

## Organists/choirmasters through the years



William Singleton  
1863



Mr FW Dawkins  
1877

The first organist of St James's Church was William Singleton, born in 1852. He was the great grand uncle (great grandfather's brother) of Frances Shanahan who has kindly sent the photograph of him on the left when he was a chorister at St Georges Chapel, Windsor Castle. This was taken on 26th October 1863 when her great grand aunt Sarah Serena Singleton (William's sister) visited him at the castle. He died very young, unmarried and without children, at the age of 25, a year after he was enrolled into the London Gregorian Choral Society.

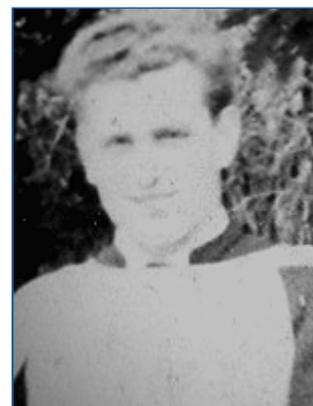
When he died in 1877, Mr Dawkins became organist. He resigned in 1911 having spent thirty four years giving faithful, patient and careful work, which was thoroughly appreciated by every member of the congregation. Mr HT Gilberthorpe, who took over from him, had *"considerable*

*experience with testimonials of the highest order"* and was selected with very great care from about sixty applicants. There were regular Sunday evening organ recitals but in 1917 he resigned his position as organist after *"offering his services to the Army as an Instructor in Musketry"*.

Mr Russe, "FRC, &c", was appointed as his replacement. Both he and the choir frequently received praise from the vicar. Revd Coad Pryor congratulated them in 1919 *"for the excellent rendering of the 'Crucifixion' on Good Friday, and the musical portions of the Easter Services, it reflected great credit on the singers and their teacher. Again I would ask for more adult members for the choir, Mr Russe is willing to train, free of cost, anyone likely to make a useful chorister"* and again *".... deserve our best thanks for the excellent way in which they rendered the musical portion of the services"*.

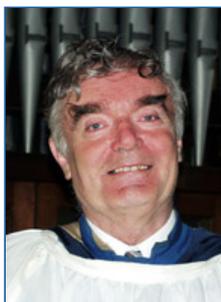
Mr Lower was appointed in 1932 from forty-three applications. He was *"young, keen and energetic, with a desire for the reverent rendering of the musical portion of the services"*. Congregational singing practice after evensong was introduced in 1933 to help the congregations join in the singing *"more heartily"* and the following year the programme of hymns and music was published each month in the magazine. Mr C Haydn-Bull, MIGCM, took over in January 1948.

During Revd Brunt's incumbency there was a succession of organists. Mr RE Bougourd was appointed in June 1955, *"his enthusiasm and knowledge making themselves felt, to the great benefit of both Choir and Congregation"*. After a demonstration arranged by Mr Bougourd, a new and much-improved pointing of the psalms was gradually introduced. He left in 1957 for a larger choir with a wider range of music. Before a new organist could be appointed, a temporary choirmaster kept an augmented choir going, including many members of the Young People's Fellowship, while members of the congregation played the organ or piano. This continued until May 1958 when Mr Aldersea, GRSM (Lond), LRAM (Gold Medallist), ARCM, ATCL, came with high qualifications and excellent testimonials. He resigned in June 1959 due to transport and time difficulties. Mr Howard Stephens, MA, BMus (Oxon) FRCO (CHM) ARCM ADCM, who also held the Archbishop of Canterbury's Diploma in Church Music and had been both sub-organist at Exeter Cathedral and Director of Music in a well-known public school, started work in his place with great enthusiasm and ability. Early in 1961 a new



Chris Wellings  
1959

organist and choirmaster, Mr Christopher Welling, ARCO, ARCM, a full-time student of music then working for his Mus Bac degree and FRCO diploma, was appointed. Mr G Butterworth, Licentiate LCM., took over the post in the middle of 1962. Mr RJC Dafforne was appointed in May 1964 and was responsible for enriching the services and bringing much pleasure by his high standard of music and devotion to training the choir. He was also largely responsible for the specifications for the overhaul and rebuilding of the organ in 1972. He retired at the beginning of 1980.



Geoffrey Bowyer  
1994



Chris Cromar  
2002



Ash Charles  
2003



Matthew O'Malley  
2007

Olive Hayward, ARCO, LRAM, was appointed in the same year and after a few months put out an appeal for more singers of all ages to join the choir. She continued as organist and choirmaster until the end of 1992 when Marcella den Boer took over. She had been a recital organist for

twenty years in Canada and organist at Calgary Cathedral, having previously played the organ in Czechoslovakia. Geoffrey Bowyer, MMus, FRCO, conductor of four choirs and teacher of music courses at Richmond Adult College, took over from Marcella in April 1994 until he retired in 2001. Karl Bridge became the new organist for a year or so but had to resign as he found making the long journey from his home too onerous. Chris Myhill stepped in for a few months in 2002.

During this period of changing organists a member of the choir, Chris Hodges, a founder member of The Sixteen, became choirmaster and brought the choir up to a high standard. Christopher Cromar, who had studied at the Paris Conservatoire, was appointed organist in 2002. His organ teachers included Naji Hakim, Nicolas Kynaston and Marie-Louise Langlais. Christopher left to be organist at a church in Aldgate in 2003.

At Easter that year Gavin Milmer became organist but died tragically a few months later. At the end of that year, Ash Charles was appointed. Ash began his musical career as a chorister at Westminster Abbey, going on to study at the Guildhall School of Music, Cambridge and the Moscow Conservatoire.



Samuel Draper  
2010



Mark Blackwell  
2015

After Chris Hodges left the parish in 2003, another member of the choir, Martin Hinckley, took over looking after the choir during times when there was no permanent organist and also when a conductor was needed while the organist accompanied the anthem. Read about [Martin](#). Ash Charles left in 2007 and Matthew O'Malley took over in September of that year. Matthew was organ scholar of Hertford College, Oxford and a choral scholar at Wells Cathedral.

Martin Hinckley stepped into the breach again when Matthew moved away from the area the following summer, taking over directing the choir and also coordinating all the music for thirteen months, liaising with a group of excellent stand-in organists. Samuel Draper was appointed organist in October 2010. He went to University College, Oxford, as Organ Scholar and Director of the Chapel Choir, and then won a scholarship to study on the post-graduate conducting course at the Royal College of Music.

At the end of 2014 Sam moved away and Martin Hinckley once again took over directing the choir and then continued that job for a while when Mark Blackwell joined St James's as organist

in March 2015. After a short while Mark's role was expanded to include directing the choir. He had often deputised at St James's and had nearly 40 years experience as a parish organist. *"A practising Anglican, I have also held organist and choirmaster posts with other denominations, which has enhanced my musical repertoire and experience. My background is traditionalist but I do play and encourage good contemporary music which supports the liturgy and worship."*

In September 2015 Mark organised an Evensong for Harvest, inviting members of other local choirs to join with St James's choir. It was a highly successful event, enjoyed both by the singers and congregation alike and was repeated the following year. He then organised a 'Come and Sing' Crucifixion on Palm Sunday 2016.

The above information covers the period from when any records could be found until November 2016. This was when Revd Derek Winterburn became St James's tenth vicar and from this time onwards any new information can be found on the main site.