

1957/11 St. Paul of Tarsus

8 feet high statue for St. Bride's Church Fleet Street, London

Plaster (it was originally intended that the statues would be subsequently carved in wood but this was never carried out, probably through lack of funds).

This statue, and that of St Bride, were part of the reconstruction of the Wren church under Architect W Godfrey Allen (see 1959/2), a successor to Wren as Surveyor to the fabric of St Paul's Cathedral, following St. Bride's destruction by German bombing on the night of 29th December 1940. The statue of St. Paul recalls the mother church of the diocese, St. Paul's Cathedral. The church was rededicated in the presence of the Queen and Prince Philip on December 19th 1957



HM The Queen at the re-dedication on 19 Dec 1957

The two full-size statues were modelled by McFall in the period September - December 1957 first in clay and then cast into plaster. He finally completed them on 9th December just 10 days before the opening ceremony and he records in his diary that he was a 'nervous wreck'.



David McFall





References:

- 1) "Phoenix of Fleet Street"; Country Life 9/1/58 "... a difficult problem ... arises again when one turns to Mr McFall's compelling figures of St Bride and St Paul. Are they in scale and in spirit appropriate where they have been placed, above woodwork which so meticulously and miraculously reproduces the craftsmanship of Wren's age. It might have been a happier solution to have set them on pedestals flanking the tower arch, where they would have had an equally dramatic effect and the psychological conflict would not arise so acutely. It should be added that the present figures are the plaster models of those to be carved in wood."
- 2) The Times 18/9/57.
- 3) "... McFall, 37, has five months to complete the work that would normally take an artist a year ... he told me that he has been given £1,750 for the work. "The next stage of the commission, when sufficient funds have been raised, is to execute the figures in limewood". It was a material much used by Wren..."



Sunday 29th December 1940

"The dome of St Paul's seemed to ride the sea of fire like a great ship lifting above the smoke and flames the inviolable ensign of the golden cross." So reported *The Times* on the night when few Londoners slept as the Luftwaffe executed one of the great incendiary raids of the war. St Bride's was not to fare well. After Sunday Evensong the church was locked up but its seasoned timbers proved perfect tinder for the fire-bomb which pierced the roof. Some things were rescued from the flames including the medieval gospel lectern which had survived the Great Fire of 1666. But most was destroyed. The famous bell's of St Bride's melted and fell but the steeple prevailed, testament to Wren's design, despite the flames pouring from it. The on-going war meant that any attempts to restore the parish had to be delayed. It was the next incumbent, Cyril Moxon Armitage, who was to oversee the resurrection of St Bride's along with architect Godfrey Allen. The church they rebuilt was not a replica of that which Hitler destroyed. Allen had access to Wren's own drawings and he, assisted by John Stammers, faithfully reproduced Wren's concept without the many additions that had been made to the original building.

