

ST. JAMES'S *Connections*

Bicentenary 2019-2024

The New Pipe Organ at St James'

Robert Marriott, Alistair Nelson, Brooke Shelley



Extracted Articles:
February/March 2018
April/May 2018
December/January 2018/2019
June/July 2019
July/July 2020
October/November 2020
December/January 2020/2021
February/March 2021
April/May 2021

This article is adapted by Alistair Nelson from a document dating from 2015 written by Organ Builder, Peter Jewkes, who was also Assistant Organist and Choirmaster at St James' from 1985 to 1994.

The first organ at St James' was by John Gray of London and was installed in 1827. It was rebuilt and moved around the church many times during the 19th century, mostly by the Sydney organ builder William Davidson. In 1901 it was moved from the south side of the church in the present-day Chapel of the Holy Spirit, to its present position on either side of the choir stalls, and the action (the connections from the keyboards to the pipes) was changed from mechanical to tubular-pneumatic (operating on air in a vacuum). By this stage, the vast majority of the organ's material was still by Davidson, despite claims that the organ contained pipework from the 1827 instrument. Considerable alterations were made to the organ throughout the 20th century, with a significant amount of the pipework being replaced.

Finally, in 1971 the organ was extensively rebuilt and 'modernised' by Hill Norman and Beard (Australia) Pty Ltd. The action was converted to electric (with a

combination of electro-pneumatic and direct electric operation), soundboards were significantly altered, pipework was entirely re-voiced, and a new large console built. A significant number of stops was also added at this time, including an entirely new 'floating' Positive division of 9 stops, a short-compass Trompette Militaire stop on the Choir division, and many other tonal alterations typical of the period, with the then new instrument totalling 67 stops.

The present organ has now given over 45 years of excellent service, with almost legendary reliability, but the mechanical aspects of the instrument are starting to fail. Some problems are obvious to the congregation: for instance, the wheezing from the organ during Lent 2017, caused by perished leather on the bellows (the reservoirs of pressurised air which make the pipes speak), and the absence of colourful stops such as Clarinet or Trompette militaire (because the corresponding bellows have had to be disconnected owing to holes in the leather, and notes which stick because of mechanical or electrical failings). Some problems have to be hidden by the ingenuity of the organist (working around missing notes

and unpleasant sounds which are result of mechanical or electrical failure or poor construction of pipes). Whilst the organ in its 1971 format was reasonably successful mechanically, it was never regarded highly among musicians for its tonal quality. Even the earliest 19th century pipework was known to have been of indifferent quality, and subsequent replacements have had only limited success. While the 1971 work rationalised and improved some tonal aspects, it left the church with an instrument which has never entirely fulfilled

continued overleaf

The organ when located on the south wall



ST JAMES' INSTITUTE continued

the world. Admission to this event is free and all are welcome. Choral Evensong follows in St James' Church at 6:15pm with prayers offered for the work and ministry of the Anglican Board of Mission.

We are delighted to announce that our preacher for Holy Week and Easter this year is the Rev'd Canon Dr Emma Percy, Fellow

and Chaplain of Trinity College Oxford. On Palm Sunday, 25 March at 2:00pm, please join us for a special 'In Conversation' event to meet Canon Percy, and to hear more about her life, her ministry and her perspectives on the mission and ministry of the church. Choral Evensong for Palm Sunday follows at 4:00pm.

Further details on these and other upcoming events can be found online at sjks.org.au/institute. To book for any of these events, email registrations@sjks.org.au, call (02) 8227 1305 or visit the Parish Office at Level 1, 169-171 Phillip Street, Sydney.

Christopher Waterhouse is Director of the St James' Institute.

AND RESTORATION

its purpose, and with the passing of time, the Neo Classical tonal additions were of course recognised as inappropriate and incongruous.

Whilst giving good mechanical service, there are also some very basic design and construction issues in the organ, not just from 1971. These include the main slider soundboards (c.1901) which, despite their rebuilding, still show clear evidence of inferior construction and inadequate operation, presumably dating from their earliest days. Visually, whilst the organ may have possessed some quaint qualities when moved to its present position, the casework remained incomplete until 1971, at which stage it was 'completed' by the addition of modern pierced metal screens at the East end of each side, of lamentable quality and appearance. Further, the expanded specification meant that not all interior pipes could be properly masked by the casework, and these



The organ pre-1988

can be seen protruding from many perspectives in the Church. In addition, the 1901 spotted metal 8' façade pipes are of poor quality, and have not aged well.

Over the last 26 years various organ builders passing through Sydney have informally examined the organ in varying levels of detail according to time available. All have agreed

that an essentially new instrument is required, but some of the existing stops can be retained (both for musical and sentimental reasons).

We look forward to preserving St James' reputation of fine music-making with the replacement and restoration of the organ.

Alistair Nelson is Organist at St James'.

THE GREETING OF WELCOME

The Greeting of Peace is, as we know, part of the Eucharist. We also know that if parishioners are asked to 'bring a plate', St James' can just about feed the five thousand, so to speak. Very often, we have visitors and strangers to join us for the service and we invite them to join us for refreshments, confident of our hospitality skills. But sometimes there is lack of confidence, a shyness in actually speaking to visitors and strangers.

Here are some 'small talk ice breakers' which might help you overcome your shyness. A smile and 'hello' or 'hi' are good stand-bys,

but don't quite engage the visitor, or even someone we know. The weather is a good 'small talk' opener: "Isn't it cold this morning?" "What a lovely scarf/hat/coat/jacket you have on"; "I see you've got your gloves on this morning—they'll keep your hands warm" are good starters, and indicate imperceptibly that you have noticed the visitor, and usually the visitor smiles back and, you can then ask, "have you come far this morning?" This works even if the person is someone you see occasionally, and you are not sure if they are a visitor or parishioner. By now, you have rapport with the person. If you are a Sidesperson, how

easy now to hand hymn book, pew sheet, service sheet to the person, and don't forget the smile! Always smile—it says so much.

If you are still shy and unconfident in approaching a stranger, practise on someone you know. If your friend is a bit mystified, just explain that you are practising. Of course, a quick 'arrow' prayer: "Lord, please help me speak" is an extra help. I hope you will soon be able to give the greeting of welcome.

Anne Innes is a parishioner, former Sidesperson and provider of hospitality and refreshments after the 7:45am and 9:00am Eucharists at St James'.

ANNE INNES

career as a Harmonium virtuoso, before it was suggested to him that he write for Organ. One of the most fascinating elements of Rossini's music is the way in which he uses both opera-like arias, as well as movements of

contrapuntal brilliance. The latter was presumably inspired by his love of the music of Bach, which he studied intensely later in life, around the time he wrote the *Petite Messe*. Indeed, he described feeling 'incomparable joy' every time he

received a volume of the works of Bach in the mail.

Alistair Nelson is Organist at St James'.

NEW PIPE ORGAN FOR ST JAMES' CHURCH

On Sunday 4 March it was announced that terms have been agreed with Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Ltd of Lake City, Iowa, USA for the construction of a new organ for St James' Church. Dobson's have built up an excellent international reputation for building high quality instruments and have recently completed work at St Thomas' Church Fifth Avenue, New York and Merton College, Oxford.

A Fundraising Appeal Committee, chaired by Mr Robert Marriott, has been established by the St James' Music Foundation to help raise the funds for the project (including on-costs), which will be around \$3 million AUD. As with the Conservation Appeal, we will be seeking philanthropic and government grants as well as private donors to support the project. The launch of the appeal will be held on Friday 6 April in the Church.

The first organ was installed in 1827 and rebuilt several times (most recently in 1971); but it is now in a perilous state, suffering frequent malfunctions and costing noticeably more to maintain. Consideration was given to restoring the current organ, however a range of expert advice over several years has concurred that the present instrument is not of sufficient musical or historical value to merit retaining.

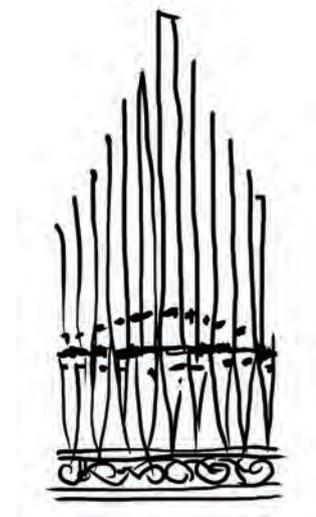
In addition to an exhaustive global search for a suitable organ builder, a large amount of engineering and acoustical preparation work has been done to ensure that the new organ will be well-suited to this historic building. In this way the Church will end up with a more versatile instrument than the current one, enhancing its use both in worship and concerts.

It is planned that the new Dobson organ will be completed

in late 2020 and will be a major component of the upcoming Bicentenary Celebrations of St James' Church.

The Reverend Andrew Sempell is Rector of St James'.

An article about the existing organ, written by Peter Jewkes and adapted by Alistair Nelson, was published in the February/March edition of Parish Connections.



Visit www.stjamesfoundationorganappeal.com.au for further information (from 6 April).





Photos: Nick Gilbert and Christopher Shain

THE ST JAMES' ORGAN APPEAL GAINS MOMENTUM

The exciting and ambitious project to install a new Pipe Organ in St James' received a significant boost in October.

Mr Lynn Dobson, President and Artistic Director of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, the firm commissioned to build the new instrument, made a visit to Sydney to discuss project details and design specifications. Abe Batten, the firm's technical designer, accompanied him.

"It was a great opportunity to speak to key people about the scope of the project, and to better understand the design requirements by actually being in the church, and seeing how the instrument is to be used", Mr Dobson said.

At a Cocktail Party for Organ Appeal donors and benefactors held on 26 October at the Universities, Union & Schools Club, Mr Dobson spoke further about the organ: "My team and I are really looking forward to building the first Dobson instrument in Australia", he told the guests.

Another special guest at the event was Professor Stephen Darlington, Organist Emeritus at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

"I well know the new Dobson organ recently installed in Merton College Oxford", Professor Darlington said. "It has made a huge impact there, and only serves to show the opportunities that will open to St James' by having what will be such

a world-class, bespoke instrument in this place."

The Appeal to raise funds for the new instrument has been enthusiastically and generously supported by the St James' community. Since the Appeal opened in April 2018, just under \$1 million has been raised. The aim is to reach \$1 million—and above!—by the end of 2018. Support for the Appeal is being sought from governments and other organisations. Donations are always welcome: go to www.stjamesfoundationorganappeal.com.au.

Robert Marriott is Chair of the St James' Organ Appeal Committee.



A new and important stage has been reached in the restoration and rebuilding of the St James' Organ. This project is one of the key initiatives to mark the bicentenary of the church, the celebration of which commences later this year.

The Organ Working Group, established by Parish Council to manage the build of the project (as distinct from the St James' Organ Appeal Committee that is fundraising for the project), has made a decision about the new organ's visual design. The decision is to adopt what might be described as a 'Contemporary' design for the new organ case.

The Organ Working Group spent considerable time debating design options, casting aside the personal tastes of individual members to develop a corporate vision. After many months of discussion with the designer and builder, Lynn Dobson of Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Limited in the USA, the Group settled on two design possibilities: one more 'Traditional' and the

other more 'Contemporary'. The Group had determined that it ought to decide on a design that was sympathetic to St James' past, yet that also looked to the future; one that would withstand the test of time, even for a further 200 years!

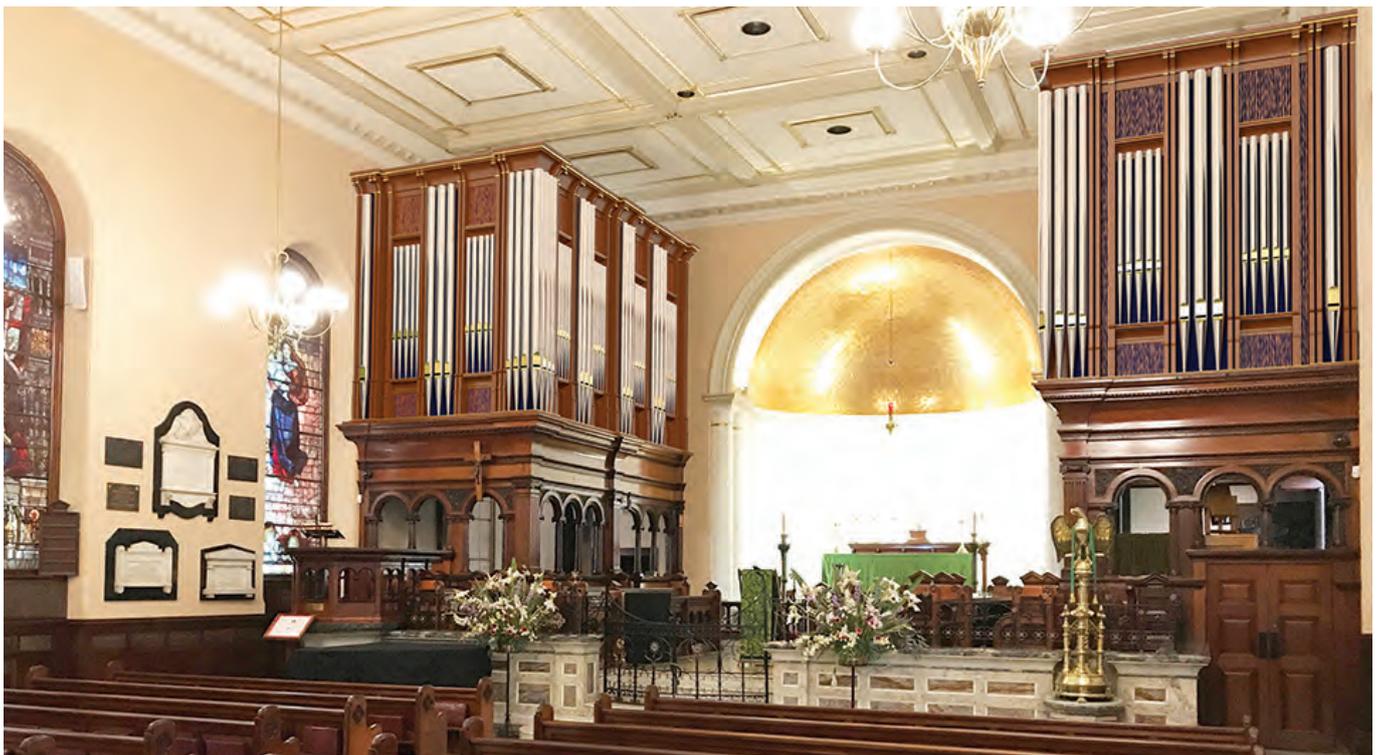
A St James' Organ Appeal Cocktail Party on 6 April 2019 was a good opportunity to test the two design options with those in attendance. It is significant that the overwhelming sentiment was in favour of the 'Contemporary' option.

The comments made by one member of the Organ Working Group provide a neat summary of the reasons for the decision: "For me, the Contemporary design is clean...and adds a brightness to the chancel. It has an elegance that is not intrusive. It does not engulf the sanctuary, and facilitates a rightful focus on the altar. It seems to me to be a design that is sympathetic to the history of the building and complementary to the existing case base, while at the same time pointing to the future. It says to me

that the church is not a museum but is a dynamic and living community that respectfully and creatively adapts to evolving needs."

The Organ Working Group is confident that the new visual design is representative of this time in history, and of this generation's contribution to the continuing life of the Parish. Moreover, it reflects the deliberate philosophy adopted by the Parish over the building's recent 100-year history of allowing each change that has been made in that period to speak honestly of its time. While inspired by the historic and aesthetic importance of St James', and sympathetic and responding to its significant historic context, changes in the church must also reflect the continuing role St James' has in Sydney's spiritual and cultural life and the role it will likely perform for the next 200 years.

Brooke Shelley is Communications and Media Manager at St James'. The information in this article came from a report to Parish Council from the Chair of the Organ Working Party, Chris Lock.



The most recent computer-generated impression of the design of the new organ. Image supplied by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Ltd.

A good news update on the St James' Organ Replacement & Restoration Appeal

Robert Marriott

In mid-April I informed our Donors about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the St James' Organ Replacement and Restoration Appeal. In amongst the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, I warned then that there might be delays to the organ installation schedule. It is a relief now to be able to bring some good news: unless other unforeseen circumstances arise, the pandemic close-down will have no adverse consequences for the St James' project.

Our US-based organ builder, Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Ltd, had suspended operations in early April to comply with public health advice. John Panning, the CEO, has reported that after a closure of just three weeks, his team is back at work. Some staff members are still working from home. Some projects have been slightly disrupted. However, unless there is any serious worsening of the COVID-19 situation in the United States, he has advised that our project has not been delayed. We are still on track to have our new instrument installed in St James' in mid-2022.

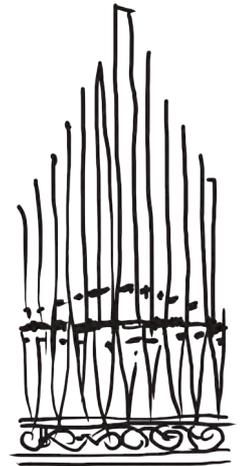
Throughout the lockdown, Mr Panning has continued to be in regular contact with the St James' team in Sydney to discuss a range of musical, technical and design issues that need to be settled prior to the actual construction process, which is scheduled to commence next year in the Dobson plant.

In addition, a significant amount of local groundwork has been undertaken. The Heritage Architect, retained to assist in obtaining all required planning and

heritage approvals for the works, has now completed complex and lengthy documentation to submit to relevant authorities. A considerable amount of informal consultation has been undertaken as part of this process. Expert acoustic consultants have been retained and have advised on acoustic work required in the church building, such as the need to include special acoustic materials in the ceiling, as the organ is installed. This exercise required high level technical and musical input. Our Organ Consultant Peter Jewkes and Organist Alistair Nelson have worked hard in this respect. It will be of little use to have a fine new instrument if the building is not 'tuned' to receive it!

As work continues on the project, so too the payment schedule required under the contract between the Parish and Dobson. Thanks to the funds from our donors, judiciously managed by The St James' Music Foundation, we will be able to meet the payment schedule for the remainder of this year, but we will continue to rely on generosity as the project gathers pace in 2021 and beyond. The Appeal Committee will be looking to arrange further fundraising and information events when it is clear to do so. In the meantime, please actively consider continuing financial support of the Appeal. The end of the financial year is now upon us, so it is a good opportunity to make a donation and obtain a tax deduction at the same time.

We appreciate that this may be a time of financial stress for many. Any support, however small, would be appreciated. As the project continues, so too does the need



to pay for the work!

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly thrown up its fair share of challenges. It has been good news for our nation as a whole that we have been able to avoid high rates of infection here. And, it is equally good news that the pandemic is now unlikely to impede the progress towards the installation of the new organ which will endow St James' with the capacity to expand its world class music programme for the Parish and the people of Sydney. We have seen what St James' can produce in the way of incredible music in the services that have been livestreamed during the lockdown. Imagine what is to come!

Thank you for being with us on this journey. Your support is needed now more than ever.

Robert Marriott is a Parishioner at St James' and Chair of the St James' Organ Replacement & Restoration Appeal Committee.

Dobson Pipe Organ Builders at Work

Alistair Nelson

You may be wondering what's happening right now with the new Dobson organ for St James'. You've probably rightly assumed that public gatherings for fundraising activities have been suspended because of COVID-19 restrictions, and that's partly why you haven't heard as much about the new organ's progress. You may still be wondering how the dire pandemic situation in the USA might be affecting work at Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, Ltd at their workshop in Lake City, Iowa.

I am pleased to report that the staff at Dobsons are safe and well, though they suspended operations in their workshop for seven weeks of lockdown. John Panning succeeded Lynn Dobson as owner and president of Dobsons in February this year, and we are excited to continue working with both John and Lynn in building the new organ. Technical discussions about the sound, appearance and construction of St James' new organ have continued by email and Zoom, in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Various preparatory works also continue in Sydney: an archival



Chatham's console is made of American black cherry and Carpathian elm burl.
Image: Benjamin Hoskins

photographic record of the current organ has been made, acoustic treatments have been tested in the church, and a structural engineer has been assisting in preparing the space for the new instrument.

Our organ is one of three new instruments that Dobsons are working on right now. They are currently installing their Opus 97 in the John and Alice Butler Hall at the

University of Dubuque, Iowa, only four hours' drive from their workshop. Photos from the installation may be viewed on Dobsons' Facebook page. In their workshop they are assembling their Opus 98, ready to be sent across the country to St Christopher's Episcopal Church, Chatham, Massachusetts, a picturesque seaside town on Cape Cod. The factory is working to schedule on the St James' organ and, unless there are unforeseen future delays, installation continues to be planned for mid-2022.

Some photos from their Opus 98 in their workshop are featured here, to give you a little taste of what goes on in building a new organ. The parts that you see in these pictures are in the process of being assembled into working order in the workshop before they are disassembled and shipped to St Christopher's.

I bring you the following update from the Chair of the St James' Organ Replacement & Restoration Appeal Committee, Mr Robert Marriott: 'The St James' Organ



Windchest 'pallets', the specialised valves that let pressurised air into the pipes.
Image: Benjamin Hoskins



Art Middleton machines some metal parts for the mechanical key action.
Image: Benjamin Hoskins



John Streufert voices a façade pipe.
Image: Benjamin Hoskins

Restoration and Replacement Appeal has carried on somewhat in the background during these unusual times. Even so, the Appeal has continued to receive donations from generous individual benefactors as well as a grant made, after a successful application, from The Fred P. Archer Charities Trust. The overall amount now raised for the project is just over \$1.6 million. The St James' Music Foundation is able to fund the building contract instalment payments due over the course of this year from the donations that have been received. The Appeal Committee looks forward to being able to hold some more fundraising events in 2021. It is grateful for the continued support and generosity of benefactors and donors as we look forward to the next stages of the construction of what will be St James' magnificent new organ.'

Alistair Nelson is Organist at St James'.

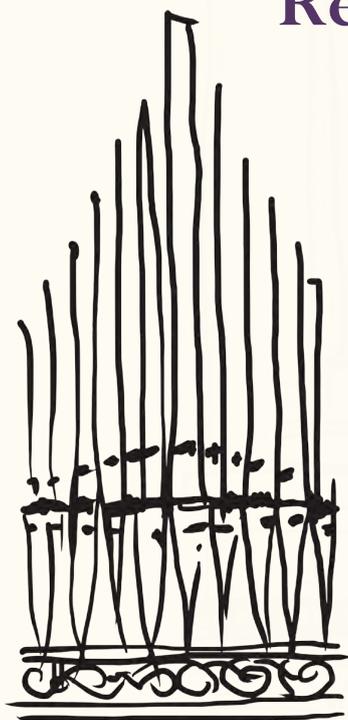


Randall Wolff fits swell shades.
Image: Benjamin Hoskins



Some frames for the organ case
Image: Benjamin Hoskins

St James' Organ Replacement & Restoration Appeal



Striving for the second million!

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a shared feeling of general uncertainty and, with many now out of work, the capacity to give to worthy causes has been reduced. But thanks to your generosity, the St James' Organ Appeal has raised just over \$1.6 million in total pledges and donations. A great effort in these uncertain times!

Why support this appeal?

A pipe organ plays a significant part in the life of a church and in the wider music community of the city. The new Dobson organ at St James' will be the third largest pipe organ in Sydney after the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Town Hall.

Its point of difference is that, apart from its use in regular church services, it will also be available to international organists and music students for concerts and recitals. In this way, generous donors can be assured they are making a difference to both the cultural and spiritual life of Sydney.

Visit the Appeal website: stjamesfoundationorganappeal.com.au

The St James' Music Foundation

ABN 81 868 929 941

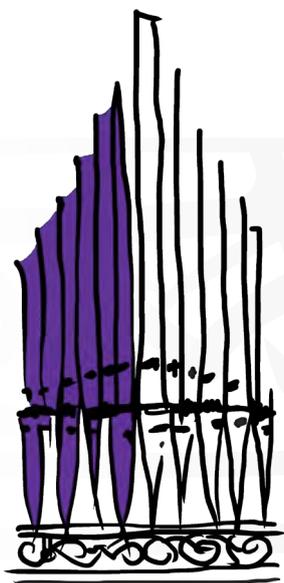
Dobson Pipe Organ Update

Alistair Nelson

The December/January edition of *St James' Connections* featured some photos of the two ranks of wooden pipes from the current organ after being removed and before they were shipped to Dobsons' workshop in Lake City, Iowa for use in the new organ. This time, we bring you some photos of new pipework being constructed in their workshop: the Hohl Flute and Harmonic Flute. The Hohl Flute is a signature stop from Dobsons, which will feature on its own as well as combining with many other stops. The Harmonic Flute is a partner to the Hohl Flute: in combination it creates a brighter flute tone. Its distinctive sound comes from the pipes being twice the length normally needed for its pitch, with a hole halfway up which allows the pipe to sound its first harmonic.

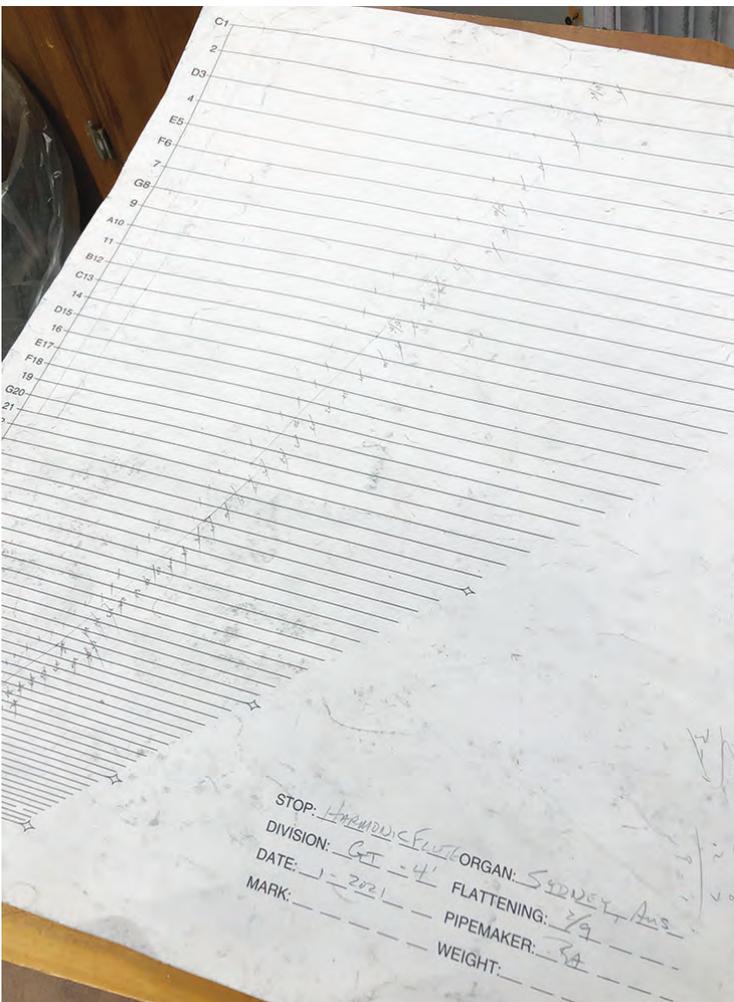
In addition to work on these two stops, pipes are being constructed by suppliers in Ohio, England, and the Netherlands; the design work continues in collaboration with our heritage architects; blowers and manual keyboards have been ordered; and new timber polish samples for the casework are due to arrive shortly.

Alistair Nelson is Organist at St James'.





Images in this article supplied by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders.



EDITORIAL POLICY
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 Publication should therefore not be read as St James', the Rector, Parish Council, staff or parishioners necessarily endorsing or approving any particular view or opinion.

NEXT EDITION
 The next edition of *St James' Connections* will be published on Good Friday 2 April 2021.
 Deadlines (advertising and editorial):
 Monday 22 March
 Contact: 8227 1301 or brooke.shelley@sjks.org.au

Dobson Pipe Organ Update

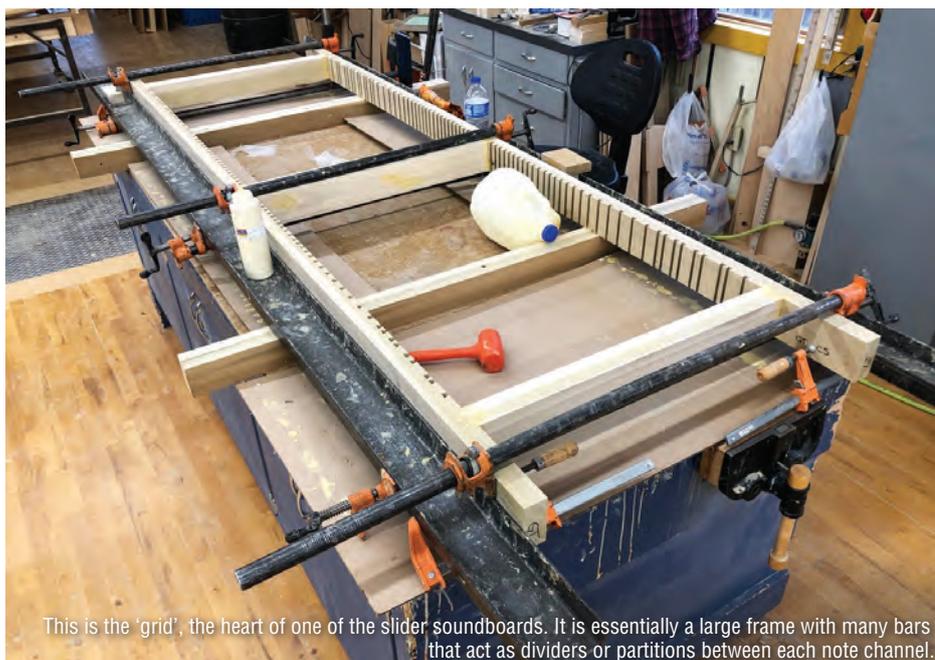
Alistair Nelson

Construction of the new Dobson organ continues in Lake City, Iowa. We present some photos of work currently being done at the factory, including two pipes from the Cornet de Violes stop, a particularly interesting and colourful stop which is likely the first of its kind in Australia. The pipes are made by the very highly regarded pipe maker Terry Shires in Leeds, England. The meaning of the remaining photos may be somewhat obscure to the untrained eye, but they give some idea of all the craft that goes into making the internal workings of the instrument.

Alistair Nelson is Organist at St James'.



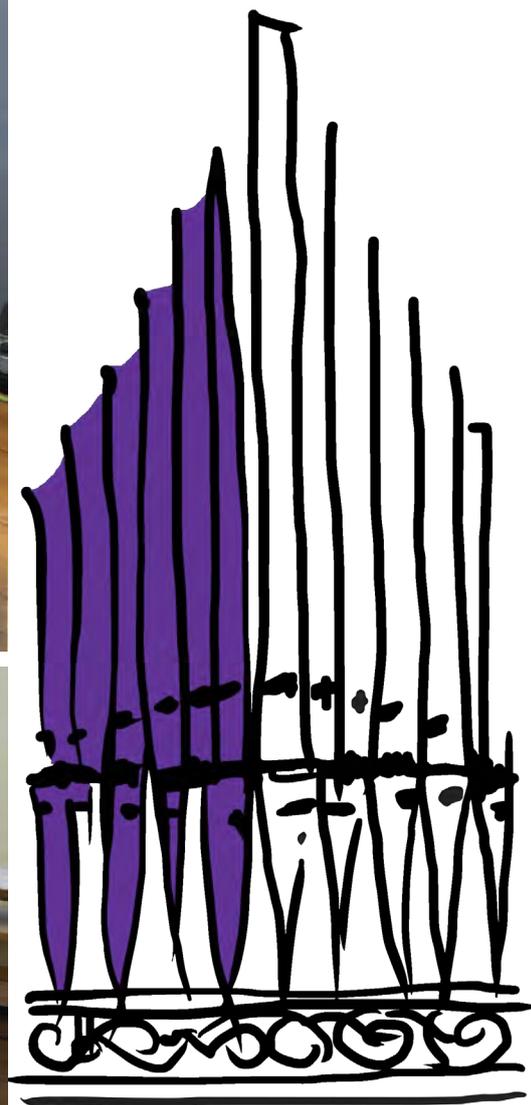
The lower part of the organ console.



This is the 'grid', the heart of one of the slider soundboards. It is essentially a large frame with many bars that act as dividers or partitions between each note channel.



These are two soundboard grids glued up. The upper and lower tables will be glued next.





These are blocks that receive conductors that convey the wind from the soundboards to any offset pipes



These are two of the reservoirs or bellows. The leatherwork has yet to be done.



These are the bars that define the note channels. Their dovetailed ends fit into dovetailed dadoes in the grid frame.



Two pipes from the Cornet de Violes.

Images in this article supplied by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders.

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St James' Connections

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