

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, DEPTFORD RESTORE THE BINNS PROJECT

BRIEF FOR ORGAN RESTORATION AND ORGAN BUILDING TRAINEESHIP

1. INTRODUCTION

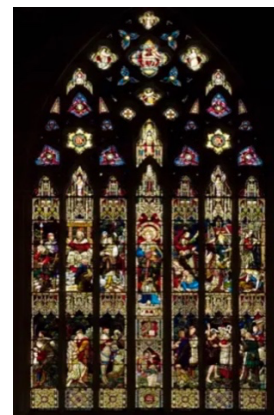
St John's Church, Deptford is looking to appoint a suitably qualified organ builder to undertake the restoration of its historic Grade II* listed organ and provide an organ building traineeship as part of its National Heritage Lottery Fund supported Restore the Binns project.

Restore the Binns will both restore the organ and deliver an Activity Plan that aims to engage the congregation, local community and visitors to St John's in music, creativity and life of the Church, building the resilience and capacity of St John's to care for this unique heritage and realise benefits to the congregation, wider St John's and Lewisham communities, and visitors.

2. ST JOHN'S, DEPTFORD AND THE ORGAN

2.1 St John's Church, Deptford

Grade II listed St John's Church was built in 1855 to serve the growing Deptford New Town area – a 19th century working class estate. Today it stands on the border of Deptford and Lewisham and is the focal point of the locality known as St. John's which still retains a considerable sense of identity, recognised as the St John's Conservation Area.



All images © Historic England Archive

The parish was established in 1855 through the generosity the Lucas family, who also provided land for the church, a vicarage (originally their family home), and a school. Today St John's Church is part of a combined ministry for St John's, Deptford and Holy Trinity, Deptford and sits within the Diocese of Southwark.

A fine early-Victorian church, St John's was designed by notable architect Philip Charles (PC) Hardwick, grandson of Thomas Hardwick. His best-known work was the Great Hall at London Euston Station, demolished in 1962 to make way for the current building. The church was constructed through the generosity of notable philanthropist Miss A. (later the Baroness) Burdett-Coutts, a staunch churchwoman and reformer who funded several churches in London, endowed the Bishoprics of Capetown, South Africa and Adelaide, South Australia and who, during a lifetime of philanthropy, funded a small children's charity that later became the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NCCPE).

Built to an early 14th century design, St John's consists of a nave with aisles, galleried along three walls, a chancel flanked by an organ chamber and vestries, and a tower with spire at the west end of the south aisle, the tower and spire being completed in 1873. Bells and the northern boundary wall were added in 1874.

The organ is sited at ground-floor level at the east end of the north aisle and is orientated to speak predominantly into the adjacent chancel. The console is established on the chancel side of the organ and is built in, with the player facing north. An electric blower is placed outside the building on the north side.

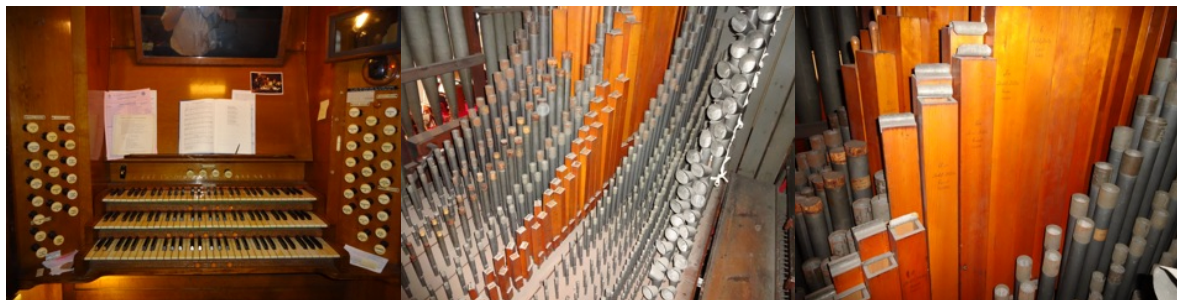
2.2 The JJ Binns organ and restoration project

The organ at St John's is Grade II* listed and is assessed on the National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR) as having 'significant heritage value'. It was built by James Jepson (JJ) Binns who established his company, the Bramley Organ Works, in Leeds just 20 years earlier. The NPOR identifies that the organ was installed in 1900, although a plaque adjacent to the console indicates that it was dedicated in thanksgiving for the long reign of Queen Victoria and includes the date of Easter 1901. Queen Victoria died in January 1901, and it is unlikely that the organ was commissioned and installed in a matter of a couple of months. It is therefore possible that its dedication was made after its installation. The organ replaced a smaller instrument by Walker, London dating from 1855, which the NPOR suggests was moved to a Baptist Church in Gillingham, where it was installed in 1900.

The instrument is a typically robust example of the Bramley workshop and demonstrates why the monicker "Battleship Binns" was gained. These organs were built to a pattern and this consistency in approach which, coupled with the use of high-quality materials, ensured reliability and longevity. This is particularly notable at St John's where much original leatherwork continues to function after well over a century of use.

Although changes have been made to the organ, it remains predominantly the work of Binns, most notably the pipework and keyboard mechanisms. Its 'voice' is convincingly original and although the mechanism is old and increasingly unreliable there is a sound basis on which to undertake a restoration. The specification is attached at Annex A.

Although minor changes have been made to the organ in the 1920s and 1990s, it remains predominantly the work of Binns, most notably the pipework and keyboard mechanisms. Its 'voice' is convincingly original and although the mechanism is old and increasingly unreliable there is a sound basis on which to undertake a restoration.



St John's commenced its planning to restore its Binns organ in 2013 and sought early advice from Diocesan Organ Advisors, William McVicker and Melvin Hughes. After almost a decade of further work and congregation/local fundraising, in 2022 St John's commissioned three independent Condition Surveys from Mander Organ Builders (December 2022), Bower & Company (February 2023) and Harrison & Harrison Ltd (March 2023). These surveys informed the identification of priority restoration works to the organ, whilst the accompanying quotations/estimates helped the team establish the order of costs.

Equipped with this information, and supported by a professional fundraiser and bid writer, St John's developed Restore the Binns – a project that aims to restore the rare JJ Binns organ, and to engage people in music and the community. In July 2023, St John's submitted a R1 Development Phase application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and in December 2023 secured a grant of £62,054 towards total project costs of £72,825 to further detail its planned organ restoration project.

Following successful completion of the R1 Development Phase, St John's submitted a R2 Delivery Phase application on 6 August 2025, and in December 2025 secured a grant of £459,399 towards total project costs of £562,149. The budget to restore the organ is £352,080 (incl. VAT).

3. SCOPE OF WORKS

As part of the Round One Development Phase a detailed Scope of Works was prepared to guide the restoration of the organ. This is available under separate cover.

3.1 Guided tours

During the final stages of the restoration process – reassembly, tonal finishing and on completion – there is a requirement to 3no. (minimum) provide guided tours of the Binns organ to explain its restoration and the process to target audiences. The timing and duration of these tours will be agreed during the appointment process. A separate budget of £540 is available for this task.

3.2 Contacts

It is anticipated that the appointed organ builder will work most closely with the Steering Group, Project Coordinator and a separately appointed Independent Organ Advisor. In addition, there will be contact with the PCC and Diocesan Organ Advisor(s).

3.3 Location and timings

Whilst dismantling, reassembly and tuning of the organ will take place at St John's, a significant amount of the restoration works will take place in the appointed organ builder's workshop. Periodic access will be required by St John's and the Project Coordinator to monitor the work in progress. In addition, access will be required by the appointed Organ Advisor to

assess and approve works in advance of the agreed staged payment schedule. All visits will be agreed at least 5 working days in advance.

4. ORGAN TRAINEESHIP

In addition to the organ restoration works, St John's wishes to provide the opportunity for an organ building traineeship as part of this contract. A separate budget of £12,000 is available to fund this role which will be located within the appointed organ building company who will be responsible for recruitment, training, management, salary and insurances. It is a requirement that the appointed contractor match this sum to provide a 12-month traineeship.

It is important that the trainee is recruited as early as possible in the project so that they can experience the entire organ restoration process – from dismantling to restoration in the workshop to reassembly and tuning. This will ensure that the trainee benefits from maximum exposure to the various trades and skills involved in the building and restoration of organs, and can make an informed decision about a career in organ building and restoration after their traineeship.

5. PROGRAMME

An indicative schedule is provided below and we would welcome feedback on this in your tender response.

Please note that because the organ restoration is part of a wider programme of Heritage Fund funded activities due to take place during 2026 and 2027, it is essential that the restored organ is handed back to St John's by the end of 2026. Please explain how you will meet this requirement in your response.

Month 2026	Activity
02 February	Issue brief
27 February	Deadline for submissions
w/c 2 March	Interview and appoint
w/c 16 March	Dismantling
w/c 30 March	Workshop works
w/c 31 August-12 October	Reassembly
w/c 19 October-6 November	Tonal finishing
w/c 16-23 November	Cleaning and handover

6. TENDER REQUIREMENTS

Submissions should comprise the following.

6.1 Response to the brief

The response to the brief should include:

- A clear methodology statement for the delivery of the Works detailed in Sections 3 and 4
- An outline work plan identifying key dates of all elements and sign-off points informed by this brief
- Confirmation of individuals who will fulfil the Services, including sub-contractors if relevant, and summary CVs (two sides of A4 max.), clearly highlighting relevant experience of named individuals (as opposed to company's broader ones)
- A cost breakdown for each part of Service, detailing staff responsible, tasks, day rates and any expenses.

6.2 Relevant experience

Please provide details of two relevant projects. For each project, include a description of the project, your/your company's and/or sub-contractors' role, client, budget and project dates.

6.3 Price

The price is to be a fixed lump sum for the provision of all Services as outlined in the Scope of Works.

The price should include all expenses. This will include travel costs, accommodation, disbursements and all other expenses and costs required in the provision of the Services. The fee should include VAT.

6.4 References

Please provide reference details of two recent contracts that are relevant to this project. Include the name and contact details of the client's representatives who can be approached for references. References will be taken up only before confirmation of appointment.

6.5 Insurance

The appointed company is required to have professional indemnity, employers' liability and public liability insurance of £2.5 million. St John's will require proof of these policies and their cover before appointment.

6.6 Tender return

Tenders must be submitted electronically with Subject 'JJ Binns Organ Restoration' to stjohnsorganfund@gmail.com no later than 12 noon 27 February. It is hoped interviews can take place w/c 2 March.

Tenders are to remain open for acceptance for a period of 60 days.

6.7 Tendering Costs

St John's will not be responsible for or pay for any costs or expenses that are incurred by any tendering company in preparing and submitting their tender.

6.8 Contract Award Criteria

Tenders will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Response to brief and additionality - **30%**
- Qualifications and Experience - **30%**
- Price - **40%**

Each submission will be given a score. A submission considered to be unsuitable shall be rejected at an early stage if it does not respond to important aspects of the brief. St John's shall notify unsuccessful tenderers of the rejection of their proposal after completing the selection process.

Tenders will be awarded on the absolute discretion of the Restore the Binns Steering Group. The decision will be final and binding. No correspondence will be entered into.

6.9 Enquiries

Any enquiries arising from this Invitation to tender must be submitted in writing via email to:
stjohnsorganfund@gmail.com.

Annex A: St John's Church JJ Binns Organ Specification

The Specification of the organ is as follows:

Console

Console type Attached Stop type Drawstop

Great, Choir and Pedal stops (under Great) on right jamb, Swell on left;
the four 'octave' couplers are over the Swell keys

Couplers

Swell to Pedal

Swell to Great

Swell to Choir

Swell octave to Great

Swell suboctave to Great

Swell octave

Swell suboctave

Choir to Great

Choir to Pedal

Choir suboctave

Great to Pedal

Department and Stop list

Pedal	Key action TP	Stop action TP	Compass-low C	Compass-high f1	Keys 30
	1	Harmonic Bass	32		
	2	Open Diapason	16		
	3	Sub Bass	16		
	4	Octave8			
	5	Bass Flute	8		
	6	Trombone	16		
	7	Tromba	8		

Choir	Key action TP	Stop action TP	Compass-low C	Compass-high c4	Keys 61
Enclosed	8	Geigen Principal	8		
	9	Lieblich Gedact	8		
	10	Gamba	8		
	11	Dolce	8		
	12	Lieblich Flute	4		
	13	Flautina	2		
	14	Clarinet	8		
	15	Tremulant			

Great	Key action TP	Stop action TP	Compass-low C	Compass-high c4	Keys 61
	16	Bourdon	16		
	17	Large Op. Diap.	8		
	18	Small Op. Diap.	8		
	19	Hohl Flöte	8		
	20	Octave4			
	21	Harmonic Flute	4		
	22	Twelfth2 2/3			
	23	Fifteenth	2		
	24	Mixture	III		
	25	Trumpet	8		

Swell	Key action TP	Stop action TP	Compass-low C	Compass-high c4	Keys 61
Enclosed	26	Bourdon	16		
	27	Open Diapason	8		

28	Gedact8	
29	Vox Angelica	8
30	Célèstes	8
31	Suabe Flute	4
32	Salicet	4
33	Piccolo2	
34	Mixture	III
35	Horn	8
36	Oboe	8
37	Tremulant	

Details

Blowing Electric

Accessories

4, 4 toe pedals

Gt-Pd toe pedal

balanced expression pedals

Annex B: St John's Deptford, JJ Binns Organ Restoration Scope of Works

To be issued under separate cover.