

## ST AGNES' CHURCH, CAWSTON

### Educational material for Key Stage 1 children - The Pipe Organ

A story explaining the basic principles of pipe organs and a little bit of the history of the organ at St Agnes' Church, Cawston.

### Bertie the bat learns about church organs

Bertie is the youngest member of a family of bats living in St Agnes' Church. He's a cheeky, inquisitive little bat and is always asking questions.

Every Sunday morning, from his roost high up in the church roof, among the angels, Bertie can hear beautiful music. He knows it came from the huge church organ he has marvelled at many a time, but he's curious to know how such a funny looking object can produce such wonderful sounds.

One evening, as he is flying around the church after all the visitors have gone, he decides to find out the answer to his question about the organ.

"I'll ask Oscar," he thinks. "He knows everything about this church."

Oscar is the wise owl who watches all the comings and goings in the church from his perch on the gallery rail, under the tower.

"Ah, well, young Bertie..." begins Oscar, when Bertie pops his question. "The organ is indeed a most marvellous musical instrument. It is known as a *pipe organ* because of those metal tubes called *pipes* which you can see on the front."

"Oh yes," calls Bertie, flying up to the organ to take a closer look. "The pipes are a lovely golden colour. I wonder how many there are? I'll count them later. Tell me more, Oscar!"

"The organ makes sounds by blowing wind into the metal pipes. If you could see inside the organ, you would notice that the pipes are set on holes on top of a special box called the *windchest*. This box has clever *valves* inside which let the wind get to the pipes to make the sound. When the person playing the organ, who is called the *organist*, presses the keys on the *keyboard*, the wind is pushed up to the pipes. If you look in front of the organist's seat you will see the keys which are played by hand.

"I've found some more funny keys," calls Bertie as he swoops under the organist's seat. "How does the organist play those?"

"Ah, yes - those keys are known as the *pedalboard*. They are played with the organist's feet," replies Oscar, as Bertie darts back to the gallery and lands beside him on the rail.

"Oh how clever," chirps Bertie. "Hands and feet together! But tell me, Oscar, how does the wind get into the *windchest*?"

"A small blower inside the organ forces air into the *windchest*, where it is stored ready to be used. In the days before electricity, someone called the *organ-blower* had to pump air into the chest by hand, using something called *bellows*. There is a handle on the side of the organ casing which operates the bellows".

"Gosh - that must have been really hard work!" exclaims Bertie.

"It certainly was," replies Oscar. "In fact it was so tiring that sometimes the *organ-blower* fell asleep during the Service!"

"Oh dear! How embarrassing!" giggles Bertie, nearly falling off the rail. "What are those funny knobs I can see?"

"They are called *stops* and the organist pulls them out to let air pass through to certain pipes to make a sound. When they are pushed in, the air can't get through."

"How long has this organ been here at St Agnes'?" asks Bertie.

"It came here in 1870 so it has been here for more than 100 years. Before that, it was in St Stephen's Church in Norwich. They bought it in 1814 so it is very old. Some parts of it are believed to be even older - as much as 400 years old. Over the years it has had parts replaced and new bits added, like its wooden *casing* which hides all the mechanical workings."

"I remember when it was moved to its new position here in the Lady Chapel in 2008", Bertie calls as he lands on one of the fancy, carved bits at the top of the organ, called "*finials*". "A man called an *organ builder* took it all apart and rebuilt it to make it look and sound even better, didn't he?"

"Indeed," replies Oscar. "It was a very complicated and expensive job but the church was very lucky to be given some money by an organisation called the Heritage Lottery Fund so that it could be done. Do you think it was worth it, young Bertie?"

"Oh yes!" exclaims Bertie, nodding his head furiously, whilst swinging upside-down from the very top of the organ. "Thank you Oscar, for telling me all about it. Now I've learnt a bit more about our organ, I'll enjoy its wonderful music even more!"