

Dedicated to the music-makers of SS. Peter & Paul, Seal

All this music-making

An account of the the instrumental
and vocal music in the church of
SS. Peter & Paul
1800 - 1980

Madeleine Eattell

PETRUS BOOKS

Foreword

When music is made week by week over the years in a place of worship such as Seal Church, it is the product of hours of work by many people, but when the last notes die away, the sounds are gone and only the memory of them remains. In this booklet, Madeleine Battell, pursuing her keen interest in local history (and herself a stalwart of the organ bench and choir stalls at Seal for twenty years) has used original sources and her own knowledge of local history to reflect on times passed in the musical history of Seal Church. You may well find yourself recalling people and occasions you had almost forgotten. You will certainly learn some things you never knew. Also, in purchasing this booklet you will be making a small contribution to the future of this musical tradition since all profits are to be donated to the organ fund for the renovation project due to start in 1996. More evidence, no doubt, for future historians that fine music continued to be valued by the people who worshipped in Seal Church in the last years of the twentieth century.

Keith Rusling

Music in the Parish Church of Seal

The Organs.

The report of the treasurer of the Seal Parochial Church Council at the Annual Church Meeting in March 1995 contains the statement: "1995 will also be a challenging year, not least because of the organ fund appeal which is just beginning." Not for the first time in the annals of the church has such an appeal been made.

The earliest known reference to an organ, taken from the Kent Archives states, "At the West End of the nave is a plain wooden gallery containing an organ with the inscription,

"Erected by Voluntary Contribution. A. D. 1836."

A receipt from the organ builders Messrs. T. J. Robson reports that £100 was paid for the organ in 1836.

The names of some of these voluntary contributors are to be found in a receipt for "Organs and stoves in Seal Church" signed by the churchwarden, Mr. W. Cronk in 1836.

Revd. G. Whitehead	£20.
Marquis Camden	£20.
An admirer of Sacred Melody	£20.
Earl and Countess of Brecknock	£5.
Sir A. Crichton	£2.

What kind of an organ was this? The churchwardens' receipts from 1838 to 1854 include an annual one from James Harding, the schoolmaster, for £10 "for attending to organ." The receipt for 1843 reads "to tuning organ and regulating stops of three barrels etc." This obviously was a barrel organ of a type in common use in small churches of the period. The music was provided by means of brass staples projecting from a cylinder about 3ft. 6ins. long and 9ins. in diameter which were slowly rotated by means of a wooden handle. The staples operated simple keys which admitted air to the pipes. Each barrel would have ten or twelve tunes. Such tunes might well have included the *Old Hundredth*, *Tallis' Canon* and *Winchester Old*

which were sung respectively to *All People that on Earth do dwell, Glory to Thee my God this Night* and *While Shepherds watched their Flocks by Night*.

The organ was in need of repeated care and upkeep. Among the records kept in the church there are receipts from Messrs. Thomas J. Robson in 1840 and 1855 for "Correcting and tuning Organ." An insurance certificate shows that it was insured for £50.

From about 1850 the great nineteenth century plan for removing the west gallery and building a north aisle to the church began to take effect. A letter from Messrs. Robson to the Marquis of Camden dated 1855 acknowledging a receipt for £4 for "Repairs to the organ" states "I will further send down one of our competent people to take down the instrument as per your Lordship's letter on Monday next".

As to whether this organ was re-sited or removed altogether, there seems to be no information. In the year 1862 there is a receipt from T. Curtis who lived in Seal for "New spring putting on pedal to organ". This may have been an instrument of the harmonium type which came into use about this time in many small churches. The next allusion to an organ comes from the *Memoirs of Charles Bassett*, a native of Seal. Writing of 1869 he states "The organ was at the west end of the church near the belfry".

As to the organ in current use in the church we find that in 1878 Kelly's Directory reported as follows. 'A new organ costing £500 was erected by G. C. Hale esq. of Fawke House and his family in memory of his wife who died in 1878.' This information can also be seen inscribed across the front of the organ itself.

"Forster and Andrews. Hull. 1878. To the glory of God and in memory of a beloved wife and devoted mother who loved to worship there, this organ was given to the Parish Church of St. Peter, Seal, Kent. March 21st. 1878."

Fawke House was at the time in the Parish of Seal, which included Underriver.

Also in 1878 a Vestry minute records a meeting for the purpose of considering the design and estimate for extending the north aisle to form a chamber for the new organ. Reference to the building of the organ chamber is to be found in a list currently hanging in the porch of the

church with a duplicate in the vestry. This list, headed 'St. Peter's Church', refers to the changes which took place under successive vicars, in this case, the Rev. C. E. Few.

In the twentieth century, money for the upkeep of the organ continued to be a call on the resources. In the year 1904 a Vestry minute recommended that an organ fund be re-inaugurated. In 1909 there was a motion to revive the choir and organ fund 'as a means of increasing income'. In 1918 the record reads 'Debt on new heating apparatus reduced to £4-8s-5d which sum was hoped to be cleared by an organ recital'.

A useful source of history is, of course, the Church Magazine. The following extract is from that of November 1929.

"We possess a sweet toned organ. It was built by Forster and Andrews in 1878. After years in use it requires overhauling, cleaning and repairing. The Church council recommends that this should be done without delay. A small sub-committee has been appointed to consider estimates and at the same time to go fully into the question of supplying an electric blower. The two items will cost over £100 so we shall ask everyone to contribute to this sum. We do so with confidence that we shall have a willing response for we are grateful to have such a good instrument and realise the need for keeping it in order."

There was evidently a speedy response, for the following month we read, "We are grateful to a friend for generously undertaking the overhauling of the organ and for providing an electric blower."

This fact is commemorated by an inscription on the organ,

*"To the Glory of God the organ was renovated and the electric
blower installed in loving memory of my sister Violet
Coleman, June 1930."*

The introduction of an electric blower must have meant the disappearance of that long established servant of the Church, the organ blower. How many Seal people must have up till that time have been in receipt of a small payment for services rendered Sunday by Sunday?

Overhauling the organ must have taken some time. In 1930 the magazine reports, "We have undertaken to overhaul the organ in the New Year and are thankful that the means for doing so has been generously provided and for supplying an electric blower. While the work is being done we shall have a small orchestra to accompany the singing instead."

Not for long does the organ give complete satisfaction. The Church Magazine for August 1937 gives the following report.

"For some little time past our organ has been giving occasional hints that all is not as it should be with regard to its workings. These signs, probably unnoticed by the ordinary churchgoer, make themselves clear enough to anyone who plays the instrument, and two independent experts were called in to report on its condition. They both expressed the opinion that the organ was well preserved for one of its age (nearly 75 years). It is exceedingly old-fashioned in its action and has developed a number of faults which should not be allowed to develop further. Although the organ could continue to function more or less satisfactorily for a few years yet, the time when a complete rebuild will become necessary is not very far distant. This is a disturbing thought as it would undoubtedly cost a lot of money. Merely to modernise the action and to correct one or two faults would cost between £800 and £900. These faults if not faced would mean a still greater burden for future years."

It was to be hoped that the necessary expenditure was made soon after this report, for it is obvious that during and subsequent to the war years no such funds would have been available. A photograph of the church choir in front of the organ in or around 1950 shows that the organ console was recessed instead of free-standing as at present. Also, at some time since then, the old draw-stops were replaced by little levers which are simply pressed by the fingers. Hence (and perhaps regrettably) the expression 'Pulling out the stops' for increasing the volume of sound is no longer applicable!

My source of information from about the year 1960 is that of personal recollection. The organ was giving trouble again. From time to time it would indulge in the fault known as 'ciphering'. One particular note or other would go on sounding like a hooter for as long as it could until a judicious tap stopped it. The organist complained that every time he asked for money to be spent on the organ he was told that a new bell rope was

needed first! We were fortunate in 1971 in being given the proceeds of Gift Day for repairs to the organ. Among other matters one whole rank of pipes, the Swell Gedackt, was sent away to the organ builders for re-voicing. Such money as was not spent was put into an organ fund. This money which has been increased by investment is currently available for the 1995 appeal. This appeal has a target of £40,000 to pay for the cleaning, repair and tonal improvements.

The Church Choir.

Of the Church Choir in the 20th Century a pile of old Church magazines (unfortunately not a complete set) provides some interesting and varied information.

1929. January. 'Hymns and carols were well rendered by the choir and the congregation joined in heartily. One wishes they would sing as heartily on Sundays.'

November. 'The choir deserves praise for the way they sang a difficult anthem for a village choir.'

1933. March. 'The Mothers' Union members who look after the cassocks and surplices find the condition of some of them so bad that they are kindly undertaking to provide new ones. We are grateful to them for their offer.'

'The P. C. C. has approved the purchase of new cassocks, the colour to be red. This will brighten up the outward appearance of the church and choir. We are grateful to the Mothers' Union for their contribution of £20 towards cost and the Churchwardens for paying the balance.'

1934. From the Vicar of St. Barnabas Vicarage, King Square EC4.
'Please accept my very grateful thanks for your kind gift of cassocks to this submerged parish. Such a gift is an untold boon to us and one which is a good help to such a choir as ours.'

Were these the old black ones?

1935. March 'The response to our appeal for help with the *Messiah* has been very encouraging. We should however be pleased to welcome several more contraltos. Unfortunately we are working with only two basses.'

1935. April. 'As we have six tenors we hope many basses will join us when they read these notes. We should also be grateful for the presence of another male alto.'

1936. January. 'The congregation listened intently but it was regrettable they failed to stand when the Alleluia Chorus was sung.'

1938. 'The Parochial Church Council decided to buy new books for the choir and new muffles for the bells.'

1939 In June, the Choirmaster, Mr R. B. Barker, wrote,
"Our choir, as many of you know, is now affiliated to the School of English Church Music which has its headquarters at the College of St. Nicholas, Chislehurst. At the end of March we had a visit from Sir Sydney who takes a personal interest in every choir. Four of the boys have also been over to the College where they were given high tea and afterwards took part in the Choral Evensong which is a daily feature of the College. On Tuesday 16th May, a thousand members of affiliated choirs took part in a Festival of English Church Music at the Albert Hall, and six of the boys with four of the men, under the care of Mr Small, travelled to London to sing in this vast choir. The Festival, part of the London Music Festival, took the form of Evensong, and though some of the music was of a standard beyond that of most of our boys they tackled it with enthusiasm and certainly did their bit to help swell the vast volume of sound which must have been most inspiring to listen to. The accommodation for changing was very cramped and the heat in the corridor, where all the choirs had to assemble for the processions was of tropical intensity and there was a continuous exodus of boys who had fainted or felt ill during the actual service. However, we are happy to record that our own boys were all sufficiently tough to withstand any disasters. They arrived home at about 10.30 and the vicar kindly gave them a lift back to Seal from the station. It was an experience which those who took part in it are not likely to forget and it is to be hoped that the singing of the choirs will have benefited as a result."

The war years in Seal, as everywhere else, must have reduced the numbers of adults available for the maintenance of a choir. Nevertheless a choir was evidently there. In January of the year 1942 the Church Magazine states, "Christmas Carols were sung by the choir at Wildernes Hospital on Christmas Eve and at Evensong on the Sunday after Christmas. Though

few in number they sang very effectively and their effort was greatly appreciated." The same year in November the report on the Harvest Thanksgiving says, "The singing of the choirboys from the London Choir School at Evensong was greatly appreciated." Presumably the London Choir School had been evacuated to some place in the vicinity of Seal.

The performance of larger choral works by the choir took place from time to time, frequently on Palm Sunday. In 1933 and 1936 the work was Stainer's *Crucifixion*, and in 1935 and 1937 it was the passion music from Handel's *Messiah*. In April 1938, the following extract appears in the Parish Notes.

"Wednesday in Holy Week, Bach's *Passion according to St. Matthew* at 8.p.m.. Mr Barker has kindly arranged to bring the Choir which is giving a rendering of Bach's *Passion according to St. Matthew* at Brasted to sing it here on Wednesday evening. We hope you will make a point of being present. This is our first opportunity of hearing it at Seal Church."

In the second half of the century, the Somervell Passion music (from which one of the tunes to the hymn *Praise to the Holiest in the Height* is taken) was to be heard. Old copies of Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*, found at the back of the music cupboard indicate that this work was also performed.

After the Church's affiliation to the School of English Church Music (later renamed the Royal School of Church Music) it became the custom to use the collection of alternate readings, hymns and anthems published by R. S. C. M. called *The Cross of Christ*. One of the well-known anthems in this collection is Farrant's *Lord for Thy Tender Mercy's Sake*.

During the second part of the century the choir began to take part in the Annual Diocesan Choirs Festival at Rochester Cathedral. This took the form of Evensong for which special psalms, canticles and anthems were learnt. Some of this music was subsequently used on special occasions and helped the selection of music and standards of performance. Here is an account of one such event.

1970 'On Saturday 18 May members of our Church choir took part in a Festival Evensong in Rochester Cathedral. This service, attended by some three hundred and fifty singers from choirs of various parishes of the Diocese, was one of three arranged during the year

by the Diocesan Church Music Committee. After a wet journey and a strenuous afternoon rehearsal under Dr. Ashfield, the cathedral organist, there was a break for tea and the sun came out in time for the impressive and colourful procession into the cathedral.

'The music selected this year, mainly that of 20th century composers, also included music of the 16th and 18th centuries. The most exacting but perhaps the most satisfying in performance was the anthem *Almighty and everlasting God* by Orlando Gibbons. *Awake thou wintry Earth* by J. S. Bach had a magnificent organ accompaniment. The anthems *Turn back O man* by Gustav Holst and *Let us with a gladsome mind* by C. V. Stanford provided interesting arrangements of well known hymn tunes. The canticles and the Te Deum were settings by John Ireland. The Cathedral choir alone sang an anthem by the 16th Century composer Orlando di Lasso.'

A unique source of information about our Church Choir is to be found in the Minute book of Annual Choir Meetings from 1958 to 1978. During 1958 when the entries begin, the Vicar was the Rev. Leslie Hills and the organist Michael Campbell who was the senior music master at the local Dorton House School. The first entry states,

'After our recent successful Choir Sunday and the good will of the congregation we had become possessed of a considerable sum of money and it was decided that we owed it to the good will of the congregation to use this fund in furthering the musical life of the Church. A committee should be elected to hold office for one year under the chairmanship of our organist and choirmaster. This committee would be responsible for the running of the choir and the expenditure of the choir funds. The committee would consist of secretary, treasurer, librarian, wardrobe mistress and choir leader.'

This Minute book, in recording the type of music performed during the twenty years in question, also shows the gradual change in stress in the use of the Parish Communion Service as opposed to the predominance of Mattins and Evensong as the main services of Seal Church. Here is the minute of a midway report, made in January 1969 by the organist and choirmaster, Mr. M. C. Campbell.

'Mr. Campbell observed that this was the twelfth anniversary of his taking office. Looking back over the period, he commented on the steady change that had been going on. There had been the change of the hymn book to the Revised A. and M. now in use and also the change to the Oxford Psalter in 1960. Reviewing the work of the current year, Mr. Campbell mentioned the Somervell *Passion* performed on Palm Sunday, at the Rochester Festival on 18th May, the meeting in Sevenoaks to which some members went to hear Dr. Ashfield on the subject of "Music for the Series 3 Communion Service." Three people had attended the Summer School of Church Music at Addington Palace.'

Here are some more extracts from the Minute book:

- 1960. 'The Vicar asked if the Choir would attend the dedication of the new Church Hall on February 15th. There would be one hymn.'
- 1961. 'The choirmaster expressed his thanks for all the support from the choir and made a plea for punctuality and better attendance as practices were getting later and later. He realised it was a human weakness.'
- 1962. 'The choirmaster said he would like members to be more punctual at practices.'
- 1965. 'Mr. Lea said would members help Mr. Campbell by being punctual for practices. Can anyone explain why some are always up to 15 minutes late?'
- 1967. 'The choirmaster stated that the new time of 8.p.m. for choir-practice had proved reasonably satisfactory and that punctual attendance was better than it had been.'
- 1969. 'The treasurer reported a balance of £61-12-5½d. She expressed a desire to get rid of the halfpenny which had been complicating the accounts for years. A donation of a halfpenny by the Chairman removed this particular difficulty, leaving the balance for the year at £61-12-6d.'
- 1970. 'The Vicar spoke with appreciation of the fact that when he first

came there were only four or five boys in the choir whereas now there were thirteen. Visiting preachers often expressed congratulatory comments on the quality of the music.'

The next few years turned out to be eventful in the history of the choir. In 1972, Mr. Martin How, a commissioner for the Royal School of Church Music to which the Church was affiliated, made a visit at Evensong when the collection of seasonal music for the Church year, *Time and Eternity* was used. He would appear to have been favourably impressed for he made the comment, 'All this music-making going on and I knew nothing about it!' Also in 1972, our organist Mr. Michael Campbell, in winning the FRCO diploma, also won the Limpus prize for the highest number of marks in organ playing together with a silver medal from the Worshipful Company of Musicians, two of the music world's major prizes.

There were, of course, changes taking place all the time. Two factors in particular will affect the type of music used in a church, namely, a change in incumbents and a change in organists. In 1973, the vicar, Rev. S. G. Crookshank retired and, after an interregnum, Canon J. S. Barnard was appointed.

Early in 1974, our organist, Michael Campbell, gave notice that, after sixteen years as organist and choirmaster, he was about to leave us to take up the post as music master at Worcester College, at that time, the only Grammar School for blind children in the country. Naturally, the announcement was received with considerable dismay by the choir. The choir minute book records, 'At the annual choir meeting, Canon Barnard, taking the chair for the first time, expressed his satisfaction, because, having left with regret a church with a good choir, he had come to one which was possibly even better. He spoke with great regret of the impending departure of the organist, Mr M. C. Campbell. He hoped we should find a worthy successor.' Incidentally, it was recorded that at the same time, at the end of 1973, the numbers in the choir were as follows:- six basses, three tenors, two contraltos, eleven sopranos (women) and fourteen boys.

There is often an interregnum in the appointment of organists as there is in that of incumbents. This particular one became for me a 'do-it-yourself' period. I found myself challenged with the task of playing the organ for Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, and Low Sunday. Incidentally, I was told that the Sunday in question was called 'Low' Sunday because the choir attendance was always so poor on that day! One of the many things I

learned while deputising was that when the choir is in procession from the vestry down the south aisle, the sound of the voices (for the organist) disappears at the point at which the procession reaches the main entrance to the church. This, I believe, is because of the large pillar of masonry near the organ, which contains a chimney stack. For the next three or four months, a retired organist from St. Nicholas' Church, Mr. G. Tester, and one of our tenors, Mr E. Triggs, shared the organ playing. I remember they made me take most of the choir practices.

We were all glad to welcome, in September, a new young organist, Mr Keith Rusling, who liked music both ancient and modern. The older music included, '*O Lord the maker of Mankind*' by Mundy, and Palestrina's '*Matin Responsory*'. Examples of newer music were the Christmas Carol, '*Christ is the Flower within my Heart*' by Chapman, and the Easter Anthem, '*Christ is risen*' by John Rutter.

Mr Rusling was particularly good at working with the boys, teaching them, as their voices began to change, to read the alto, tenor and bass parts respectively.

Another matter should not go unrecorded, and that was the introduction, for the first time, possibly ever since there had been a surpliced choir, of young girls to sing with the boys. Up until that time, girls had not been admitted until they were fourteen or fifteen years of age, when they came straight into the adult choir. As this was a matter of local historical importance, perhaps I may be permitted to record their names. Alison Cross, Jane Walkling and Angela Darling were brought into the choir at the age of eight.

In 1976 we presented three members of the choir a soprano, a tenor and a bass with R. S. C. M. certificates acknowledging 25 years' continuous service in the choir. They were Miss June Burgess, Mr. George Peacock and Mr. Roland Harris.

In 1977 one of our tenors, Mr. Edward Triggs became a lay clerk in the Rochester cathedral choir.

In 1977 the first performance in the church of the Fauré *Requiem* was given by the choir under the direction of the organist and choirmaster, Mr. Keith Rusling.

The year 1980 marked the seventh centenary of the foundation of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Seal. Among many special events was a recital on June 21st by the choir of Rochester cathedral directed by Barry Ferguson with Michael at the organ. A note on the reverse of the programme gives an apt summary of the function of a choir:

"To make the best possible musical offering as a contribution
to the worship of almighty God."

SEAL PARISH CHURCH

A RECITAL

of ORGAN, VOCAL and FLUTE MUSIC

on

ASCENSION DAY
THURSDAY, MAY 31st, 1973
at 8.15 p.m.

SOLOISTS

ORGAN: M. Campbell, F. R. C. O.
R. Husson, F. R. C. O.
(Organist at Sevenoaks
Congregational Church)

SOPRANO: Zenda Evans

FLUTE: M. Campbell, F. R. C. O.
(Organist at Seal
Parish Church)

There will be a retiring silver collection in aid
of the Appeal being made this year by the Royal
School of Music to extend their work.

May 31, 1973

PROGRAMME

ORGAN SOLO:
Prelude and Fugue in E Flat
Major, (St. Anne)

M. Campbell
J. S. Bach

SOPRANO SOLO:
"I Follow with Gladness to
Meet Thee"
(Soprano Aria No. 13 from
St. John's Passion)

Zenda Evans
J. S. Bach

FLUTE & ORGAN:
Les Plaisirs; Air à L'Italien;
Rejouissance
(From Suite in A Minor for Flute &
Strings)

M. Campbell &
R. Husson

G. P. Telemann

ORGAN SOLO:
"Sonatina"

R. Husson
Robert Cundick

SOPRANO SOLOS:
"I Know a Bank"
"Come Sing and Dance"

Zenda Evans
Martin Shaw
Herbert Howells

FLUTE SOLOS:
Syrinx
Pièce

M. Campbell
Debussy
Ibert

ORGAN SOLOS:
Carillon
Chorale Prelude on 'Wachet
Auf' ('Sleepers, Wake')
Toccata

M. Campbell
Herbert Murrill
Flor Peeters

Eugène Gigout

An Improvisation on a theme to be suggested at the
time

RECITAL AT SEAL CHURCH

on Saturday, 21st June 1980, at 7.30 p.m.
by the

CHOIR OF ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Directed by Barry Ferguson
with

Michael Edwards - Organ

Sing joyfully William Byrd (1543-1623)
Jesu dulcis memoria Tomas Luis de Victoria (1535-1611)
Sing joyfully John Mundy (?-1630)
Baritone soloist: Richard Paul
O Lord give Thy Holy Spirit Thomas Tallis (c.1505-1585)
Christus resurgens Orlandus Lassus (1530-1594)

ORGAN:

Noël and Variations in D minor Claude Daquin (1694-1772)
Largo, Allegro, Aria and two variations Michael Festing (?-1752)
arr. Thalben-Ball

Zadok the priest Handel (1685-1755)
Christ ist erstanden (sung in German) Schubert (1797-1828)
Ascribe unto the Lord S. S. Wesley (1810-1876)

ORGAN:

Cantabile César Franck (1822-1890)
Toccata Eugène Gigout (1844-1925)

And I saw a new heaven Edgar Bainton (1880-1956)
Pie Jesu (boys' voices) Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)
I will magnify Thee (men's voices) Barry Ferguson (1942-)
There is a stream Robert Ashfield (1911-)
Coelos ascendit hodie C. V. Stanford (1852-1924)

Specification of the organ at Seal (as at the end of 1995)

<u>Swell</u>		<u>Great</u>		<u>Pedal</u>	
Open Diapason	8	Open Diapason	8	Violone	16
Gedeckt	8	Geigen	8	Bourdon	16
		Diapason			
Salicional	8	Hohl Flute	8	Lieblich Bass	16
Voix Celeste	8	Dulciana	8	Bass Flute	8
Gemshorn	4	Principal	4	Octave Flute	4
Quint Mixture		Harmonic Flute	4	Hautboy Bass	16
Contra	16	Fifteenth	2	(from Swell)	
Hautboy					
Cornopean	8	Mixture			
Clarinet	8				
Sub Octave		Sw to Gt		Sw to Ped	
Unison Off		Sw Octave to Gt		Gt to Ped	
Sw Octave					

4 thumb pistons on each manual, duplicated by toe pistons.

Sw to Gt, Sw to Ped, Gt to Ped on thumb and toe pistons.

General Cancel thumb piston, and Full Organ tab and reversible toe piston.