

St Mary's held its first Crib Service on Christmas Eve and Brian Wake has given us a brief insight into its planning whilst Christine Burnell lets us know what it was like from the congregation's viewpoint.

If projects such as this are measured by the numbers that attend then with a congregation of around 100, the Crib Service must have been a triumph.

St Mary's Crib Service 2016 - **THE SHEEP AND THE CRIB**

When the Worship Committee was thinking about the Christmas services for 2016 someone suggested a service, especially for families, on Christmas Eve. It became known as the Crib Service. It was to be a service which had the children at its heart - in both senses!

How about getting the children to be involved in the Christmas story by re-creating the scene in the stable linked with the theme that whatever our age, shape, size or disposition, the love of Jesus is for every one? So it came about that, in addition to those gathered in that stable, we collected sheep of every size, colour and shape to be the big feature and to be 'found' by the children.

This was the first crib service aimed at families that I have attended. It was a lively and engaging service for everyone. The children were encouraged to participate though out the service with activities and song. The children loved hunting for the characters of the nativity, Shepherds, sheep, donkeys, Mary, Joseph but especially the sheep! All the while the nativity story unfolded.

The interactive process meant this was a fast paced service with lots of moving around and thinking, encouraging the children to use the whole church, there was nothing stuffy or formal about this participation including the assistance from the adults as they hunted out excited children from the Londonderry Chapel and choir stalls.

Once again St Mary enables worshippers to try something different this time whilst we cover the much loved Nativity story engaging the whole family throughout.

About our Organ

The organ in St Mary's has a somewhat chequered history having been one of the first produced by Harrison & Harrison of Durham in 1873. It wasn't that this was a new firm of organ builders, rather a complicated removal from the previous business, T H Harrison of Rochdale. That business had been in financial difficulty and seems to have been sold as a going concern to a Mr Horrocks whilst involved in a project to build the organ for Penrith Parish Church, but the business was repossessed by a creditor before the Penrith organ could be finished.

Having moved to London to join with his family's firm there, Harrison contacted Penrith PC to offer his services to complete the installation. It seems Horrocks heard of this and was understandably upset; Harrison made a rapid departure from London and appeared a short while later in Durham.

Harrison engaged a printer in Hartlepool, a Mr Proctor, to produce an advertising brochure and Proctor seems to have been offered a commission for introducing new business to Harrison. One of these was Holy Trinity Church in Hartlepool where, in early 1873, Harrison built a large new 3-manual organ to replace their existing organ. Part of his sales pitch was to offer to engage a Dr Dykes, apparently an organ virtuoso of that time, to play the new organ on its opening service. It seems that Dr Dykes may not have been informed as the Sunday service proceeded with the new organ but no music as there was no organist available to play.

Harrison by then was in negotiation with Revd. Wilson in Long Newton regarding a new organ for St Mary's. He proposed the structure and sound board of the existing Holy Trinity organ would form the basis of the single-manual organ with new pipe-work, actions, keys and pedals at St Mary's. The incumbent of the church, Revd. Wilson, took some persuading, even though Harrison promised as follows: 'We undertake to make the organ as perfect rich and pure in tone in fact as nearly equal to new as possible; in some respects it would be better'. Delays persisted, not least because of Harrison's moving premises, being short of capable staff ('absence of hands') and having trouble with existing employees, so that our organ was eventually installed late in 1873. In a letter to the Revd. Wilson dated 26 November 1873, when the organ was almost completed and awaiting final tuning, Harrison muses: 'The organ has never paid us and we lost by the decorating too ... you have a bargain'.

This is the invoice for the manufacture and installation of our organ which celebrates its 150th year in 2023 (if it makes it!)

Case of neat open design, metal speaking pipes in front.
 The bellows large enough to supply a good Pedal and Swell organ.
 The organ to be prepared for second manual to be added at some time. No zinc pipes, all organ metal. Materials to be of the best kind.
 The tone rich, full and sweet, free from all harshness.
 Stops No's 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 to be enclosed in a Swell box.

Price	£90/0/0
The front pipes to be decorated gold and colour	6/10/0
An organ stool, price	1/0/0
About 72 [sq.] feet of back and east side casing@ 8 ¹ / ₂ per foot	2/11/0
60 [sq.] feet of casing for west side ornamental heads to panels	3/2/6
Carriage of organ to Darlington Station	19/6
1 ¹ / ₄ ft@ 1/7d per cut	1/0/0
Total and include all	£105/3/0

Harrison & Harrison
 Durham. April 3rd 1873