

REES, ALAN WILLIAM (1941 - 2005), Benedictine monk and musician

Name: Alan William Rees
Date of birth: 1941
Date of death: 2005
Parent: John Rees
Parent: Hilda Rees
Gender: Male
Occupation: Benedictine monk and musician
Area of activity: Religion; Music
Author:

Alan Rees was born in Morriston, Swansea, on 1 February 1941, the son of John and Hilda Rees. He was raised in the Baptist tradition by his father and the Anglican tradition by his mother. In his youth he was a member of the Church in Wales and adhered to the Anglo-Catholic tradition. He showed a profound interest in the Catholic Church at an early age and was received into the Church during his first year at university. Another important aspect of his life manifested itself during his childhood, showing an aptitude for music and learning to play the organ.

He was educated at Dynevor Grammar School, Swansea, and at University College Cardiff (now Cardiff University) where he graduated in music and went on to gain a postgraduate diploma in education. He became an ARCM in 1961 and ARCO in 1964.

After leaving university he intended to enter Ampleforth Abbey, but a nervous breakdown prevented him from fulfilling this intention and he entered the teaching profession. Between 1963 and 1968 he was choirmaster and organist at the Metropolitan Cathedral Church of St David, Cardiff. In 1968 he entered Belmont Benedictine Abbey, Hereford. He studied theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Sant Anselmo, Rome, and was ordained priest on 29 September 1974. From 1982 until 1986 he was novice master of Belmont Abbey, and choirmaster from 1972 until his death in 2005. He was a member of the Abbot's Council from 1975 until 1986 and a representative on the Chapter of the Congregation of English Benedictines in 1977.

In 1986 he was elected the ninth abbot of Belmont Abbey, a post he held until 1993. He was not a person who enjoyed positions of authority and after suffering from depression he resigned the office of abbot and received the honorary title of Abbot of Tewkesbury. He continued to be industrious in his work as a priest conducting retreats at the Abbey, and also served as the Vicar for Religious in the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

His ability as a musician and composer was acknowledged internationally. As a composer of liturgical music he turned for inspiration to the Gregorian modes rather than modern musical scales. He composed the music for the Papal Mass celebrated by John Paul II in Cardiff in 1982. His compositions enjoyed considerable success and are used in the Church worldwide. He established the Panel of Monastic Music with other likeminded monastic musicians with the intention of developing monastic music in the light of the Second Vatican Council, and was the chairman of the Society of St Gregory from 1981 until 1985. His musical skills were also acknowledged in that his collaboration was sought by ICEL (The International Committee for English in the Liturgy).

In addition to publishing liturgical music he published essays on the religious life and a book of prayers entitled *Prayers from the Cloister* (1996) based on his own practice of 'lectio divina'.

During the period from 2002 to 2005 he suffered from repeated bouts of depression, and despite treatment the final attack proved to be fatal. Alan Rees died after falling from a second-storey balcony at Belmont on 2 October 2005.

Author

Sources

Obituaries in *The Daily Telegraph*, October 11, 2005, and *The Times*, October 18, 2005

Abbot Paul Stonham, [Abbot Alan Rees](#), Belmont Abbey website (accessed May 2021)

Liturgical Pioneers: [Alan Rees, OSB](#) (accessed May 2021)

Personal acquaintance

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Alan Rees \(composer\)](#)

Additional Links

VIAF: [16406485](#)

Wikidata: [Q20985688](#)

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