

Robert Waddington, Former Dean of Manchester Cathedral, and Chetham's School of Music

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One of the most important stories to have appeared in the last few days concerns Robert Waddington (1927-2007), Dean of Manchester Cathedral from 1984 to 1993, about whom serious charges of sexual abuse of boys have been brought to light through a sustained investigation by *The Times* and *The Australian* newspapers.

Waddington took a very active part in cathedral life during his tenure, and attended most daily services. He made some significant changes to strengthen the administration and the nature of the liturgy, and was also chairman of the diocesan education committee. Obituaries from 2007 draw attention to his great interest in the choirs at the cathedral and in Chetham's School. He was also close to Archbishop of Canterbury (1980-1991) Robert Runcie.

Chetham's School lies just on the opposite side of the road from Manchester Cathedral, and the connections between the two institutions are strong. During the time when I was at the school (1978-1986) weekly services took place in the cathedral, and as described below, the school provided all of the statutory choristers, who would sing at the cathedral practically every day and often over holidays. The annual ceremony of Founder's Day (for which boy pupils wore an extremely cumbersome Tudor uniform), celebrating the founder Humphrey Chetham, also took place in the cathedral, as did some other concerts.

Reports (some of them behind pay walls) describe how in 1999, David (now Lord) Hope, then Archbishop of York, was informed about Waddington's abuse of a pupil when he was headteacher of St Barnabas boarding school in Ravenshoe, north Queensland, Australia during the 1960s. Here Waddington is said to have beaten and sexually abused at least three boys; furthermore, two teachers hired by both Waddington and his 1970 replacement as headmaster, Barry Greaves, were later themselves convicted of child abuse at other Australian schools and parishes. In one case, the teacher, Peter Gilbert, also faced an allegation that he himself abused whilst at St Barnabas. In 1999, Queenslander Bim Atkinson, now 59, complained about Waddington's abuse between 1964 and 1968, when he was both a boarder and choir solo soprano. This was forwarded to Lord Hope, who claimed at the time to be shocked but would not take action on the grounds that Waddington was then suffering from throat cancer, and was near death (which did not actually occur until 8 years

later). A call for an investigation was rejected in 2005 by Australian church officials, and Atkinson accepted a \$75,000 ex-gratia payment.

Eli Ward, now 40, who joined Manchester Cathedral Choir at age 7 (thus in 1979 or 1980), has described how he was groomed from the age of 11 (so just around the time when Waddington became Dean), then persuaded to participate in sexual acts, with Ward sleeping in Waddington's bed from the age of 13. By his mid-teens he was spending almost every weekend and many nights at Waddington's house, and went on holidays with him to various places in England and France. Waddington employed various clever but malicious strategies: he knew how to use Ward's break-up with his girlfriend as a catalyst for exerting his influence at a vulnerable time and would place a terrifying painting of Hieronymus Bosch in Ward's room, to give him nightmares, so that Ward would wish to stay in Waddington's room instead. According to Ward, Waddington told him that if a member of the press were to approach him, to tell them that the Dean was helping him with his GCSEs and was his godfather. Eventually Waddington made Ward leave the choir, still remained close, but incidents of abuse diminished. At the age of 21, Ward called the now-retired Dean, who told him to 'Forget those memories and push them to the far reaches of your brain and never tell anyone again and come and see me'. Waddington would go on to lead Ward's own marriage ceremony in 1999.

Ward's lawyers have made a personal injury compensation claim against the Dean and Chapter of Manchester. Also, as reported in an article in today's Observer here – <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/may/12/church-of-england-child-sex-abuse> – the CoE plans to set up their own inquiry into allegations of abuse by Waddington.

Manchester Cathedral has two choirs, the statutory choristers (known colloquially as the 'stats'), all of whom come from Chetham's School (many boys are admitted on this basis, and often would stay at the school just until the age of 13), and a voluntary choir (the 'vollies'), from outside. Eli Ward was a vollie, but the stats are the mainstay of music-making at the cathedral. An article in the Guardian in March 1986 ('Monday People: Acts of good faith/Focus on Manchester Cathedral congregation', 13/3/86) confirms that the three individuals most directly responsible for music at the cathedral then were precentor Gareth Turner, organist Gordon Stewart and choir master Stuart Beer. Both of the latter two also taught at Chetham's.

Waddington was thus in direct regular contact with a whole range of boys at Chetham's. I have spoken to one boy at the school during Waddington's tenure who alleges that he was sexually touched by Waddington, during a period following the latter's retirement.

Waddington was also a close personal friend of John Vallins, Headmaster of Chetham's School from 1974 to 1992 (thus during the period of some of the worst allegations, involving Michael Brewer, Chris Ling, Malcolm Layfield, Ryszard Bakst and others). Vallins was previously an English teacher and housemaster at Cranleigh School, where one of his pupils was later Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger. He also continued to teach English at Chetham's, and was known for rather pompous teaching on Shakespeare, urging uncritical reverence for the great bard, and according to several former pupils (I personally never studied English with him) prone in his teaching to assign blame for the downfall of most male characters on devious and untrustworthy women. He was a religious man – not a born-again fanatic (like then Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, James Anderton, incidentally a classical music lover who was made an Honorary Member of the RNCM in 1984), but still one for whom this was fundamental – and would sometimes (in a way which is almost unthinkable in education today) practically foam at the mouth with anger at some of those who rejected religion. In the weekly services in Manchester Cathedral, he would be furious at some who would refuse to sing or pray, pointedly casting our eyes towards the ceiling of the place when others had their head stooped, gazing to the floor to pray. Though, rather amazingly for the Head of a music school, he was quite unsympathetic to musicians, especially those of a certain type who he perceived as arrogant, narcissistic, oblivious to other world concerns, and so on, which he associated above all with string players, talking about 'string players' syndrome' (in at least one assembly). At one point several boys were called into his office after acting irreverently in the cathedral service, and he fulminated to them 'You....you.....MUSICIANS!!!!', associating lack of respect for religion with the artistic temperament. His attitudes in this respect towards the preciousness and arrogance of the music world did bring some respect from some of us who recognised clearly to what he was referring, though this did not sit comfortably with his blind canonical attitude towards the study of English.

I remember Waddington coming to talk to my year, when we were in the sixth form (1984-1986, so just after he had taken up the position), invited by Vallins. We were informed by a teacher of the high esteem in which Vallins held Waddington, and told to be extremely respectful. Being a confirmed atheist, and as belligerent then as I perhaps still remain, I put a provocative question to him about whether the idea of heaven gains its power primarily in terms of being some sort of mythical five-star hotel packed with fun and amusements (not unlike in the final scene of Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life*). Naturally this caused some ire from both staff and other pupils for talking so disrespectfully towards this revered Dean.

According to my source, during the period of his tenure as Dean of Manchester Cathedral, Waddington was both a Governor and a Feoffee of Chetham's (the Governors are the body responsible for the school, the Feoffees for the wider

Foundation of Chetham's Hospital School and Library. Details of the current Feoffees can be found here – <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/ContactAndTrustees.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=526702&SubsidiaryNumber=0>). Lists of previous governors are not generally available, but likely to be accessible within the minutes of their meetings from 1985 to 1997, which are housed in Chetham's Library (see under 'Special' on this page – <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/2002/02digests/educat.htm>). At the time when the violin teacher Chris Ling left the UK for the US, never to return, and awful allegations began to emerge about his abusing of female students, the Chair of the Governors was lawyer Paul Lee, a Partner (and from 1997 to 2010 Senior Partner) at Addleshaw Goddard (who have acted for the school) – see http://www.addleshawgoddard.com/view.asp?content_id=1081&parent_id=1252 for more details on Lee, who is still today a Feoffee [Edit: I had heard he was Chair of the Feoffees, but am not absolutely sure if this is correct]. Also on the Board of Chetham's Governors was Sir John Manduell, then Principal of the RNCM, a position he held from the establishment of the institution in 1973 until 1996, during which time the late Ryszard Bakst, who has been named as a serial abuser – <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/feb/12/chethams-music-school-allegations-increase> – was the most influential piano teacher at both there and Chet's. Also on the board during some of the same period as Waddington were Ewart Boddington, Director of the infamous Boddington's Brewery, the 18th Earl of Derby, Edward John Stanley, and a couple by the name of Barraclough, who owned a carpet firm who fitted out Waddington's retirement home in York.

A statement is required from the governing body of Chetham's as to whether one of their former Governors and Feoffees was indeed Robert Waddington, and thus whether their governing bodies, at the time when some of the worst abuse is alleged to have gone on at the school, contained someone who has been outed as an abuser himself. **[EDIT: Chetham's have now confirmed that Waddington was indeed both a Governor and a Feoffee, from September 1984 to September 1993 – see below. However, the speed at which the Church of England has commissioned their own independent inquiry contrasts very strongly with the relative silence, minimisations of the scale of problem, denial of any culpability and more of Chetham's and other specialist music schools.]**

[ADDENDUM: More has now been published on the relationship between Waddington and Chetham's. See the articles by Sean O'Neill in The Times [here](#) (behind a paywall), that by Paul Gallagher in The Independent [here](#), and those by Michael McKenna and Amanda Gearing in The Australian [here](#) and [here](#). I quote here the most important parts of the first article:

'New evidence from abuse victims suggests that the Very Rev Robert Waddington, a former Dean of Manchester Cathedral, was still pursuing young boys at the time the Church decided that he was too ill and frail to pose a threat to children.

One of Waddington's victims said that the priest was "as fit as a fiddle" in 1999 — the year that the then Archbishop of York, Lord Hope of Thornes, declared in a letter to an Australian bishop that the former dean was "severely debilitated".

The victim, a former Chetham's pupil who is now in his 30s, said that he wanted to give evidence to an independent inquiry being set up by the Church to examine the Waddington case after an investigation by The Times and The Australian newspapers.'

[...]

'Chetham's School, which is at the centre of a criminal investigation by Greater Manchester Police into sex abuse claims, confirmed last night that Waddington had been a school governor and a feoffee, or governor, of its charitable foundation between September 1984 and September 1993.

The police investigation into the school, Operation Kiso, which began after the conviction in February of Michael Brewer, a former Chetham's music director, for sex abuse, has not previously looked at Waddington.

The former pupil, who asked to be identified only as P, said that he was one of several boys who attended Chetham's and sang in the cathedral choir who were targeted by the priest.

P met Waddington in 1993 and was subjected to frequent indecent assaults over a period of years when he regularly visited Waddington, who retired from Manchester to live in York.'

Another article in The Australian [here](#) details how a convicted cleric, Peter Gilbert, claims that Waddington prescribed him the drug stilbestrol in order to control his libido, but this had unfortunate side-effects:

'In the statement to the victim, obtained by The Weekend Australian, Gilbert claims Waddington, headmaster between 1961 and 1970, took him to a doctor and had him put on the synthetic oestrogen stilbestrol after he complained of having sexual thoughts about women.

He says Waddington had told him the drug would "control his libido". Instead he was turned into a "semi-transvestite", growing breasts and developing an attraction for his young male students.

“Prior to joining St Barnabas, I hadn’t the slightest interest in children ... now they were the centre of my life,” he wrote. “He misled me about the dangers and propriety of romantic love for children while being in a position of special power and influence.

“He encouraged and facilitated my romantic love for children directly and indirectly through ideology, through literature, by example and through specific guidance and advice in response to my concerns.”’

There is also an article from The Church Times on Waddington [here](#) . A document on the organisation of celibate priests with which Waddington was involved can be found [here](#) .

Updates on new articles relating to Waddington can be found on the website of Australian journalist Amanda Gearing [here](#).]