

## **From the Archivist:**

### **World War I and the Church Organist**

At a Vestry meeting, Sir Oliver Riddell proposed they raise the salary of Mr Smith, the Church Organist, to the sum of £35 per annum. (When Mrs Mitchell was appointed organist in July 1899 she received only £15 per annum.) However, should he be unable to attend, the organist must choose a suitable replacement and pay the cost out of his salary. The rector had to approve the temporary organist. However, in the spring 1916 Mr Smith resigned his position.

The search for a new organist began in March. The salary was advertised as £30 per annum. Mr McNair played for the services on 5 March and Mr Collison took the position at the organ on the following Sunday. The Vestry decided to appoint Mr Collison as Church Organist. Unfortunately he was called up into the army later that year. Mr McNair was asked to take his place. Thus in 1916 St Cuthbert's had three organists.

In March 1917 Mr McNair was also called up into the army. St Cuthbert's were yet again seeking a new organist. The following month George Short took over the position of organist. At the beginning of 1918 he too resigned leading to a vacancy in the position of Church Organist.

This was not filled until October 1918 with the appointment of Mr Balharrie. He was the fifth organist in three years! In the last years of the war prices rose rapidly forcing the government to introduce controls to steady the cost to the public. In fact, during these years of war the price of basic commodities doubled. Despite this, Mr Balharrie was paid a salary of only £25 per annum. When his mother died in 1919, he resigned his position and left Edinburgh.

With the war now over, soldiers were being demobbed. Mr Collison who had held the position in 1916 was re-appointed organist. At this time there were a considerable number of services although the organist would not have been present at them all. He continued as organist until August 1924 when he left the city for London. In June 1921, "in view of the choir now meeting for practice every week it was agreed to increase the organist's salary to £40 per annum." Thanks for his work was published in the minutes:- "appreciation of the service Mr Collison has rendered during the years in which he was organist at the church and especially of the state of efficiency to which the choir has been brought during the last three years."

Charles Hodgeson became organist and choirmaster.