

HISTORY : The second son of Jonathan George Fincham, organ builder of St Pancras, London, George was apprenticed to Henry Bevington, organ builder of London and then worked as foreman for James Bishop & Son. He arrived in Victoria in 1852¹ and in 1855 built a bluestone house and two-storey factory in Bridge Road, the first in Melbourne and only organ factory in Melbourne until 1873. He bought more land in Bridge Road in 1869 and 1871 and in 1884, further property in Stawell Street.² By 1883 there was a new metalwork shop on the corner of Bridge Road and Stawell Street.³ The ratebooks show that the two-storey brick factory was constructed at 2 Stawell Street about 1896 and is shown in a photograph in 1900.⁴ Fincham died in 1910 and Fincham & Sons became a company in 1920 under his son, who died in 1955. The firm has continued under the grandson and great-grandson⁵ and operates today.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION : A two-storey English bond brick factory, with symmetrical segmental head openings and a gable roof facing Stawell Street. There are three bays to the front and three to the side, with a further single-storey bay behind. Windows have eight-light double-hung sashes to the front. Internally, it comprises voicing-room, machine-room, pipe-shop and erection area. There is a recent office to the north. In 1983, it still contained some old plant and machinery including an 1890s or earlier Ransom band-saw and organ components.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS : There are 26 industrial sites identified in the Study. Comparable to : 28 Rodney Street, bakery; 90-92 Balmain Street (ref : 192). No other longstanding organ factory is known in Victoria. No other Richmond business is known to have survived for 137 years.

SIGNIFICANCE : George Fincham (1828-1910) was the major Australian nineteenth-century organ builder and from this site built organs for St Ignatius, the Royal Exhibition Buildings, St Kilda Town Hall, Baptist, former Independent & Scotts Churches, Collins Street; Wesley Church, St Francis Church, St Peters, St Patricks, St Lukes, Fitzroy, Assembly Hall and 92A and 290 Burnley Street (refs : 24 & 34). A continuously operating business since 1855, George Fincham and Sons built over 200 organs organs and supplied parts to other builders from this site for 137 years. Possibly the oldest business in Richmond. Historical and architectural significance at local level.

INTACTNESS : Very good. Apparently internally also very intact. The interior was not inspected.

CONDITION & THREATS : Good.

REFERENCES : 1. Douglas Pike, (Gen.Ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography, (MUP) Melbourne, Volume 4, p.167.
2. E.N. Matthews, Colonial Organs and Organbuilders, (MUP) Melbourne 1969, pp.5-12. In 1884, Fincham owned a 218-foot frontage (66m) in Bridge Road, 188 feet (57m) deep, extending from Tyne to Stawell Streets. Matthews describes the factory and its contents in detail. National Trust of Australia (Victoria) File No.5376. Research Notes. C. Kellaway 30.5.83.
3. Matthews, op.cit., p.29.
4. Rate Book No.5541, Nav. £50, Fincham and Hobday. (Hobday was briefly a junior partner). In 1895 it was vacant land.
5. Matthews, op.cit., pp.33-35.