



Bath Abbey

Klais Organ Restoration

“A pipe organ inspires people when it speaks their language.”

Philipp. C. A. Klais



Our Director of Music, Huw Williams, writes

'We are very proud of our world famous Klais organ at Bath Abbey. It was built by Philipp Klais in 1997 under the guidance of Peter King, former Director of Music at Bath Abbey, and organ consultant Nicolas Kynaston.

This wonderful instrument made use of some historic pipework, though was essentially a new organ in the old case in the north transept. It has welcomed famous players from around the world to play and the organ concerts have drawn countless listeners to the Abbey. Through recordings, broadcasts and worship it has been heard by millions across the world and been an inspiration to all including our Abbey choirs and the regular congregation.'

When was the organ built?

In May 1990, when the Abbey organ was first inspected by Orgelbau Klais of Bonn, they discovered an instrument that was compromised in musical performance and was suffering breakdown in its older mechanisms.

The priorities in designing the new organ were to achieve maximum tonal projection, to facilitate ease of access for future maintenance, and to ensure future reliability of all mechanisms.

For the first time in the organ's long history, the number of stops was reduced, both in the interests of creating a more cohesive ensemble, and creating a more friendly working space for the pipes. The organ had evolved stylistically over a period of 130 years.

In the reconstruction, Klais were at pains to respect this history whilst creating a new internal structure that ensured reliability and longevity. New materials and new voices were added to complement a much-loved instrument.

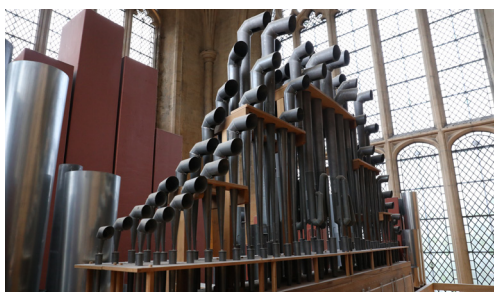
Since its inauguration in 1997 the instrument has attracted widespread acclaim from some of the world's finest players.

*Peter King
September 2022*

The organ sounds fine, why does it need restoring?

Over the past 25 years, and during the Footprint building works, the organ pipes have been gaining dust. This affects how well and reliably they sound. The electronics are 25 years old and there are mechanical issues which need attention.

Every 20-30 years it is sensible to do a major overhaul or restoration of an instrument to ensure that it remains in good condition for the next generation.



Who will do the work?

Philipp Klais and his team from Bonn will mastermind a comprehensive rebuild, cleaning the dust and restoring the pipework.



Philipp Klais writes 'Bath Abbey is a beautiful and fascinating building and the Abbey organ contains impressive historic pipework of a high quality from many different generations. I took over the Klais workshop from my father in 1995, thus Bath Abbey was one of my first projects I was personally responsible for. I am extremely grateful, that now, 25 years after the instrument was built we have gained your confidence to carry out this work'

When will it take place?

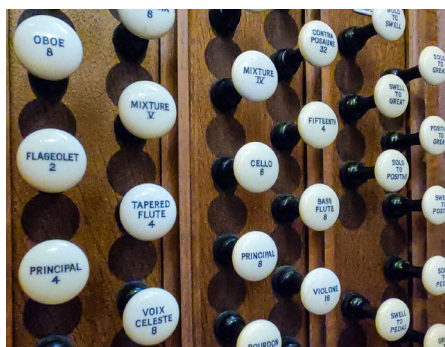
The work will last 3 months (between January and March) and there will be some additional work in the autumn, though the organ will be available to use in the spring and summer. Philipp and his team will be back in the autumn when the organ has settled to put the magic finishing touches – voicing the organ to sound its best as one instrument so the organ will be fully restored and ready for action in late autumn 2023.

What work is being done?

The instrument will be restored and updated and sound at its best again. Cleaning every single pipe on the organ is painstaking work. There are over 4,500 pipes and each one will be carefully removed and cleaned before being reinstated to sound their best. The electronics which are used gives the player the ability to change which sounds are produced, will be updated and replaced.



The electronics are now 25 years old and there are other mechanical issues which need attention.



“A pipe organ inspires people when it speaks their language. This is our principal challenge. We know that every human being is affected by his social, cultural and geographical surroundings, and that is why we always inspect the surroundings carefully when planning a pipe organ, to ensure that the Klais organ makes them reverberate – wherever the organ is installed the world over.

This begins with the conception and architectural form, and continues with the stop list and the voicing. Because a pipe organ is distinctive and can reach the heart of those for whom we built it – combined, of course, with a certain touch of zest for life embodied by the builder’s homeland on the River Rhine.”

Philipp. C. A. Klais



How can I help?

Come to our regular organ concerts. Tell your friends about us, volunteer as a concert steward, or donate. You can send a cheque made payable to Bath Abbey to: Bath Abbey Offices, 9 Kingston Buildings, Bath, BA1 1LT, or pay by BACS using the following details:

Natwest PLC
Bath Abbey PCC
Sort Code: 56-00-34
Account Number: 00232971
Ref: Organ Rebuild

For further information

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