

No stopping us, so here's to the next 150 years!

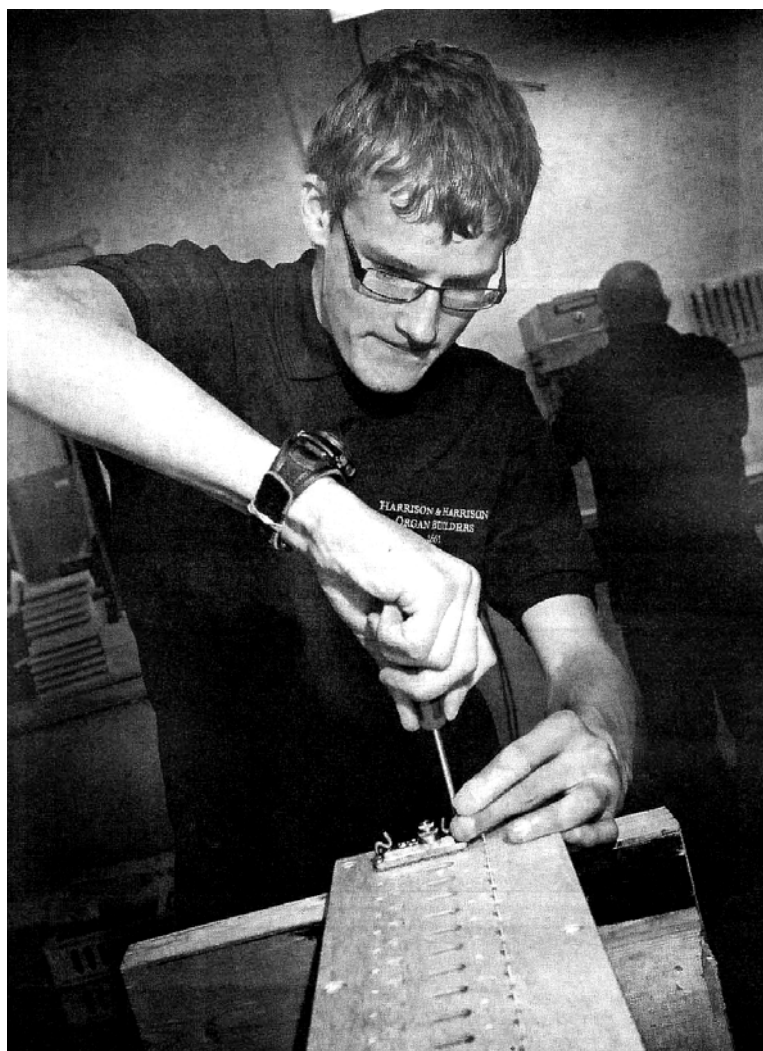
THOMAS Harrison founded what would become Harrison and Harrison (H&H) organ makers in Rochdale, near Manchester, 150 years ago, in 1861. But just nine years later. He uprooted and moved North East to Durham- the company's home ever since. Over the following 141 years, the business has grown and grown, establishing itself as the biggest organ builder in the country and one of the most highly respected anywhere in the world.

When Westminster Abbey's organ needed repairing, to give Kate Middleton a pitch-perfect welcome to Westminster Abbey to marry her prince this April, the church authorities had no hesitation in turning to H&H. Now, H&H managers are celebrating 150 years of trading by holding a special recital in Durham Cathedral. James Lancelot, Master of the Choristers and Organist of Durham

A firm of world-renowned organ makers based in Durham is looking to the future as it celebrates its rich and varied past. MARK TALLENTIRE reports

Cathedral since 1985, will perform a programme including: JS Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor and works by Johannes Brahms, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Percy Whitlock and Louis Vierne. The evening will include a live demonstration of how an organ works by Mark Venning, a long-serving former H&H managing director and now the company's chairman. There is also to be an historical exhibition in the Cathedral's Galilee Chapel. On display will be old photographs, documents, drawings and, subject to other events, two demonstration organs. Over 150 years. H&H has made or repaired organs for cathedrals in Durham, Belfast, Coventry, Edinburgh, Lincoln, Ely, Salisbury

and Wells, St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle and many other major churches across the globe. Recently, experienced craftsmen finished building a new organ for Bury St Edmunds' St Edmundsbury Cathedral, which was unveiled by Prince Charles in March. The biggest instrument currently in the firm's workshop in Meadowfield, near Durham City, comes from the Royal Festival Hall, in London. Many of the staff have served the firm for decades, Keith Unsworth, now in his early 70s, has worked for H&H continually since 1952, apart from two years of National Service and a five-year period in early retirement at the turn of the century. But the company is not resting on its history. It has just recruited three new apprentices, hoping they will carry on the refined skills of organ making and repairing for decades to come. After finishing school, Karl Mountain, 17, from New Brancepeth, spent a year training to be a plumber before being chosen from the 60-plus applicants for the trainee posts. "I knew nothing about organs but I like woodwork," he said. Karl's current project is making valves for an extension of the organ at Church of the Holy Spirit, Lake Forest, Illinois, USA an instrument originally built by H&H in the 1990s. Karl has four months to go on his six-month probationary term, which he hopes will lead to a four-year

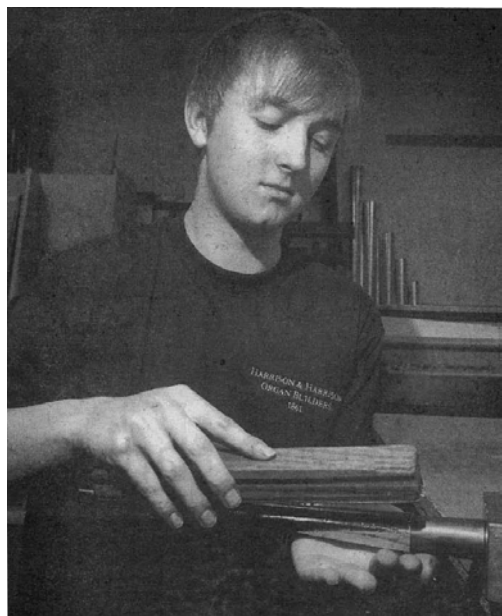


Jordan Gutteridge, who has 'graduated' in the art of repairing old organs. He is pictured screwing on chest magnets for the Holy Trinity Vhurch, Sloane Street, London

apprenticeship. "I love it," he says. "I love doing work with my hands." Across the workshop, Jordan Gutteridge, 17, is tinkering with electro-pneumatic actions for an 1890-made organ from Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street, London. "It's good work, he says, "it's as good, if not better than I expected." Now I've been working on organs, I appreciate what goes into the music." Through another door, the third apprentice, Andrew Fiddes, also 17, has landed his dream job. A pianist since the age of 12, Andrew began playing the organ three years ago and now regularly accompanies worship at three churches near his home in Almfield Plain, near Stanley. "It's soon to be four - I got a phone call last night." He jokes. Andrew gave up A-Level studies to pursue an H&H job, having enjoyed two earlier work experience stints with the firm. He says, "I enjoy everything about the job, it's all new and interesting. "It's a real learning curve.

I particularly enjoy the pipe work... Doing the introductions is John Oliver, assistant works manager, who has been with H&H ever since starting out as a 16-year-old apprentice in 1980. "I get a lot of satisfaction from the job," he says, "It's aesthetically very pleasing "When I hear the organ sound, it makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck." H & H employs around 50 staff, has an annual turnover of £2.5m and bookings until 2015: and their record speaks for itself, work fit for a future king. The H&H 150th anniversary organ recital evening will be held in

Durham Cathedral on Wednesday, October 12, beginning with a buffet in the Monks' Dormitory at 6.30pm. The music will start at 7-30pm Tickets are priced £10 for the recital only, £13 for entry and an interval drink and £25 for entry, buffet and an interval drink. Concessionary tickets are priced £8, £11 and £23 respectively. Tickets can be booked by calling the Gala Theatre box office on 0191 -3324041 and proceeds will go to the Cathedral's Music Endowment Fund. The 150th anniversary exhibition, which is free to view, will be in the Cathedral's Galilee Chapel from October 6 to 20.



LEARNING: Andrew Fiddes, who has 'graduated' in the art of repairing old organs. He is pictured making sockets for the Holy Trinity Vhurch, Sloane Street, London



LEARNER: Apprentices at Harrison and Harrison, form the left, Andrew Fiddes, Jordan Gutteridge and Karl Mountain