



## THE ART OF PIPE ORGAN RESTORATION

*John Maidment*

The past decade has witnessed a number of restorations of significant pipe organs in Melbourne and regional areas.

Additionally, with the closure of churches, there have been several very successful projects where organs have been recycled into new homes - sometimes into environments where they sound and look a great deal better.

In March of this year, the most important organ restoration project in Melbourne for at least a decade came to a successful conclusion.

Scotch College in Hawthorn was fortunate to acquire a very important example of the work of the organ building firm of Hill, Norman & Beard built in 1930 for the Presbyterian Assembly Hall, Scots Church, in Margaret Street, Sydney.



The Sydney building was about to be redeveloped, so the school was able to acquire the organ for its Memorial Hall, a lofty and impressive Gothic building in red brick designed by Henry Kemp. The previous instrument in the hall, also by Hill, Norman & Beard, had been installed in 1955 but was tonally inadequate for the large interior space at Scotch. It was sold to St Joseph's Catholic Church in West Brunswick.

The 1930 organ was built on a grand scale with lavish use of materials. It included a rare rank of 32 ft open flue pipes, massive slider windchests, an elaborate wind system and a wonderful palette of sounds. The instrument was extracted from the building by the Sydney organ building firm of Peter D.G. Jewkes and placed in storage until restoration could begin.

Owing to the size of the project, the contract was let conjointly to the Jewkes firm and to the South Island Organ Company of New Zealand, who transported the majority of the pipework and mechanical components to its premises in Timaru. Here a very thorough and painstaking restoration of all the mechanical components and the pipework took place. Some necessary modifications were undertaken to suit the configuration of the new site.

In Sydney, the 32 ft pipes were restored by Peter Jewkes and a recycled Hill, Norman & Beard console of 1961 overhauled for the new location. It was possible to recycle 50 turned ivory drawstops from the former organ in St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney (ivory is now unprocurable for such purposes).

Installation of the organ took place during school vacation periods throughout 2003. Given the size and weight of the components, scaffolding, hoists and even a crane have been employed. Towards the end of 2003, the pipework was installed, adjusted and tuned.

The results are magnificent in every way. The organ speaks into an ideal acoustical space with almost four seconds reverberation time when the full organ is played in an empty hall.

The overall quality of the sound is of the highest order, with a colossal dynamic range and amazing variety of colour. The reed stops, made in London at Hill, Norman & Beard's York Road factory and voiced by Arthur Rundle, are of enormous distinction.

As the organ was placed behind Gothic grillwork in Sydney, a new organ case for the hall was designed by Garry Martin Associates of Hawthorn and made by DNG Restorations in Abbotsford from Australian hardwood. The design picks up motifs from the hall, such as the quatrefoils that appear in the window tracery.

New zinc façade pipes have also been made by Australian Pipe Organs in Keysborough to suit the design. The organ was opened at a celebrity concert at the end of March.

With the closure of many church buildings, the preservation of their pipe organs has been an issue that is being addressed by the National Trust's Pipe Organ Committee and by the Organ Historical Trust of Australia, which publishes a redundant organs newsletter on its website: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ohta/>

Scotch College is to be strongly commended for preserving this very important organ, one of the largest examples of its builders' work to remain intact tonally.



The Pipe Organ Committee of the National Trust maintains classifications of organs in Victoria and is always happy to assist owners of instruments when restorations or relocations are being considered.

#### IMAGE CREDITS

The organ case, designed by Garry Martin Associates of Hawthorn and made by DNA Restorations of Abbotsford. (Image: Tony Love)

The Tromba pipework, showing the hooded metal resonators of this powerful reed stop. (Image: John Maidment)

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Contact Information:  
National Trust of Australia (Victoria)  
Tasma Terrace, 4 Parliament Place  
East Melbourne, Victoria. 3002  
Ph: 03 9656 9800 Fax: 03 9654 8143  
✉ [conservation@nattrust.com.au](mailto:conservation@nattrust.com.au)  
💻 [www.vic.nationaltrust.org.au](http://www.vic.nationaltrust.org.au)

