Bellows, with inverted rib, 10 feet long by 7 feet wide, and 59 Register Stops.

The whole is enclosed in two richly carved cases of solid Wainscot Oak, from the designs of Thomas Allom, Architect, M.I.B.A. The large case, 29 feet in height by 19 feet in width, contains the Great, the Swell, and the Pedal Organs, all the gilt front Pipes, forming the lower notes of the Diapasons, the centre Pipe CCC, being 18 feet in length. The smaller Case in front of the lower Gallery, 10 feet wide by 12 feet in height, contains the Choir Organ, the front gilt Pipes also forming a portion of the interior Stops.

p469 'The Organ' Hopkins & Rimbault, 1855

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With these two organs so well known to the public, the younger Bevingtons were perhaps the natural choice to build two other large new organs. The first of these large instruments was made in 1854 with 49 stops for St Martin in the Fields. With a very substantial pedal division as well as fully-developed choruses on all four divisions, this was a monumental organ. Just as its construction was nearly complete, a fire in the early afternoon of Sunday 21 May 1854 in the Rose Yard part of the factory destroyed 'the whole exterior part of a magnificent organ', (Daily News, 22 May 1854), the one for St Martin's, along with all the tools of the workmen – probably furniture-making journeymen – who were employed in making the elaborate casework. Fortunately, the rest of the organ was in the larger premises in Greek Street, but this must have been a severe blow, and to remake the casework (assuming that it was not altered at this time) to the known designs of Thomas Allom would have delayed the completion of the project significantly. Any later criticisms of the organ might be better understood in the light of this near-catastrophe.



Bevington & Sons

Two organs exhibited at the Industrial & Fine Arts Exhibition, Cromwell Road, London in 1862.

The huge 3 manual and pedals organ with a drum received a medal for "superior quality and finish of workmanship".

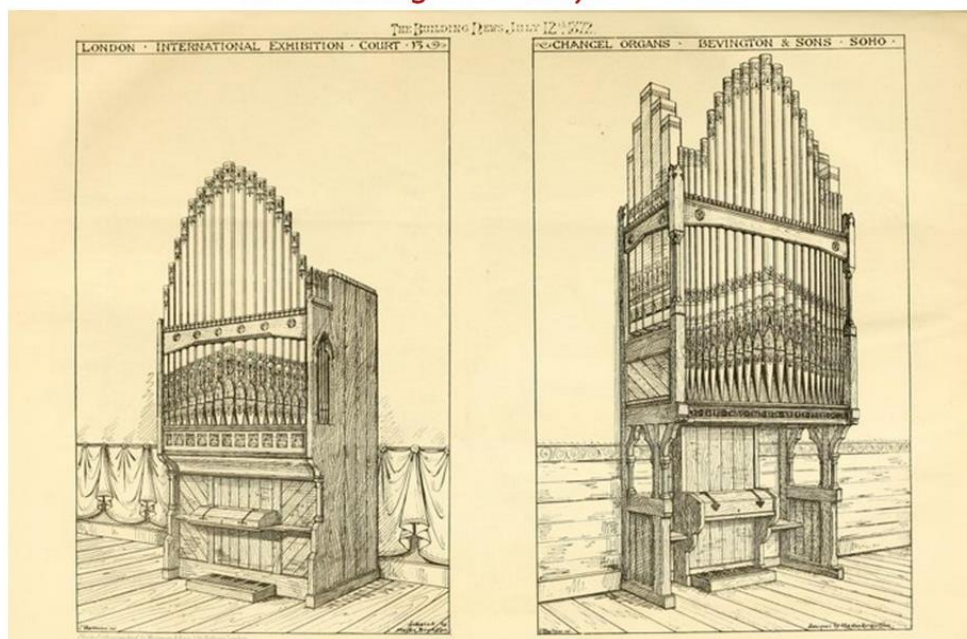
The interior of the organ including the drawstop shafts and trackers were French polished because they could be seen through the windows in the lower case.

from NPOR

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When a slightly smaller-scale Industrial and Arts Exhibition took place in Cromwell Road in London in 1862, the Bevingtons exhibited and won more medals. This time, fortunately, we even know what two of the organs they exhibited looked like. If you can take your eyes away from the highly-characteristic design of the large organ with its prominent bass drum and look down towards the left, you will see a small 'chancel' organ with, presumably, a 4' front. Its overall height scarcely reaches the impost of the large organ, which also towers over the men standing around it. This large organ subsequently went to two large music rooms in private houses and then to the equally remarkable town hall concert room in Ealing, before being sold off for parts in the 1950s.

London International Exhibition Court 13 : Chancel organs Bevington & Sons Soho *The Building News July 12th 1872*



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At another Exhibition, ten years later in 1872, the Bevingtons exhibited two organs to illustrate their production of chancel organs, which was by then a significant part of their business. These two organs were apparently designed by Martin Bevington, whose signature appears in the lower right-hand

corners of these drawings, and they exemplify the gradual stylistic shift in the appearance of their organs that was happening as time went on.

Entire list provided by Andrew Cooper, found glued to the back of the music desk of the 1851 Bevington & Sons finger & barrel organ at Rockbourne Church, Hants

The image shows a historical document titled "BEVINGTON & SONS." which is a list of organs for Roman Catholic churches, chapels, colleges, monasteries, and nunneries. The list is organized into columns, with church names and locations listed on the left and right sides, and the organ specifications in the middle. The document is a detailed inventory of musical instruments from the mid-19th century.

Organs for Roman Catholic churches

Let us now leave exhibitions and return to the 1851 list. In it, out of nearly 250 organs there are 53 organs made for Roman Catholic churches, chapels, colleges, monasteries and nunneries. About three-quarters of these are in England and about a quarter in Ireland. Not surprisingly, a substantial number of these were made for buildings designed by Augustus Pugin. They include the one in his own large chapel at Ramsgate in Kent, and he also had a small one in his adjacent house. It has been thought that James Bishop took the lion’s share of the new market for organs in Roman Catholic churches, but in fact the Bevingtons took a large part of it too.



Ushaw College main chapel
Bevington, 1885

from NPOR

At Ushaw college they even replaced an earlier Bishop organ with a new one made in 1885 for the enlarged chapel as well as making a smaller 'chancel' organ for the chapel of the junior school, which had been designed by Pugin's son Edward at about the same time.

From the 1830s onwards, the young Martin Bevington, who must have been a more than capable organist, very frequently played at the opening of the firms' organs.

3-manual Bevington, 1850-1 original state + 1970 additions Wickham church, Berks



One of these was the large church organ which survived in restorable condition until earlier this year in the parish church of Wickham near Newbury. Here the Revd Mr Nicholson had rebuilt the church to designs by Benjamin Ferrey, one of Pugin's pupils, and supplied both the organ and a well-paid organist. This organ was – rather unusually – opened twice by Martin Bevington, in 1850 and again in 1851 after it had been enlarged. Its stop-list, which prefigures the large London organs, is on the hand-out, together with a note of which pipework now (Spring 2021) survives from this organ.

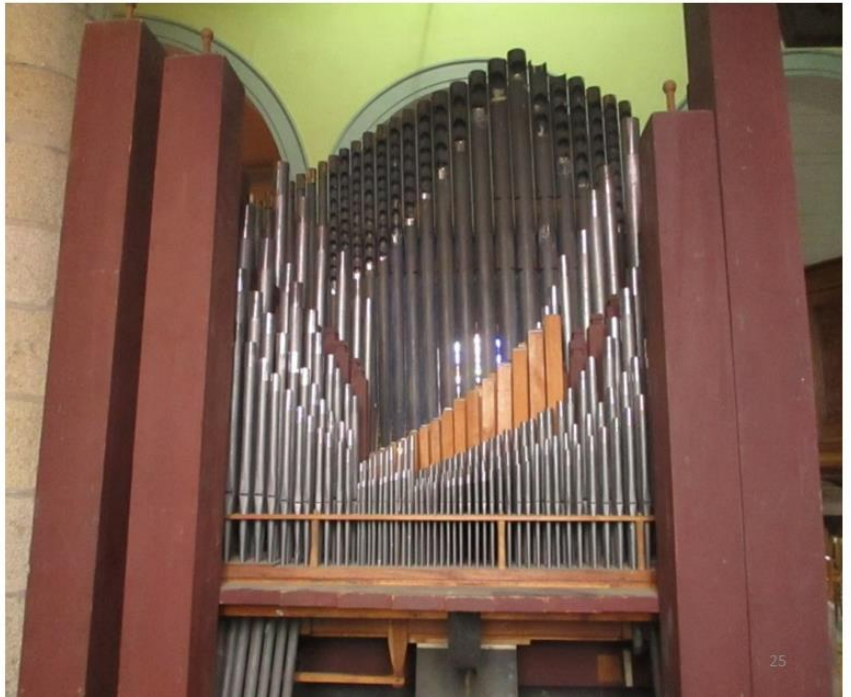
Smaller church and house organs

During the three decades from the 1850s right through to the end of the 1870s, organs of all sorts and sizes were leaving Soho at the rate of about one a week. Although the Bevingtons' production included a large number of their small 'chancel' organs, based on those described in the 1851 list, it would be completely wrong to suppose that these were identical instruments. On the contrary, those organs made with the same number of manuals and the same stop-lists were not in fact made identically.

For a start, there was scope for considerable variation in their layouts. The normal style used in their one-manual organs was to have the basses of the 16' rank, playable from the keyboard as well as the pedals, sited at the back of the organ. Then the smaller ranks were placed at the back of the soundboard and were accessible through a trap-door in the back of a light-weight swell-box. The front swell-shutter frame was placed on the soundboard, to leave the whole of the Open Diapason's pipes unenclosed. The consoles are built out over the pedalboard and the console cover when opened became the music desk.

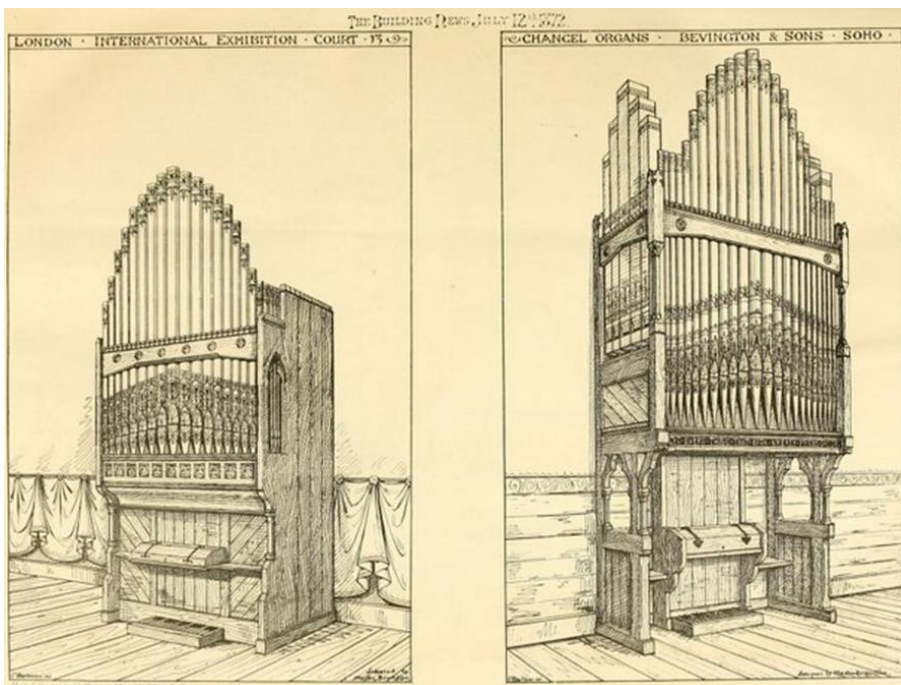
Asymmetrical layout

Bevington, 1863 job number 799 for Aisthorpe, Lincs now in Plehedel, N Brittany

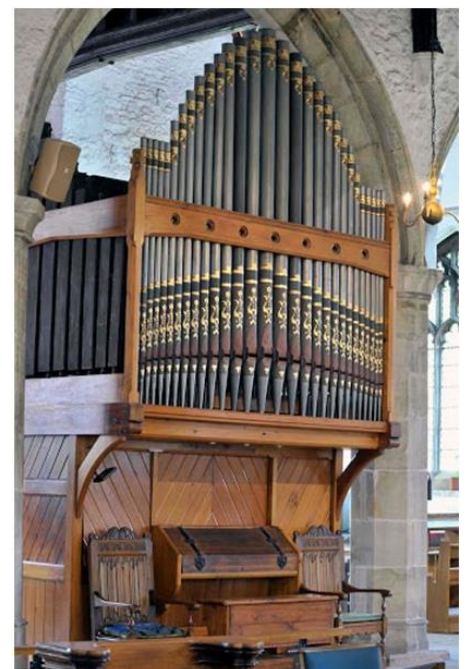


Nor was the layout of the soundboard always the same. This sometimes had to be laid out asymmetrically (as this organ's is) because of an awkwardly-placed medieval arch or the need to leave a passage along one side of the organ into a vestry and the blower's area behind it.

The smaller organs that were placed free-standing in a church were more standardised, quite naturally, but even here there are variations in size, as you can see, with some Open Diapason ranks going down just to bass F in open case pipes, with casework scaled smaller accordingly.



The Building News July 12th 1872
Showing the Bevington & Sons of Soho chancel organs
exhibited at the London International Exhibition



Bevington chancel organ built c1885 for
Congregational church Greasbrough, Yorks
West Riding, now in Kendal PC, Cumbria

Another important feature of these smaller chancel organs is that the scaling and voicing of their pipework was by contrast not small-scale. Their thin swell-boxes do modify their tone somewhat, which is a good thing when there are (or rather were) singers nearby in their choir stalls, and of

course the primary job of these organs was to accompany village church choirs. In other situations, when these organs have been moved, removing the swell-box (or just the shutters) gives the organ much more breadth of tone and power; quite strong enough to accompany a large congregation if the organs are carefully positioned.

In other words, Bevingtons had found a way of making organs at accessible prices in versions that were variable enough for all situations. Although some parts of them, such as reservoirs with their bellows, may have been somewhat standardised, differences in their voicing suggest that they may have been made by teams of workers. Some of these small organs are voiced on a low wind-pressure of about 2½” wind pressure with pipework tip-holes that are quite open, while other organs are on a slightly higher wind-pressure with therefore systematically smaller tip-holes. But the scaling in both versions is basically the same.

The 11-stop organ now in Kendal parish church was definitely voiced for maximum effect in a Yorkshire Congregational church and its lusty hymn-singing. It is of course much louder than an organ made for a house, but it’s also much more forthright than would be normal in a chancel organ made for Church of England choirs.

With such a large through-put of organs, of about one per week in the middle decades of the C19, it was necessary to mark essential components and the pipework with a job number.



Label for job no. 770 dated 1866

‘Medals Awarded’ printed onto Bevington & Sons labels and invoices



Invoice



Label for job no. 1215 dated 1878

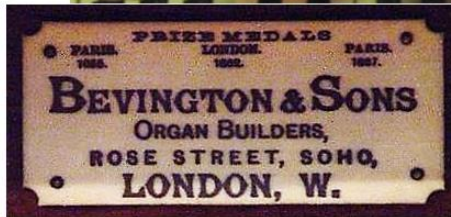


Label for job no. 776 dated 1867

Glued inside the soundboard there is a large, pre-printed label onto which the organ’s number, year-date and the place for which the organ was made were written in ink. The largest octaves of wooden pipes and the largest metal pipes also have this number marked on them. The loss of the firm’s business records when the Soho workshops were bombed in 1941 has meant that a full work-list could be compiled only by using these job numbers and dates – and the month-dates on a bass pallet – inside the soundboard. This would be a large task, since there are at least 1200 organs to find, research and list.

These soundboard labels often also include something else that is practically unique to Bevingtons’ organs: their medals from three successive Exhibitions, at Paris in 1855, London in 1862 and Paris again in 1867. After this last date, they displayed them on the consoles, using either stuck-on labels

Name plates with Exhibition prize medals



with gold print, or written out with their typical and also unique fine lettering in black or sometimes gilded, as well as being printed on the labels in the soundboards. The citations were for 'excellence of tone', among other things. And this may have been emphasised as a public reply to Henry Smart's criticism of their organ at St Martin's in the Fields. It is true that sometimes their voicing is not so immediately ingratiating in the way that the rather unfocussed voicing of say Hill's voicing might be, but their bright and quick-speaking stopped diapason basses and clear choruses are thoroughly effective musically in the same slightly brisk no-nonsense way that is also characteristic of Snetzler's pipework.

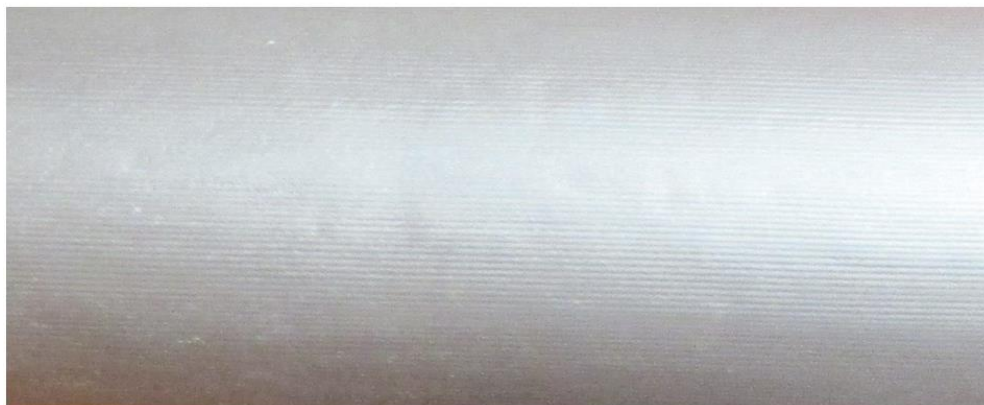


The Bevington's expertise in making organs extended to a system of packing them with colour-coded instructions for assembly on arrival. This could have been done by local organ builders or even workmen who were part of a church's congregations where organ builders were in short supply, such

as in the colonies. One would love to know what these instructions were – they might well be copied with real advantages in present circumstances, when organs have to be saved from destruction by being rapidly and efficiently dismantled and stored in transit.

Ribbed metal of front pipes

Menton, SE France



At some time in the later 1850s or early '60s, another unique feature of Bevington's organs was introduced. This was to cast the metal alloy for front pipes onto a grooved steel plate that gave these front pipes of their organs a characteristic ribbed finish. There are two possible reasons for doing this: first, because the metal cools quickly on the steel, it is relatively strong for its fairly low tin content.



Equally important is that this ribbed finish holds paint much better than a smooth surface, and we have seen how integral the art of decorating front pipes had become a part of the aesthetic appeal of Bevington organs. Those of their clients who were able to afford the extra few pounds for this work would have had skilled artists at their command. I hope that someone will find time soon to research this aspect of English organ building thoroughly.

Glass windows and dates on pallets

Organ palleted in 1864, installed in the midlands 1868



Organ palletled 1872, sold 1876 to Masonic Temple



Two Bevington organs I know well have glass windows in the faceboards of their soundboards. The only sensible reason I can think of for doing this, which risks leaks from broken or loose glass, is to show what there is inside the wind-well in the soundboards: the pallets and their pull-wires, guide pins and springs. These windows suggest to me that organs with them were made for exhibition and, as we have seen, their large 1862 Exhibition organ had windows in its casework so that people could view its mechanisms. Since it is known that Snetzler exhibited important organs for home and export in what he called his 'warehouse' in Dean Street, it is likely that these two organs also started life by being shown there.

In both of these organs, their date of making, as noted on their pallets, predates the date of their first-known installations, and this fact strengthens my supposition. One of these was made in 1864 but it was not installed until 1868 in its present home in the midlands. The other was made in 1872 and was first installed four years later in masonic rooms in London. In 1909, it was moved, altered and loudened, to masonic rooms in Duke Street, Paddington. This is the organ now in the English (Church of England) church in Menton in the extreme SE of France.

Hinge straps



Nether Stowey, Somerset



Menton, S France, ex-Duke Street Masonic Rooms W London

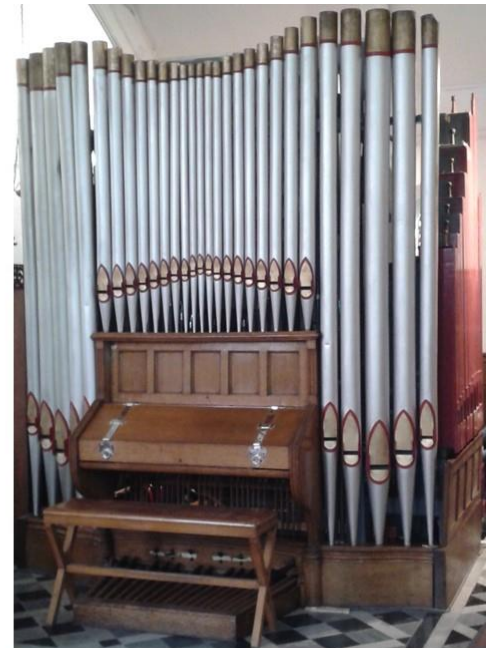
The organ now at Menton organ has another special feature which may also indicate its origin as a workshop-exhibition piece. Its key-fall hinge straps are not made of iron as would be normal, but they

are formed from brass, cut to a different design from solid plates, which were then electrolytically plated with silver. This was not obvious at first because the silver had completely blackened, and I discovered this only when starting to clean the straps. They are now silvered again.



Iron strap hinges on 1878 Bevington house organ now in St Saviours Eton Road, Chalk Farm

Bevington strap hinges before re-silvering originally on 1872 Duke Street Masonic Temple organ



Re-silvered strap hinges back in place and now in Anglican church, Menton, SE France

If the hinge straps are shaped like these and are not like the usual iron straps, they may well be of silvered brass too, and quite possibly for a special reason as well, such as being made for a house.

Stop-lists

Both of these organs with ‘windows’ have slightly unusual stop-lists as well, with seemingly as much variety as was possible to pack into them.

By the later 1840s, stop-lists of Bevington’s organs were moving away from well-trodden post-classical paths, and were introducing bell gambas and harmonic and other flutes on the lines of those also being pioneered by Hill and Willis.

St Swithun, Wickham, Berks. Bevington 1850

Pedal				Swell Compass tenor-high f2 Keys 42		
1	Open Diapason	16		17	Double Diapason	16
2	Bourdon	16		18	Open Diapason	8
3	Open Diapason	8		19	Stopped Diapason	8
4	Trumpet	8	[1970s]	20	Principal	4
				21	Mixture	III
Great Compass low C -high f3 Keys 54				22	Cornocean	8
5	Bourdon Bass	16		23	Hautboy	8
6	Open Diapason	8		24	Clarion	4
7	Dulciana	8	TC			
8	Claribel	8	TC	Choir Compass low C-high f3 Keys 54		
9	Stopped Diapason Bass	8		25	Double Dulciana	16
10	Principal	4		26	Bourdon Bass	16
11	Flute	4	TC	27	Horn Diapason	8
12	Twelfth	2 2/3		28	Open Diapason Bass	8
13	Fifteenth	2		29	Stopped Diapason	8
14	Trumpet	8		30	Stopped Diapason Bass	8
15	Horn Lein	8	prepared	31	Violon Gamba	8
16	Sesquialtra	III		32	Salicional	8
				33	Suabe Flute	4
Couplers				34	Stop Flute	4
Swell to Great				35	Fifteenth	2
Swell to Choir				36	Fagotto	16
Choir to Great				37	Clarinet	8
Pedal to Great						
Pedal to Choir						
			Lowest octave of Swell acts on Choir			

In addition, the Bevingtons used harmonic flutes even in their smaller organs, and that was unusual at the time. The 1850-1 large church organ made for Wickham church in Berkshire, had a plethora of such 'novelty' stops, with Salicional, Horn Diapason, Violin Gamba, a harmonic Suabe Flute, and even a prepared-for Horn Lein which must be unique to a mid-C19 church organ in England. Unfortunately we don't know what that was actually intended to be, since no archaeology at all was done on that unfortunate organ before the church's own congregation was shamefully allowed to break it up.

Mechanical arrangements

With respect to mechanical innovations, I will confine myself to some general points, for lack of time.

Making two-manual organs for rooms with restricted height is a challenging prospect, as any organ maker who has done so will know. This is because an organ's keyboards have to be set at a playable height up from floor level and the soundboards have to be placed low enough to allow sufficient height for the majority of their pipework to stand directly on them. The small vertical distance that is left between keyboards and soundboards does not leave, as you can see, enough height for a normal English-style backfall and roller-board system to be used. This problem is amplified when the organ is set into an alcove, as might often be the arrangement in a house or small chapel.



Keyboard close to soundboard

Menton, SE France

In such situations, the problem is even greater because the Great soundboard is also sometimes set out symmetrically on an M-chest with a passage through its centre so as to provide access to the Swell beyond it. Such an M-chest would need a roller-board with as many rollers as there are keys and this would take up around 21" of height overall, far more than the height actually available.



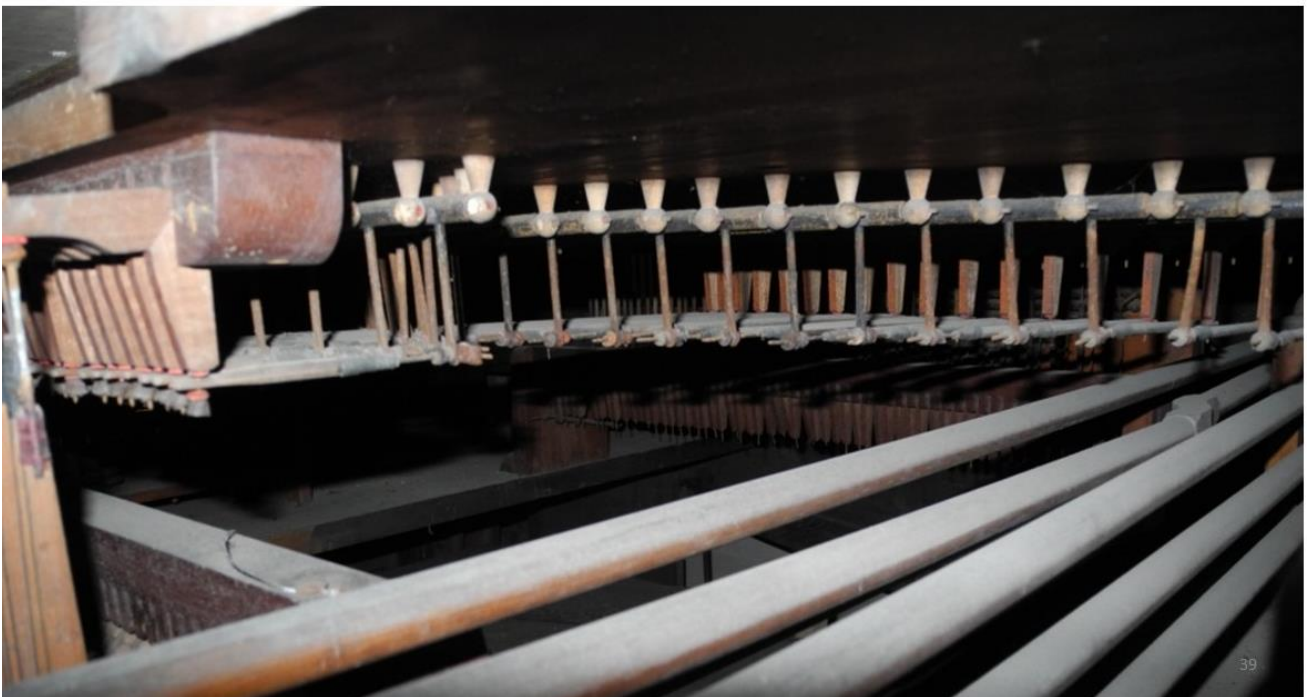
Access to swell between
great pipework

Menton, SE France

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Horizontal roller board

Midlands organ 1864



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In the midlands organ, the Bevingtons solved this problem by placing a horizontal rollerboard under each soundboard with transmission from the keys to its rollers via squares, and with another set of squares from them to the pallet pulls. Fitting in the trackers from squares to rollers is very difficult in such a situation, so in this organ the trackers and squares have unusual characteristics.



Key action squares with unusual connections to their horizontal trackers

Midlands organ 1864

Here, the lower arms of the mahogany squares have projecting wires which go through holes bored into the flattened-off ends of the trackers, instead of the tracker wires passing horizontally through the ends of the arms of the squares in the conventional way. This system, though, pre-supposes Great or Swell soundboards that are each at least around 24 inches from front to back, meaning that each would have at least eight ranks of pipework on it, as is the case in this organ. But smaller church and house organs do not have as many stops as this.



Passage through great soundboard to swellbox

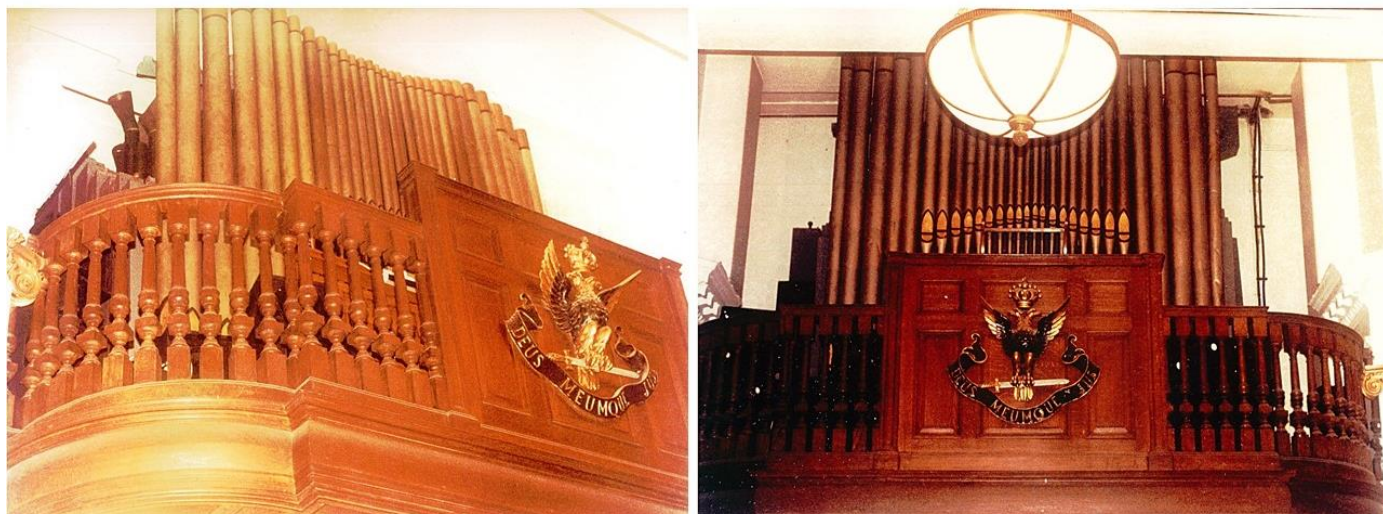
Menton, SE France

In the organ now in Menton, because the Great soundboard has only six stops on it, the same problem had to be solved another way. In this organ as it was originally made, that was achieved by placing a single rollerboard-frame behind and below the level of the keyboards, with the rollers for the Great on one side of it and the Swell on the other. When the organ was moved to its second home in 1909,

height constraints in the gallery-alcove in which the organ was then placed made things even more difficult.

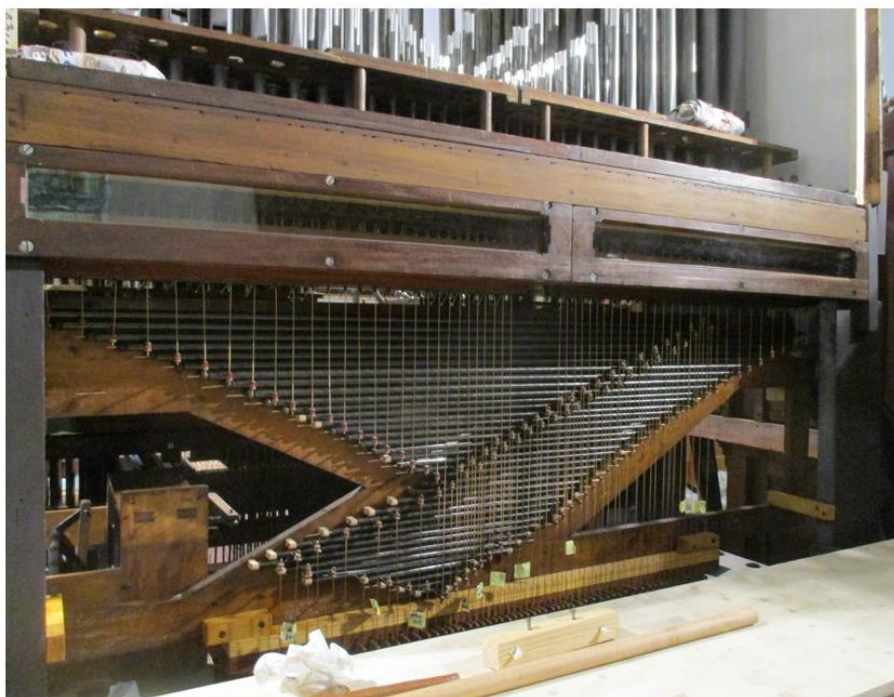
Bevington organ when in its 1909 home in Duke Street

now in Menton, SE France



The Swell soundboard and its swell-box had to be lowered a few inches. The main reservoir previously under these was placed in a separate room behind the organ, and large wooden wind-trunks conveyed wind from it to the soundboards. The resulting tangle of trackers, stop-actions and wind-trunks was a wonder to behold, and it is hard to see how it ever operated at all efficiently. In 1995, the organ was dismantled and moved to Norfolk, but for various reasons it was never set up in the church for which it was destined. Fortunately, Richard Bower rescued and stored it for 25 years. In 2020, the whole organ was completely restored and then moved in September to France, to join the four other Bevington organs that have found their way there in the last 20 years.

Swell rollerboard repositioned under Swell pallets



Menton, SE France

The height available under a quite low sloping north-aisle ceiling in the church at Menton was restricted, and that was one of the main reasons for choosing this organ. But it allowed me just

enough room to turn the symmetrical Swell M-soundboard through 180 degrees, to detach the Swell rollers from the Great rollerboard and put them onto a new matching frame and to make access to tune the Swell pipework through large doors on the back of the box.



New tuning access

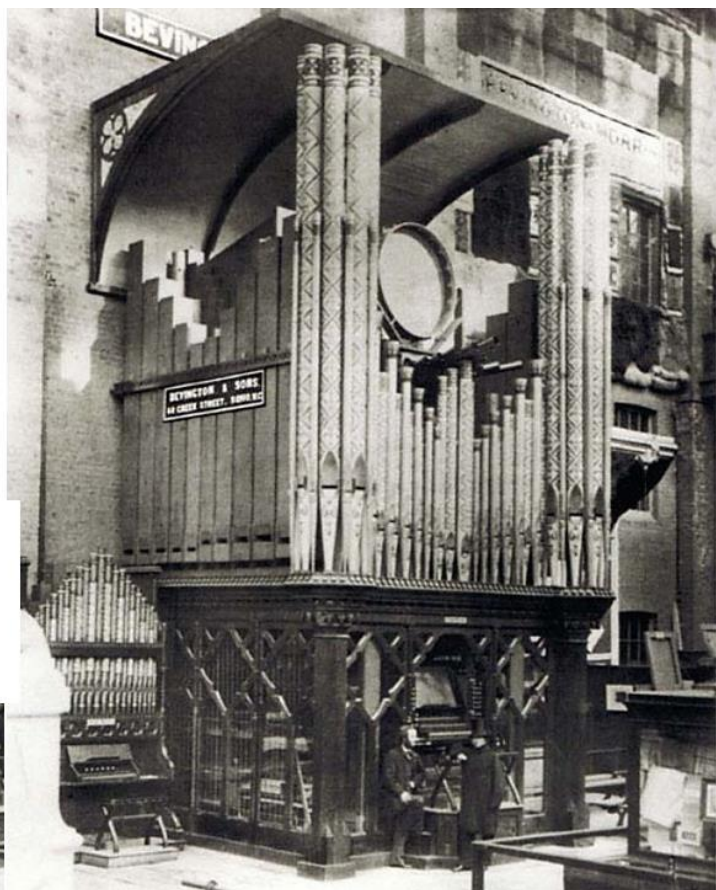
Menton, SE France

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The Swell reed (a Cornopean) can easily be tuned from a platform over the reservoir, which is still placed behind the organ. And now the windows in the soundboard can easily be seen by anyone going round to the back of the organ and switching on a wall- light there.

I hope I have said enough to convince you that the seemingly similar and ubiquitous Bevington organs are worth more than a cursory investigation; they are not as alike as we might suppose ...

Industrial & Fine Arts Exhibition
Cromwell Road, London 1862:
First Class Prize Medal, awarded
'For Organ of Three Manuals
and Chancel Organ'



Photograph
from NPOR

My own direct experience is that Bevington organs are made from good and appropriate materials, that they employ excellent workmanship and often creative and clever technical design ideas, just a few of which I have mentioned today. *They are built to last and to be restorable...*

I have one final thought for you: we now have been given the impression that Bevington's organs were not as good as those made by their contemporaries, but where does this impression come from?

The answer must be: from what might be called 'the pundits', those who write about and all too often advise on organs without any practical knowledge of designing and making them. In the 19th century, the pundits were often also those who secretly took substantial financial commissions from the builders they recommended and championed. I wonder if the Bevingtons, with their Quaker background, refused to take part in this practice? Surely the fact that they advertised their prices in 1851, and later, with total transparency, is indicative of this? And was it as a result of doing this that they were deliberately disdained by those profiting from the system?



The brothers Henry and Martin were clearly skilled in running a busy and apparently financially secure business – in contrast to some much better-known names. These two men were also wholly committed and innovative in all aspects of the work of making organs as efficiently as possible – and to playing them as well. What more could one ask of them?

So I think that Bevington's organs should not any longer be underrated or thought of as insignificant in the history of C19 organ making. I suggest that the proof of that is the very large number of organs they made over 150 years ago that are still working well, often with minimal attention, up and down the country, at home and abroad.

MR with VH

LARGE BEVINGTON ORGANS OF THE 1850s

Wickham (Berks),1850-1	St Martin-in-the-Fields,1854	Foundling Hospital, 1855
	[Hopkins & Rimbault, 1855]	[Hopkins & Rimbault, 1855, 'now being built']
Great		
CC – f''', 54 keys	CC-g''', 56 keys	CC-c''', 61 keys
16 Bourdon Bass	16 Double Diapason [m, div]	16 Bourdon [bass]
	16 Double Diapason [t.c.]	16 Double Diapason [ten.g]
8 Open Diapason*	8 Open Diapason I	8 Open Diapason No. 1
	8 Open Diapason II	8 Open Diapason No. 2
	8 Hohl Diapason [sic, t.c.]	8 Open Diapason No.3 [t.c.] 'large scale'
8 Stop Diapason Bass*	8 Stop Diapason Bass	8 Stopped Diapason [thro']
8 Claribel [t.c.]*	8 Claribel t.c.	8 Clarabella [fid. g]
8 Dulciana*	5½ Quint	4 Principal No. 1
4 Principal*	4 Principal	4 Principal No. 2
4 Flute [stopped]*	4 Wald Flute	4 Wald Flute [t.c.]
	3½ Decima	2⅔ Twelfth
2⅔ Twelfth*	2⅔ Twelfth	2 Fifteenth
2 Fifteenth*	2 Fifteenth	IV Sesquialtera
III Sesquialtera*	IV Sesquialtera	III Mixture
	III Mixture	III Furniture
III Furniture		8 Trumpet
8 Trumpet *	8 Trumpet	8 Tromba t.c
Horn Lein ['prepared']	4 Clarion	4 Clarion
- Swell to Great	- Swell to Great	- Swell to Great
		- Octave up to Great
Swell		
C [tenor]-f''', 42 keys	CC-g''', 56 keys	CC-c''', 61 keys
	16 Bourdon [wood]	16 Bourdon Bass
16 Double Diapason*	16 Double Diapason [metal, t.c.]	16 Double Open [fid.g]
8 Open Diapason*	8 Open Diapason	8 Open Diapason
8 Stop Diapason	8 Stopped Diapason (div)	8 Stopped Diapason Bass
	8 Stop Diapason Treble	8 Stopped Diapason Treble
	8 Dulciana [t.c.]	8 Dulciana [t.c.]
4 Principal*	4 Principal	8 Viol de Gamba [t.c.]
	4 Flute [stopped]	4 Principal
	2 2/3 Twelfth	4 Open Flute [t.c.]
	2 Fifteenth	III Triplet
III Mixture	IV Sesquialt[e]ra	II Doublette
	16 Trombone	16 Trombone
8 Cornopean*	8 Cornopean	8 Cornopean

8 Oboe*
4 Clarion*
[bass octave played from
Great keyboard]

8 Oboe
4 Clarion

8 Oboe
4 Clarion

Choir

CC-f''', 54 keys

CC-g''', 56 keys

CC-c''', 61 keys

16 Bourdon
16 Double Dulciana*
8 Open Diapason Bass
8 Horn Diapason [t.c.]*
8 Violin Gamba [t.c.]*
8 Salicional [t.c.]*
4 Suabe Flute [t.c.,harmonic]*
4 Stop Flute [wood]*
2 Fifteenth*
16 Fagotto [t.c. ?]
8 Clarinet [t.c. ?]
- Swell to Choir

16 Bourdon Double Diapason
16 Double Diapason
8 Open Diapason
8 Stop Diapason Bass
8 Viol de Gamba [t.c.]
8 Dulciana [t.c.]
8 Claribel [t.c.]
4 Principal
4 Flute
III Mixture
8 Clarionet [t.c.]
8 Bassoon 'double reed' [t.c.]
- Swell to Choir

8 Dulciana Bass
8 Dulciana Treble [t.c.]
8 Stopped Diapason [thro']
8 Viol di Gamba [t.c.]
4 Principal
4 Wald Flute [t.c.]
4 Suabe Flute [t.c.]
2 Fifteenth
2 Piccolo [t.c.]
16 Double Bassoon [t.c.]
8 Clarionette [t.c.]
- Swell to Choir

Pedal

CC-F, 18 notes

C-f', 30 notes

CC-f', 30 notes

16 Open Diapason [wood]
16 Bourdon *(12 basses)
8 Open Diapason

8 Trumpet

16 Great Open Diapason
16 Bourdon
8 Unison Open Diapason
8 Unison Stop Diapason
4 Principal
5½ Quint and Decima
2⅔ Twelfth and Fifteenth
16 Grand Trombone
8 Trumpet

16 Open Diapason (wood)
16 Open Diapason (metal)
16 Bourdon
8 Principal
16 Trombone
"Also, by means
of an octave coupler,
and an additional octave
of pipes above tenor [sic] f,
a - Octave... wood..... 8
b - Principal... metal.....8
c - Bass Flute... wood..... 8
d - Fifteenth... metal..... 4
e - Trumpet...metal..... 8"

- Pedal to Great
- Pedal to Choir

- Pedals to Swell Organ keys
- Pedals to Great Organ keys
- Pedals to Choir Organ keys
[3158 pipes]

- Pedal to Swell
- Pedal to Great
- Pedal to Choir

[??? composition pedals]

Nine composition pedals

[some pipes from previous
organ (Parker/Russell)
were apparently reused]
Nine composition pedals

Note: of these three large organs (and the 47-stop organ made for the Cyclorama – see below), only about 1220 pipes (*above) from the Wickham organ now survive together (with the name-plate, music desk and keyboards), currently (May 2021) stored in east London.

The St Martin's organ was rebuilt several times and finally scrapped (together with the 1854 casework) in the early 1990s.

The Foundling Hospital organ was rebuilt, then moved and rebuilt in a new school in 1935, then moved and rebuilt in St Andrew, Holborn, and scrapped (except for some elements of the original Theodore Jacobsen-designed 1751 casework) in the 1980s.

The Wickham organ was nearly all scrapped, through ignorance and carelessness, in March 2021.

LARGE BEVINGTON ORGANS OF 1848

The 1848 Bevington organ, 'The new Apollonicon'; in the Colosseum, Regent's Park

Hamilton *Catechism of the Organ*, 1865 edition part one p97, and Hopkins and Rimbault, 1855, p 475 (This seems to be copied from Hamilton, 1851 edition; the following is a conflation of the two accounts, in which the stop-lists are identical in all vital respects.)

The [H&R: 'new'] Apollonicon Organ in the Colosseum, Regent's Park, was erected by Bevington and Sons, to accompany the diorama of Lisbon. It contains 3 Manuals, a Pedal Organ, and 47 Sounding Stops.

Great [16 stops]

Solo [11 stops]

Swell [15 stops]

[Editorial pitches in square brackets, manual and pedal compasses not known; these pitches etc. are likely to be similar to those in the 1850-1 Wickham organ and the other large 1848 and 1850s Bevington organs.]

Teneroon	[16]	Double Stopped Diapason 16ft tone	Teneroon		
Bourdon	[16]	Salicional	[8]	Flauto Unisone (metal)[8]	
Unison (metal)	[8]	Viol da Gamba	[8]	Flauto Unisone (wood)[8]	
Unison (wood)	[8]	Claribella	[8]	Quint	[5½]
Claribella	[8]	Unison, Bass	[8]	Octave	[4]
Contra Bass	[?16]	Wald Flute	[4]	Wald Flute	[4]
Octave	[4]	Suabe Flute	[4]	Octave Quint	[2⅔]
Twelfth	[2⅔]	Piccolo	[2]	Doublette	[2 or II?]
Super Octave	[2]	Bassoon	[16]	Flageolet	[1 or 2]
Doublette, 2 ranks		Clarionet	[8]	Triplette	[III]
Sesquialtera, 4 ranks		Oboe	[8]	Posaune	[16 or 8?]
Furniture, 3 ranks				Cornopean	[8]
Trumpet	[8]			French Horn	[8]
Trombone	[16]			Clarion	[4]
Clarion	[4]			Octave Clarion	[2]
Octave Clarion	[2]				

Pedal

Double Open Diapason	16 feet
Unisone (wood)	8 feet
Principal	4 feet
Great Ophicleide	16 feet
Trombone	8 feet

A set of Kettle Drums, Triangle, Cymbals and Effects for the Storm, worked by the one performer. The roll of the drum is done by machinery, set in motion by the performer. The kettle-drums are those used at the great Commemorations of Handel, [H&R: about seventy years since], and are very large.

MR: Note the different nomenclature of the (unusual and innovative) stops – and traps – in this early theatre organ ... is this rather untechnical stop-list taken from publicity at the Coliseum? How much did this stop-list influence that of Willis in his 1851 Great Exhibition organ? The large reed choruses and the (harmonic) Suabe Flutes are certainly harbingers of it.

The 45-stop Bevington organ in the Mechanics' Hall, Nottingham

This organ was also made in 1848, with the following stop-list (with the 8 stops added shortly afterwards by Groves of London – were they to complete a 'prepared' scheme?) which shows many of the same innovative characteristics. Again, the description and stop-lists in H&R 1855 and Hamilton 1865 are in practice identical, though the stops are arranged slightly differently, and what follows is a synthesis of them:

“The Organ in the Mechanics' Hall, Nottingham, was built by Bevington and Sons, in the year 1848. It originally had 45 Sounding Stops, to which 8 [prepared?] have since been added by Groves, of London, who removed the Choir and Swell Organs from inside the case to ante-rooms underneath the Orchestra. He also arranged the Organ on the direct action principle, i.e. placed the Great Organ Sound-board so that the sliders run parallel with the keys, and are therefore brought under control by a simple and direct Draw-stop action. The following is an enumeration of the Stops.”

Great CC to G in alt

1. Teneroon 16 [t.c.]
2. Bourdon to meet No1 16 feet tone
3. Open Diapason 8
4. Open Diapason 8
5. Stopped Diapason 8 feet tone [bass?]
6. Clarabella 8 [t.c.?)
7. Hohlflute 8 [t.c.?)
8. Quint $5\frac{1}{3}$
9. Principal
10. Wald Flute 4
11. Decima $3\frac{1}{5}$
12. Twelfth $2\frac{2}{3}$
13. Fifteenth 2

Swell Tenor C to G in alt. Each stop throughout.

1. Great Double Diapason 32 feet tone
2. Double Diapason 16 feet tone
3. Open Diapason 8
4. Open Diapason 8
5. Stopped Diapason 8 feet tone
6. Quint $5\frac{1}{3}$
7. Octave 4
8. Wald Flute 4
9. Fifteenth 2
10. Piccolo 2
11. Octave Fifteenth 1
12. Furniture V ranks $1\frac{3}{5}$ [17-19-22-26-29 at C?]
13. Cornopean 8

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 14. Sesquialtera III ranks $1\frac{2}{3}$ [19-22-26 at CC] | 14. Hautboy 8 |
| 15. Mixture III ranks $\frac{4}{5}$ [24-26-29 at CC] | 15. Clarion 4 |
| 16. Posaune 8 | 16. Octave Clarion 2 |
| 17. Trumpet 8 | |
| 18. Clarion 4 | |
- [Swell to Great]

Choir CC to G in alt.

1. Double Stopped Diapason 16 feet tone
 2. Open Diapason 8
 3. Stopped Diapason 8 feet tone
 4. Dulciana 8
 5. Viol di Gamba 8
 6. Keraulophon 8 ('To tenor C', Hamilton)
 7. Claribella 8
 8. Principal 8
 9. Flute 4
 10. Flageolet 2
 11. Double Bassoon 16
 12. Oboe 8
 13. Clarionet 8 feet tone
- [Swell to Choir?]

[no pipe-totals given]

8 Composition Pedals

4 Coupling Movements [suggested in square brackets above]

Pedal CCC to Tenor D

1. Open Diapason ... wood ...16
 2. Open Diapason ... metal ...16
 3. Principal ... wood 8
 4. Fifteenth ... metal 4
 5. Trombone ... metal16
- [Great to Pedal]
[Choir to Pedal]