

Bishopscourt Chapel, Kirk Michael



Gt: 8,8,8,4,II, 16. Ped: Pulldowns

This small instrument by Bevington, of London, was built to replace the larger organ which now stands in Kirk Michael Parish Church. (The change was made necessary by alterations to the chapel, in the late 1800s.)

Built at a time when many organists in Britain were unused to pedals, this is an interesting example of one solution to the problem, in that the pedals are fitted with a

simple 'pulldown' coupler, which permanently couples the pedals to the equivalent keys on the keyboard, and the 16' stop (which would be found on the pedals in later instruments) consists of one octave of pipes, which are played from the lowest manual keys. Thus, the player could play these pipes with the left hand, or with the feet, provided he could cope with the fact that there were only 12 of them, and all in the bottom octave of keys.

There is an interesting parallel to this idea, seen in the reed-organs produced in America from the 1880s onwards (the so-called 'American Organ,' as opposed to the harmonium) in which a Sub Bass stop was provided, consisting of 12 reeds at 16' pitch, which could be played from the same 12 notes as that found on the Bishops court organ, despite the fact that, in the American Organ, the keys start at the F below bottom note of the pipe organ.



The decorated display pipes and simple, but entirely appropriate, case design is striking and an excellent example of what was considered suitable for a village church organ at the time. The tone of the organ is clear and surprisingly loud in the fullest combinations, with the 2-rank mixture being boldly voiced. There is a Gamba stop, with bell-shaped tops, rather like the one at Arbory Parish Church and the metal Gedact stop is unusual, having soldered tops to the pipes and extra long ears for tuning purposes.

This organ retains its hand-blowing gear in working order, and, inevitably, bears the names of the blowers of the past, written on the casework and wooden pipes on this

side of the instrument. One of the blowers to have left his name, Bertam M Barron, is commemorated in a tablet elsewhere in the chapel, as having been killed in action, a poignant reminder of the personal tragedies of war.

