

## BIGGS PIPE ORGAN



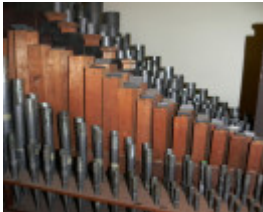
Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish



Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish 2



Console and pedals of the Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish



Metal and timber pipes of the Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish



Manual, Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish



Pedals, Biggs Pipe Organ, Cavendish

### Location

31-33 BUNBURY STREET CAVENDISH, SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

### Municipality

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2404

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO94

### VHR Registration

August 13, 2020

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 13, 2020

#### What is significant?

The whole of the Biggs Pipe Organ currently located at the St Luke's Lutheran Church at 31-33 Bunbury Street, Cavendish including the detached windchest.

#### How is it significant?

The Biggs Pipe Organ is of historic significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

#### Why is it significant?

The Biggs Pipe is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Biggs Pipe Organ is historically significant for its use in the production of church music from 1858. The organ was constructed by organ builder Jesse Biggs who trained in the UK. Contemporary newspapers document it first being used to make music in Victorian churches from 1858 when it was installed in the United Methodist Free Church in Collingwood. Pipe organs were used both during church services and for concerts not related to worship. Up until the mid-1860s almost all pipe organs used in Victoria were imported. After this the manufacture of pipe organs became an important industry in nineteenth century Victoria. The 1858 Biggs Pipe Organ is one of the first pipe organs to be made in Victoria and its sound demonstrates the musical tastes of the time. [Criterion A]

The Biggs Pipe Organ was made in 1858 and is historically significant as one of very few surviving organs made in Victoria in the 1850s and 60s that are undamaged, not substantially altered and still in original condition. It is rare in Victoria as a surviving example of an early pipe organ made in Victoria that is still in largely original condition. [Criterion B]

The Biggs Pipe Organ is historically significant as a notable example of the smaller, less elaborate pipe organs used in Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s. It has not been altered and so the characteristics of early pipe organs are evident in the case, internal equipment and sound of the organ. [Criterion D]

### Permit Exemptions

#### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.38 of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act). Under s.38 of the Heritage Act 2017 the Executive Director may include in his recommendation categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to the place or object without the need for a permit under Part 5 of the Act. The Executive Director must not make a recommendation for any categories of works or activities if he considers that the works or activities may harm the cultural heritage significance of the place or object.

The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Biggs Pipe Organ.

#### **General Permit Exemptions**

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered object and maximises retention of original fabric.

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the object are revealed which relate to the significance of the object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the object. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

#### **Specific Permit Exemptions**

The reeds of the organ may be tuned by the Church Organist or by an organ builder who has experience in the type of work to be undertaken. When tuning, the original pitch, temperament and voicing (if still in original form) should not be altered.

Maintenance also includes playing through every note on every register (i.e. a stop or rank of pipes) at frequent time intervals if the organ is seldom used, in order to prevent the settling of dust and dirt in pipes and other parts vital to wind conduction.

The repair of minor faults and defects by an organ builder who has experience in the type of work to be undertaken if discovered during tuning or cleaning and dust removal. The repairs must maximise protection and retention of existing fabric.

Electrical repairs to the modern electric blower.

### **Theme**

#### **8. Building community life**

Construction dates	1858,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Other Names	PIPE ORGAN, ST LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH,
Hermes Number	155832
Property Number	

## History

Jesse Biggs (1819-1872) was born in Bromham Mill, Bedfordshire in the UK. He trained as an organ builder with the London based firm of Gray and Davison which was one of Britain's leading organmakers between the 1790s and the 1880s. Gray & Davison also exported organs to Victoria, the largest of which was for St Patrick's Church (later Cathedral) in Ballarat (VHR H0997). Biggs emigrated to Melbourne in the mid-1850s. In May 1856 he began advertising in The Argus first as an organ builder and tuner and later advertising organs for sale. He was based at 143 Lonsdale St in Melbourne at this time. Biggs is thought to be the first professionally trained organ builder to work in Victoria. Biggs moved to Tasmania in the 1860s but returned to work in Victoria from time to time. For example, he installed an organ in Geelong in 1871. He died in Tasmania at the relatively young age of 53 of Dropsy. Biggs' profession may have contributed to his death as some of the symptoms of lead poisoning are similar to the symptoms of Dropsy.

In March 1858 Biggs advertised an organ for sale with a "Handsome gothic case. Powerful tone, for a church." It seems very likely that this is the Biggs organ that was purchased one month later by the United Methodist Free Church located on the corner of Perry and Hoddle Streets in Collingwood. Jesse Biggs' first cousin Alfred Barrett Biggs was the head teacher at the United Methodist Free Church School in Hoddle Street Collingwood. Barrett Biggs also played the organ and conducted the choir and is likely to have been involved in the purchase of the organ by the church. The organ was opened (first played) on the 29th of April 1858.

The United Methodist Free Church appears to have been demolished c. 1899. The minister, the Reverend Benjamin Goldsworthy went to Bendigo c. 1900 and oral history states that the organ was purchased by the prominent Harkness family of Bendigo. There are records of Robert Harkness playing the organs at several Methodist Churches in Bendigo from 1900. Many church organ players also played small organs at home and this may have been how the Harkness family used the Biggs Pipe Organ. At some stage the organ was installed in the Methodist Church in Arnold Street, Bendigo and in 1957 it was installed at the Methodist Church in Ararat after being purchased from . In 1984 the organ was purchased by Ivan Puls of Miga Lake. Mr Puls was a Lutheran church organist and used the Biggs Pipe Organ at home. On his death in 2001 his twin brother gave the organ to St Luke's Lutheran Church in Cavendish (constructed 1857) where his niece Leanne Huf is the Church Secretary. The congregation values the bright and strong sound of the organ as it assists the congregation to "sing up" because Lutherans sing hymns while seated. They also use the organ to provide music for occasions such as wedding, funerals and carols as well as for Ecumenical services with other churches in Cavendish.

Biggs organs were said to be suited to "churches of moderate size" (and "congregations of moderate means") and "possess(ed) great power combined with a richness of tone." Some of the organs he built would have been made for private owners and these and others have not been documented. Those that are known include:

- The first pipe organ Biggs built in Victoria was featured in The Argus in 1857 and was later bought by Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Williamstown in July 1857. This organ was removed c. 1896 and its current location is unknown.
- The second organ built by Jesse Biggs in Victoria was ordered by St Andrew's Anglican Church in Brighton (VHR H0124) in July 1857. In 1860 this organ was moved to the Wesley Church in Lydiard Street, Ballarat (VHR H1089); in 1874 to the Methodist Church in Pleasant Street, Ballarat; in 1921 to St Mark's Anglican Church, Camberwell (VHR H2158) and finally in 1928 to St Paul's Anglican Church, Fairfield. It was broken up c. 1968 with some of the parts being used in other organs.

- The third organ he produced was the Biggs Pipe Organ now in Cavendish.

- Biggs also undertook extensive repairs and alterations to the organ then at St Francis Catholic Church in Lonsdale St (VHR H0013) and likely many others. He returned from Tasmania to install an organ for All Saints Anglican Church, Newtown in 1871. This organ was removed in 1891-2 and its destination is unknown.

From the mid-1860s church organs became larger, more elaborate and created more of a symphonic sound. The function of organ music in Christian churches could be summarised by the statement on this subject by the Second Vatican Council: "The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem in the Latin Church, since it is its traditional instrument, the sound of which can add a wonderful splendor (sic) to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lift up men's minds to God and higher things." Liturgical organ-playing takes different forms: solo such as preludes, chorale settings, and postludes, accompanying hymns and other liturgical vocal music, as well as the non-liturgical organ music concerts which take place in some churches. Newspaper reviews of the classical music concert held at the 1858 opening of the organ at the United Methodist Free Church in Collingwood describe the organ as "small but powerful and its tone of excellent quality." The organ is so loud it can be heard outside the small bluestone church where it is currently located.

## KEY REFERENCES

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## Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion

The Biggs Pipe Organ is of historic significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

## **Extent of Registration**

Heritage Act 2017

### **NOTICE OF REGISTRATION**

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including an object in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2404

Category: Registered Object

Place: Biggs Pipe Organ

Location: 31-33 Bunbury Street, Cavendish

Municipality: Southern Grampians Shire

All of the Pipe organ attributed to Jesse Biggs, St Luke's Lutheran Church, Cavendish. Includes the whole of the original organ of the 1850s but excludes the electric blowing plant

13 August 2020

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*