

Quick Guide...

Organs and Musical Instruments

Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture

There have been organs in Scottish churches - intermittently - since at least the 15th century. From the Reformation to Victorian times, the Presbyterian churches shunned instrumental accompaniment, but other denominations have always used instruments to accompany worship. In the 18th century the Church of England used groups of instruments in galleries rather than organs, which had mostly been destroyed in the 17th century. These instrumental groups had much in common with the "Worship Groups" of today.

Before you follow the Covenanters' example and destroy your pipe organ, pause for a moment. Once you destroy your instrument, it can never be recreated. If you abandon using it, but leave it untouched, you are at least offering your successors the option of restoring and reviving it in the future.

An organ of any kind is a complex piece of machinery which will need maintenance or replacement from time to time. CARTA and its advisers are there to help you find the most cost-effective way of keeping your instrument going, or of replacing it.

Since 1986 the Scottish Federation of Organists (www.scotsorgan.org.uk) has provided an organ advice service for CARTA (and its predecessors). Its team of advisers is available to visit any church free of charge or answer queries. The SFO's detailed guide to organ repair and replacement is available on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/carta/resources).

Before taking any decisions on organs:

- a) seek at least three reports or quotations from organ builders.
- b) seek independent advice on the reports through CARTA.
- c) remember that the sales representatives from digital organ companies are there to sell a product, not to offer impartial advice.
- d) arrange to visit other churches where a particular firm has been working, or has provided a product.
- e) do not be afraid to use your own ears and judgment in the final instance, but respect the views or needs of your organist or director of music.
- f) if in doubt about anything at all, contact CARTA.

The Organ Advice Committee recruits advisers who have sufficient technical knowledge to advise about any sort of organ, pipe or digital, with confidence, and we pride ourselves on very many success stories. We are grateful that we work with the co-operation and encouragement of all good organ builders, particularly members of the Institute of British Organ Building.

Whom to Contact

Congregations of the Church of Scotland wishing to contact the Organ Advice Committee should complete a CARTA enquiry form which can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta) and email it to: gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk. Alternatively, you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to someone in the CARTA office. CARTA will then contact a member of the Committee. In the first instance CARTA will pay the expenses.

CARTA prefers early contact. Often before proposals have been developed CARTA's advice has helped congregations define how best to deal with a project.

Members of any other denomination or of a secular body, in any difficulty are asked to contact the Secretary of the Organ Advice Committee, Donald MacLagan, on [dolandmaclagan@scotsorgan.org.uk](mailto:donaldmaclagan@scotsorgan.org.uk) or 01540 662431.

CARTA Quick Guides

Other Quick Guides include advice on lighting, reordering, audio visual, access for all, stained glass and communion ware. These can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides).

About the Author

The Organ Advice Committee is a committee of the Scottish Federation of Organists



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