

## The Royal high School organ.

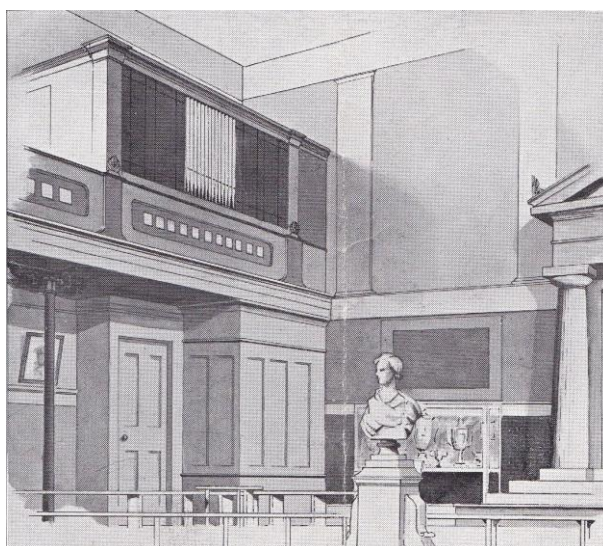
By Alan Buchan (leaving year 1971)

The RHS organ was originally built for St. Paul's Free Church in St. Leonard's Street, Newington by the prolific national firm of Eustace Ingram of London and Hereford. It was inaugurated at St. Paul's on 2nd October 1898. By this time Eustace Ingram's son, Arthur, had set up a branch in Edinburgh which soon became the largest organ building firm in Scotland. The actual installation was almost certainly carried out by local Edinburgh staff. Following the closure in 1942 of St. Paul's Church, by then part of the established Church of Scotland, the organ was moved to the school in Regent Road thanks to the efforts of the Rector, Albert Ball and Director of Music, Norman Mellalieu. This work was completed in 1948 by Arthur Ingram's Edinburgh branch of the firm. However, in 1956 the Ingram firm folded and was taken over by Rushworth & Dreaper of Liverpool. In the summer of 1967, the organ was dismantled by Rushworth & Dreaper. In the school's final year at Regent Road, morning assemblies and concerts were accompanied on the grand piano by Director of Music, William Bowie. By the time the school moved to Barnton in September 1968, the organ had been reconstructed in the new building with two extra ranks ("Mixture" stops) added to give more sparkle to the overall sound. The extra stops cost about £600. The organ was tuned and maintained by Rushworth & Dreaper until the demise of that firm in 2002, at which time their Scottish branch established itself as Forth Pipe Organs. Forth Pipe Organs continue to visit from time to time.

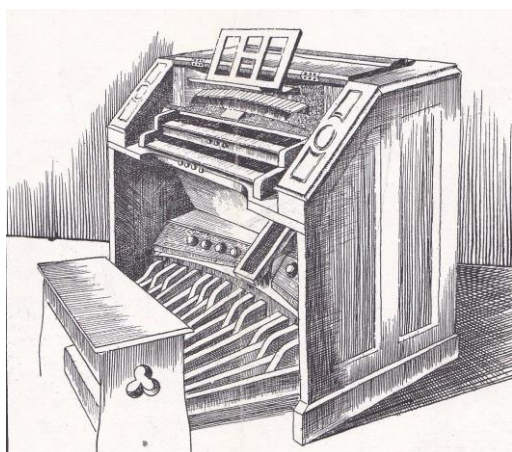
### Photographs and diagrams



St. Paul's Free Church in St. Leonard's Street, Newington – organ in use between 1898 and 1942



The east organ loft in the hall at Regent Road, installed with the west loft and the console in 1948



The organ console



Bill Bowie and his boys rehearse circa 1963



## School Organ

The installation of the Pipe Organ in the Hall, considerably delayed by difficulties in obtaining electrical parts, is completed; final voicing and tuning are now being carried out, and by the time this issue appears the instrument will be in use, providing yet another valuable and distinctive amenity to our splendid Hall.

It has long been felt that a pipe organ was an obvious requirement in the Hall. In view of the impossibility of obtaining either a complete new instrument, or even new material, the organ in St. Paul's Church was purchased by a generous gift of £500 from the late Dr. J. Watt. It was decided to use only the pipes and basic material, which were of excellent quality, and to have the mechanism completely modernised and electrified. This work has been excellently done by Messrs. Ingram & Co., of Edinburgh. The organ has been divided and erected in the last bays of the gallery at the south end of the Hall, the Great Organ on the west side and the Swell Organ on the east, the 16-foot pipes being carried down through the gallery to the floor. An entirely new modern electric console is situated at the north end, giving the organist not only a clear view of the Hall, but also placing him in a good position for hearing the effects. It was important that the architectural lines of the Hall should not be altered, and it was therefore necessary to abandon the usual type of church-organ casework, and to build the case unobtrusively into the interior design of the Hall. Mr. Joseph Grant (1897-08), who previously donated the fine cases containing the School Trophies, kindly undertook to have this work done by his firm, to a skilful and artistic design by Mr. Wm. Little, another former pupil. Sketches appear elsewhere in this issue.

The specification of the Organ, which provides ample volume and variety of solo stops, is:—

Great Organ.		Swell Organ.	
Open Diapason	8 ft.	Bourdon	16 ft.
Clarabella	8 ft.	Violin Diapason	8 ft.
Viola	8 ft.	Lieblück Gedackt	8 ft.
Dulciana	8 ft.	Salicional	8 ft.
Principal	4 ft.	Voix Celeste	8 ft.
Harmonic Flute	4 ft.	Gemshorn	4 ft.
Fifteenth	2 ft.	Horn	8 ft.
Clarionet	8 ft.	Oboe	8 ft.
Tremulant			
3 Combination stops and foot pistons (duplicate)		4 Combination stops and foot pistons (duplicate)	
Pedal Organ.		Couplers.	
Open Diapason	16 ft.	Swell Octave	
Bourdon	16 ft.	Swell Sub Octave	
Octave	8 ft.	Swell Octave to Great	
Bass Flute	8 ft.	Swell Sub Octave to Great	
		Swell to Pedal	
		Swell to Great	
		Great to Pedal (reversible)	

Blower, Motor and Generator: Rockingham, London.

The total cost has been just under £2,000, including £400 for purchase of the original organ; £650 for modernisation,

adaptation and re-erection by Messrs. Ingram; £120 for new motor, blower and generator; £150—an anonymous donation for the addition of the Pedal Octave and Bass Flute; £250 for new console; and £250 for adaptation and re-erection of casework. Of this sum £500 was donated by Dr. J. Watt; £500 allocated from the Burns' Bequest by the R.H.S. Club; £300 from the School Endowment Fund; and the remainder was subscribed by present and former pupils. Lists appeared in previous issues. On behalf of the School the Rector would like to thank all those who responded to the appeal so readily and so generously, many from far corners of the world. This kindly remembrance of the old School is indeed heartening in these difficult days. Our traditional functions, the School music in general, and the individual interest of the boys will all be enhanced by this handsome acquisition.

## The 1948 Summer Schola Regia article thanking the Rector's wife (Mrs Ball) for her part in securing the funds to acquire and install the organ

Apart from his scholastic qualifications, the Rector possesses a very acute business sense and an extensive knowledge of technical things. The experts and workmen who built the organ, installed the concealed lighting and painted the Hall and Gymnasium, must have been surprised at his detailed knowledge of the planning, execution and working of each particular operation.

In an estimate of the Rector and his work we must not forget Mrs. Ball whose presence has graced so many of our functions and whose neat and witty speeches, delivered in her inimitable manner, have delighted all who heard them. Above all, Mrs. Ball will be remembered for her indefatigable labours as Convener of the Ladies' Committee of the Royal High School Memorial Fund. She set her committee a target of £1,500, which appeared at first somewhat high, but this target, thanks to her inspired leadership of a group of zealous workers, was both reached and passed. She and

her committee will always be associated with the stained glass windows which are to be placed in the Hall.

In years to come, when we listen to the organ, with the windows in the background and the lighting overhead, we shall remember the Rector and his good lady and the part they played in the life of the School.

Our best wishes will follow them to their new responsibilities, and to their new home in a new country.

J. E. G. B.



## The 2022 School Organ project

In September 2022, it was decided to investigate the state of the organ, with the objective of recording a short concert for transmission to Former Pupils via the Annual email newsletter.

Alan Buchan, the author of the first part of this article, very kindly travelled from the Moray coast to visit the school, and make an assessment of the organ's condition. He quickly confirmed issues with the organ blower, requiring electricians, and tuning requirements which could be delivered by old acquaintances 'Forth Pipe Organs'. The Rector was approached with a request to pursue some funding from the RHS Club, and the fact that the organ formed part of the WW2 memorial held considerable sway.

Electrical and organ pipe maintenance started in November, and after agreement from Alan Buchan, and another Former Pupil organist Alan Ireland, a concert was videoed on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November, with no fewer than four cameras being used to show all aspects of the performance. The concert was included in the newsletter, and our statistics show that over 100 viewings took place.

[The concert can be viewed here.](#)



*2022 Oct 17 - organ electricians at work on the organ blower motor, trying to reduce the vibrations*



*2022 Oct 19 - Jim Smail of Forth Pipe Organs in the organ loft*



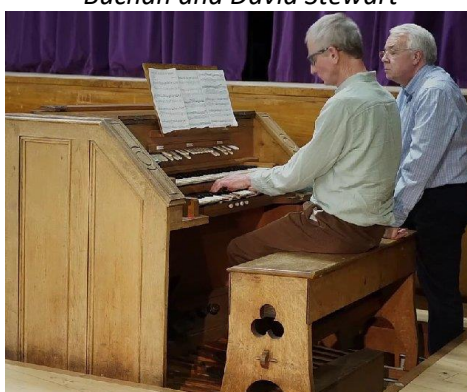
*2022 Oct 19 - Broken swell reeds*



*2022 Oct 28 RHS Organ team. Jim Smail, David Page, Alan Ireland (seated), Alan Buchan and David Stewart*



*2022 Nov 4 - Ian 'Quentin Tarantino' Cowie keeping an eye on sound and vision quality*



*2022 Nov 4 - a video clip showing Alan Buchan and Alan Ireland performing*