

William Charlton Blackett

Founded/Born

1859 - 1941

Closed/Death

Still active?

no

Description

In the 1880s William Charlton Blackett, the son of a coal agent, joined forces with Charles W. Howden and set up the firm of Blackett and Howden Ltd., organ builders of Newcastle Upon Tyne. They introduced some highly innovative features to pipe organs, and their business rapidly expanded from its initial focus on the Tyneside area, to supplying organs across the whole of the United Kingdom and beyond, at one time having a second workshop in Glasgow. They built and restored church and theatre/cinema organs, many of which are still in use to this day in countries such as Australia and Germany as well as the UK.

Blackett and Howden built the organ for the Royal Memorial Chapel at Sandhurst in 1924 but by then the original partnership had recently been dissolved and William replaced by his son Ralph Walton Blackett.

William settled in Hong Kong in 1917, where he set up a small organ factory in the city, training locals in the technique. He reconstructed the organ in Hong Kong Cathedral some time between 1917 and 1920/21 and is remembered by a then future organist of the Cathedral as "an elderly bearded man". He rebuilt the Cathedral organ again in 1937/38. He had also installed the organ at Kowloon Union Church in 1931. He is believed to have died in Hong Kong in 1941.

The firm was still trading under its original name as recently as 1969.

William Charlton Blackett was the 2nd cousin of Robert Blackett Charlton, who developed the engineering firm of R. Blackett Charlton Ltd. (see A Piping Hot Blackett).

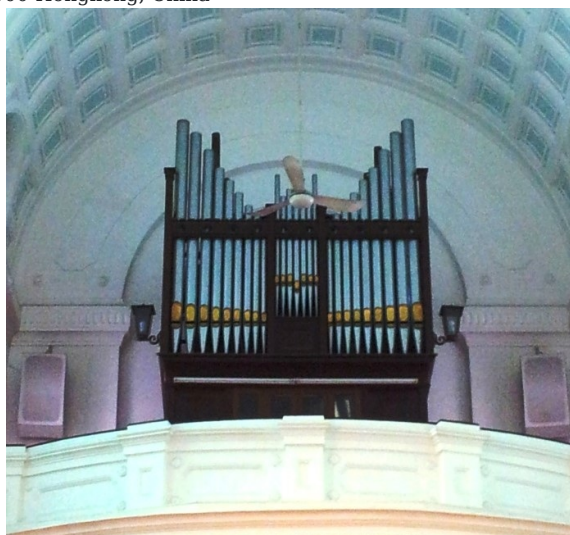
Musical visitors to this site might like to try out the following traditional Northumbrian air, originally called "Blackett O' Wylam", and presumably dedicated to Christopher Blackett or his descendants.

Sources

<https://www.theblacketts.com/node/99>

Hongkong, St. Margaret's Church

Broadwood Road 2A, Leighton Hill, 000000 Hongkong, China



Builder	W. C. Blakett
Year	ca. 1927
Period/Style	Romantic
Stops	13
Keyboards	2+P
Keyaction	tracker/mechanical
Tuning	Equal

Description

Presumably some of the strange spellings on the drawknobs originated with Blakett's Chinese workers. According to research now in progress in Hong Kong, it appears that this organ was hand-blown from the time of its installation in 1928 up to the early 1980s. Why this was the case is not known. Hong Kong had advanced infrastructure for the time, and one of the main electricity generating stations was in North Point, not that far from the church. It may have just been a cost-saving measure. In the 1980s, a jury-rigged motor, utilizing bicycle wheels, differential gears, and chains, was attached to the bellows. This Rube Goldberg-type contraption was removed about 1994 and a proper organ blowing mechanism installed.

This organ appears to have had some work other done on it in the 1970s and 80s, possibly by Detlef Kleuker or another European builder. The Pedal Bass Flute 8' appears to be a later addition, tracker action on a separate chest, and made of different woods from the Bourdon 16'. This makes sense, as Blakett's stock models only contained a single 16' Pedal stop. An overhaul of the organ was considered around 2010, and rejected as too expensive.

When it was surveyed for the Project in 1997. Prof. Urrows played it and found that it filled the building admirably with a sweet tone. The power of the Pedal Bourdon, and of the combined Gamba celeste (almost a Montre céleste) were most impressive. The organ is partly functioning at present, and the church has installed a Rogers electronic organ on the floor of the sanctuary.

The church is nowadays referred to simply as 'St. Margaret's Church', obscuring its dedication to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90).

Stoplist/Disposition

Great	Swell	Pedal
Volin DIAPN [sic.] 8'	Open DIAPN [sic.] 8'	Bourdon 16'
Rhor Flute [sic.] 8'	Hohl Flute 8'	Bass Flute 8'
Voix celeste 8'	Lieblich Flute 8'	
Viol d'Gamba 8'	Dulciana	
Principal 4'		
Harmonic 2'		
Mixture III		

Additional: SW/GT, GT/Ped, SW/Ped, Swell pedal, Tutti on/off pedals SW & GT, 2 combination pedals

Sources

<http://organcn.org/organ/hkg1927b/>