

St. Mark's



Man: 8,8,8,8,4,4,2 Ped: 16.

During the 1880s, several Island churches bought small, 1-manual organs from WH Hewitt of Leicester, of which the 8-stop instrument in St. Mark's is a typical example. In this case, however, the organ was originally built for Malew Parish Church in 1850, by Douglas builder D Minay (of Prospect Hill) where it was said to have been sited in the gallery. Hewitt evidently rebuilt it about 30 years later, modernising it considerably, but in 1907, Malew replaced it with a new Morgan instrument, and the Hewitt was moved to St. Mark's, where it was put up in the front of

the building, covering the easternmost window on the north side, and projecting out so far that the organist was sitting in front of the communion rail and almost in the middle of the chancel.

The case front contained 2 narrow flats of larger pipes, arranged on each side of a central flat. All pipes were (as in the present organ) non-speaking dummies. There was a side case of panelling, with the ends (only) of dummy pipes projecting over the top.

The organ was hand-blown, and remained

this way, gradually deteriorating, until it became completely unplayable, due to wear, rust, moth and woodworm. Its internal pipes were collapsing and the whole instrument was sinking into the rotting floor.

In 1979, the church underwent extensive renovations, and the organ was taken down by Peter Jones, so that the floor could be repaired. By 1982, the instrument had been rebuilt, with new electric blowing, a new console and a modified case (which incorporates 2 paper pipes, made from paper bound with glue, in the best Victorian tradition.)

Its pipework (second-hand in Hewitt's day, and therefore of considerable age) includes some wooden ranks with low mouths and a typically nasal sound, with the larger ones tending to 'cough' at the start of the note. This feature has been left, as has the somewhat unrefined but undoubtedly musical character of the rest of the pipework.

Though the console was completely redesigned and rebuilt (the pedalboard being originally from the Morgan instrument in Ballasalla Methodist Chapel) it retains its 16' GGG compass keyboard, as does the soundboard. Unhappily, Hewitt, in the



1880s, modernised the compass of the pipe-work to start at 8' CC. It is likely that the pedals and pedal Bourdon stop were added at this time.

The main alterations, made by Peter Jones as part of the rebuild, are: the case design (now with 3 towers enclosing 2 flats, and the 3 largest pedal pipes on each side) the new

console and bench, pneumatic actions to the lowest pedal notes and to the manual stopped basses and electric blowing.

Sited on a new floor in the gallery, this remarkable survivor from the mid-1800s looks and sounds perfectly suited to its charming country church setting.

