

Pipe Up!

St Mary's Church Gate Helmsley Centenary Organ Restoration Fund

Five years of fundraising came to fruition recently with the return of the pipe organ to St Mary's Gate Helmsley. After 6 months in the York workshop of Principal Pipe Organs (PPO) the re-installation began in November and was completed just before our village carols on 10 December – a close shave.



The organ was first installed in November 1913 and cost £225. As the vestry had to be enlarged to accommodate the organ, the final bill was £350! An electric blower was added in 1946, but otherwise no alterations were made.



Approaching its centenary it was clear that the organ needed major restoration if it was to remain in use. Critical parts were worn; pipes either didn't work, or worse, sounded when they weren't supposed to because air was leaking between the proper wind channels; everything was covered in 100 years of dust.

The Diocesan Organ Advisor and three firms of organ builders all considered that the instrument was worthy of restoration and in 2011 a Fundraising Group was set up within the PCC – Dick Garnons-Williams, Andrew Podmore, Keith Potts, and Michael Harran.

The target of £44,000 seemed formidable and at times we wondered if it was achievable. The PCC "loaned" £7,000 to cover VAT, which we will recover from HMRC and repay. We wrote grant applications (several of which were successful), arranged fundraising events and invited people to "Sponsor a Pipe". The response, from far and wide, was uplifting. Many of you reading this will have enjoyed one or more of our events – and contributed most generously. Our costs were small because so many people gave their services free of charge or with minimal expenses.

The red line on "thermometer" in the churchyard crept steadily upwards until it reached the top.



So, what of the restored organ?



These pictures give an indication of the improvement of the pipework, the organ console and the case. We were unable to preserve the original pneumatic action but conversion to electric action allowed for some useful extra flexibility and you may judge the improved sound for yourself.



The organ was re-dedicated by our Rector, Revd. Chris Wingfield during the Benefice service on Sunday 15 January, with the Benefice choir and Peter Stott at the organ.

A book illustrating the history of the organ and the steps along the road to its restoration is on display in the church.

The inaugural recital will be given by Mr Geoffrey Coffin of PPO on Saturday 8 April at 7pm – contact Michael Harran (01759 372215) for details.

Finally, a huge **THANK YOU** to all those who supported and encouraged **Pipe Up!** in so many ways. Because of you this pipe organ will continue to inspire and uplift singing and worship in the church for another century.

