

THE 1903 HARRISON & HARRISON ORGAN

A History of St Joseph's "Hidden Jewel"



St Joseph's 1903 Harrison & Harrison Pipe Organ
(photographed in March 2023 after restoration)

1. FOUNDATIONS: A MUSICAL HERITAGE

From its very foundations, music played a key role in the liturgical and social life of St Joseph's community. A choir from St Andrew's in Glasgow (now the cathedral in Clyde Street) sang at the opening of the church on 13 June 1847 and it was recorded in newspaper reports that an 'organ' had been purchased by the community. Another contemporary source described the instrument as 'small but very powerful'. This organ had been obtained by Rev. Thomas Wallace, originally from County Limerick and the first priest-in-charge of St Joseph's (1844-53), who supervised the building of the church and, in 1849, travelled as far afield as London in search of funds to help eliminate the debts incurred in the church's construction.

In the Fourth Edition (1880) of his *History of Kilmarnock*, Archibald McKay listed the organs in various Kilmarnock churches, including information about builders and cost. Unfortunately, his account ends with a single sentence to the effect that 'there is also one in the Roman Catholic Chapel in Hill Street' (p. 313). This organ could have been a single-manual pipe organ or, perhaps, a reed-organ. However, the weight of available evidence would seem to suggest it was, indeed, the former: the *Glasgow Observer* of 20 June 1903 clearly identifies St Joseph's pre-1903 instrument as the first organ to be installed in any of the churches in Kilmarnock. There was a succession of dedicated organists throughout these early decades, including Miss Brennan and Miss Kitson in the 1880s and 1890s.

A choral tradition was established in St Joseph's from its earliest years. Music sung by the choir was typical of the period, with the influence of opera and oratorio particularly marked. In 1898, St Joseph's Choir sang one such piece at the Christmas Midnight Mass, the *Paschal Mass* by the Belgian Jesuit composer, Louis Lambillotte SJ (1797-1855). This setting of the Latin Mass required accompaniment by other instruments, alongside the organ, including trumpets, horns, clarinet, oboe, flutes, cello and violins.

In 1899, the organ, such as it was at that time, was deemed to be a serious cause for concern. The fact that this assessment was arrived at so soon after the singing of Lambillotte's *Paschal Mass* would appear to provide a clue as to a developing mindset. Musicians and choir-members of those years evidently shared remarkable ambition in seeking to take their music-making to 'the next level' (and hence the enhancement of the various liturgies). Given such aspirations, it is very probable that the then organ was found wanting in terms of providing appropriately robust

accompaniment. There is also the real possibility that the instrument, in common with many older instruments of the period in Britain, lacked a full pedalboard (if any at all) and, therefore, would have been most out-of-sorts with the requirements of emergent repertoire and performance technique (not least in the works of J. S. Bach) at the turn of the century. In April 1899, the organ was cleaned, tuned and fitted with a new keyboard - but was still not satisfactory. Consequently, probably in 1900 or early 1901, a *St Joseph's Organ Fund Committee* was set up, charged with exploring options for a new instrument which might more readily meet and fulfil the aspirations of the community.

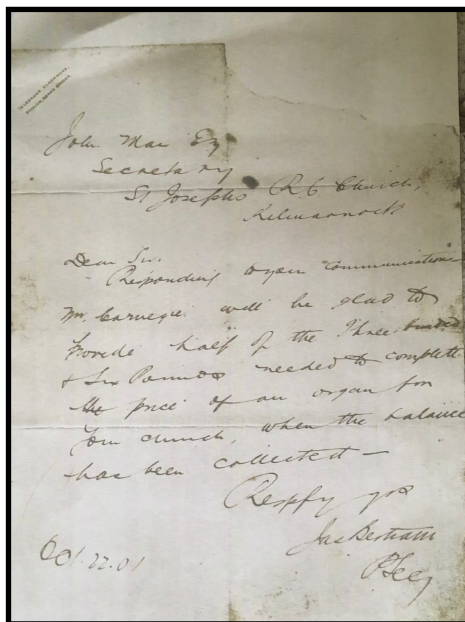


St Joseph's sanctuary (c. 1900)

2. ORGAN FUND COMMITTEE AND THE CARNEGIE GRANT

The *Organ Fund Committee* met under the auspices of Canon John Woods. He had arrived in Kilmarnock in 1898 and would leave in late 1903 to take up the post of Rector of the Royal Scots College in Valladolid, Spain. The Secretary of the *Committee* was Mr John Mair, a confectioner with premises in Cheapside Street. He was an accomplished singer and member of St Joseph's Choir. (Indeed, he was one of the soloists in Lambillotte's *Paschal Mass* at Christmas 1898.) Other choir members, including Daniel McKillop and John Foy, joined them in their fund-raising efforts, taking a lead in developing initiatives which might aid them in achieving their goal.

At some point, the *Organ Fund Committee* must have become aware of Andrew Carnegie's willingness to part-fund new organs in churches all over the world. Carnegie had established a Committee in New York which assessed applications and awarded grants, under the supervision of its Secretary, Mr James Bertram, another Scot. The *Register* of the Carnegie Committee for 1901 (now in the archives of the *Carnegie Corporation of New York*) records that on 22 October a sum of £153 had been granted towards the purchase of an organ for St Joseph's Church in Kilmarnock, Scotland. Most noticeably, the entry in the Carnegie *Register* makes it clear that the £153 represented *half of what was still required to make up the total cost of a new organ* - not half of the total cost itself.



**James Bertram to John Mair
(22 October 1901)**

The notification of the award of monies from Carnegie was signed by James Bertram and sent to John Mair in his capacity as Secretary of St Joseph's *Organ Committee*. Dated 22 October 1901, it reads:

'Dear Sir, Responding Organ Communication. Mr Carnegie will be glad to provide half of the three-hundred and six pounds needed to complete the price of an organ for your church, when the balance has been collected.'

The cheque for £153 from the Carnegie Committee was finally dispatched to Kilmarnock on 14 February 1902. On 25 February, John Mair wrote a letter of thanks, noticeably addressed not to Bertram but to Andrew Carnegie himself:

'Your letter received with cheque for 153 pounds enclosed to our Organ Fund which we the members of St Joseph's R.C. Organ Fund Committee in [sic] behalf of congregation return our most sincere and heartfelt thank you for your kindness kind and generous gift to us.'

There is a certain poignancy in noting Mair's scoring out of the word 'kindness' as he clearly sought to get just the right words to convey the authentic sentiments of both himself and the community he represented.

3. THE ADVENT OF THE NEW ORGAN (1902-03)

It can be surmised that the monies required to make up the balance of the cost of a new organ had been successfully collected by St Joseph's community in the interim between notification of the Carnegie grant (October 1901) and its eventual receipt (February 1902). What is evident (puzzling too, perhaps) is the fact that the grant from Carnegie was received by Canon John Woods before any organ-builder had been contracted. However, it is very likely that estimates had been sought from various firms. On 12 July 1902, Canon Woods wrote to one firm in particular, namely Harrison & Harrison of Durham, enquiring as to what might be the earliest date by which an organ could be supplied to St Joseph's were they to secure the contract.

Given the intense competition in the contemporary trade of organ-building and the range of options (including Scottish-based) which could have been presented to Canon Woods and his committee, why was the firm of Harrison & Harrison selected for the commissioning of St Joseph's new organ? Three contemporary details provide some tantalising clues in accounting for the final choice of organ builder.

First, two other churches in Kilmarnock had already purchased Harrison & Harrison organs in the firm's early years - the Laigh Kirk in 1877 and Riccarton Parish Church in 1884 (both organs have not survived). It would seem reasonable to assume that Canon Woods and his Committee were aware of this local state-of-affairs and that some well-meaning agency had provided word-of-mouth recommendations.

Second, a report in the *Glasgow Observer* newspaper of 4 March 1899 informed its Catholic readership that various members of St Joseph's Choir had sung in the chorus of the Kilmarnock Choral Society which had recently performed Handel's *Messiah*. The Choral Society had been accompanied on this occasion by none other than Mrs McIlroy, identified by the *Observer* as St Joseph's current organist. Such a concert was precisely the sort of environment where conversations about local organs could have taken place.



Fr Stephen McGrattan, Parish Priest, standing beside the blue plaque commemorating the original Durham premises of Harrison & Harrison where St Joseph's organ was built in 1903.

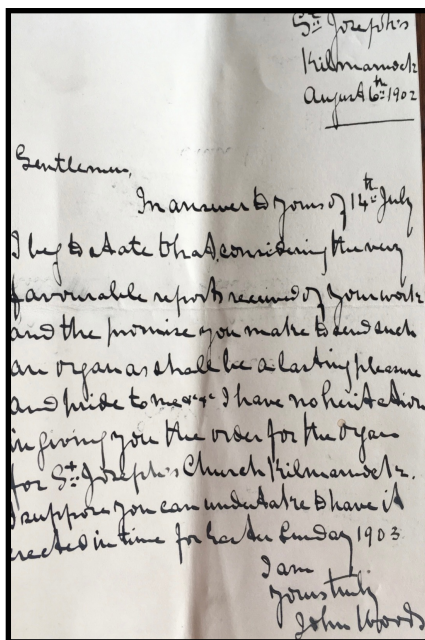
Third and finally, Canon Woods (and presumably his Committee) had met with Harrison & Harrison's Scottish agent at least three times before making a final decision. A letter of 14 August 1902 from the agent to Harry Harrison in Durham indicated that 'the folks' at St Joseph's had 'been a long time making up their minds'. This certainly infers that the Committee had been looking at a range of options and keeping their cards close to their chests. At the same time, it also suggests that Harrison & Harrison's Scottish agent had been persistent.

In sum (albeit tentatively), it is possible that awareness of Harrison & Harrison amongst St Joseph's *Organ Committee* was initially awakened by a now impossible-to-identify local recommendation. The final firm decision, however, was the end-result of the happy coincidence of St Joseph's pipe organ aspirations gestating at a most auspicious moment in time when the Durham firm was proactively seeking business in Scotland as part of a broader goal of expansion into new markets.

In the letter of 14 August 1902, Harrison & Harrison's Scottish agent acknowledged news recently forwarded to him by Harry Harrison: St Joseph's, Kilmarnock, had confirmed the commissioning of an organ from the firm. The agent asserted that 'this little bit of success will stimulate me to try and get more work for you'.

Canon Woods' original letter, putting in the order for the organ, remains in the Harrison & Harrison archive. Dated 6 August 1902, Canon Woods wrote as follows:

'I beg to state that, considering the very favourable reports received of your work and the promise you make to send such an organ as shall be a lasting pleasure and pride to me, etc., etc., I have no hesitation in giving you the order for the organ for St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock.'



St Joseph's
Kilmarnock
August 6th 1902

Gentlemen,

In answer to yours of 14th July

I beg to state that considering the very favourable reports received of your work and the promise you make to send such an organ as shall be a lasting pleasure and pride to me, etc. I have no hesitation in giving you the order for the organ for St Joseph's Church Kilmarnock.

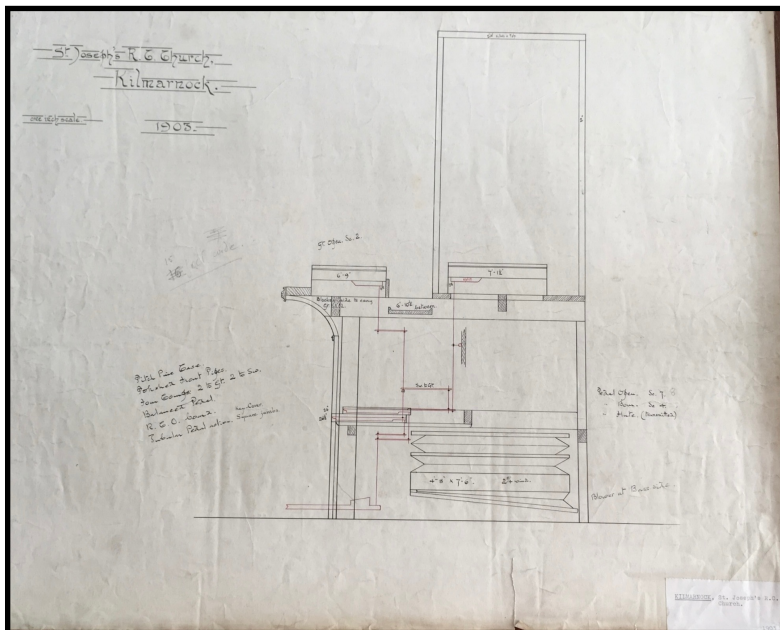
I suppose you can undertake to have it erected in time for before Sunday 1903.

I am
yours truly
John Woods

Canon John Woods commissions Harrison & Harrison (6 August 1902).

Given the role which the Harrison & Harrison pipe organ has gone on to play in the liturgical and devotional life of St Joseph's community over the ensuing decades to the present day, there is a particular resonance to Canon Woods' words: 'lasting pleasure and pride', indeed.

In the letter of 6 August 1902 commissioning the new organ, Canon John Woods also expressed the hope that the organ would be installed in time for Easter Sunday 1903 (12 April). This was to prove an unrealistic date. In fact, in his 1973 book *The Harrison Story*, Laurence Elvin offers the revealing observation that 1903 was a particularly significant year for the firm with so much work in hand that alterations to the Durham factory were necessary. Nevertheless, on 15 July 1903, Canon Woods sent the sum of £263 as part payment towards the total cost of the organ: £470. That same day - 15 July - the first organ materials arrived at Kilmarnock Railway Station. By 23 July, Canon Woods must have been pleased with the progress of the team working on the installation of the organ as he wrote that day to Harrison & Harrison informing them of his proposed date for the inauguration of the instrument. Indeed, the date he suggested - 9 August - was confirmed in the August 1903 edition of the monthly London publication, *The Organist and Choirmaster*.



The original designer's drawing for St Joseph's organ (1903).

In fact, St Joseph's new two-manual, seventeen-stops, tracker-action (pedals, tubular-pneumatic) Harrison & Harrison organ was inaugurated on Sunday 23 August 1903, as reported in the *Glasgow Observer* of 29 August (which can be sourced at www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). Nominated "Organ Sunday", there was a full day of ceremony. Solemn High Mass was celebrated in the morning by Fr Henry Corrigan SJ of St Aloysius' College, Glasgow, with Fr Bede Wrigley OFM of St Francis', Cumberland Street, Glasgow, preaching. Canon Woods was Master of Ceremonies. St Joseph's Choir, directed by Mr Tom Boyle from Govan and accompanied on the new organ by Mr Walker Brooke, sang Mass settings by Weber and Mozart (or, more accurately in the latter's case, a setting - the so-called *Twelfth Mass* - then still mis-attributed to Mozart). In the evening, another special service was held at which Fr Bede preached again, soloists sang sacred arias, and the choir sang a *Tantum Ergo* by Lambillotte.

4. HISTORIC ORGAN STATUS



**The modern premises of Harrison & Harrison,
Durham.**

Though they would not have known it at the time, what Canon Woods and his Committee achieved in 1903 was to occasion the intersection of the history of St Joseph's Church in Kilmarnock with the continuing success story which is Harrison & Harrison as an organ builder and restorer,

particularly throughout the 20th century and onwards to the present day. The catalogue of Harrison & Harrison's organs is truly impressive, including the Royal Festival Hall in London. Most recently, the firm has worked on the organs of Kings College, Cambridge, and York Minster and is presently building a new organ for Norwich Cathedral.

Significantly, the organ in St Joseph's, Kilmarnock, is the only Harrison & Harrison in a Catholic church in Scotland, still located in the space and acoustic for which it was originally designed, built and voiced. Obtaining a pipe organ of quality was clearly important to St Joseph's priest and people and, in commissioning Harrison & Harrison in 1902, that generation of parishioners demonstrated just how important looking to the future was for them. As a result of their parochial ancestors' farsightedness, the present generation of parishioners is the recipient of a most generous-hearted legacy.

The sense of gratitude extended through time to the generation of 1903 for their gift of the Harrison & Harrison organ was abundantly reinforced in 2019 when the instrument was awarded a *Certificate of Historic Listing* by the *British Institute of Organ Studies* (BIOS). The certificate has the following citation:

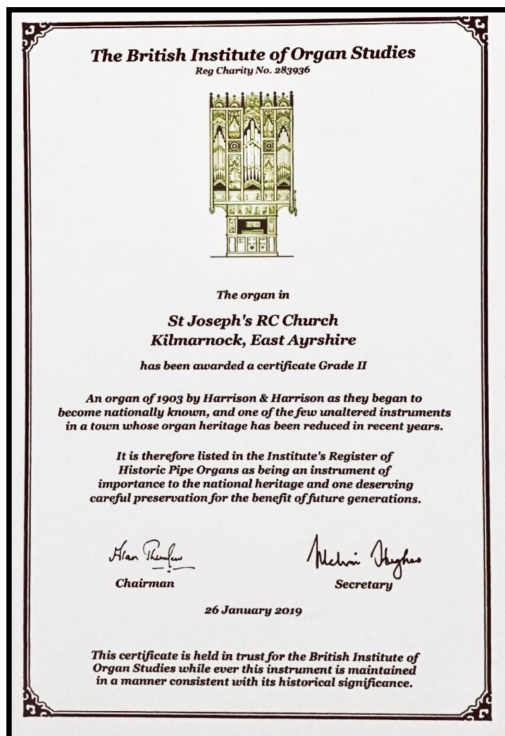
'The organ in St Joseph's RC Church, Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire, has been awarded a certificate Grade II. An organ of 1903 by Harrison & Harrison as they began to become nationally known, and one of the few unaltered instruments in a town whose organ heritage has been reduced in recent years. It is therefore listed in the Institute's Register of Historic Pipe Organs as being an instrument of historic importance to the national heritage and one deserving careful preservation for the benefit of future generations.'

The reference to 'unaltered instruments' in the BIOS citation is a reminder that it has been the largely unchanged condition of St Joseph's organ which has given it a particular significance. It has survived with historical integrity. So many UK organs which have managed to survive for similar lengths of time are no longer in their original state, having had 'improvements' added, oftentimes involving changes in action (e.g. mechanical to electro-pneumatic) or additions of pipes and/or divisions. This is not the case with St Joseph's 1903 Harrison & Harrison. The organ's

specification – its stops and the sounds they emit – remains as it was when it was first constructed.

The only major change to the organ was the installation of an electric blower to provide the air for the pipes to speak, ensuring the sustenance of an even rate of air-pressure. Before this innovation in 1940, air was delivered by means of a hand-pump which remains *in situ* at the rear of the organ.

The *Certificate of Historic Listing* was formally presented to St Joseph’s parish by Matthew Hynes (BIOS representative) during Mass on Sunday 28 April 2019. Councillor Jim Todd, Provost of East Ayrshire Council, addressed a packed church of parishioners, including the members of St Joseph’s Choir, on what was a truly memorable occasion.



BIOS Historic Organ Listing Certificate (2019)

5. THE ORGAN RESTORATION PROJECT

Over the decades since 1903, St Joseph's Harrison & Harrison organ has continued to be at the heart of the congregation's worship and devotion, in no small measure providing a significant soundtrack to so many people's lives. It has accompanied countless liturgies, offered consolation at funerals and communicated exultation and joy at weddings. St Joseph's choral tradition continues, with a four-part (SATB) choir singing at Christmas, Holy Week and Easter (a norm only interrupted in recent years due to COVID-19 restrictions). The sound of the Harrison & Harrison has nobly accompanied that music-making in praise of God, providing a bedrock of organ-sound which has become so familiar to congregants over the decades.

The instrument has also proven to be an instrument of great adaptability. It has provided sympathetic harmonisation of the plainsong of the past as well as robust accompaniment of congregational hymns and Mass settings. It has also proven itself to be idiomatically responsive to the requirements of all periods of organ repertoire. For a tracker-action instrument built in 1903, it is remarkable the extent of the warmth and clarity which it brings in particular to 20th- and 21st-century music. The sheen of sound produced in playing organ works by the likes of Herbert Howells or Kenneth Leighton speaks volumes for the quality of the original Harrison & Harrison workmanship. Such an instrument - in its liturgical and recital roles - remains one rich in promise for years to come.

Although still playable almost twelve decades after its installation in St Joseph's, the need to undertake a complete restoration had become more imperative in recent years. Like any complex construction approaching 120 years of age, the instrument's workings were becoming tired as they neared the end of their functional life. It was clear that a great deal more than just a general cleaning of accumulated dust was required; rather, only a complete dismantlement of all its parts, followed by attentions in a specialist workshop, would be required to ensure that the instrument could continue to be played with confidence for generations to come. More than ever before, perhaps, there is a general awareness in society that a community's heritage matters and, consequently, merits proactive protection, though its preservation and enhancement can come at a cost, not least financial. But there is also so much to be gained in such projects in terms of strengthening bonds of community and nurturing a sense of shared endeavour, offering

opportunities to work together to make what once seemed impossible possible.



St Joseph's Organ Restoration Project

Thus it was that, in responding responsibly to the demands of custodianship of such a historic instrument, Fr Stephen McGrattan, appointed Parish Priest of St Joseph's in 2016, took up with real passion and commitment what was certain to be the truly daunting challenge of raising funds of £100,000+ to finance the restoration. Informal conversations about the possibility of organ restoration were begun shortly after Fr McGrattan's arrival in Kilmarnock. These aspirations took more concrete form in 2019 when the *Organ Restoration Project* was launched with a small steering group made up of five members: Fr McGrattan, parish priest; Raymond McCluskey and Fiona McCluskey, parish organists; Helena Rameckers, grant applications; Matthew Hynes, BA(Hons), CertPGS (RSAMD), professional organ restoration consultant, organist in St Columba's Parish Church, Ayr, and, as Royal Burgh of Ayr Organist, curator of the impressive 1904 Lewis pipe organ in Ayr Town Hall. Matthew's advice and insight were to prove invaluable to the process. Two eminent musicians agreed from the outset to be Patrons of the *Project*: Sir James MacMillan, Ayrshire-born composer and conductor, and Martin Baker, for twenty years until 2020 the Master of Music and Director of the world-famous Westminster Cathedral Choir.

The main purposes of the *Organ Restoration Project* steering group were two-fold: (1) to co-ordinate the raising of monies by way of (a) making grant applications to funding bodies and (b) encouraging voluntary contributions from philanthropic individuals; (2) to enhance the public profile of St Joseph's Harrison & Harrison organ.

Over several months, in pursuance of the first goal, applications were prepared for submission to potential funding institutions. As was to be expected, not all applications were successful but those that were bore fruit with major awards, including some of several thousand pounds. Such successes encouraged a positive momentum in the continuing efforts to promote the *Organ Restoration Project*. Many in the parish community - as well as other supporters sympathetic to its purpose - responded to the *Project* with great generosity, often anonymously. An opportunity, in particular, to sponsor organ pipes seemed to capture the popular imagination and provided not only much needed funds for the restoration but also enhanced awareness of the complexity of the organ as people made their choices from the instrument's 872 pipes. Sponsors of pipes received a souvenir certificate, signed by Fr McGrattan, naming the pipe selected and thanking sponsors for their support of music in St Joseph's. It was not uncommon for pipes to be sponsored as gifts for someone else; more poignantly, perhaps, sponsorship was often in the name of a deceased family member.

St Joseph's Church, Kilmarnock
1903 Harrison & Harrison Organ Restoration Fund
Sponsor a Pipe

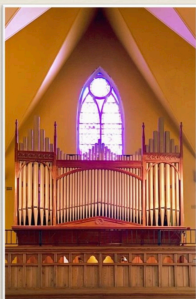


What is Sponsor A Pipe?
As part of our Organ Restoration Project, we are offering you the chance to sponsor an organ pipe. Your individual donation will help towards the cost of the restoration. We will recognise your generosity with a commemorative certificate and, with your permission, your name will be recorded in our public *Book of Sponsors*.

How many pipes does the organ have?
Our organ has 872 pipes, varying in sizes - 16 ft, 8ft, 4ft and 2ft. The smallest are just as important as the largest with each playing its own part in producing the magnificent sounds that the organ offers.

Sponsor a Pipe!

ORGAN RECITALS



INAUGURAL SERIES 2020
1903 Harrison & Harrison Organ

St Joseph's RC Church
Kilmarnock

The Organ Recital Series which never was. Recitals eventually began successfully in Autumn 2021.

The *Project's* second goal was concerned with enhancing knowledge and appreciation of the significance of St Joseph's historic instrument amongst a wider local and, indeed, national community. An obvious starting-point was seeking to understand better the circumstances surrounding the organ's origins. Consequently, in August 2019, the parish organists visited the current workshops of Harrison & Harrison (now situated in the outskirts of Durham, having moved in 1996 from the original city centre location where St Joseph's organ had been built in 1903). After the warmest of welcomes from then Managing Director, Andrew Reid, the two organists were provided with access to all correspondence in the firm's archives relating to St Joseph's. This was the happy occasion when, amongst other papers, both Canon Woods' August 1902 commissioning of the instrument and the original 1903 draughtsman's drawing of the organ were discovered. On 9 August 2021, two years after the visit, the materials found in Durham formed the basis of an illustrated presentation on the history of the instrument, delivered in St Joseph's by Raymond McCluskey.

The two year delay between archival visit and presentation was a result of the impact of the Covid pandemic which put some of the *Project's* initiatives on hold. This was particularly the case with an inaugural series of Organ Recitals programmed for between March and November 2020. Flyers, leaflets and posters had all been printed. However, it was destined to be the Recital Series that never was as the entire country went into lockdown. With the gradual relaxation of restrictions, a re-scheduled Series began in September 2021 and concluded in August 2022. These occasions allowed all those in attendance to hear (and see, by means of a big screen) the playing of a succession of eight distinguished invited organists, including the *Project's* co-patron, Martin Baker, a former President of the Royal College of Organists, whose memorable recital in June 2022 was arranged specially to mark the church's 175th Anniversary. Particularly revealing on these occasions was the extent to which the

invitation to come along to hear St Joseph's historic organ opened up opportunities for the parish community to extend hospitality to a broad range of visitors, from Ayrshire and beyond. Shared love of music can, indeed, be a great 'bridge-builder'.

6. RESTORATION (2022-23)



Restoration team from Harrison & Harrison arrives at St Joseph's (5 September 2022).

In due course, the Durham firm of Harrison & Harrison, original builder of the organ, was duly contracted to undertake the comprehensive restoration of St Joseph's instrument. The many months of fund-raising, sponsorship of pipes, organisation of organ recitals (with voluntary exit donations), and drafting of grant applications culminated on 5 September 2022 when the restoration process finally kicked off. A team from Harrison & Harrison, led by Lee Gibson, arrived at St Joseph's and began the work of dismantling the organ for removal to the firm's workshops in Durham. The focus, congeniality and professionalism of the team impressed from the start.

The original 1903 job-list for St Joseph's organ still exists in Harrison & Harrison's archives and notable amongst the several names given as the makers of particular ranks of pipes is Thomas Henry Finch Pollard, the

talented craftsman responsible for the production of the Horn and Oboe pipes on the Swell. In a remarkable quirk of fate, it transpired that, 120 years later, their maker's great-grandson, Geoff Pollard, was a member of the restoration team and it was with great familial pride that Geoff collected and boxed the pipes stamped with the signature of his direct ancestor. The discovery of that human link between the instrument's original construction and its restoration twelve decades later was a veritable highlight of the entire restoration process.



Geoff Pollard of Harrison & Harrison proudly holds a pipe stamped with the signature of its maker in 1903, namely his own great-grandfather, Thomas Henry Finch Pollard.

The hands-on restoration work threw up two particular unforeseen issues. The first concern was the discovery of split soundboards (on which pipes sit) which was allowing air to escape prematurely, thus preventing pipes from sounding 'true'. This was a serious matter which was destined to receive considerable dedicated attention in the Durham workshops. The

second pressing issue was a result of different manufacturing standards when the electric blower cabinet had been added to the organ in 1940. The discovery - during the process of its removal - that the interior of this enclosed cabinet had been coated in asbestos caused a delay of several days in the dismantlement of the instrument as a team from another firm which specialised in such services was engaged to assess the situation. In the event, the suspect material was safely disposed of and the work of removing the organ continued on to its conclusion.



The organ console before and during the work of restoration.

On 18 October 2022, a party from St Joseph's, including Fr Stephen McGrattan and Fr Kevin Rennie, visited the Harrison & Harrison workshops on the outskirts of Durham to view up close some of the work being done on the organ. It proved to be a memorable trip. Projects Manager, Owen Woods, led a tour of the premises and provided a most informative and enthusiastic update on progress on the restoration work. Particular highlights were seeing: (a) the results of removing decades of grime from the pedalboard; (b) the new manual keyboards; (c) the beginnings of painstaking remedial work on the split soundboards. The group was also shown round other areas of the building, learning so much about carpentry, metalwork, design and voicing of pipes. All in the group were very impressed by what they witnessed and returned to Kilmarnock

with an enhanced appreciation of the unique set of skills required by organ builders, so abundantly displayed by Harrison & Harrison's dedicated workforce. The organ was to remain in Durham for several months after the visit.



A group from St Joseph's visits the Durham workshops of Harrison & Harrison (18 October 2022).

The much anticipated return of St Joseph's organ commenced on 6 February 2023 when a Harrison & Harrison team travelled to Kilmarnock to begin the seven-weeks-long process of re-build, voicing and final tuning. Slowly but surely, as the days and weeks passed, the empty shell of the casing on the gallery gradually began to take on a much more familiar aspect as pipes were added and the console re-instated with its new manuals (keyboards), refurbished pedalboard and stops with engraved names freshly refilled in their original colour. The crowning glory, as it were, was the final act: re-situating the front display pipes, now resplendently painted in gloss gold. Highlighted by recently installed spotlights, the front display's new brilliance complements so well the

majestic 2022 colour scheme of the interior of the building. Indeed, when viewing the restored organ in its architectural context from a position in the sanctuary of the church, it is easy to affirm the old Latin adage, “Finis Coronat Opus”: “the end crowns the work”.



From left to right: Fiona McCluskey and Raymond McCluskey (parish organists); Fr Stephen McGrattan; John Oliver and Lee Gibson of Harrison & Harrison. The final day of the re-build (16 March 2023).

With the re-build complete, the final stage of restoration began on 20 March 2023 with the arrival of the voicing and tuning team, Andrew Fiddes and Daniel Rose-Jones. Over the next two weeks, all the pipes in the organ were regulated to ensure that the balance of sounds and colours of the instrument was optimised to serve the acoustic characteristics of the building. The uncluttered and unobstructed environment which the organ enjoys in St Joseph’s (situated as it is on a gallery from where the sound

oscillates without impediment) is a huge advantage for the instrument. So influential is that fortunate acoustic on the sound experienced by the human ear that the building itself might even be termed the organ's 'extra stop'. Instrument and architecture are in perfect harmony: something which the patient and sympathetic work of Harrison & Harrison's voicing team has served to accentuate and highlight.



From left to right: Andrew Fiddes (voicer/tuner), Matthew Hynes (organ consultant), Daniel Rose-Jones (voicer/tuner), Fr Stephen McGrattan, Fr Kevin Rennie (21 March 2023).

7. BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE RESTORED ORGAN

Sunday 16 April 2023 was a special day in the history of St Joseph's as it saw the successful conclusion of the organ's restoration formally marked and celebrated. On looking back over the past five years of conception, planning, promotion, financing and implementation of the project, there was so much to give thanks for, including especially the support of grant-

awarding bodies, the generosity of so many individuals and, of course, the skill and craftsmanship of the restoration team at Harrison & Harrison.

The day was in two parts. In the morning, a Mass of Thanksgiving provided the opportunity to hear the restored organ blend with the voices of St Joseph's Church Choir, with music by Chrysogonus Waddell OCSO, Colin Mawby, Charles Villiers Stanford, Luigi Cherubini and Carlos Zapién contributing to a moving and beautiful liturgy. Herbert Howells' rousing *Paeon* for organ solo provided an ideal voluntary at the end of the Mass, allowing the colours of the rejuvenated instrument to be heard in all their clarity and vividness.

The second part to the day followed later in the evening, at 6 p.m., when Fr Stephen McGrattan and Fr Kevin Rennie celebrated a truly unique Service of Solemn Blessing and Dedication of the newly restored instrument. East Ayrshire Provost, Councillor Jim Todd, attended, alongside representatives of funders who had supported the *Organ Restoration Project*.

Particularly gratifying was the presence of a party representing the management and employees of Harrison & Harrison which made the round-trip to Kilmarnock and back to Durham on the same day in order to attend the Service. There could have been no clearer illustration of just what the occasion meant to those who had been so intimately involved in the restoration process.

The distinguished guest organist for the Service of Solemn Blessing and Dedication was Andrew Reid FRCO(ChM), formerly of Westminster Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Peterborough Cathedral, the Royal School of Church Music, and (until 2022) Managing Director of Harrison & Harrison.

The blessing of the restored instrument was both dignified and uplifting. Fr McGrattan proclaimed eight invocations, calling on the organ as "sacred instrument" to announce the mysteries of faith and the majesty of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After each invocation, Andrew Reid played a short improvisation suggested by the text which had preceded it, gradually building up the sound of the organ before delivering a joyous, toccata-like final improvisation after the eighth exhortation.

Having moved from the sanctuary to the organ gallery, Fr McGrattan invited the congregation to turn to face the organ as he blessed, then incensed, the instrument; Fr Rennie asperged with water. St Joseph's Choir

continued the theme of enhancing prayer through music with the singing of Stanford's *When in our music God is glorified*.



Fr Stephen McGrattan (Fr Kevin Rennie alongside) incenses the restored organ during the special Service of Solemn Blessing and Dedication (16 April 2023)

Owen Woods, Harrison & Harrison's Projects Manager, then offered some words, thanking St Joseph's parish community for entrusting the restoration of their historic organ to his firm and, looking optimistically to the future, expressing delight at the renewal of links between Kilmarnock and Durham.

After a short interval for refreshments in the parish hall, everyone returned to the church for Andrew Reid's Inaugural Recital. Music by Bach, Sir James MacMillan, and others, commanded the rapt attentions of all in

attendance who were able to watch the organist at the console courtesy of a big screen in the sanctuary. The much-deserved standing ovation at the end prompted an unprogrammed encore: a rendition of Andrew Reid's own arrangement of the great Easter hymn, *Victimae Paschali Laudes*,

In sum, the blessing and dedication of the restored instrument was a truly once-off occasion which will live long in the memories of all those who were in attendance.

8. ST JOSEPH'S 'HIDDEN JEWEL': LOOKING AHEAD

From the outset of the *Organ Restoration Project*, there was a consistent aim that the public profile of St Joseph's instrument - especially in its newly restored state - be extended beyond the boundaries of the parish with a view to it continuing on its 21st-century trajectory not only as a liturgical instrument (though that will by definition remain its principal duty) but also as a historic musical instrument *per se* which will attract the attentions of other organists, both nationally and internationally. Having managed to survive, unaltered, since its construction, St Joseph's 'hidden jewel' provides unique insight into the development of Harrison & Harrison's 'house style' of approach to manufacture and tonal priorities in the first decade of the 20th century. As such, the instrument represents a key period of transition in the history of organ building in Britain more generally.

In the final analysis, the organ is not a machine; it is a musical instrument capable of the sweetest meditative improvisation and the most robust, declamatory voluntary. Sourced from its bellows, the air feeds the pipes, breathing 'life' into them, allowing them to speak, the one moment soothingly, the next with energy and vigour, as the organist varies colours and volume with the appropriate choice of stops. With each note, the organ rekindles the telling of a story worth remembering: a story of two aspirational, proud, hard-working communities and how their worlds crossed over. The first in Durham, so evocatively represented by Mr Thomas Henry Finch Pollard and his colleagues whose skills and dedication in the early 20th century created instruments of such beauty in appearance and sound. The second in Kilmarnock, fittingly represented by the likes of Mr John Mair and Mrs McIlroy, which, while predominantly poor in terms of material goods, was nevertheless rich in ambitions of self-improvement for themselves and their children. The two communities would have recognised something of themselves in each other. Similarly, there are links across time between St Joseph's community then and now.

The commissioning of the Harrison & Harrison organ in 1903 and the impetus towards its restoration in 2023 both sprang from the same dynamic source: a desire to accompany worship with music that dignifies and uplifts liturgy, potentially helping to move hearts and minds towards a more profound sense of transformative, spiritual encounter with a transcendent God.

In conclusion, what might be said in looking ahead to the coming years and the organ's future? St Joseph's 1903 Harrison & Harrison organ deserves to begin its new lease of life in a spirit of great optimism as it is entrusted, ultimately, to the care of generations still to come. It is not prudent to attempt to second-guess what the fate of the organ will be in the years ahead. What *is* important to acknowledge at this present juncture, and history will bear witness to, is the fact that the St Joseph's Generation of 1903 saw their dream through to reality, passing on their cherished organ as a generous-hearted legacy to their parochial descendants. It is this precious gift from the past which, in turn, the Generation of 2023 has preserved, enhanced and resuscitated. May St Joseph's historic 1903 Harrison & Harrison pipe organ continue to raise the spirits and animate the prayers of all who might hear it sing in the years ahead.



The Harrison & Harrison organ resplendent after its restoration, 120 years after its original construction.