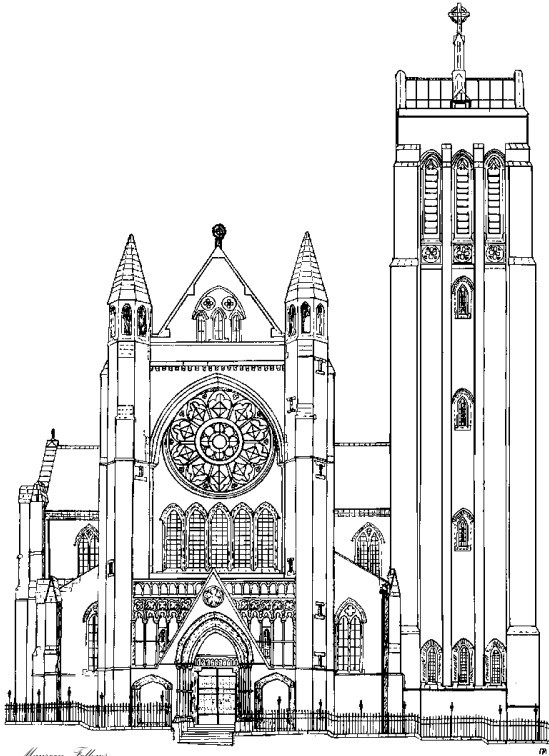




The Church of
St Alban the Martyr
Birmingham 12



ST ALBAN AND ST PATRICK PARISH MAGAZINE



December
2020
70p





Church of S Alban the Martyr
Conybere Street, Birmingham
(Traditional Anglo-Catholic)

(www.saintalban.co.uk)

Vicar: Revd Dr Gerald Sykes,

The Vicarage, 120 Stanhope Street, Birmingham B12 0XB

☎: 0121 440 0404

Sunday Services

Choral Mass 10.00 a.m. Solemn
Evening Service 6.00 p.m.

Weekday Masses *(Please note that weekday services are presently cancelled due to Covid-19.)*

Thursday 11.30 a.m. Low
Saturday 9.00 a.m. Low
Saturday 5.00 p.m. Multimedia Mass *(Term Time)*
Holy Days of Obligation 7.30 p.m. Solemn

Confessions: By appointment

Authorized Eucharistic Ministers *(Bishop's Permission)*

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Mrs Verna Smith-Broadbent

Mrs Amanda Cadman

Dr Christopher Smith ☎: 0121 471 1301

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From The Vicarage

Dear All,

We are, as I write this, in the middle of a lockdown: we may be in one when you are reading this, but hopefully not. Whatever the lockdown situation, it is certain that Advent and Christmas will be different this year. The Bach Choir, and the schools that use our church in the run-up to Christmas, will not be able to come this year. We won't be having a large Christmas tree and it won't be possible to assemble the crib. Different doesn't have to be all bad, but it will certainly be unusual and probably disconcerting. Mass will still be celebrated every Sunday and midnight on Christmas eve, and you can still attend either in person or virtually. Music is still being played and sung: last Sunday (33rd in Ordinary time) we actually managed a virtual choir, and for me, in church, it made a huge difference to hear the hymns sung. We probably won't manage that every week, but we are planning to record some carols for Christmas. John Jenkin has had his operation and is on the mend and will soon be able to play piano and organ again at home, and I hope before too long he will be able to play in church.

We are also managing to keep our Saturday family service going. We can't do our normal activities, but I think it's very important that we are doing something for our young adults and children.

Events are moving apace to improve our Zoom and YouTube services. I hope to take delivery of a new mixing desk, and I have already made some improvements to the microphones that I use for recording. This week I got a new wireless webcam, which will help us in the longer term to video and stream services without having wires all over the floor as now.

Now let us just take a step back from current events. We are in the holy season of Advent: a season of reflection and waiting. Let us reflect on the last (church) year, a difficult year with Covid-19 but also a year on which our church roof was renewed.

Let us look forward:

let us look forward in hope to a church made waterproof and which has had the outside spruced up;

let us look forward to a year when a vaccine for Covid-19 is rolled out;

let us look forward to new opportunities for our church, our nation and the world;

let us look forward to Christmas when we celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ and all the hope he brings.

Fr Gerry.

History Writ Large And Small

Readers will probably remember that in May and June this year, just as the first lockdown had really set in, our screens and newspapers were filled with memories and commemorations of the evacuation, 80 years ago, of British and French troops from the beaches of Dunkirk.

What might have been overlooked, however, is that in our own church is

something that, in itself, recalls in an unexpected way, those momentous and extraordinary days. If we go to walk the short corridor from the apse to the cloister, we pass on our right the west side of the fine organ case. On that case, more or less at eye level, though not well-illuminated, is the following record, finely carved in elegant relief lettering:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD & IN MEMORY OF GEORGE H. MANTON F.R.C.O
[,] ORGANIST 1918-23 [,] THE ORGAN WAS RECONSTRUCTED AND NEW
STOPS ADDED BY THE GIFTS OF WILLIAM ARCHER CLARK & JOHN
GOODMAN ~ THE WARDENS & FRIENDS ~ WHITSUNTIDE 1940
...+ ... DUDLEY CLARK M.A. VICAR.

Note the date. Whitsun in 1940 fell on May 12th. At that time, a British Expeditionary Force of over 250,000 men was deployed in Northern France, supporting the French Army which was gathered behind the heavily fortified Maginot Line, intended to defend France against German invasion. Since war had been declared in Sept 1939 this had been the situation of the “Phoney War” with both sides facing each other warily. But by Whitsun that time of nervous quiet had suddenly ended. On Friday May 10th, in a move that was as bold as it was ruthless, Germany violated Belgian neutrality and sent its well-trained and well-equipped panzer divisions smashing through the Ardennes Forest in Southern Belgium, bypassing the Maginot defences and rumbling its way toward the Channel Coast. The Phoney War was over; the Battle of France had begun.

But back at Saint Alban’s we had the Whitsuntide dedication of the newly reconstructed organ. The Vicar and

Wardens had not to know of course, that the reconstruction project would come to fruition at such a dramatic time. But the project must have been envisaged when war clouds were already gathering over Europe or even in the early months of the war itself. What great vision they showed and what hope for the future in pressing ahead with the reconstruction, at a time when danger threatened our whole country and its way of life. That danger would certainly have been brought sharply home by the news on that Whit Sunday. Despite any local celebration of the reconstructed organ it is more than probable that the minds of many of the congregation were on events elsewhere.

In the same way, it could not have been envisaged that our current major building project would have to be undertaken in the midst of a pandemic, with all its dismalness. Events overtake and frustrate even the most carefully worked-out plans.

In the days following Whit Sunday 1940 the German advance through Northern

France would have seemed unstoppable. Some British and French units made gallant stands on the canals and sluggish rivers in the path of the German advance. The momentum and energy, however, were with the Wehrmacht and, in the end, the allies could only withdraw, pushed from the east and the south toward the temporary safety of the ‘Dunkirk Perimeter’

The rest of the story is well known. The Chiefs of Staff had warned that no more than 45,000 could be successfully evacuated. In the event, however, 338,000 British and French Troops were returned to England in the most desperate of circumstances from the beaches of Dunkirk. This was the “Miracle of Dunkirk”, a miracle effected by the brilliant improvisation of Admiral Ramsay’s naval planning staff in Dover.

In a few weeks the sad story of the BEF was at an end. What had begun at Whitsun was all over by Trinity 3. Weary and tired, the greater part of the BEF — fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, lovers and workmates — were back in Britain by June 4th. It is not too fanciful to suppose that among those weary returners were some from our own parish, who might well have been welcomed back by the reconstructed Saint Alban’s organ. I’m sure they would have done their best to show their appreciation.

I suppose that beside the world-historical conflict taking place over those weeks, the refurbishment of a church organ in a poor parish in Birmingham, is something so small as hardly to be worth comment. But life goes on. While cultures and ideologies clash, families and communities are also making their own small histories. Books are read; exams

are passed or failed; grandparents die and grandchildren are born; a swimming pool is opened, an organ is reconstructed. They all are woven into history. And, with luck, they all have a place in the future.

Let us look for a moment into that future. Within five years of Whitsuntide 1940 and the evacuation of the BEF, Hitler’s Reich, which was to last a thousand years, would lie in ruins, graveyards would be filled to overflowing and great swathes of a continent reduced to rubble. Yet eighty years on the Saint Alban’s organ with its reconstruction and its new stops (and more since, I would imagine) still praises God every Sunday and delights our congregation.

And, again looking into the future from 1940, it should also be noted that Warden Goodman, memorialized on the organ case, was the father of Mary Goodman, herself to become a churchwarden of great distinction and still an example and an inspiration to us all into her second century.

So history takes under its wing the great events and the small. And it takes in both greater and smaller constituencies: cultures, nations and communities. They all have their own histories, which, in turn, feed into the greater historical narrative. Often communities follow the same historical trajectory as their nation; sometimes those trajectories describe a slightly different arc, one that reflects different priorities. It is, perhaps, not surprising that church communities will reflect such differences. And sometimes they are very noticeable indeed.

I have suggested, for instance, that whenever we read that noble lettering on the organ case, we should also think of those clamorous events across the channel.

Perhaps we might also think of another time of turmoil, that of the English Civil Wars, three centuries ago. And then we might take our minds to the village of Staunton Harold in Leicestershire. There stands Holy Trinity, England's last true Gothic — as opposed to Gothic Revival — church. The building was begun by the local squire, Robert Shirley and the work commenced during the Cromwellian Commonwealth, when the old Church of England had, to all intents and purposes, been deposed by Parliament. Staunton Harold's architecture was to be in direct contravention of parliamentary directions enforcing "Godly simplicity" in new church building. The Gothic was intended both as witness and as an earnest of the continued survival of the old Laudian

Church of pre-Commonwealth days. This tradition re-established itself remarkably quickly after the Restoration and, in time, would feed into the Tractarian, Anglo-Catholic and Ritualist movements of the 19th century.

Staunton Harold church would have to wait until Charles II's restoration to be completed, by which time its founder would have died imprisoned in the Tower of London. But the church, completed to Shirley's original Gothic design, still stands both as a witness not only to the Laudian tradition but to the courage, in turbulent, dangerous and apparently hopeless times, of the church's founder. A famous inscription is still to be read over the west door:

**In the year 1653 . When all things Sacred were throughout ye nation .
 Either demolisht or profaned .
 Sir Robert Shirley, Barronet . Founded this church .
 Whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in ye worst times .
 . and . hoped them in the most callamitous .
 The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance.**



The plaque above the west door of Holy Trinity, Staunton Harold

Sir Robert Shirley is now of blessed memory. As are Father Dudley Clark and Churchwardens Goodman and Clark. And many others who, over the years, like them, did the best of things in the worst of times and hoped them in the most calamitous. The men and women who are their successors, however, walk among us and go about that same work. May they be praised in life and blessed in memory.

Stephen Wycherley

Material for the magazine each month from members of the congregation would be most welcome to help keep the magazine alive and interesting. If anyone would like to submit an item, please forward it to Fr Gerry for his consideration.

The Church's Year — December

This month has many saints' and holy days, but mostly towards the end of the month. We begin, however, on Tuesday December 1st with someone not so well known, but a great character, Charles de Foucauld, who,



after a rather dissipated life as a young man in the French army, became converted to an active Christianity and lived as a hermit in the Sahara. The order of the 'Little Brothers of Jesus' was founded after his death by some men inspired by his writings — a companion order for women was also founded. I remember once, driving back from Heidelberg to England, giving a lift to a hitch-hiker, a Frenchman, who told me he was a member of this order and was astonished when I told him that I knew it was founded by Charles de Foucauld — he was amazed I had heard of him, to which I replied rather flippantly, "Tout le monde connaît Charles de Foucauld" — "Everyone knows of him!" — which perhaps is not quite the case, but I think he

deserves to be better known.

Monday December 7th is the Feast Day of the great S Ambrose, Bishop of Milan in the late Roman Empire, whom I spent several years studying in my



twenties and who is one of my heroes! He was a formidable figure, not afraid to confront the Roman Emperor himself, when Ambrose considered the Emperor had gone off the rails spiritually but we might remember him at this time of the year particularly because he was the first person who successfully introduced the practice of hymn-singing in the church — something we take for granted nowadays. Several of his hymns are to be found in the New English Hymnal, many translated by J.M. Neale, and among the finest is his Christmas hymn, also suitable for Advent, *Veni, Redemptor gentium* — translated as 'Come, thou Redeemer of the earth' — also well known in Germany as 'Komm, der Heiden Heiland' — 'Come, thou Redeemer of the heathen' — translated, I believe, by Martin Luther.

Tuesday December 8th is the Feast Day of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (whose birthday, therefore, we celebrated on September 8th). This day can help to remind us of the marvellous obedience of the Virgin Mary to the message of the angel, the account of which of course is very much part of the Christmas narrative. (The Roman



Catholics celebrate this day as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary — this was, in fact, a matter of dispute in the Middle Ages, Bonaventura being for this belief, but the great Thomas Aquinas being against! It's comforting to know that we can disagree on such matters, but still remain united in the same Church of Christ).

I cannot resist pointing out, once again, that December 21st — a Monday this year — used to be the celebration of S Thomas the Apostle and that I regret the moving of this feast to the, perhaps, more 'comfortable' date of July 3rd. I found it refreshing to be made to pause on this day from the frantic preparations for Christmas, which we are so easily caught up in, and to be encouraged to think about this Apostle instead. Once again, may I set my annual competition (for those who have not yet already won it!) — in which Ghost Story of M.R. James, who was Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and writer of these stories as an interest, is this Feast

Day on this date mentioned? A bottle of Pimms is still waiting for whoever tells me the answer!

Christmas Day, on Friday this year, is, of course, one of the great feasts of the Church, but still ranks behind Easter, which alone was celebrated from the earliest days. Christmas began to be celebrated universally in the Church only from about the 4th century. Every communicant



Christian is encouraged to receive the Holy Sacrament of Communion on this day — or on one of the days following — in thanksgiving for the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of all the hymns sung at this time the one which for me most expresses the wonder of Christ's birth is the Latin hymn of Prudentius, the 'Christian Virgil', as he has been described, *Corde natus ex parentis*, 'Of the Father's heart begotten', which, again, is to be found in the New English Hymnal. Its majestic, but moving, poetry brings out impressively the rejoicing of humanity and of nature at Christ's birth. Whatever the situation of the pandemic may be at this time, let nothing detract from our celebration of this festival.

The three days following Christmas are all of the highest importance in the Church's calendar, but tend to be overlooked — it may be suggested rather cynically perhaps because people are giving priority to nursing their hangovers from Christmas Day, but I think one gains

immensely from trying to observe them as much as one can.

Saturday December 26th is the Feast Day of S Stephen, the deacon and first martyr; the first to give his life for Jesus Christ. This helps us to see the right



context of Christmas — certainly, a time of rejoicing, but also a time of ambivalence — following Christ may mean encountering dangers and even death. However, if we are like Mr Valiant for Truth, in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, we need not fear that. *“The coward dies many times before his death; the valiant never taste of death but once.”* So, it was with Stephen — whose martyrdom was witnessed by ‘a young man, called Saul’, who was to become S Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Sunday December 27th is the Feast Day of S John, the Apostle and Evangelist. (If this day is celebrated as the First Sunday after Christmas, then this Feast Day is transferred to Tuesday December 29th). S John was the ‘beloved disciple’ of Jesus, to whom are attributed the five writings we find under his name in



the New Testament, the Gospel — with its magnificent Prologue, customarily read in the main service at Christmas — the three Letters and the last book of the Bible, the Revelation (not Revelations, please!) of S John the Divine. It is disputed whether they were all actually written by S John himself, but it is likely that his immense spiritual influence was responsible for the founding of a ‘school’ of disciples, much influenced by the teaching of the Apostle himself, and that one or more members of this school wrote these works.

The third of these Red-Letter days falls on Monday December 28th, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. This commemorates



the terrible slaughter of the young children of Bethlehem by King Herod in his futile attempt to slay the infant Christ. One might legitimately wonder in what sense this could be regarded as a ‘Feast’ day, but the same could be said of S Stephen’s Day — the point, once again, is that Christmas should be recognised

as a much more ambivalent festival than we are perhaps prepared to acknowledge — certainly an occasion of celebration, but a reminder also of the consequences of the coming of Christ into this world. We can commemorate the Innocents because we can be sure that they passed from this world into the joys of heaven, which, ultimately, is what we all hope for. It is also a reminder that God’s purpose cannot be frustrated even by the most violent actions of a wicked ruler. This last point is something that can encourage us in our prayers for Christians living under tyrannies in various parts of the world at this time — I think especially of Christians

in North Korea and also in China, where religious freedom has been considerably curtailed in recent years.

For over twenty years I have usually taken the services in the Cathedral on these three Feast Days — at 9.00 a.m. (bearing in mind what I wrote above about the Sunday after Christmas) — and if any members of S Alban’s or S Bartholomew’s would like to be present at those services I would regard that as a singular blessing! All this has yet to be confirmed because of the pandemic but meanwhile let nothing discourage us from observing the great Holy Days of this wonderful season as much as possible!

Fr Andrew

The O Antiphons of Advent

The O Antiphons or Great Os. These are the Magnificat antiphons sung at vespers in the days before Christmas and are based on prophecies about the coming of the Messiah.

17th December: O Sapientia (O Wisdom)

18th December: O Adonai (O Lord)

19th December: O Radix Jesse
(O Root of Jesse)

20th December: O Clavis David
(O Key of David)

21st December: O Oriens (O Dayspring)

22nd December: O Rex Gentium
(O King of the Nations)

23rd December: O Emmanuel
(O With Us is God)

O Sapientia

Latin:

*O Sapientia, quæ ex ore Altissimi produisti,
attingens a fine usque ad finem,
fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia:
veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiæ.*

English:

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,
reaching from one end to the other,
mightily and sweetly ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Isaiah had prophesied:

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit
of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His
delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.”

Isaiah 11: 2 – 3

“[...] he is wonderful in counsel, and
excellent in wisdom.”

Isaiah 28: 29

O Adonai

Latin:

*O Adonai, et Dux domus Israel,
qui Moysi in igne flammæ rubi apparuisti,
et ei in Sina legem dedisti:
veni ad redimendum nos in brachio extento.*

English:

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel,
 who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush
 and gave him the law on Sinai:
 Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

“[...] but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.”

Isaiah 11: 4 – 5

“For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us.”

Isaiah 33: 22

O Radix Jesse**Latin:**

O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum populorum, super quem continebunt reges os suum, quem Gentes deprecabuntur: veni ad liberandum nos, jam noli tardare.

English:

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples;
 before you kings will shut their mouths,
 to you the nations will make their prayer:
 Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

“A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”

Isaiah 11: 1

“On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.”

Isaiah 11: 10

O Clavis David**Latin:**

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel; qui aperis, et nemo claudit; claudis, et nemo aperit: veni, et educ vincitum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

English:

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel;
 you open and no one can shut;
 you shut and no one can open:
 Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house,
 those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

“I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.”

Isaiah 22: 22

“His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore.”

Isaiah 9: 7

“...To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

Isaiah 42: 7.

O Oriens**Latin:**

O Oriens, splendor lucis aeternae, et sol justitiae: veni, et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

English:

O Morning Star,
 splendour of light eternal and sun of

righteousness:

Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.”
Isaiah 9: 2

O Rex Gentium

Latin:

*O Rex Gentium, et desideratus earum,
lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum:
veni, et salva hominem,
quem de limo formasti.*

English:

O King of the nations, and their desire,
the cornerstone making both one:
Come and save the human race,
which you fashioned from clay.

“For a child has been born for us, a son given us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9: 6

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Isaiah 2: 4

“But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”

Isaiah 64: 8

O Emmanuel

Latin:

*O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster,
expectatio Gentium, et Salvator earum:
veni ad salvandum nos, Domine, Deus noster.*

English:

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver,
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:
Come and save us, O Lord our God.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”
Isaiah 7: 14

Fr Gerry



Calendar for December 2020

Date	Feast		
1 st	Tuesday	Tuesday of the First Week of Advent	
2 nd	Wednesday	Wednesday of the First Week of Advent	
3 rd	Thursday	S Francis Xavier Pr	
4 th	Friday	S John Damascene, Pr Dr	
5 th	Saturday	Saturday of the First Week of Advent	
6th	Sunday	The Second Sunday of Advent	Parish of Highgate
7 th	Monday	S Ambrose B Dr	
8 th	Tuesday	The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	
9 th	Wednesday	Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent	
10 th	Thursday	Thursday of the Second Week of Advent	
11 th	Friday	S Damasus I P	
12 th	Saturday	S Jane Frances de Chantal, religious	
13th	Sunday	The Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)	Parish of Highgate
14 th	Monday	S John of the Cross Pr Dr	
15 th	Tuesday	Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent	
16 th	Wednesday	Wednesday in the Third Week of Advent	
17 th	Thursday	Advent Weekday (O Sapientia)	
18 th	Friday	Advent Weekday (O Adonai)	
19 th	Saturday	Advent Weekday (O Radix Jesse)	
20th	Sunday	The Fourth Sunday of Advent	Parish of Highgate
21 st	Monday	S Peter Canisius Pr Dr (O Oriens)	
22 nd	Tuesday	Advent Weekday (O Rex Gentium)	
23 rd	Wednesday	S John of Kanty Pr (O Emmanuel)	
24 th	Thursday	Advent Weekday	
25th	Friday	The Nativity of the Lord	
26 th	Saturday	S Stephen, First Martyr	
27th	Sunday	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	Parish of Highgate
28 th	Monday	The Holy Innocents Mrr	
29 th	Tuesday	S Thomas à Becket B Mr	
30 th	Wednesday	Sixth Day of Christmas	
31 st	Thursday	S Sylvester I P	

Note: The daily Mass readings can be found at: <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

Dame Rachel Waterhouse DBE, 2.1.23 – 14.10.20

Most of you will already know of the sad passing, recently, of the founding Chairman of the Friends of St Alban and St Patrick, Dame Rachel Waterhouse. She died peacefully in her sleep, following a stroke. She would have been 98 in January, and had lived in Prestbury near Wilmslow for the past several years, but she remains firmly in our memories here at S Alban's. Her obituary was written by members of her family:

Rachel had an extraordinary life. She was born in 1923, before there was universal suffrage for women and in an age when few women had careers. She went to King Edward's High School for Girls (KEHS), winning a Foundation Scholarship. After graduating from St Hugh's College, Oxford, in 1944, Rachel returned to Birmingham, married John Waterhouse in 1947 and completed her PhD here at Birmingham University, in 1950.

While bringing up four children, she wrote centenary histories of several key Birmingham institutions:

The Birmingham and Midland Institute 1854 – 1954 (1954).

A Hundred Years of Engineering Craftsmanship — Tangye's Limited (1957).

Children in Hospital — a hundred years of child care in Birmingham (1962).

How Birmingham became a Great City (1976).

King Edward VI High School for Girls 1883 – 1983 (1983).

Her love of history stayed with her for her whole life.

In the early 1960s she joined the Birmingham Consumers' Group (BCG), a decision which changed her life completely. From being secretary of the Birmingham Group in 1964, she became a member of the Consumers' Association's Council (publishers of Which? magazine) two years later and in 1982 became Chairman of CA Council, a position she held for eight

years. From the mid-1960s the consumer movement rapidly gained recognition, including within Government. It was here that Rachel's skills really came to the fore, as she was appointed to almost twenty public bodies as the consumers' representative. These varied from the Potato Marketing Board to the National Economic Development Council (chaired by the Chancellor of the Exchequer) and from the Duke of Edinburgh's Inquiry into Social Housing to the Office of the Banking Ombudsman. She was as comfortable discussing financial securities and investments as the microbiological safety of food; one day she might be visiting a farm, another an offshore oil rig (with the Health and Safety Commission).

Despite the almost daily commuting to London she remained firmly grounded in Birmingham. She took on many influential rôles here, including being a founder member and first Chairman of Birmingham's reconstituted Lunar Society (1990 – 96), Chairman of the Birmingham branch of the Victorian Society (1966 – 67 & 1972 – 74), President of the Birmingham and Midland Institute (1992), Provost of Selly Oak Colleges (1997 – 2000), and a member of University of Birmingham's Court of Governors (1992 – 2003). In the 1990s she was appointed a Trustee of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and she was a leading member of the Church of England's Affirming Catholicism movement. Rachel was made a CBE in

1980 and a DBE in 1990. She received honorary degrees from Aston University, the University of Birmingham and Loughborough University. Dame Rachel was the first recipient of the Lunar Medal

in 2006 — a prestigious award reflecting outstanding contribution to the aims of the Lunar Society and the furtherance of social and economic life in the West Midlands.

I feel immensely privileged to be asked to write a personal appreciation of Rachel, for a good many members of the congregation will have far longer memories than I of the major contributions made to the S Alban's community by both John and Rachel. John was a church warden for some years, and was, I believe, one of the first Church Wardens Emeriti, while Rachel founded the Friends of St Alban's and St Patrick's, chaired the earlier Restoration Appeal and also the organising committee for the St Alban's Festival founded by Fr David Hutt.

I first came to S Alban's with Birmingham University Liturgical Choir when I was Departmental Secretary of the Music Department (and a choir member). The late lamented Ian Ledsham was both Music Librarian at the University and Director of Music at S Alban's. The choir was founded by Dr John Whenham to enable music students with little knowledge of the liturgical reasons for so much of the music they sang to experience singing that music in a 'proper' liturgical setting. Of course S Alban's fitted the bill excellently, and we sang Evensong there fortnightly. Somehow I stayed and joined the S Alban's choir as well, and I suppose it was inevitable that I would be roped in to help with the Festival: but as Treasurer? It was through the Festival, I suppose, that I got to know Rachel: the beginning of a long and for me immensely significant friendship and a chance to learn a huge

amount about the wider Birmingham world.

There are times in one's life when meeting someone new changes the course of that life. For me, meeting Rachel did just that. My working life, which had till that time been focused on music and the arts at the University of Birmingham — interesting though that was — was suddenly greatly expanded to embrace almost all aspects of Birmingham life and to meet people involved at the highest level not just in the arts but also transport, education, health, social issues, history, religion, science.

As well as all her consumer-related commitments in London and her various commitments at S Alban's, Rachel was also on the Steering Committee for a planned reinvention of the 18th-century Lunar Society that would be non-party-political and would bring together people from different walks of life to move forward debate on various issues of immediate relevance to Birmingham and its region. One day, she told me, she came back from a meeting in London to find that the Lunar Steering Committee had elected her as founder Chairman of the new Society in her absence. I had just left the University's employ and was setting out on a freelance administrative career. Rachel suggested that the new Society might soon find they needed a little administrative back-up: would I be interested in being considered?

You bet I would!! Rachel and Sir Adrian Cadbury (Vice-Chairman) interviewed me

some months later and I joined initially for half a day a week, as I recall. Rachel chaired the Society 1990 – 1996 and I was the Society's Administrator 1991 – 2007. It was an enormous privilege for me to be at Rachel's side as she shaped the new Society. As well as a wonderful working relationship (she left a good deal of the day-to-day decision-making in my hands, always supporting but never controlling), we also became great friends, and business meetings in each other's houses always involved a good deal of wide-ranging conversation too. Her chairing skills were evident in all our meetings with the Committee and a growing band of members. Early Executive Committee meetings were held at Highbury and were always followed by a meal. Dessert always featured a strange confection with sparklers ablaze on the top. We never learned who had set up these post-meeting meals, but no-nonsense Rachel eventually put a stop to them, as being an inappropriate use of City Council funds! The Lunar Society developed a meeting series on a wide range of topics, often with very prominent speakers, and Rachel and I had fun locating interesting and relevant venues for the topic in hand; 'going on trips' for the sake of it were not to be the point! Everything had a clear educational or informative purpose, and members were able to feel they were playing their part by discussing issues from as broad and wide a variety of viewpoints as possible.

John and Rachel's enormous house, 252 Bristol Road, with its first-floor kitchen and living room, was a joyous place to visit. Rachel was an enterprising cook (how did she find the time?) and John a wonderful sommelier. Conversation was inevitably stimulating! I remember a visit to 252 on a very snowy day: only Ian Ledsham

and I had managed to get to church for a rehearsal, but no one else arrived and we realised we had to walk home as the snow was by then almost up to our knees. We were able to walk along the middle of Bristol Road (though I do remember a pink VW Beetle going along in the other direction). Of course we got very wet and very tired, so we turned up unannounced at 252 and stayed there being fed and watered (well, probably wine) until our outer clothes were dry enough for the onward trudge to our homes.

I was happy to be able to play a supporting rôle when, after John's devastating stroke, Rachel continued to hold down her chairing rôles in London and Birmingham. I remember how Rachel was very firm in getting John fit to walk again, making the treks up and down stairs possible even when she was off in London. Later I assisted Rachel with the Bernard Isaacs Memorial Fellowship Appeal, raising funds for Research into Ageing. How appropriate that the Fellowship was won by a physiotherapist researching into muscular re-education after stroke!

I recall going to see Rachel and John in loco parentis to tell them that I proposed to get married again after twenty single years. Rachel was rather scathing, since Peter is 12 years my senior and she thought he was simply looking for a carer in old age. Luckily, as you probably know, Peter is a historian too, and I soon found myself half-excluded from detailed historical discussions!

My final work as administrative assistant was to help Rachel with arrangements for the move from Birmingham to Prestbury to be nearer family. Peter and I have been up to visit a number of times, much admiring the lovely flat she acquired, its stunning views and dramatic décor (including

all her honorary degree and honours certificates, hung in the loo! Rachel stayed with us whenever she came down to Birmingham. I'm only sorry that time and distance meant that we did not see Rachel

as much recently as I would have liked. It was a huge privilege to work with her and to enjoy her friendship. Thank you, Rachel for all your guidance and encouragement. May you rest in peace and rise in glory.

Amanda Cadman

The Roof Renewed and Progress with the Cloister Entrance: November Update

The contractors have continued to make good progress towards completing their work by Christmas. By the 13th of November the tiling of the apse roof was finished, completing the high-level roof from nave to chancel:



By the next week the roof of the north transept was finished and the whole roof had been renewed.

The work has been made possible by our grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and by coincidence the recipients of grants from the Heritage Fund were asked to post selfies on the 19th of November in front of their projects with fingers crossed to thank

the players of The National Lottery for their funding.



Here is the picture that we posted.



By the 25th of November, the west end of the church was free of scaffolding.



And the scaffolding was being dismantled at the east end of the church:



Meanwhile, the door that will separate the cloister entrance lobby from the corridor to the vestries and hall had been hung, but still needed a handle and lock.

And the glazed door that will give a view into the church from the lobby (when the oak door behind it is open) had been inserted into the archway, but was also incomplete.



At the time of writing, the outer cloister doorway had been widened on the right of the old door, ready to take the new glazed door, which is wider for improved wheelchair access.

And the first of the three lamp posts that will light the path from Stanhope Street to the cloister entrance had been erected.

These lamp posts are not part of the work covered by the Heritage Fund grant but have been given by Bryce and Cynthia Somerville in memory of their parents, Tom and Doreen Somerville. These will be a great help to visitors after dark, once choir practices and evening services can resume.

*Chris Smith
26 November 2020*



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