

Father Walter Alan Smith

OUR PRESENT PARISH PRIEST was born in Catford, London, on December 5th, 1905. Educated at St. John's Seminary, Womersley, he was ordained priest at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, on January 6th, 1935, by the late Archbishop Amigo.

His curate days were spent in the parishes of St. Mary Cray, East Greenwich, and Rotherhithe. During the war years he went to Dorset to care for London children evacuated to the west country. Returning in 1944 he became



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Assistant Financial Secretary of the diocese. This appointment he held for nine years and for the latter half of this period he was in addition parish priest of Mitcham.

In the autumn of 1953 he came to St. Mary Magdalen's. He came not as an entire stranger, for in his early years as a priest he worked for a short time as assistant to Monsignor Wallis. Since his return to Brighton he has shown himself an efficient and indefatigable pastor. Nor has he confined his activities solely to his parish. Each week he travels to Bishop's House, Southwark, to serve on the Finance Committee there, and many a

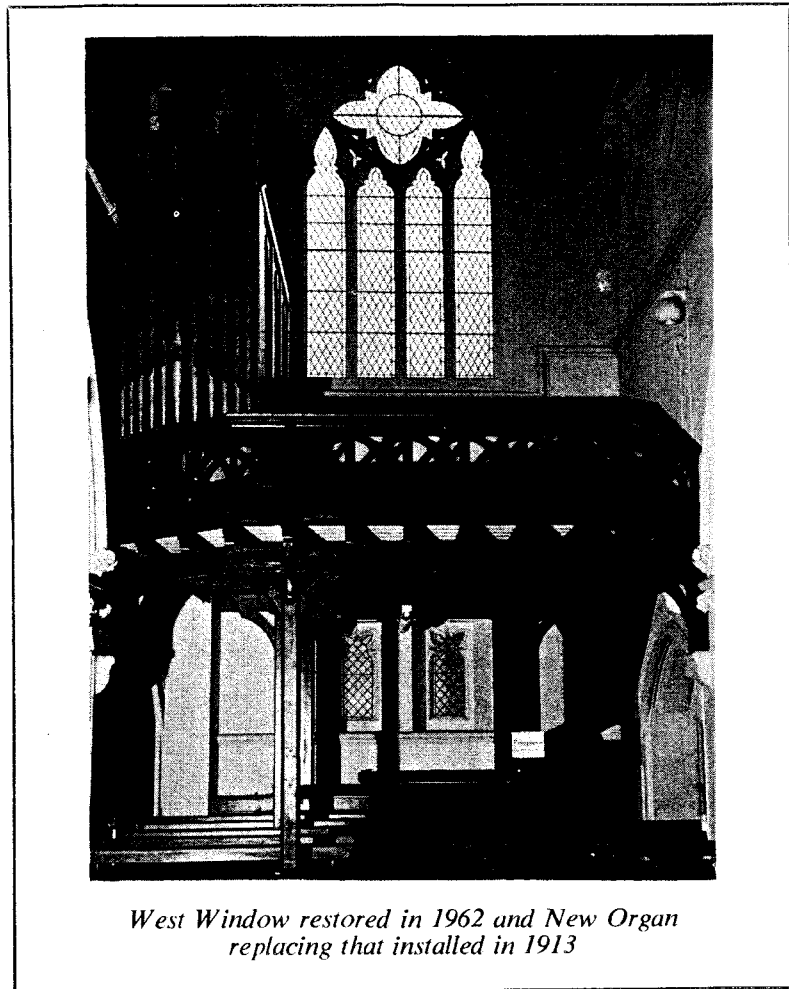
day is spent both in visiting and directing the numerous convents placed under his charge. He has taken a deep interest in local affairs and for five years was a member of Brighton Education Committee. In a town such as ours the care of the aged poor is a perennial problem, and those who have endeavoured to relieve the plight of these lonely and much-neglected people have always found in Father Smith a kind father and a wise counsellor. In this sphere he has gladly given his guidance and help to the work set on foot by Sister Mary Garson. He also serves on the committee of the Brighton Abbeyfield Society.

Father Smith sometimes jokingly says that he seems to be fated to inherit parishes that require the church to be consecrated and are about to celebrate a centenary, for in Mitcham he had the joy of seeing the church consecrated in 1951 and the following year celebrated the centenary of the setting up of the Mission there. On his arrival in Brighton he found that St. Mary Magdalen's was awaiting consecration and his first work was to have the church decorated in preparation for that ceremony which took place on June 27th, 1956. Recently — since the autumn of 1961 — in preparation for the fitting celebration of our centenary, he has skilfully piloted through the work of the restoration of the fabric of the church which has culminated in such an up-lifting result. He has also been able to replace the organ which has served since 1913 with a less pretentious but very pleasing instrument.

Father Smith has always taken a very great interest in the diocesan Seminaries where our future priests are trained. Most generous himself, he has persistently encouraged a like generosity among his parishioners towards this all important work. With his concern for the financial security of these colleges goes a zealous fostering of vocations. Several students have started on the long road to the priest-

hood through his direction and encouragement. It is indeed fitting that the first student whom he sent on from this parish should be raised to the priesthood at St. Mary Magdalen's during the centenary celebrations.

His parishioners are most grateful for the good work he has accomplished among them. He has devoted himself unsparingly in their interests, and it is their fervent prayer that he will be spared to shepherd them for many years of the parish's second century.



West Window restored in 1962 and New Organ replacing that installed in 1913