

BRESSINGHAM CHURCH BARREL ORGAN

The organ was presented to Bressingham Church by Rev G H C Bidwell in 1859, but it was probably built before this. It is said to have been built by Benjamin Flight, who died in 1847. Flight was recognised as one of the best builders of barrel organs.

According to some sources the organ was played (the handle turned on the barrel) on a couple of occasions by Sir John Betjeman

It has 6 different ranks of pipes and 2 barrels each with 12 tunes. As with most barrel organs, the list includes the tune Old Hundredth, better known as the tune for All People that on Earth do Dwell.

To play the organ, the barrel has to be turned to play the pipes and the bellows have to be pumped to create the wind.

The three parishes of Bressingham, North Lopham and Fersfield must be unique in the world of Church barrel organs. There are three different types of barrel organ and an example of each type, in working order, can be found in each of these three churches.

These are:

- a) Bressingham Barrel Organ - this has simply a barrel and no keys, so that it can only play the tunes on the barrel.
- b) North Lopham - this has keys and a barrel and can be played either from the keys, or, by moving a lever, the barrel tunes can be played.
- c) Fersfield - this is called a Dumb Organist (no jokes please!), this just has keys with a small barrel and action which can be lowered onto the keys and when the barrel handle is turned it presses the keys to play the tunes on the barrel. This is almost the rarest type because in most cases the barrel and action could be taken off the keys and stored separately and thus lost over the years. The Fersfield organ barrel is hinged inside the casework so has remained.