



1875 HILL & SON ORGAN RESTORATION PROGRESS REPORT OCTOBER 2004

Prepared by David Shield and Steve Kaesler



Organ Historical Trust of Australia citation:

"A three manual organ, originally of 37 speaking stops built by the noted London firm of Hill & Son for the Adelaide Town Hall where it was opened in 1877. One of three organs built by the firm for Australian town halls, it remains the oldest concert organ on the Australian mainland and is notable for its impressive casework, with carved details, its generous tonal scheme and outstanding sound."

Project Patrons:

Emeritus Professor David Galliver AM
Ashleigh Tobin, Principal Organist St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide,
Former Adelaide Town Hall Organist
Brian Hurn OAM, Mayor of The Barossa
Jane Lomax Smith, Lord Mayor of Adelaide
Neil Andrew MP, Federal member for Wakefield
Ivan Venning MP, State member for Schubert
Luise Krips John Radzevicius Peter & Margaret Lehmann Don Brown

Project Coordinators:

Steven Kaesler, David Shield

Consultancy Committee:

John Maidment OAM, John Stiller, Ray Holland

Supported by:

The Barossa Council Tanunda Soldiers Memorial Hall Committee

Many of you would be aware of the stunning casework and façade on the stage at the Tanunda Soldiers Memorial Hall, perhaps through the ABC Television, South Australian, "Statewide" programme aired mid 2004 or by visiting the Barossa Regional Gallery in Basedow Road, Tanunda. Beginning in 1999, the restoration has proceeded with quickening pace on a number of fronts.



We have seen the establishment of the "Friends of the Hill & Son Grand Organ", the positioning of the casework on stage, partial completion of the diapering of the display pipes, the refurbishment of the Tanunda Soldiers Memorial Hall both on stage and within the main body of the Hall, the erection of the framework in the factory of George Stephens Organbuilder and the completion of components for the console. The establishment of the "Friends" has seen a community body which meets together for fundraising activities. A small group of these people have also met on a weekly basis over the past four years for practical work on the restoration. Initially, paint was removed from case and pipework using 80 litres of methylated spirits in the cramped quarters of the film room at the back of the Hall. This work moved to the "Long room" of Chateau Tanunda.

The pipe organ's figurehead affectionately known as "Ethel Adelaide Hill" was followed to Melbourne by 21 central façade pipes for restoration by celebrated pipe decorators Christine Holmes and Marc Nobel.

At the same time, every piece of casework was carefully examined and faults rectified. Missing parts were replicated where necessary. It was then erected on stage and Tanunda artisan Lyall Rosenzweig applied the stunning two-tone faux grain oak finish. When the ornately coloured pipes returned from Melbourne they were put in place creating a wonderful display.

With assistance from the "Friends" and Barossa Council, the refurbishment of the stage, part of the project's responsibility, is virtually complete. A new roof has been provided. Old fretted brickwork has been remediated both externally by applying weatherproof paint, and internally by complete repointing, surfacing, and painting. New electric wiring and lighting has been provided including three-phase power for the organ. Sound absorbers have been removed from the body of the Hall, which has enhanced the already generous acoustic. At the factory of George Stephens Organbuilder, the focus has been on:



A "photo" break!

- The erection and layout of the internal building frame, correcting some errors of the past.
- The ordering of a new 3 manual "Hill & Son" keyboard set to match the original specification.
- The laying out of a new straight concave pedalboard ready for imminent construction.
- The reconstruction of components for the new console; including draw stop, music desk, panels and the restoration of the extant stop knobs and hand engraved ivory labels.
- Specialist timbers have been acquired after kiln drying for the reconstruction of the double rise bellows and barker lever mechanism.



The crew on a case pipe

The immediate future will see the placing of a false ceiling above the organ at the hall and completion of the painting of the stage walls early 2005. Beneath the stage will be prepared for the lowering of the floor behind the organ case. This area will be boxed in, hopefully to include glass, so that the public can view the organ's interior mechanism. Work will continue in the organbuilders factory, starting from the new keyboards and bellows, and working through the action to the windchests.

The Barossa Regional Gallery and the Hill & Son Grand Organ together won the 2003 SA Great Regional Arts Award. In 2003 The National Trust in South Australia commended the project in its publication, *Heritage Living*. It has also received an Award of Merit nomination from the Barossa Residents Association.

We have raised well over \$180,000 in cash and in kind contributions. Voluntary help has considerably reduced the original estimate and we have met all costs to date with cash in reserve. We are now heading towards the most costly stages of the restoration.

We continue to pursue the limited funding options available to us with some success. However it will take up to a further \$100,000 to secure this exciting project and bring it to a speedy conclusion. We already are aware of national and international tourists visiting to see our progress and artists from around the world who wish to play this instrument. Preliminary thought has already been given to the organization of the organ's anticipated opening. We still have some way to go and with our cohesive and energetic team will see the project through. Continued focus on the fund raising effort is needed to maintain the momentum and rapidly bring the project to the height of its potential.



Applying Gold Leaf

Again we appreciate your continuing interest and support of this extremely important national project. The results to date are of the highest quality, and will be "absolutely stunning".



The newly reconstructed Hill & Son console, showing the new three manual key sets by P&S, and surrounds by John Stephens.



The Adelaide based organ building family of 'George Stephens Pty Ltd' (left to right): John, Graham and George Stephens.