

# 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'.**

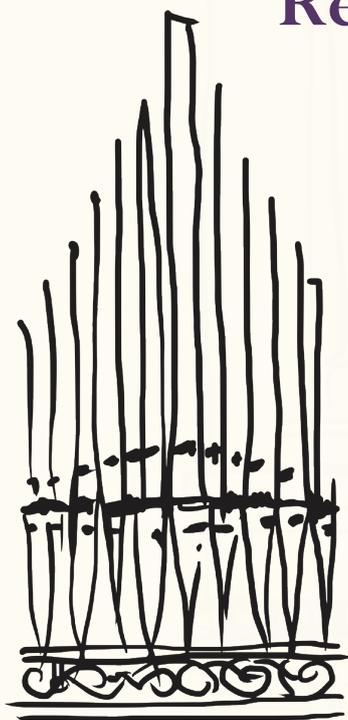


Randall Wolff fits swell shades.  
Image: Benjamin Hoskins



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](http://stjamesfoundationorganappeal.com.au)

**The St James' Music Foundation**

ABN 81 868 929 941