

On Wednesday 3rd October, Kate Swaddle, treasurer of the Diocesan Church Music Association organised a workshop tour of Harrison & Harrison Ltd., who are prestigious, world-renowned organ builders, situated in Meadowfield, Durham, in the heart of our diocese.

Twenty-five participants, including: organists, clergy and musicians signed-up for the free tour, in which Harrison & Harrison's voicers, Andrew Scott and Andy Fiddes (ex-pupil of St. Bede's, Lanchester) kindly facilitated.

As participants arrived at St. John's Road, Stuart Wright Funeral Service Ltd had kindly agreed to show case their Perlee Dutch Street Organ,



to show case their Perlee Dutch Street Organ, which was manufactured in Amsterdam, in 1983. The barrel organ is a mechanical musical instrument consisting of bellows and two ranks of pipes, housed in a case (usually of wood), and are often highly decorated. The basic principle is the same as a traditional pipe organ, but instead of being

played by an organist, the barrel organ is activated either by a person turning a crank, or by clockwork driven by weights or springs. The pieces of music are encoded onto wooden barrels (or cylinders), which are analogous to the keyboard of the traditional pipe organ. You may have heard of the phrase 'organ grinder' – this phrase is derived from a person (or in some cases, a trained animal!), who played a barrel organ. All of the fun of the fair was had as the Pirates of the Caribbean soundtrack and the BBC theme tune echoed around the carpark and certainly delighted the audience.

Then, at 4:30pm, Harrison & Harrison Ltd. kindly opened their doors for participants. Having nearly 160 years of experience in organ building, Harrison's are clearly meticulous experts in this highly-specialised field, caring for organs - throughout the world - in countries like Nigeria, Australia and America and those closer to home such as the Royal Albert Hall and Windsor Castle. Additionally, an insight was gained, into the rebuilding of the Henry Willis organ from Canterbury Cathedral as the organ was in various stages of being overhauled and refurbished.





Tour delegates were taken to the 'bellows' manufacturing area, as their employees explained how 15-20 sheepskin leathers help to form the outermost layers. Significantly, Andrew Scott, Head Voicer, also conveyed how he was responsible for the tuning of the organ in Westminster Abbey, for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, in 2013. Harrison's experience in manufacturing, creating, researching, lasering and casting metal enables them to be world leaders in the production of organs.

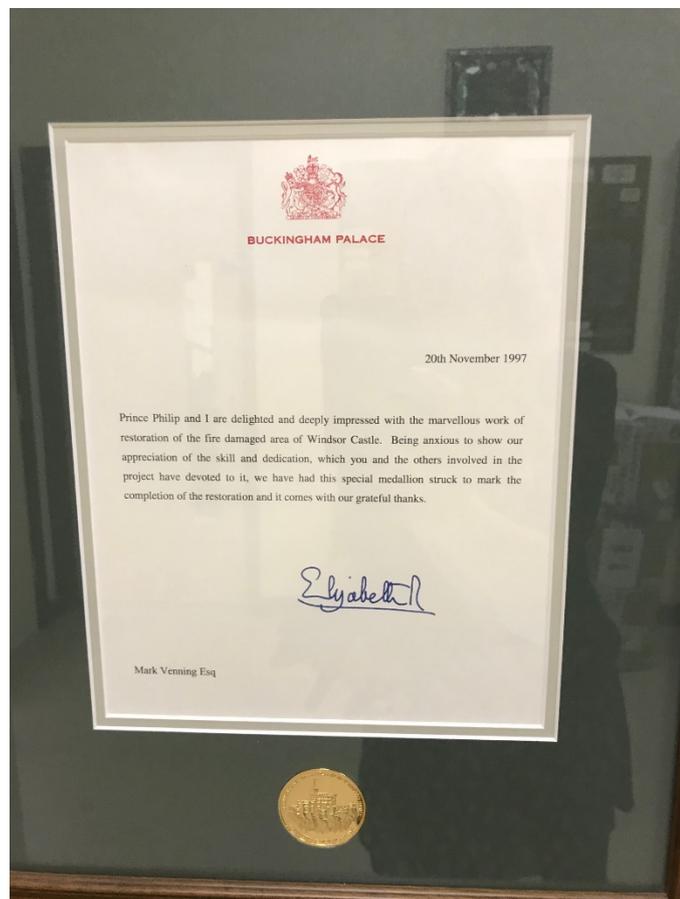
Both 'Andrews' were incredibly modest as they demonstrated their expertise in tuning; while describing how the flue pipes produce the 'principal', 'flute', 'diapason' and 'string' sounds. Committee

member Paul Berry even attempted to tune a clarinet reed! The talks were incredibly informative – explaining how the wood used tends to be manipulated from poplar hardwood trees and that keys are now made from bone, as opposed to ivory. The new workshop extension also allowed an insight into the workings of the trade. The annexe will enable 'rebuild projects' to be assigned to a team of individuals, who can then work together - in close proximity of one another, thus improving efficiency and effectiveness.

A number of questions were asked during the evening, including: 'Is this a dying trade?', 'How can you estimate the cost of a rebuild?'; and answers were carefully considered with Harrison identifying that a huge proportion of the cost of the manufacturing and rebuilding costs are largely due to labour costs. For example, a new organ would take a team of twenty, an entire year to build and finish.

Some of the local Harrison & Harrison Ltd. organs include St. Robert's, Fenham (1980), St. Andrew's, Worswick Street (rehoused in 1997) and All Saints', Lanchester (1985). Furthermore, Durham Cathedral's organ was originally installed by Henry Willis, 1876, but was rebuilt by Harrison in 1905.

Overall, the tour was a terrific insight into the world of organ building, and participants were undoubtedly left with the feeling that an electric organ could never replace the bespoke craftsmanship, magnificence and beautiful sounds of a real mechanical or electro-pneumatic pipe organ. Delegates' knowledge grew exponentially from the incredibly small amount of time that was spent on tour. The DCMA would like to formally thank Harrison and Harrison Ltd. and Stuart Wright for their expertise: it is reassuring to know that we have such talented experts in our diocese.



In conclusion to the workshop, the DCMA would like to encourage all interested parties to a 'Come and play' organ session. Visit @dhndcma on Facebook for more information, or access the DCMA Diocesan page at http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/liturgical_formation/churchmusicmain.php.

Additionally, Stuart Wright is also highly acclaimed organist, with a particular interest in the North-East Theatre Organ Association, and has invited all to attend the Mighty Wurlitzer Christmas session on Sunday 9th December, 2-5pm, at Howden-le-Wear.