

Hope-Jones' own 1890s scrapbook discovered!

Robert Hope-Jones (1859-1914), the well known organ builder of Victorian times, who started work in Birkenhead, went on to join the Wurlitzer Company in America, and earned himself the title "Father of the Theatre Organ". He died exactly a hundred years ago, on 13th September 1914. Coinciding with the centenary of his death comes the following amazing discovery:

A fragile old scrapbook of newspaper cuttings and letters – originally the property of Hope-Jones – was donated on 6th June 2014 to the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust's Theatre Organ Heritage Centre, at Eccles, Manchester, by Mr. John Candor.

This historic 190 page book was compiled jointly by Hope-Jones' two Company Secretaries, Arthur Speed and Alfred Foxworthy, and Robert Hope-Jones himself, who has annotated many of the cuttings and letters.

Mr. Candor has had custody of the book for some years, but it had come down to him from one George Andrews who had worked as an organ builder, possibly for Norman & Beard in Norwich. Hope-Jones left this behind when he emigrated to America in 1903. Indeed, in a letter Hope-Jones wrote whilst sailing to America he said "*I am leaving everything I possess in England so as not to defraud Norman & Beard.*" We must therefore be thankful that George Andrews preserved it.

This priceless volume covers Hope-Jones' early period in Birkenhead. The newspaper and periodical clips date from April 1890 to August 1896, and come from 180 different publications.

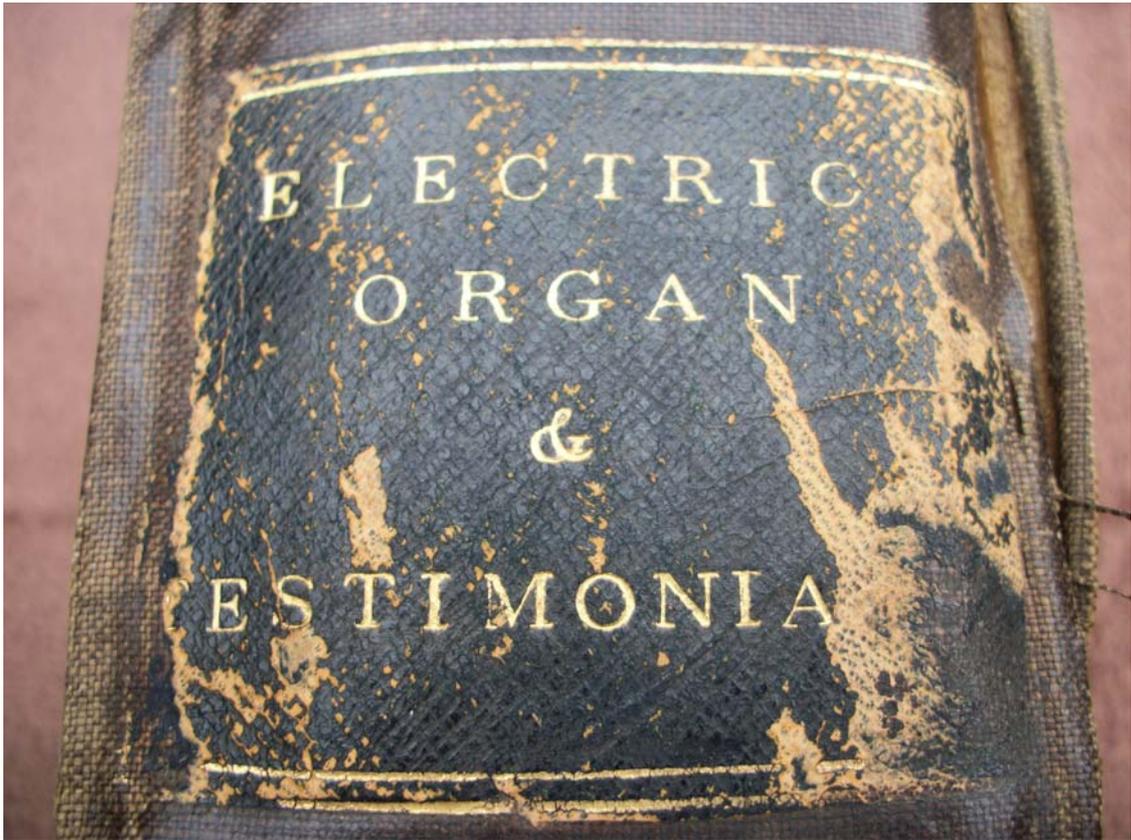
The letters begin in January 1891 and run to May 1895. These form the second half of the volume, and are the original testimonials sent at the request of Hope-Jones, by 125 organists and 25 organ builders, many still being well known names today.

Work is well under way by the Heritage Centre's Roger Fisher, studying and indexing the volume. During this many new discoveries have been made. For example, how many knew that when the Birkenhead factory was at its peak, with around 100 employees, there was a staff Brass Band which performed at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall amongst other places.

Upon completion it is hoped that a book will be published. This will take the form of an illustrated summary of highlights from the old scrapbook, revealing to the "organ world" many previously unknown facts. It will incorporate an index to the summary and the whole scrapbook. The exact details of how this will be done are currently being discussed.

Finally, the scrapbook will be put on permanent display in the Museum alongside many other Hope-Jones related items, at the LTOT's Theatre Organ Heritage Centre in Eccles, Manchester.

For more details call 0161-792-1836, or email rcfgromit@btinternet.com



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