

# ORGANS IN CHURCHES



**ST JAMES THE GREAT**  
SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Organs have been in churches since 900 A.D. By the 1400s, organs were well established in monastic churches and cathedrals throughout Europe.

The Reformation saw music frowned on in Presbyterian churches. Organs were disparagingly called a “kist (coffin) of whistles”.

It was only in 1864 (Church of Scotland), 1872 (United Presbyterian Church) and 1883 (Free Church of Scotland) that the use of organs was approved.

Parish churches became very competitive to obtain the best organ. The ‘king of instruments’ were very popular.

In the North East there was:

- a very prosperous fishing and farming economy, getting produce to market via the new railways;
- greater church attendance (needing more volume to lead the singing) and substantial church incomes

- The Carnegie Foundation offering funds to double the money a church raised.

**Into this market, in 1877, moved John Wardle, a young organ-builder from Wadsworth's of Oldham.**

## Why is an organ suitable for a church?



### Range of Sounds...

Required for everything from stirring hymns to reflective interludes.



### Enough Volume...

To reach the back, and to lead the congregation singing in bigger churches



### Only one player...

To pay (plus a boy to pump the air!). Keeps the Treasurer happy.



### Leading the Congregation ...

The legato sound and impact of an organ is ideal to sing along with.

St James' organ was built in 1881 and uses a 'tracker action', connecting the keys to the pipes. It is a mechanical link, usually of wood or aluminium, from key to the valve (known as the pallet) that lets air into the pipe. As organs grew larger and more distributed, this type of action was superseded by first, pneumatic transmission, then electric/electronic transmission.

## Tracker action

Many visiting organists remark on how pleasant an instrument the St James' organ is to play, and that is primarily due to the tracker action. It has to be:

### Light

If the action is heavy, the organist's fingers will get tired quickly, and playing large chords or fast runs of notes gets difficult.

### Responsive

A delay between the movement of the organist's finger and the start of the sound is offputting. A tracker action is very immediate.

### Easy to maintain

An organ is usually in regular use, by many players. A tracker action is straightforward and has simple adjustments.

The St James' organ is essentially the instrument installed over 135 years ago. It only requires an annual adjustment and tuning. The only changes since installation are a) installing an electrical blower (to replace the choirboy!) and the replacement of the pedal board in the 1950's, putting in an electrical relay action.

## The King of Instruments

An organ of any size consists of 'ranks' of pipes (sometimes called stops). The St James' organ has 18 ranks. Each rank is designed to make a specific type of sound, and can be used on their own or in combination. Each rank has enough pipes to cover the full range of the keys across the keyboard (usually about 6 octaves, implying 72 pipes per rank).

If you would like an opportunity to play the St James' organ, please get in touch.

| Organ       | Stop name                 | Pitch              | Family       |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| GREAT ORGAN | Open Diapason             | 8ft                | Grand Chorus |
|             | Principal                 | 4ft                | Grand Chorus |
|             | Stopt Diapason/Clarabella | 8ft                | Flute        |
|             | Dulciana                  | 8ft                | Flute        |
|             | Harmonic Flute            | 4ft                | Flute        |
|             | Twelfth                   | 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ft | Mutation     |
|             | Fifteenth                 | 2ft                | Mutation     |
| SWELL ORGAN | Lieblich Bourdon          | 16ft               | Grand Chorus |
|             | Violin Diapason           | 8ft                | String       |
|             | Gamba                     | 8ft                | String       |
|             | Lieblich Gedact           | 8ft                | Flute        |
|             | Vox Celeste               | 8ft                | Flute        |
|             | Giegen Principal          | 4ft                | Flute        |
|             | Mixture (2 ranks)         |                    | Mutation     |
|             | Cornocean                 | 8ft                | Reed         |
|             | Oboe                      | 8ft                | Reed         |
| PEDAL ORGAN | Open Diapason             | 16ft               | Grand Chorus |
|             | Bourdon                   | 16ft               | Grand Chorus |

More information can be found by visiting our website [www.stjames-stonehaven.org.uk](http://www.stjames-stonehaven.org.uk)