

ARNOLD RICHARDSON

Edited by David C F Wright DMus

(I have tried to locate the author of this article but without success. I do not want to breach copyright but I feel that such a musician as Arnold Richardson must be remembered)

Arnold Richardson was an exceptional organist but is sadly forgotten. I remember him as a jolly, slightly tubby, red faced man who was eminently likeable.

Before the Dedication Festival Evensong at St Albans, Holborn, London, in 2002, photographs of seven former Directors of Music were blessed and hung in the choir vestry. It was a great joy that David Richardson, son of Arnold Richardson, David's wife and their three children travelled from North Yorkshire to be present on this important occasion.

Arnold Richardson was born in Ely in 1914 and was educated at the Cathedral Choir School and at Paxton Park, St. Neots. In May 1936, he succeeded Reginald Goodall as Director of Music at St. Albans, Holborn. Wilfred Thomas, who died in October 2003, was a member of the congregation at the time, and many years later wrote: 'Arnold Richardson made a splendid successor to Reg and was, I think, the better organist. Reg's qualities were principally as choir trainer and conductor.'

The Ely Standard wrote: 'His many friends in the Ely district will learn with pleasure of the honour which has been bestowed on Mr. Arnold Richardson, Organist at St. Luke's Church, Cambridge, for he has been appointed as Master of the Music and Organist of St. Albans, Holborn. This is one of the most important positions in London as regards church music and, without exception, those who have held this post have been organists of outstanding ability. Mr. Richardson, who succeeds Mr. Reginald Goodall at St. Albans, is to be congratulated very heartily. His many friends, who have no doubt that a great future is in store for him in the musical profession, will be delighted to know of this appointment and will wish him every success.'

'Mr. Richardson is the son of Mrs. Richardson and of the late Mr. Fred Richardson, a valued member of Ely Cathedral choir, and who was lay clerk at the Cathedral for 25 years. When still quite a lad, Mr. Arnold Richardson was organist in succession of Madingley and Grantchester, and at St. Luke's has done excellent work as organist and choirmaster since 1932. After studying composition with Mr. Henry Moule (Mus. Bac.) of the Royal College, and organ with Mr. Boris Ord (organist and Fellow of King's College, Cambridge), he gained, at the Royal Academy of Music, the open Maud Mary Gooch organ scholarship in 1933, since when, as a pupil of Mr. G. D. Cunningham (the famous broadcasting organist of Birmingham Town Hall) he secured the R.A.M. Club Prize in 1935, and his Associateship at the Royal College of Organists in the same year. At the R.A.M. his teachers are Mr. B.J. Dale, Mr. Frederick Shinn and Mr. G.D. Cunningham. Mr. Richardson has already appeared as a recitalist in many places, as well as at the Queen's Hall with the orchestra under Sir Henry Wood.'

It is interesting to note that Arnold Richardson was a pupil of G.D. Cunningham who was St. Albans Director of Music from 1920-24. Cunningham maintained his links with St. Albans for many years after he relinquished the Directorship, often giving the festival organ recital in June. It is possible that Arnold Richardson's appointment was made at the recommendation of G.D. Cunningham.

So, at the age of 22, Arnold Richardson had the daunting task of following Reginald Goodall, whose painstaking training had brought St. Albans choir to a level of near perfection, and whose adventurous repertoire outshone that of other church and cathedral choirs. Under Goodall, the choir gave frequent concerts, but Goodall seems not to have given organ recitals. Under Richardson this was reversed; he gave frequent organ recitals, but the choir did not give concerts, and the repertoire for Sunday services reverted to what it had been before Goodall.

Arnold Richardson was amongst the pre-eminent organ recitalists of his generation, giving broadcast performances for the BBC within a short time of taking up his post at Holborn that was while he was still in his early twenties. His reputation (and that of St. Albans organ) was such that he succeeded in persuading Olivier Messiaen to give the first performance in England of his *La Nativité du Seigneur* at St. Alban's in festival week, June 1938. In his own way, then, Richardson continued to put St. Albans, Holborn on the map, as had his eminent predecessor.

In August 1936 the Vicar's letter read, 'I want to pay tribute to Mr. Richardson, our new Organist, and Choir Master, and to the choir who under great difficulty produced music by no means unworthy of the tradition of St. Alban's.' It is not clear what the 'great difficulty' was.

'Mr. Arnold Richardson, our new Organist, is to give two special recitals on Wednesday, November 4th, and Wednesday, November 18th, at 8 p.m. It is earnestly hoped that the whole congregation will support this effort and also bring their friends. Mr. Richardson is likely to make his mark in the musical world.

In 1937, Richardson gave three recitals in May and three in October/November at St. Albans, a recital at the West London Synagogue in November and jointly gave a series of eight recitals in November/December at St. Benedict's Priory, Ealing, with C.H. Trevor. In May 1938, and in March 1939, he gave three recitals at St. Albans, the latter series devoted to works by French, Belgian and German composers.

It was said at Christmas 1937: 'We had a marvellous Festival, with congregations and music quite up to St. Alban's standard. I ought to pay tribute to Mr. Richardson and the choir for the beautiful rendering of Gounod's Mass; I think that this year was better than it has ever been before, at any rate in my seven years as your Vicar.'

In April, the Vicar's letter read, 'With regard to the great Festival of Easter, I have made myself responsible for the provision of the orchestra at these great Festivals of the year and I shall be glad to receive any offering you may like to send me. That High Mass on Easter Day is to me the most marvellous acclamation of our Master's victory over death, and it is to His glory and honour only that we offer all our gifts. The note of triumph in the Easter Mass and the glory of the music is but a feeble expression of the longing in our hearts to worship the Risen Lord worthily, but I believe that this year it will be more wonderful than ever.'

A letter to 'Musical Opinion' said,

'Sir, In Paris last summer I heard Olivier Messiaen (of Sainte-Trinité) play a series of nine meditations for organ, "La Nativité du Seigneur". It was a moving experience, and the exuberance of the press notices needed no discounting. I have introduced the work to London, and when André Fleury played four movements from "La Nativité" at his recital to the Organ Music Society, high commendations came from Edwin Evans and Frank Howes. A seal of fame was attached when two movements were chosen by the international jury for performance at the I.S.C.M. festival; and now, through the kind co-operation of Mr. Arnold Richardson and Father Eves, a complete performance of "La Nativité" will be given on Saturday evening, June 25th, at 8 15 p.m. [by Olivier Messiaen] at St. Albans, Holborn, where both organ and surroundings are eminently suitable. The following week Mr. Arnold Richardson will play a programme of modern French music, including first performances in this country of works by André Fleury, Jean-Jacques Grunewald, Jean Langlais and Daniel Lésur. It is hoped that many whose interest in contemporary music has been stimulated will be present on both occasions, especially the first, because Messiaen will have prolonged his stay in London for the pleasure of playing before his English confrères.'

Felix Arahamian asserts that Arnold Richardson was the first English organist to perform Messiaen's

La Nativité du Seigneur in its entirety. His programme, referred to above, also included Roger-Ducasse's Pastorale, and some Versets by Dupré.

The Ely Standard of June 24th wrote, 'Mr. Arnold Richardson, organist of St. Albans, Holborn, and a distinguished Elean, has been selected from among 200 applicants as organist of Wolverhampton Civic Hall. The number of entrants was reduced to seven actual competitors, who were each required to play two set pieces before three well-known adjudicators: Mr. G.D. Cunningham, organist of Birmingham Town Hall, Dr. G. Thalben-Ball, organist of the Temple Church, and Dr. Heath Gracie, of Derby Cathedral. These gentlemen were unanimous in the opinion that Mr. Richardson was pre-eminently the right candidate for the post. Mr. Richardson is expected to take up his new duties next month.

'Mr. Richardson, one of the most brilliant organists that this country has ever produced, has several times had the distinction of broadcasting. When acquainted with the news of Mr. Richardson's success at St. Albans Clergy House, Holborn, Father Eves, Vicar of that church, expressed his extreme delight at the appointment. He said "His success is well merited. Mr. Richardson has been organist and Master of the Music for the past few years and during that time he has not only maintained that high excellence of music which is necessary in a church so famous as St. Albans, but has raised it, and we rejoice in this great honour which has been conferred upon him.'

In July, the Vicar's letter said 'Mr. Richardson, our director of music, has received an honour by being appointed the first municipal organist of Wolverhampton, and this gives me the opportunity of paying tribute to him, and to his work here for the past two and a half years. He has one quality which is quite unique, I think, and that is that he is always tranquil and unperturbed in all circumstances, a quality which I have not noticed in other musicians. He is not only our director of music but also a great friend of us all, and I am thankful to know that we shall not lose him at St. Alban's and that this new appointment only means that he will have to give twenty-six recitals a year on week-days at Wolverhampton. I hope that there will be a good attendance at his next recital here, on Saturday, July 2nd.

The 'Musical Opinion' of July 1938 recorded that 'Mr. Arnold Richardson, A.R.C.O., Master of Music at the church of St. Alban-the-Martyr, Holborn, has been appointed borough organist at Wolverhampton. Mr. Richardson, who is twenty-four years of age, was educated at the Royal Academy of Music, and studied the organ with G.D. Cunningham of Birmingham. At the Academy, he was awarded the Gooch Scholarship and the R.A.M. Club Prize for organ playing, and the Lady Wallis Budge prize for extemporisation. He has had considerable success as a composer, and this year had a Mass published by the Oxford University Press.'

Arnold Richardson held the post of Civic Organist, Wolverhampton, till his death.

An extract from Musical Opinion, July 1938 reads 'Arnold Richardson will play Vierne's Third Symphony at his recital of modern French organ music at St. Albans, Brooke Street, Holborn, on Saturday, July 2nd, at 8.15 p.m. The programme will also include works by some of the younger French organ composers. Mr. Richardson recently received the advice of André Fleury and Bernard Gavoty on a number of points of interpretation and registration at St. Alban's, where the organ (one of Father Willis's masterpieces) is particularly suited to French music.'

An unidentified newspaper cutting records, 'The organ recital given by Arnold Richardson at St. Alban's, Holborn, on Saturday evening was devoted wholly to modern French compositions. Mr. Richardson is an excellent player, with a technique that seems ready for anything. The only detail he might consider more carefully is phrasing, particularly in slow movements. Continuous melody is all very well for the player, but it can be very perplexing to the listener. Organists seem to be alone among instrumentalists in ignoring this essential requirement of good interpretation.

‘The most distinguished music played was Vierne’s third symphony. Vierne resembles Rheinberger in his respect for principles of form and, to some extent, in the quality of his invention. French musicians do not like this comparison, but that is merely because they are French. The other works in the programme mainly illustrated a characteristic preoccupation with colour and an acrobatic exhibitionism of the kind that means more to the performer than to the listener. The trouble with so many organ composers is that they never really listen to what they have written.’

Consider the accounts for 1938

The cost of music,	
Organist	£187 10s. 0d.
Choirmen	£223 5s. 0d.
Choirboys	£158 12s. 10d.
Music, extras & misc.	£48 14s. 2d.

In 1938, OUP published Richardson’s Communion Service in A, which was dedicated ‘to the Rev. R.S. Eves, Vicar of St. Albans, Holborn E.C.1.’. It was first performed at St. Albans the previous year, and was performed regularly till 1980. The copies in the music library today are dog-eared from frequent use, and may be the ones that Arnold Richardson provided to replace those destroyed by incendiary bomb in 1941.

‘During August, as last year, the congregation will sing the Mass and Evensong, because the choir will be officially away from the first Sunday in August until the second Sunday in September. Last year everyone enjoyed this break in our usual custom, and I hope the singing will be as hearty and good as it was then.’

In September, following the outbreak of World War II, all St. Albans school children, including St. Albans choirboys, were evacuated to Croxley Green, near Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire.

The October Vicar’s letter reported ‘The staff of clergy must in wartime be reduced by one, but it is necessary to keep two assistant priests, if we are to do the work properly, and for this purpose we must raise £400 per year. The expenses of the choir are very much less, since we have no boys, but we hope to be able to retain the services of the organist, for his sake as well as our own, and one or two choirmen.’

A December communicator said. ‘Mr. Richardson, our Organist, is trying to form a voluntary choir and orchestra for Christmas. Travelling expenses will, of course, be paid and there must be many musical people who at present are unemployed, and possibly some members of the congregation, who would be happy to help in this way. Would those who can help write to Mr. Richardson at the Clergy House.’

February 1940, Vicar’s letter said, ‘ We have had a most wonderful Christmas, and January has been full of activity and interest. First we must congratulate All Saints, Margaret Street, which is always considered the aristocratic sister of St. Albans, on the preservation of her Choir School. An account of this wonderful happening and answer to prayer is given in the January number of their Magazine. The two churches are so closely connected in the history of the Catholic Movement that the triumph of one is the triumph of the other. To ourselves, also, have been vouchsafed many blessings, for we have not had to diminish any of the glories or activities of S. Alban’s at present. By a great effort on the part of Mr. Richardson, our Organist, we were able to offer to God a very beautiful rendering of Mass music at Christmas, and I have received several letters of appreciation of the fact that the standard of worship in S. Albans has not had to deteriorate.’

April: ‘We are going to obtain the services of some soprano voices, in order that the music may attain to something of its old standard, and we are very grateful to those few men who have remained on in the choir for the beautiful rendering of the Masses during Lent.’

‘The income from collections was down, as were donations. This was a regrettable feature which must be put down to the outbreak of war. Choir expenses were considerably less for the same reason. The boys had been evacuated from London, and several of the men singers had already left to join the various Services. In this connection Mr Pledger (churchwarden) paid a tribute to the Organist, Mr. Arnold Richardson, for the high standard of music which had been maintained in spite of a depleted choir.’

St Albans Day, an extract from a letter written to a young man serving in a minesweeper, by his cousin: ‘For the High Mass at eleven, the great church was thronged. Who they all were and where they came from I simply can’t imagine – and such a mixed bag! “High and low, rich and poor.” I felt quite like the Queen of Sheba for all that you’d told me of other S. Albans Days - but in war-time, it had to be seen to be believed. All very grand, with a Procession (why do you mock at them? I think they’re lovely!); Bishop Jackson in cope and mitre, attended by several clergy, sitting in the chancel and also preaching; the Vicar, looking very proud and rosy, celebrating; an orchestra playing Bruckner; and the singing, despite the absence of boys’ voices, quite exquisite...For all its magnificence, there was nothing forced or artificial; on the contrary, it seemed perfectly natural, spontaneous and extremely beautiful...In the afternoon there was a Concert of Sacred Music in church. The Organist played and one of the Choirmen sang. This is something new, I gather, and a very delightful innovation too...The day ended with a short service of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament during which the Te Deum was sung heartily by us all. Sunday was almost a repetition of Saturday - but with even more people there. They didn’t have the Outdoor Procession this year in the afternoon but one in church instead, with another Bishop – Roxburgh Smith – and the vicar of S. Peter’s, London Docks to preach. Another enormous congregation at Evensong with Fr. Ross [Vicar of St. Alban’s, 1918-1931] to preach to us; another procession and Te Deum and the day was done.’

‘Two things rather stand out in my mind about my visit. First the steady stream of people coming into church on S. Albans Day to place their gifts for the maintenance of the church at the foot of a Cross and to be blessed by the priest. Then, the number of young people about the place – the nineteen year olds, I mean. One hears so much of how the Church loses its hold on the youngsters when they leave school - but it seems to me that S. Albans might have a rather different story to tell.’

October, Vicar’s letter: ‘Is this really S. Albans, Holborn, or am I in a dream? At the moment of writing, there is an air-raid, and explosions are taking place. Last night, gunfire in the sky was so intense, shrapnel was falling with such frequency and one or two bombs exploded so close, that it was a miracle that the church was not hit. Undreamt of things are taking place and the very foundations of our ordinary life seem to be shaken... At S. Albans, even an hour after raids which have lasted all night, there is a devout congregation clustering round their Lord. During the day penitents are numerous; the intercessions go on; Devotions or the Holy Hour bring light into the darkness; and the intercessors and worshippers prove, if proof were needful, that the Catholic truth is the very health of their life. Up to the present not a single service has been interrupted or abandoned. Only one Mass has had to be delayed for an hour...I pray that it may be continued to the end by God’s Mercy; but my eyes are clearly open to that fact that we are indeed a church in a besieged city, and that it is no dream but a ghastly reality.’

‘Beginning on Sunday, October 6th, Evensong and Devotions will be sung at 4 p.m. instead of 6 p.m., owing to the darkness and the possibility of air-raids...The earlier hour gives the opportunity for most people to get home before dark.’

December: ‘We are going to have the midnight Mass at S. Albans, even though the church will have to be very much darkened. The service will begin, as usual, with a Procession of the people, at 11.45 p.m... Those who come from a distance can find accommodation both before and after Mass in a special private shelter, provided for us very kindly by Messrs. Sage & Company in Baldwin’s Gardens, or under the Boys’ School. These shelters will be open all evening, so please bring your rugs or blankets, so as to spend the night here, if you come a distance.’

‘Mr. Arnold Richardson, our own organist, will give a recital on Saturday afternoon, December 28th, at half past two. The collection will go towards the cost of the Christmas music.’

January 1941, Vicar’s letter: ‘In the last fifteen months, since the war was declared, I have had a definite plan, which has been more or less carried out, and which I think has received God’s blessing. I refused on purpose at the beginning to give way to panic, and to dismiss people who had served S. Alban’s faithfully, because of a fear of financial collapse. Our organist, for instance, who has done great things for us, and who has recently been married, has taken on the responsibilities which naturally follow. Ought I, do you think, to have put him out of work, and to have immediately discarded the hope of preserving the music of this great church as far as we could? Only recently a visitor to the church said that our music was the best in London...Certain economies, however, had to be faced, and so the choir expenses have been reduced by at least £200 per year.’

February, Vicar’s letter: ‘Our deepest sympathy goes out to Father Ross and his congregation at St. Augustine’s in the loss of their church. I immediately wrote and offered them the hospitality of St. Albans for their services....I stood during the great fire on a certain Sunday night on the steps of S. Paul’s, and saw the buildings on every side of the Cathedral blazing like so many bonfires. The wickedness of such destruction appalled me. I remembered at the same time that in our enemies’ countries something like the same scene might be taking place....Such a wanton attack on non-military objects with the purpose of death and destruction as its only aim opened up before my eyes the relentless character of the enemy; and the fact that it creates anger, and not fear, and to a certain extent a desire for retribution among our own government and people, makes the hope of reconciliation recede further into the distance.’

February 23rd: Anna Maria, daughter of Arnold and Joan Doreen Richardson, was baptised at St. Albans.

April: ‘Since the war we have maintained our Festival Music very well, in spite of the absence of the boys in the choir, and Mr. Richardson with the ladies and gentlemen who have formed the choir are much to be congratulated. The orchestral music has, of course, been reduced, and Father Eves has each time paid such expenses out of his own pocket. If we were to give up all attempt to preserve the music of S. Albans some of its life and glory would disappear, and it seems right to make the effort for the sake of the worship of God and for the sake of those who are away from us, so that when they come back they may find St. Albans the same as ever. But it is a heavy burden upon the Vicar as it means about £30 at each Festival. Is there anyone who would like to contribute to this cause? Donations may be placed in the Box provided for that purpose.’

Twenty one years later, in April 1962, Father. Startup [Vicar 1947-1965] wrote: ‘Bishop Horsley once told me of how he preached at a Festival at St. Albans at the height of the flying bomb attack on London. He sat terrified in his stall with the choir singing an elaborate Mozart Mass and Father Eves singing the hymns at the top of his voice.’

APCM, Tuesday, April 15th: ‘The choir had cost £289 in 1940 against £372 in 1939. There was a deficit on the year of £196...Father Eves said that 1940 had been the most difficult time of their lives. His gratitude to all who had supported him was greater than ever because of the difficulties they had gone through...Gratitude was due to Mr. Richardson, the organist, who had kept the standard of music extraordinarily high. In answer to prayer the church had so far been hardly touched by the raids. Whatever might happen they would always remember that God had carried them through and the church had been saved.’

The following night the church was reduced to an empty shell by an incendiary bomb. The renowned Father Willis organ was destroyed, as was the music library.

Vicar’s letter, June: ‘For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore

have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” ‘We must indeed set our faces like flint, and live for one great purpose, which is the restoration of S. Albans in all its glory. It, and the schools and the institutes must be rebuilt. The glory of the latter house will, by the Grace of God, be at least as great as the glory of the former. It is upon you and me that this great task is laid. We must not hesitate about it, or think that it is too great for us. All Catholics in the Church of England will rally round us. The appeal will go out to the whole world.

‘In five or six hours, the building which had been offered for the Glory of God, and had stood for eighty years as the centre of spiritual activity and the Treasure House of countless Christian people, was destroyed. The church and schools were burnt out by fire from the adjoining buildings. The first incendiary bombs on the roof of the church were extinguished and all was safe. Then the whole district was ablaze, and the flames spread to the schools and the House of God... the fact is we have the four walls and the tower, which now, I am glad to say, are proclaimed to be definitely safe. Though much damaged, the Stanton Memorial can more or less be easily repaired... When I look back upon that night, there are certain things I feel I might have saved, but I know that there is no use in thinking that way, and I know also that, before God, I and all those who helped so wonderfully did our best.’

Sunday High Masses were moved to Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell. Father Eves wrote: ‘Every other Sunday our choir sings the Mass. In that church the chief services for our Festival of St Alban will be held. On St. Albans Day itself, in between the services, I shall sit in the courtyard inviting your gifts for the Restoration and work of the church, and also at Holy Redeemer after the High Mass, and I know that this year, after all the suffering we have gone through, and in view of the great task before us, I shall not appeal in vain.’

‘St. Alban’ hymn books were unfortunately were all burnt in the fire, together with all other books at the end of the church. Members of the congregation are particularly asked to bring their own hymn books to the services. The great loss is the supplementary hymns which were bound up with the English Hymnal. We have ordered 250 of the supplement bound in stiff cloth, and these will be available for sale to the congregation through the tract case, or at the Clergy House.’

Festa al fresco by Father. Colin Gill: ‘The enemy had left but the scorched shell of a great church in a side street off Holborn but God roofed it with a sky the colour of His Mother’s own blue gown and gilded wall, arch and pillar with the fullest splendour of the summer sun in honour of His Martyr’s feast. Such glories only God could contrive, but his fellow-worker, man, true to his part, set up an altar once again and made it fair to show forth Christ, and lifted up his voice in prayer and praise, and worshipped there... The eloquence of preachers, the artistry of musicians, served to enhance the majesty of the Liturgy and to stir the hearts of the faithful.

‘The future no man can look into, but we remember our past. We remember how our fathers suffered, we remember what they endured. We know how St. Albans, Holborn, has been loved and we know how it has been hated – and we have seen the fruits of both, for it is loved and it is hated still. In days gone by our predecessors fought hard and faced unflinchingly the bitterest persecution in order that they might worship God here in the Catholic way. In days to come we, or our successors, may have to fight equally hard, and to suffer accordingly, in order to worship God here at all.

‘Already, unless we are misinformed, committees are sitting, both ecclesiastical and civil, not to decide to rebuild the churches of London, but to determine which London churches shall be rebuilt. When the time comes, will the authorities assist or resist the restoration of St Albans, Holborn?’

On the first and subsequent anniversaries of the bombing Mass was held within the walls of the ruined church, weather permitting.

Letter published in ‘The Living Church’ – an Anglo-Catholic periodical published in Milwaukee,

U.S.A.: 'ST ALBANS, HOLBORN –

At the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York, the feast of Corpus Christi has been celebrated with fitting splendor. On the Sunday within the Octave, High Mass was sung to the well-known and loved music of Gounod's 'Saint Cecilia' Mass.

'In the flesh I was present in Forty-sixth Street, but in the spirit I was in another church, where I last heard that same music, Easter Day a year ago, before another altar one of the most beautiful in Anglican Christendom, now a heap of blackened ruins. I saw the priest, tall and ruddy, with a glorious voice, a veritable young David, wearing a golden chasuble, magnificent in its almost unadorned simplicity; I heard the choir, English boys' voices, than which there is nothing on earth so near the music of the angels, singing that same flowing, lilting music, proclaiming the glory and the triumph of our Faith, the victory that overcometh the world; I saw the young choirmaster, as darkly Celt as the priest was blondely Saxon, music and poetry in his every movement, conducting not only with his hands, but with his whole body.

'The first time I went to St Albans, Holborn, twenty years ago, I had some trouble finding it, as many others have had, before and after me. I asked the way in a shop scarcely a stone's throw from the church and was told by a man who said he had been there twenty-six years that he had never heard of it. My answer was that every Catholic in America had heard of it. Little did I know then that I should have a home in England and that S. Alban's would become my church for festival High Masses. Nor did I know at that last Easter Mass, that I should never see it again as I had known it and loved it through twenty years of comings and goings.

'This stronghold of the Faith, this home of martyrs of the Oxford Movement, stands out for Americans among the great Catholic centres of London. It is one of the churches we know best, by reputation and by personal acquaintance. It was from here that the Procession of Witness set out at the end of the first Anglo-Catholic Congress giving momentum to a movement which has spread across the ocean. Through you, I appeal to all American Catholics who know St. Alban, particularly to those who have seen it, who have taken part in its worship, who have received the sacraments there, to show what knowing it has meant to them, by helping it in its time of need. Will you, Mr. Editor, sponsor a fund of thank-offering from American Catholics, for all that St Alban, Holborn has meant to the Catholic Movement and to themselves as individuals, that there may be a corporate gift from its American friends for its rebuilding? Rebuilt it will be, more glorious than before and we, whose altars are still intact, should be glad and proud to share in the courageous effort of that congregation, drawn from London's slums as well as from its West End and from the uttermost parts of the earth. Let us show Father Eves what American Catholics think of S. Alban's and do what we can to lighten his burden in this most practical way.'

Extract from "Church Magazines" quoted in the Parish Paper in July: 'The calamity which has overtaken the great Church of Saint Alban, Holborn, is, to my mind, the most terrible of all because of its wonderful and romantic history. All Saints', Margaret Street, may have been the first church built at the beginning of the Revival, and it may have caused a sensation at the time and it has been served by many famous priests since, but in no way can its history be compared with that of Saint Alban's, neither can we be more grateful for the example of any group of Priests than for that of those great pioneers of Saint Alban's.....There are so many young men and women serving with the Forces who owe everything to one or other of the Priests at Saint Alban and the news of the destruction of their Church will be an awful grief. Fire and bombs may destroy the structure of Saint Alban, but nothing can break up the spiritual foundation upon which those great men of the past built. Saint Alban's will rise again, and its work for the Catholic Faith will grow and continue. Upon St. Alban, Holborn, has been poured the devotion of countless thousands. There was no church in this country more used for private prayer. There was none more beautiful....More wonderful than their wonderful building was, and is, the devotion and love of St. Alban's priests and people. St. Alban's will rise again, more glorious than before.'

Easter Day 1942: Solemn High Mass was celebrated at Holy Redeemer, the music being Beethoven's Mass in C. 'On and after Low Sunday, April 12th, the Sunday Evening Service will be at 6 p.m. in the Mercers' School Hall*, and it will be followed by Benediction in the Mackonochie Chapel. We have decided to come back to Holborn for this service because the majority of the congregation seem to feel that it is better to be on our own ground... We shall try to develop the singing and the music a little better.'

May, Vicar's letter: 'We are all very sorry that Mr. Richardson, who for the last eight years (sic) has been our Master of Music, was called up immediately after Easter, but he has not resigned and we are appointing an acting choirmaster. We hope that Mr. Richardson will get leave from time to time and play for us, and our prayers go with him in the life to which he will be, I am afraid, entirely unaccustomed. Father Taylor, who is very musical, will be able to look after our evening service at Mercers' Hall, and I am sure that the congregational singing will improve under his care.'

Patronal Festival, 1942, Vicar's letter: 'Spiritually, it was a wonderful time, and I do think that in the procession from the Holy Redeemer to S. Albans, and in the outdoor services within the walls, we can say that probably never in the history of the church has a greater Festival been held.... As we wended our way through the street market and along dusty, dull streets, flanked, as we neared St. Albans, by destroyed factories, offices and tenement buildings, where many we had known had suffered innocent martyrdom during the blitz raids - as we thus wound our way along we sang at the top of our voices, old and young, songsters, croakers and quaverers, but all with uplifted hearts and great gush, the lovely and stimulating hymns "Faith of our Fathers", and our own Patronal hymn "Laud the Grace of God Victorious", so exciting with its thrilling "craggy way, and steep and narrow, dark and drear the path of blood", holding out no promise for the moment of ease and comfort, and the loveliest hymn of all, "Sweet Sacrament Divine". We had a lovely High Mass at the Holy Redeemer on St. Alban's Day, with beautiful heart raising music. Arnold Richardson, our organist, of whom we are justly proud, was with us for some of the time.'

APCM, April 1944: Mr Patterson (Peoples' Warden) said we have been able to save very largely on the organist's salary. We are giving a small donation of £60 a year to Mr. Arnold Richardson for his past services. He is a very competent organist, and we felt it our duty he should not join the Forces without some recognition from St. Albans, so we are paying him £5 a month as an honorarium. The choir expenditure is up a trifling amount; it is £5 more this year because we had a Requiem Mass during the St. Albans Festival. The Vicar then stated that there will be the additional expense of the Choir at S. George's, Bloomsbury: whilst at Holy Redeemer our Choir have only been singing alternate Sundays, now they will have to sing every Sunday.

Arnold Richardson did not resume his post at St. Albans after the war, although he returned occasionally as guest recitalist. Felix Aprahamian writes that St. Albans pre-war musical ambience had gone, so Arnold developed his teaching career at the Royal Academy of Music, succeeding his own teacher, G.D. Cunningham, as Organ Professor. He also became an Examiner for the Associated Board. Aprahamian was consulted by Dr. Percy Rideout for his views on a suitable successor to himself as organist to the West London Synagogue. He suggested Arnold, and thus began a long and happy association with Upper Berkeley Street.

Extract from an article about Arnold Richardson in 'The Music Teacher', August 1958: 'In 1947 Arnold Richardson gave a series of six Bach recitals for the BBC Third Programme and has been a frequent recitalist for the Organ Music Society. He has appeared as soloist at the Sir Henry Wood Promenade concerts, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. In 1951 he gave a recital at Sandringham Church in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother - then Queen Elizabeth. In March, 1954, he was one of the four distinguished British recitalists who played at the first recital given on the new organ in the Royal Festival Hall, where he has since appeared as soloist. He is resident conductor of the Wolverhampton Civic Choir. During the war he served as an officer in the Royal Air Force.'

‘But what of his activities at home? I shall let Arnold speak for himself. “Although I adore my little home and garden in Wolverhampton, I am seldom in it, as I spend two-thirds of my time either in London or away on recital and examining tours. Anyway, here at home the doors are always open and I spend much of my time in the kitchen - I am really a cook, and music often interferes with this hobby!” Arnold keeps Siamese cats, and his favourite is called Bumble-Bee.

‘Arnold Richardson as an eminent man has both power and influence, yet as a man he is essentially humble. My friend Arnold is a distinguished musician who offers his talents to the world; what he gives to the world are friendship and goodwill.’

At the invitation of Fr. Startup, Arnold Richardson acted as consultant in the formulation of the specification for St. Albans new organ, commissioned from Comptons, and he played for the service of re-consecration in 1961. His many recitals for the BBC included a recital from St. Alban’s which was broadcast on the Home Service on 30 June 1961. The BBC no longer has these recordings, although they survive in private collections, recorded from the radio.

Arnold Richardson made four LP records, on the ARGO label, of the complete organ works of Mendelssohn and Brahms, and the Sonata on the 94th Psalm by Reubke. These recordings are currently deleted from the catalogues. His published compositions included Pastorale (1937), a Mass setting in A major (1938), and a few songs.

The last recital Arnold Richardson gave at St. Albans was in February 1965, when he played music by Lubeck, Haydn, Bach, Peeters, Whitlock, Franck and Reubke. He played the organ at the wedding of Michael Foley and Maureen Rye on 10th July 1965, and that appears to be the last time that Arnold Richardson played at St. Albans.

Arnold Richardson fulfilled a unique rôle at St. Albans - he was the link between our pre- and post-war musical life. He knew the Father Willis instrument, and he it was who recommended the organ builder for the new instrument and wrote its specification - not that the two instruments should be similar, but he knew the quality of the earlier instrument, and ensured that the later one was not inferior. He was the last Director of Music to work with a boys’ choir, though we saw that he was able to produce very satisfactory results using women’s voices, after the outbreak of war and the choirboys’ evacuation. He was a personal friend of Michael Foley, Director of Music 1962-1980, who was passionate in his desire to continue the quest begun by his predecessor, Ted Bloomfield, to re-establish St. Alban’s musical tradition. Michael Foley was committed to rediscovering the musical ambience that Felix Aprahamian felt had gone after the war, and I think that, by the time of his death in 1971, Arnold Richardson would have known that St. Alban’s musical life was measuring up to the pre-war yardstick.

Music performed at St. Albans under Arnold Richardson

Beethoven: Mass in C

Bruckner: Mass in C

Byrd: Mass for 3 voices; O Christ who art the light and day

Darke: Mass in F (likely first performance 18 October 1936)

Elgar: Ave verum

Gardiner: Evening Hymn

Gibbons: O Lord, increase my faith

Gounod: St. Cecilia Mass

Guilmant: Mass in E flat

Harwood: Mass in A flat

Henschel: Mass in D

Hummel: Mass in D; Mass in D minor
Mozart: Mass in B flat
Muller: Missa Quarta
Palestrina: Missa Aeterna Christi Munera
Richardson: Mass in A (first recorded performance 2 May 1937, i.e. before its publication in 1938)
Schubert: Mass in C; Mass in G
Weber: Mass in E flat
Wiltberger: St Cecilia Mass (scheduled performance 24 Sept 1939, but probably cancelled)

This list is almost certainly incomplete, as the Parish Paper carried no music lists throughout the war.

Recital programmes

Broadcast organ recital on BBC radio from St. Luke's Church, Chelsea, April 26th 1937:

Overture, Acis & Galatea, Handel
Two Choral Preludes, Bach
(Erbarm' dich mein, O Herre Gott; Christus unser Heiland)
Canon in B minor, Schumann
Ariel, Bonnet
Toccata in B minor, Gigout
Prelude & fugue in G minor, Dupré
Idyll no. 1 (Spring come hither), Alan Gray
Finale (Symphony n. 1 in F sharp minor), Vierne

St. Albans, June 1937

Prelude & fugue in A minor, Bach
Toccata for the flutes, Stanley
Chorale-preludes:
St. Mary Charles, Wood
Herrlich tut mich verlagern, Brahms
Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu wend, Karg-Elert
Scherzo, Duruflé
Intermezzo, Reger
The Way of the Cross, Dupré

St Albans, June 1937:

Fantasia & fugue in G minor Bach
Air & variations Haydn
Pelérinages: Cellier
Nuages, Le Moulin, and Reminiscences
Pastorale Richardson
Tuba Tune Cocker
Versets des Psaumes: Dupré
B flat major, G major, and Finale
Noël, & Toccata Mulet
Fantasia & Fugue in G major Parry

Organ recital from the Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, for the BBC. August 9th, 1937:

Introduction & Passacaglia, Alcock
Choral Preludes:
Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein, Bach
Herzlich thut mich verlangen, Brahms

Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend (toccata), Karg-Elert
Intermezzo, Reger
Rhapsody no. 2 in D, Saint-Saëns
Le Moulin, Cellier
Finale (Symphony no.1), Vierne
St Benedict's Priory, Ealing, November 1937
Marche pontificale, Widor
Choral-preludes
Martyrdom, Parry
Hirten, er ist geboren, Peeters
Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend, Karg-Elert
Three pieces, Pierné
Prélude, Cantilène, and Scherzando
Pastorale, Richardson
Tuba Tune, Cocker
Scherzo, and Toccata, Gigout
Intermezzo, Reger
Toccata & fugue, D minor & major, Reger

Richardson's programme at the West London Synagogue on 25 November 1937 included several movements from Dupré's "The Way of the Cross", Chorale Preludes by Karg-Elert, Rootham's "Epinikion" and the Toccata and Fugue in D minor and major from Reger's Op. __ and the Toccata and Fugue in C major by Bach.

Live broadcast from the Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, January 1938:

Toccata In D minor, Op. 59, no. 5, Reger
Fugue in D, Op. 59, no. 6, Reger
Pastorale, Op. 65, Stögbauer
Choral Preludes:
Hirten, er ist geboren, Peeters
Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt, Karg-Elert
Intermezzo, Op. 51, Vierne
Choral Finale, Mottu