

## Frederick. S. Waterman, Organist Jun 1954 - Sept 1957

*Background note: Mr. Waterman lived in Croydon, & his previous post was at St Jude's, Thornton Heath. Several boys from St Jude's choir came to sing at St. Alban's under his direction, & when Mr. Waterman left St Alban's a few followed him & joined his new choir at St. Peter's, Streatham. This contingent from Thornton Heath explains the comment in the narrative below about monies paid out to choirboys to defray rail fares, ie a significant number of boy choristers were not from the local area.*

*I am indebted to Andrew Strevens, a former boy chorister under Frederick Waterman, for background information about the times, & what it was like for him & his brother to be in the choir of St Alban's Holborn. Andrew was 7 when he joined the choir, together with his brother David, who was 13. Other choir members at the time included Mr Waterman's two sons, David & Kenneth, plus Brian Cadermole, Peter Catton, Peter Laverick, Derek Furneaux & Malcolm Lowe. It seems likely that Richard Beauchamp, mentioned below as reading a lesson at the annual carol service at St Paul's Cathedral, was also a chorister. Andrew's comments are shown below in a different typeface to the extracts from the Bourne Echo, to further illustrate the information.*

**Vicar's letter** (ie, Fr. Startup): After due consultation with the Churchwardens, I interviewed applicants for the post (of organist) and we have appointed Mr. F. S. Waterman as a successor (to Mr H F Arnold). Mr. Waterman will take over duty on S. Alban's Day and from all I have seen and heard of him I have no doubt that in him we have found the right man.

He has asked that there should be some musical offering during the Patronal Festival and so I have made a change in the normal observance of this time. It will end on the Octave, Tuesday, June 29<sup>th</sup> with a Recital of Music by the Argosy Singers who appear under his direction. Mr. John Fear will be the organist that evening and there will be a small orchestra. The programme will consist of the Coronation Mass in C by Mozart and also excerpts from cantatas by Bach. This recital will begin at 7.30 p.m. and will end with Benediction. Please come along and support our new organist.

I am very grateful to organists who have come along to assist during the interregnum, Mr. Ribbers, Mr. Pourpart, Mr. Prouse and Miss Hood.

John Fear (tall, with ginger hair) used to call in from time to time on a Friday night for the weekly practice. Others that came were Michael Kerton, who became organist and choirmaster at St Peter's, Streatham, after Fred died; and Mr Sibley who became my teacher at primary school in 1956. I think that these three who came from time to time were supporting Fred in what he was trying to achieve at St Alban's. He seemed to have many contacts.

Patronal Festival 1954: A very good congregation assembled for the High Mass at noon where the music was beautifully sung. On the Sunday within the Octave, once again we had a beautifully sung High Mass.

There was a slight change in the conclusion of the Festival. Instead of the Solemn Evensong which I introduced some years ago, we had a recital of music by the Argosy Singers during which Mozart's Coronation Mass was sung...I am hoping that shortly it will be sung at an actual Mass.

October 1954: MUSIC. I would like to pay a slight tribute to those responsible for the improvement in our musical standards. The organist and many of the boys and men come quite a distance to sing at our Sunday services and I want them to know that they are much appreciated.

Our typical journey was a 15 minute bus ride to Streatham station and then a train to Holborn Viaduct station. We then walked to the church. The whole journey would have taken 1 1/2 hours. Sometimes for the return journey, when we saw we were going to miss a train from Holborn by a few minutes, we ran as fast as we could to Blackfriars station and hoped to get it from there!

Christ the King, 1954: Thanks to the Argosy Singers and all responsible for the music in church on the Feast of Christ the King when the Mozart Coronation Mass was sung at High Mass. The church was nearly filled for this Mass and all present were deeply impressed.

February 1955: The Diocesan authorities are anxious that the new church of S. Alban's, Holborn, shall be built as soon as possible. Our architect, Mr. Adrian Gilbert Scott, has been requested to bring out plans and to open negotiations with the War Damage Commission. The Commission will provide the money for what is known as a plain substitute building. I doubt if any of you want merely that at S. Alban's, Holborn. Therefore we must provide the cost of any extra adornment or extension of the old church. It is my belief that the Sacristy accommodation in the old church was inadequate. We have purchased all the ground surrounding the church with the result that there is not the slightest reason why the new Sacristies should not be proper to our needs. It will however cost money and I have told the authorities that I have no doubt the money will be there when needed.

APCM 1955: Some comment ought to be made on the expenditure on the choir. Our new organist has been with us now some six months and in this time we have spent about £125 for a full choir of boys and also an alto and tenor. Of this sum however only some £50 has been spent in actual payment for service, the rest has gone in fares.

Now about the rebuilding of our church. As you probably already know our Architect, Mr. Adrian Gilbert Scott, has been commissioned to complete the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool. On the other hand, I am sure that will not prevent him getting on with the new S. Alban's, and already he has done a great deal towards this. You all know that I want our new church to look something like the old one and I am hoping that before another annual Meeting, I shall have been able to present plans.

During the past year there has been a change in the musical direction of our services. I do most sincerely thank on your behalf our organist, Mr. Waterman, and the members of the choir for the many joys they have given us since S. Alban's Day last year. His work has been deeply appreciated by us all.

One thing I enjoyed about the choir was the quality of the musical pieces that we sang throughout the year. Fred chose music that was a joy to sing. We enjoyed singing as much as he enjoyed playing.

Patronal Festival 1955:

I would like to thank...our choirmaster and choir and especially for the music with orchestra at the High Mass on the Sunday.

July 1955: I do want to pay a tribute to our organist and members of our choir. Many of them come quite a distance by train on Sundays and the railway strike provided them with a real problem. With very few exceptions, they all turned up every Sunday, although I know it must have meant making a much earlier start. We do thank them on their devotion to duty in spite of all difficulties.

October 1955: **FROM THE ORGANIST AND CHOIRMASTER**

It is somewhat over a year since I was appointed to be responsible for the music of the Church, and in the Vicar's own words 'It was a case of starting from scratch.' However, after a short period of teething troubles and a few headaches, we have gradually built up a choir of men and boys. A great deal of hard work has gone into the preparation of the music pertaining to the services. The Masses by Schubert, Mozart, Ireland, etc., call for considerable 'musical sense' from even expert choirs.

I feel that our boys deserve a special word of praise, for, in addition to their regular weekly rehearsal (sometimes of three hours duration) they rarely fail to appear on all occasions for which their services are required. Our Choir is a young one, particularly as far as adults are concerned: in fact, someone (I hope jokingly) remarked 'the Organist and Choirmaster was the only old timer in the outfit'.

The nature of our Services does not give us much opportunity for presenting anthems and motets, so, by permission of the Vicar and Churchwardens, the Choir will give a Recital of Church music on Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, at 6.15 p.m. This time will, I hope, prove convenient to a number of business folk. The programme will include some of the music sung at our Services, but will certainly feature 'Hear my prayer' by Mendelssohn, and anthems by composers new and old. If any of you care to make a note of this date, and bring your friends, it will be a great encouragement to us all.

We are busy preparing three new Masses and hope that before long you will hear these works.

In conclusion, may I add a note of thanks to the Vicar, Frs. Hill and Colebrook, our Churchwardens and Secretary for their valuable practical help and guidance on occasions too numerous to mention. May we all enjoy many happy years together, and look forward to the day when the Builders commence work on the new Church and Organ.

**FREDERICK S. WATERMAN**

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1955: S. Alban's Choir, under the direction of our Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. F.S. Waterman, led the singing once again at the annual Carol Service in S. Paul's Cathedral on December 10<sup>th</sup>. This service is arranged by the Editorial Board of *The Eagle* and associated papers for children. The choir contributed some very lovely solo items, which we hope to hear again in church during Christmastide. Richard Beauchamp was chosen to read one of the lessons and was conducted with due solemnity to the Cathedral Lectern being preceded by a verger carrying his wand of office.

I remember this occasion because on the steps outside afterwards I got the autograph of the editor of *The Eagle*, Marcus Morris. He founded the *Eagle* magazine, and was an Anglican priest. I don't know what became of the autograph, but I treasured it for a while. We also sang at the Royal Albert Hall on one occasion with many other choirs, and at St Margaret's, Westminster, and Southwark Cathedral. At Christmas we sang carols at the Connaught rooms in London at a special dinner for Fred's business associates. I'm not sure whether or not it was a Masonic dinner. It was certainly a splendid affair with lots of bow ties and cigar smoke and the Christmas pudding carried in quite ablaze. They took up a collection afterwards in metal dishes and it was shared out. It was a memorable occasion. As I said, Fred had lots of connections and some of them were influential. I don't know what his day job was, but it must have been a good one.

Holy Week, 1956: I am well aware that my decision on the Mass for Maundy Thursday is going to cause much heart searching in this parish. For the first time in its history, a Mass will

be celebrated in the evening. This is a return to the custom of the early Church which normally permitted an evening Mass on Maundy Thursday as a special act of commemoration of our Lord's gift of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. This year millions of our fellow Catholics will be *ordered* to assist at an evening Mass on Maundy Thursday and after very much thought on the matter I have decided it advisable to adopt the custom ourselves.

Easter Eve: This year we are transferring the Holy Saturday ceremonies until late at night and the first Mass of Easter will be celebrated at about midnight. We would be most grateful for offers of hospitality to members of our choir and congregation for Easter Even. Many come from a distance and cannot get home after the midnight Mass. Guests will provide their own bed linen and will be prepared to contribute towards the cost of breakfast.

**I remember this. Midnight mass was exciting to youngsters and on this occasion we stayed with local parishioners. My brother and I, and another boy, stayed within walking distance of the church, in order to be on hand for the Easter day service, which was also an enjoyable one.**

APCM April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1956: The net proceeds of the Choir Recital were earmarked for the Organ Fund and had been paid into the Restoration Fund for that purpose...The Choir cost more (than the previous year) but this was largely due to the payment of the boys' fares.

Corpus Christi, 1956: During my stay in hospital one of the most blessed of reports was to hear of the wonderful service on the evening of Corpus Christi, when I was told that the church was so full that many had to stand and some went off to other churches with later services because they could not get in.

Patronal Festival, 1956: At 9.30, the children from our schools made up the larger part of the congregation at the Low Mass with hymns....They had all learned S. Alban's hymn off by heart and even the adults could scarcely have sung it with greater spirit and devotion. Thus a new generation is growing up with a love of this particular traditional hymn of S. Alban's, Holborn....The High Mass of the day followed at noon when the music was William Byrd's Mass for Four Voices. A word of appreciation is due to the members of our choir who put in many extra rehearsals for the performance of the music which means so much at Festival time.

On the Wednesday after the Festival our choir gave a recital of music. Most of the programme was given up to the work of English composers and much of it was made up of liturgical music of the Mass and the Divine Office. A good number of people attended and much appreciated the programme and the violin solos of Dr. Marien Miller.

During July a very important meeting took place between the members of our Parochial Church Council and our architect, Mr. Adrian Gilbert Scott...Most of the knottier problems (with the War Damage Commission) were now settled and he hoped very soon to submit full plans for the rebuilding.

Mr. Scott outlined his proposals for the new building and it will closely resemble the old S. Alban's. The changes will include larger sacristies on the vacant site at the east end and it was proposed to build a gallery for the choir and organ at the west end of the church. This will enable us to have a more spacious sanctuary. It is hoped that some day a Lady Chapel may be built at the east end behind the High Altar and that a new Parish Hall may be put up on the site of the old one, with connecting corridors. But the latter are for the future. The main thing now is to get the church up...We shall have to pay for the choir gallery and the new sacristies.

Christmas 1956: PARISH PARTY. A most enjoyable Christmas party was held on January 10<sup>th</sup> and was attended by the largest number entertained here at this annual event in the ten Christmases I have spent here. The evening passed all too quickly, filled up of party games, an extremely good concert, charades and, naturally, attractive refreshments...Mr. Waterman and members of the Argosy Singers provided such an excellent and amusing musical programme.

January 1957: The District Surveyor inspected the ruins of the old church on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and decided that the condition of two pillars near the Stanton Chantry had so seriously deteriorated as to render the building unsafe. There is a danger that the entire structure will collapse. I have therefore closed the temporary church. Arrangements are being made for the speedy removal of its contents to a place of safety. It is hoped to strut up the walls and prevent a complete collapse. Plans are being made for the repair and renovation of the Parish Hall so that it can be used for Sunday services. In the meantime, Sunday Masses will be in the Hall of the new Schools.

I know you will all understand if some of our main services have to be shorn of some of their "grandeur". These happenings have been a great grief to me and I ask you all to rally round. I know you will not fail me. Plans for the new church are going ahead and the rebuilding should start this summer.

We always knew the day would come when it would have to go and that for a time we would be without a proper church, but I never thought we would have to get out in a matter of a few hours. Plans were being made for the renovation of the old parish hall for use as a church but we had imagined we had a few months in which to put these plans into action.

In the future we may bless this catastrophe. It has made everyone face the urgent need to rebuild S. Alban's, Holborn. It is now very much "full steam ahead" for everybody. In addition the fact that the old arcading has to be demolished will assist us. Had it been retained - as we originally thought - it would have been a long and costly business to have it shored up and made safe. We have been saved all this and also we are now free to make certain alterations in the plans which ought to be an improvement on the old church.... We plan to raise the height of the side arches so that more light will come into the body of the church from the aisle windows. Outside the new church will look very much the same as the old and we also hope that all who knew and loved the old, will find the interior of the new a similar but improved version....We have a wonderful opportunity which we do not want to waste.

February 1957: BUSINESS AS USUAL DURING ALTERATIONS. Our choirmaster and choir are to be congratulated on going ahead with their decision previously made of singing the Mozart Coronation Mass on Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. It could not have been easy for them with only a piano to provide the accompaniment but we all appreciated their rendering and found it of great help in our worship.

28<sup>th</sup> February: Arnold Richardson writes to the Vicar:

"Dear Father,

It was a great joy to come to St. Alban's, Holborn, and meet you and many people I have known for years last Sunday week. I only hope that my advice will be of some help to you, and that the Organ you eventually build will serve St. Alban's for many years.

I still remember with much gratitude the old Father Willis Organ during my time as Organist of the Church. This instrument was a masterpiece, and my greatest wish for you would be that the Organ in the new Church should compare favourably with it.

Since seeing you, I have given a good deal of thought to the whole matter, and I have heard and played one or two of the more recent smaller Organs by Compton. The workmanship and the tonal quality do seem to me to be quite admirable.

Unfortunately, I have not played any of their recent large instruments, such as you would have in your Church, but I can speak with some confidence regarding my own Organ at the Civic Hall, Wolverhampton. This instrument is extremely effective tonally in the Concert Hall, and I am sure that the same specification would prove equally so in a church. Furthermore, during the last twenty years there has been no serious trouble from a mechanical or tonal point of view.

I am sure Mr. Taylor would give you the best possible workmanship, and also, with his interest in St. Alban's, I do feel that the choice could not be bettered.

Should you be in any difficulty, or require any assistance at all in this matter in the future, do not hesitate to let me know, and it will be a great pleasure to help in any way that I can.

Yours very sincerely,  
ARNOLD RICHARDSON"

March 1957: As Lent started so did the demolition of our beloved little church. The workmen arrived every morning at 7.30 and during the second Mass one could hear loud bangs and falls of masonry as the roof and the walls of the temporary church were knocked down. The noise goes on for most of the day and few can find the Mackonochie Chapel a quiet place for prayer. On Thursday mornings we have been absolutely packed out for the mid-day Benediction...Penitents have found they have had to make their confessions in all sorts of odd corners. For the Stations of the Cross we had to put up a screen in the Mackonochie Chapel and show the pictures by means of a film strip.

On the day before Palm Sunday we had the great joy of moving into our new temporary church (on the ground floor of the old school) and the first function to take place there was the Quiet Afternoon.

APCM 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1957: A TRIBUTE OF THANKS. Great applause greeted Fr. Startup's remarks at the end of his speech when he mentioned the debt owed by all to the Choirmaster and members of the Choir for their contribution to the beauty of the Holy Week and Easter Ceremonies. He said they had an important part in the services of that week and fulfilled their task wonderfully. It was agreed unanimously that the Secretary of the P.C.C. be asked to send a letter of appreciation from the entire meeting.

**This was not only down to the quality of the singing, but to the piece chosen also. Fred instinctively knew the best things to be sung according to the occasion.**

S Alban's Day, 1957: I decided that, since the old site had now been cleared and declared safe, we would have every possible service out of doors within the ruins of our parish church....Loud speakers had been installed so that the congregation could hear every word both on the altar and in the pulpit. In fact the microphones were so efficient that I had to warn priests, servers and people not to make remarks near them. By the time High Mass began every chair had been taken (even the Clergy House was largely denuded of chairs) and many had to stand. The weather kept fine except for a few drops of rain during the Gospel.

Evensong was sung at the early hour of 3 p.m. but owing to the state of the weather we had to crowd into the temporary church. Every bit of space was filled with chairs and even then some had to stand.

Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1957: Evensong was sung in the open out in the old church and I fear that some in the congregation found the weather a trifle chilly...May the great good God grant that by S. Alban's Day 1958, those who are present may see a real start made on the new church. And what a happy Patronal Festival it may be in 1959 or 1960 at the latest!

September 1957: While I cannot tell you all my troubles, two of them I can mention. One of them is that our organist and choirmaster, Mr. Waterman, has decided that, owing to ill-health and the long journeys he has to make to Holborn on Sundays and for rehearsals, he must resign and accept another appointment at a church nearer his home in South London. He will be leaving us at the end of this month. As you will recall Mr. Waterman came to us at S. Alban's-tide in 1954 and in the time he has been with us he has done very much to improve and sustain the musical side of our worship. It has not been an easy time for him and he had hoped to remain here to supervise the building of the organ in the new church and also to have the joy of playing on it, but circumstances have been against him. We are sorry he is going, and grateful to him for all he has done and wish him every happiness in his new post. I have made temporary arrangements about which I will tell you next month after I have discussed the matter with the Rebuilding Committee and probably the P.C.C.

It saddens me to think of the difficult decision that Fred had to make because of his increasing ill-health. He was only in his mid-forties and yet in those days the asthma and emphysema that plagued him so much was never as well controlled as it is now. From what I've read in these reports, he did achieve what he set out to do, and must have been looking forward with everyone else to the new church and the new organ that would be in it.

After leaving St Alban's, Mr. Waterman took the post of organist at St Peter's, Streatham. He died in 1963, aged just 56.

### **Repertoire**

We have seen reference above to Mozart's Coronation Mass, Byrd Mass for four voices & Ireland's Communion service in C. Former chorister Andrew Strevens remembers that the repertoire also included Stanford's *Beati quorum* & a *Magnificat* & *Te Deum*; Mendelssohn's *Hear my prayer*; Praetorius *Three kings*, & music by Bach, Gounod, Palestrina, Schubert & Tallis, among others. The choir consisted of a dozen or so boys & a few men, perhaps 15-20 singers in all.

Christine Petch  
December 2016