

# **WOOD OF HUDDERSFIELD**

PIPE ORGAN BUILDERS

UNIT 4 SILVER COURT

HUDDERSFIELD

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## **Stillingfleet Parish Church – The Organ.**

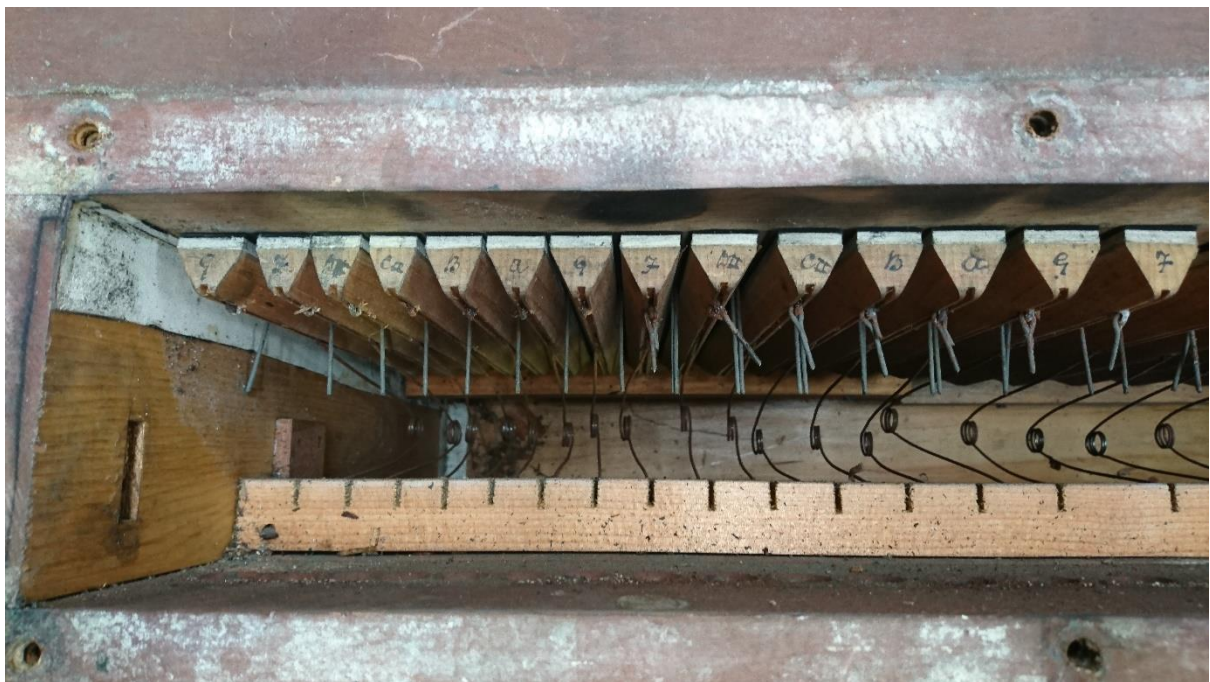
### **A Completion Report.**

Dear John,

Now that you have taken the organ back into regular use in church, I can reflect on the work we have done and what it has involved to get us this point. You will recall from my report and estimate that the bulk of the 1878 Forster & Andrews organ remains as it was constructed for Stillingfleet, the only alterations over the years was the making of a new oak case to fit the choir arch where the organ now lives, together with the tin façade pipes that it contains. We have no record at the moment of who may have done this later additional work. We suspect that at the same time the pedal organ was altered - a new radiating concave pedal keyboard was put in (rather badly), the compass was increased from 2 octaves to 30 notes.

On taking the organ down to commence the restoration the alarm bells started to ring, we had noticed some evidence of woodworm infestation when we first inspected the instrument, but we were unprepared for the amount of damage we would encounter as we stripped the parts down to return

The soundboards, actions and winding proved to be of the high quality we expect from F&A, with a suitably high standard of both materials and workmanship. The pallets of the manual soundboards were covered in a built-up layer of 3 skins of soft sheepskin, some firms used 2 and most used felt and leather. We were able to source the skins we needed to re-create the Forster & Andrews method of covering pallets,





*The pallets of both Swell and Great with new 3 ply leather coverings.*



*The restored pallet side of the Great soundboard.*



The table tops of the soundboards were planed throughout their length and the surfaces, bearers and sliders planed together to make a perfect fit for the sliders to move without runnings under the upper-boards.



*The Swell soundboard with table top planed and bearers papered ready for the sliders and upper-boards.*

We found the 3 ply leather coverings to be excellent, each pallet has bedded perfectly and once again proves the theory that the old masters knew exactly what they were doing.

The action frames contain the backfall beams which are, in fact levers which transfer the action of the keys through 180°, and can turn a pulling motion into a push. The levers are bushed and have central pivot which runs through the beam in one continuous run. These are held in place with iron staples which have been hammered into the hardwood beams in which they sit. However carefully we tried to remove these the backfall combs split out and snapped off.



*One of several of the backfall beams with the split and missing sections.*

We took the decision to machine these through the saw and fit new sections in hardwood to be exact copies of the originals. This meant we could re-bush all the levers and leave the key action bushed and free in its movement.



*The action beams remade with hard-wood sections.*



The keyboards were a tale of woe yet again. A casual look-over on an inspection visit could not have possibly revealed just how bad these had become through woodworm damage. The characteristic Forster & Andrews keyboards have retained their rounded blackwood sharp blocks and the natural surfaces have been re-covered with second hand ivory from keyboards we have salvaged over the years.



*An example of damage to the keyboards.*

Our keyboard restorer, David Martin, has carefully remade each damaged key so they now appear as good as new, we have saved as much of the material from the old keys as possible with only the odd key being brand new. The front pins have been replaced, the balance slots re-made and all surfaces are buffed and clean.

Once the lever frames were re-made, we could turn our attention to the roller-boards which transfer the key centres to the soundboard pull downs. We took these apart and re-bushed every pin and stud.



*Iron rollers from the action.*



*The roller-board frames with studs removed for re-bushing.*



The frames were reassembled with the rollers painted as they once were and all bushings replaced.

The bellows was re-leathered using hot glue and the very best sheepskin we could find. The feeders from the old hand-blowing arrangement have been left in position, screwed up to the underside of the bellows but not connected.

The pipes have suffered at the hands of careless and incompetent tuners over the years. Instead of using the correct tuning cones to carefully adjust the tuning over the years the pipes have been pinched with finger and thumb or just hit or ripped open to bring them into tune.



*The pipe tops of some of the Great showing damage.*

We took the decision to preserve the pipe feet and mouths by fitting tuning slides where the risk of further cone-tuning would have seriously damaged the pipes, we removed no metal but straightened out the tops to fit the slides, this will see the pipes able to be tuned easily without risking the speech. The reeds have been thoroughly cleaned and their speech re-set. Wooden pipes have been glued and stoppers replaced where eaten, leather has been replaced around the stoppers where worn away.

The Bourdon 16ft of the pedal organ has had new lugs fitted where they were secured up against the stays – the old ones crumbled to dust when we removed them.

The Pedal pneumatic chest has been re-leathered and thoroughly restored.



*The Pedal pneumatic chest with re-leathered internal and external motors restored.*

The blower had evidence of some asbestos use within the silencing cabinet, we couldn't risk re-using this so have scrapped this unit replacing it with a reconditioned good quality unit from Steve Lemmings of Derby.

You can see that we have carefully restored every aspect of the organ and we thank you for your patience in waiting for us to re-make so much of the organ and hope that you will agree with us that this whole project has been well worth the effort from both the Parish and organ builders.

We will supply a complete set of the restoration photos for the church to keep as a record of all that has been done.

With kind regards,

David Wood.