



# Journal of the RVW Society

No. 15 June 1999

## EDITOR

*Stephen Connock*  
(see address below)

**Special Adviser**  
**on Thomas Hardy:-**  
**David Tolley**

## In this issue...

### THOMAS HARDY EDITION

- **Hoping it might be so...**  
by David Tolley - page 2
- **Thomas Hardy and Music**  
by Hubert Foss - page 4
- **Hardy in the music of Vaughan Williams**  
by Alain Frogley - page 8
- **On the trail of Tess**  
by David Tolley - page 14
- **Ursula on VW and Thomas Hardy**  
- page 25

### plus news and reviews

#### CHAIRMAN

Stephen Connock  
Willow House, 3 Burywoods,  
Bakers Lane,  
Colchester, Essex. CO4 5AW  
(0836 567413)

#### TREASURER

John Francis  
Lindsey Francis Ferguson,  
North House,  
198 High Street,  
Tonbridge, Kent. TN9 1BE  
(01732 360200)

#### SECRETARY

Robin Barber  
The Chantry, Stoney Lane,  
Stocklinch,  
Ilminster, Somerset. TA19 9JJ  
(01460 57819)

## THE GARLAND APPEAL TAKES SHAPE

The RVW Society's main fund-raising initiative, involving a tribute to Linda McCartney, is in the final stages of preparation. Eight leading British composers have now completed their contributions to *A Garland for Linda*. The world première of the complete cycle will be held at Charterhouse Chapel on Sunday 18th July, 1999 with the Joyful Company of Singers conducted by Richard Hickox. The full programme for the event with box office details is shown on the insert to this Journal. All proceeds will go towards cancer research and to British music. The Garland Appeal has been set up to manage the project and is now a registered charity (number 1075007), chaired by Stephen Connock. John Francis is a Trustee and is the charity's finance director.

### The composers

The eight composers contributing to *A Garland for Linda* are: Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, Judith Bingham, David Matthews, Roxanna Panufnik, John Rutter, Giles Swayne and John Tavener. Through their music, these composers will be contributing to the fight against cancer whilst also helping to encourage performances and recordings of British music that would not otherwise be heard.

### Impact on VW

The projects planned under the British music heading include a first recording of *The Poisoned Kiss* as well as a new recording of *Sir John in Love*. Four VW works are in the programme for the world première at Charterhouse, as well as at the

USA première in New York on 4th December. The USA concert is being broadcast by National Public Radio across the States. The RVW Society will also be a beneficiary of the Appeal in financial terms, enabling us to improve services to our members.

### EMI recording

The four VW works will also be on the CD of *A Garland for Linda* being recorded in August by EMI Classics. The Appeal will gain around £2.50 for each CD sold, and over 150,000 discs could be sold world-wide. EMI have provided a significant marketing budget for this disc. All the design and notes for the CD will be handled by the RVW Society. The disc should be in the shops in early 2000, if not before. The sheet music will be published by Music Sales Ltd for world-wide distribution. Again, the charity will benefit from each copy sold.

### Gaining impetus

Whilst a sound income stream will come from the CD and the music, we need to achieve around 100 performances of *A Garland for Linda* in both the UK and in the USA, with box office proceeds going to the Appeal. The composers have kindly donated their performance royalties until the end of 2001. A brochure is being designed to assist our marketing efforts and any member willing to help in any way is urged to contact Stephen Connock. The idea is compelling, the causes good, and everyone can contribute.

# HOPING IT MIGHT BE SO .....

by David Tolley

## David Tolley examines the complex issues surrounding Thomas Hardy and religion

(Poetry references are numbered to *The Complete Poems* (Macmillan) edited by Dr James Gibson. All quotations are taken from broadcast contributions made by Dr James Gibson, Dr Timothy Hands and Dr Desmond Hawkins, whose consent is appreciated.)

From the setting by Vaughan Williams in *Hodie* readers will be familiar with Hardy's poem *The Oxen* (403) describing a folk myth of cattle kneeling on Christmas Eve, it declares the poet's wish to be persuaded to visit a barton in the expectation that 'it might be so'. This suggests Hardy's regret of his loss of faith. The same feeling is expressed more explicitly in *God's Funeral* (267) 1908-10.

In the poem *I Rose Up as My Custom Is* (311) a married woman is visited by her deceased lover, a poet. In the manner of Housman's ploughman he asks if she is happy now that she is:

.... rid of a poet wrung in brow  
And crazed with the ills he eyed.

She retorts that she is satisfied with her spouse, who makes no quest into her thoughts:

But a poet wants to know  
What one has felt from earliest days,  
Why one thought not in other ways...

These lines may be read as a satirical self-portrayal by Hardy: a writer of wide poetic invention representing a highly active and deeply inquiring mind. To assess his output of over nine hundred poems and many novels, one must not only take account of this but also the formative influences of his early life from much of which his writing draws inspiration.

Coming from an artisan family Hardy grew up in a social order affording him observation of the hardness of rural life in mid-19th century Dorset, and awareness of the rigid distinctions of class.

This became influential in his work. Perhaps due to the unfavourable reaction to his first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* Hardy was later careful to disguise his perceptions until he became sufficiently

established to write more overtly in such works as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, although even as early as the seemingly arcadian *Far from the Madding Crowd*, reality is represented by the fate of Fanny Robin.

Hardy's early life was influenced also by both Music and Religion: his father and grandfather had served in the church choir at Stinsford, while his mother and grandmother were literate above the average for their class. This, together with their attachment to the Church, was another strong influence on the young Hardy who for a while taught at Sunday School and had ideas of Ordination.

Hardy learned quickly, was an extensive reader and sufficiently talented to have made a very good living as an architect into which profession he was apprenticed - the route to what Shaw described as 'middle-class morality' lay open.

From here wherein lies the way to such novels as *Tess* and *Jude* with their implicit criticisms of double standards, social inequalities, conventional religion and the institution of marriage? Fame and notoriety, prosperity and calumny attended these achievements.

Quite simply, Hardy was an acute observer: like the dead poet he continually questioned - the results were controversial and not always conclusive - even to himself.

Following the outcry against *Jude* Hardy confined himself to his poetry and the creation of his epic Napoleonic verse-drama. In much of that outpouring of poetry Hardy continued the questions and promptings. Little attention was now paid for as Hardy observed 'if Galileo had stated in verse that the Earth moved the Inquisition might have left him alone'.

Here was a 'Doubting Thomas' indeed: his inconsistency of belief may originate from factors in early life. Firstly, as proposed by Dr Timothy Hands, the religious background of the High church of Stinsford contrasting with the Evangelism of surrounding Dorset. Dr. Hands argues that this was ultimately resolved in the writing of *Tess* as:

"... an exorcism of his evangelical past and in *Jude* as a kind of exorcism of his High Church past. Hardy cannot forgive his evangelical past for creating expectations which he then finds unfulfilled. Providence

is something that the Evangelicals were very keen on, but that Hardy lost his belief in. *Tess* is partly an outcry against any notion that things may go for the best in life."

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* did not appear in novel form until 1891, when Hardy was 51. Dr Hands points out however that even at the age of 24 Hardy's belief was undermined when he inscribed the single word 'Doubt' against the passage in Isaiah 'I am God and there is no other', subsequently erased.

Growing religious doubt was compounded on other grounds: Dr James Gibson states that Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was published in 1850, when Hardy was 10, and in reading it not much later he would have been aware of this crisis of faith, and "... whereas Tennyson seemed able to find a way to remain a Christian in spite of his doubts, Hardy could not. And Hardy expresses that terrible conflict in his mind between Faith and Doubt, and often conflict produces the best drama and the best poetry."

Throughout the latter part of the 19th century England was subjected to great advances in scientific understanding, including the publication in 1859 of the theory of evolution then exclusively credited to an ancestor of Vaughan Williams; significantly the term 'agnostic' was reputedly coined by its most distinguished advocate, T.H. Huxley, whom Hardy met and liked.

Dr Desmond Hawkins has alluded to the influence of these developments on Hardy: "when he began to be established as a novelist he felt that he had to write love stories, because he was writing serials, that was the way you earned a living. Having got the readers onto a conventional story, he used to like to bring his ideas in: A good example is *Two on a Tower* where instead of the young man being any young man Hardy made him an astronomer and then Hardy could talk about his ideas."

Conflicts emerge from this. In the later novels, and often in the poetry, Hardy's work reflects the differing elements represented in his religious background, the scepticism imposed on him by science and his perceptions of the wrongs of the world.

Despite a lifelong addiction to the Church services, Hardy longed for it to 'modulate by degrees into an undogmatic and non-theological establishment for the

promotion of that virtuous living on which all honest men are agreed'.

In some poems Hardy satirised the Zeus-like perception of the Christian God to be replaced with such vaguely defined propositions as the Supreme Power, Prime Force and finally the Imminent Will.

Dr Hawkins has argued that Hardy followed Spinoza and Einstein "what really drove the Universe was Necessity; it wasn't Chance, nor was it Purpose; given a situation it follows necessarily that something else will happen. So he had this idea of the Great Web of human activity, and all of human movement followed from being within this Web - a Determinist thing."

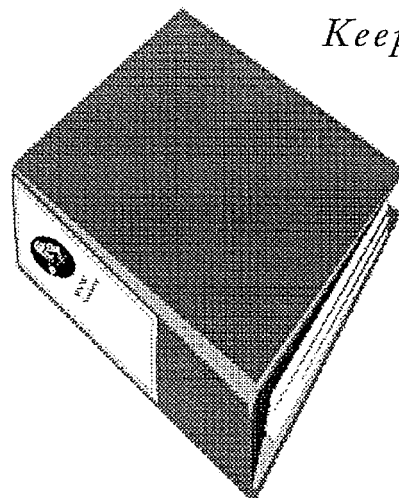
There seems little distinction on Hardy's part between the Universe and the affairs of Mankind, so that when he embarked upon his epic verse-drama *The Dynasts*, it becomes as much a moral and theological debate as a dramatic account of the Napoleonic conflict. Hardy still appears to be looking for a metaphysical dimension to these events which had been impressed on his mind from an early age.

This suggests an enduring impulse to believe in *something*, consistent with the wish that 'it might be so'. Nevertheless his implied criticisms of Christian convention clearly encouraged the emergent Rationalist movement to try for his support, Desmond Hawkins: "... Edward Clodd was a very close friend of his and they wanted him to declare himself a Humanist. This was the beginning of the Declaration of Humanism as the modern replacement for Christianity... and in one of his letters he just flatly says No: he does not want to write for the Rationalist Press and he does not want to label himself a Humanist..."

This raises a paradox: here is a questioning, doubting, realist observer of human nature who could not detach himself entirely from his original beliefs, who not infrequently extended imagination and thought almost to the point of superstition. This became manifested in a number of short stories and poems involving interaction between the living and the dead. With the passage of time Hardy became deeply attached to Stinsford churchyard and its congregation of departed relatives and *Friends Beyond* (36).

*The Dynasts*, Hardy's last major work, suggests his continuing hope that some moral compassion was acting in the world, consistent with his advocacy of 'loving-kindness'. This reflects a general belief of the Edwardian era that following the turmoil of Victoria's long reign, life was beginning to improve. This false sense of peace, prosperity and stability was overturned in 1914 by an event which changed the world and from which it has never recovered. The effect on Hardy is

## RVW SOCIETY JOURNAL BINDER OFFER



*Keep your RVW journals  
together without  
damaging them!*

The RVW Journal Binder  
holds 14 journals.  
Black, PVC finish with  
pre-printed binder spine.  
Only £10.00 per binder  
(including p&tp).

To order, send a cheque/postal order, made payable to:  
*The RVW Society*, with your name and address and a  
daytime telephone number to: Binder Offer, The RVW  
Society, c/o 18 Perry Mead, Bushey, Herts WD2 3HW.

best described by Dr Gibson: "... about 1911 he expressed a view that perhaps things might be getting better. He used the phrase 'evolutionary meliorism' and it's rather touching that the old man, who's now about 71, felt that perhaps there might be some purpose in the world, that we might be evolving towards something better. Then in 1914 the war came and the terrible four years of suffering and he writes: '...After two thousand years of mass we've got as far as poison-gas.' (Christmas: 1924 - 904). Here he lost his belief. I think he was a very

sad and dejected man at the end of his life. That's not to say that he behaved so publicly but I think there is much in those last years of his life, he died in 1928, that he very much regretted about the state of the world."

As well he might, for there was worse to come.

David Tolley

Please see crossword on back page.

RVW Crossword No.1 compiled by Linda Hayward

### ANSWERS

1.	Pastoral	1.	Six	1.	Pilgrims Progress
2.	Masque	2.	Drover	2.	
3.	Poisoned Kiss	3.	Oboe	3.	
4.	Old	4.	Romance	4.	
5.	Serenade	5.	Beauty	5.	
6.	Fen	6.	Lark	6.	
7.	Merciless	7.	Flemish Farm	7.	
8.	Five	8.	Vow	8.	
9.	Stour	9.	Sea	9.	
10.	Mass	10.	Rest	10.	
11.	Tuba	11.	Antarctica	11.	
12.		12.		12.	

DOWN

ACROSS

# THOMAS HARDY AND MUSIC

by Hubert Foss

CLEVER people write (unpaid) to the weekly and monthly press proving that Dr Watson married twice, that Sherlock Holmes must (or must not) have been a graduate or disappointed in love or whatever, that there was at least a third cask erroneously introduced into Mr Freeman Wills Crofts's novel of that name. Other public-spirited well-wishers write letters to expose the errors of Mr This or Miss That in their uninformed references to music in ordinary novels.

Apart from John Meade Falkner, only two novelists of our time can be trusted to be reasonably accurate in their treatment of music - Thomas Hardy and E. M. Forster. The difference in their attitudes towards music, I would suggest, is marked by the difference in their dates of birth; a matter of 40 years made great changes in post-Beethoven music. But I think it is marked, too, by the fact that though Mr Forster is practical enough in musicianship to have written the words for *The Abinger Pageant*, to which Vaughan Williams wrote some music, and a libretto for Benjamin Britten, Thomas Hardy was an active practitioner of music with his own fingers. In his eightieth year he confessed in his diary, after hearing Crofts's *God is gone up* and the Psalms to Walker in E flat at Salisbury Cathedral: 'Felt I should prefer to be a cathedral organist to anything in the world. Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work, claiming each slave of the sound.' Cast the mind back a year or two and we find the child Hardy tuning his father's fiddle for fun and 'worried by *The Wolf* in a musical octave, which he thought a defect in his own ear', and the adolescent architectural student of twenty-two or so buying 'an old fiddle at this time, with which he practised at his lodgings, with another man there who performed on the piano, pieces from the romantic Italian operas of Covent Garden and Her Majesty's.' At forty-five or so Hardy met Grieg and discussed Wagner with him - 'weather and ghost music, whistling of wind and storm, the strumming of a gale on iron railings, the creaking of doors; low screams of entreaty and agony through key-holes, amid which trumpet-voices are heard. Such music, like any other, may be made to express emotion of various kinds; but it cannot express the subject or reason of that emotion.' How much detail of this view-point he described to Grieg we do not know, but it is recorded that Grieg replied, shaking his head, 'I would rather have the

wind and the rain myself.'

Hardy the literary man, the novelist who always called his poems 'songs', was a musician in the sense of doing it himself, and never lost his interest in music as a living art to his dying day, though he found himself unable to pace along in step with the swift, almost forced marches of music as he grew older.

Before we examine Thomas Hardy's own deep love of music and his potent use of music in his novels as both a dramatic force and also a linking pattern-motive, I propose to turn away for a short space to glance at how musicians, and especially composers, have been affected by his writings.

\*

Thomas Hardy's life swung across an immense span of years - immense because the artistic history of his eighty-eight years from 1840 onwards is incalculable in its importance. His mind was so saturated with tradition heard and folk-lore learned that he acquired a kind of inherited memory: we can count his mind as leaning back into the eighteenth century, which (as he himself has written) was of indeterminate dates, since centuries in Wessex passed as soon as single years elsewhere, in less agricultural areas.

Yet Hardy was (if one may dare use such a word relatively) a modernist. That oddly extended Victorian century showed signs of splintering long before it broke itself into the halves recognisable only later as (take your choice) 'the age of faith' and 'the age of reason'. John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer began to argue early; Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared no later than 1859; the days of the later followers of Kant and of Comteism had begun. Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* was published in 1872.

Into such a world was Thomas Hardy born; the old ways of living were around him in his childhood and environment of upbringing, the new ways of thought were ready at hand for his enquiring mind to probe - whether into Kingsley's 'muscular Christianity' or the nothingness of 'pure reason'. His first major novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, was published in 1874, a novel that made that most original novel, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* of 1860, look a little Victorian in its outlook. So the procession of Hardy's novels led on,

tragedy piled on tragedy, until 1891 he published *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, which, though his heroine was seduced in the first section and hanged for murder in the last, he subtitled 'A pure woman'. All through the years, Hardy had been writing poetry - his 'songs'; none appeared until his novel-writing days had been terminated by the violent reception by critics, libraries, and public alike of his *Jude the Obscure* in 1895 (*The Well-Beloved* of 1897 was a 'sport'). Then he released *Wessex Poems* in 1898, and subsequent books of verses up till 1925, not (I beg) omitting that great epic drama *The Dynasts* (1904-8).

During all this period of Hardy's activity, English music was opening into blossom again. Parry began to write songs nearly twenty years before Hardy's first poems were printed. Those songs he called *English Lyrics*, and indeed they give us a fine corpus of English poetry as Parry knew it - Shakespeare, the Elizabethans, the Caroleans, Tennyson, and some contemporaries of his own. Parry set out, following Milton's words that he so nobly set in 1887 in *Blest Pair of Sirens*, to unite once more 'voice and verse', and it was a shrewd and not unkindly comment on Parry that Delius made when he said that had Parry lived longer he would have set the whole Bible to music. Charles Villiers Stanford's series of songs began a year later than Parry's - 1882. A school of English singers sprang up, centred upon Harry Plunket Greene.

But in truth English poetry had changed unofficially as English philosophical thought had. The mellifluousness of Tennyson as practised by followers without his genius (like the *fin-de-siècle* Stephen Phillips), the awkwardly versified conversationalisms of Browning, had been left behind; the novels in verse of Coventry Patmore were coming to the fore, and a new generation of poets was springing up. The composers had not arrived at that point; they were, as usual, fifty years behind the times.

A pale and lone poetic star appeared in the heavens in 1896 - the slender volume *A Shropshire Lad* written by an unknown classical professor named A. E. Housman. It passed unnoticed across the vision of composers, save that of one, George Butterworth; and through him it was brought brilliantly into focus by the telescope of Vaughan Williams's

song-cycle, for tenor and piano quintet, *On Wenlock Edge*, in 1909. Ironically, Housman (who despised music) has become the most frequently set of all later English poets. He was entirely unaware that his epigrammatic verses fell into our modern English idiom of music, and was not interested why.

Thomas Hardy's poems have not the same facility for falling unbruised on to the bed of modern English music that Housman's have; they are too angular, too uncomfortable (in the sense of 'a well-covered woman'), too musical in themselves. The music in them is not that of *The Lotus Eaters*; they are comparable in painting rather to El Greco than to Rubens. But they foreshadow, in reality, the whole trend of modern musical thought - the trend that led away from the billowing waves of brass in Wagner and Mahler on which one could rest a weary head towards the spikiness of a Walton or a Hindemith (to give but two random names). These poems did not ask for music - did not set themselves; besides, the great Parry and Stanford tradition was not attuned to such semi-poetic turns of phrase. They were unsingable, or so they were represented.

It may perhaps seem strange that Vaughan Williams has only once turned to Hardy for a poem to be set to music - the *Bonaparty* of 'before 1909', which is the soldiers' marching tune in the earlier part of *The Dynasts*. That other Dorset poet, William Barnes, attracted him more by his close-to-the-folk idiom.

An even odder point is that two contemporary English composers should have turned for inspiration, not to Hardy's verse, but to his prose. H. Balfour Gardiner (whose recent death we lament as a great loss to English music) made something of a success with his orchestral piece *Shepherd Fennel's Dance* (1911): Shepherd Fennel was of course the host at the wayside cottage on the downs where the hangman and his victim were both visitors on the same night in the story *The Three Wayfarers* in *Wessex Tales*. Then Professor Patrick Hadley made a beautiful song (for small chamber-music forces) of the last passage in *The Woodlanders* - Marty South's lament over Giles Winterbourne's grave. Three larger-scale interpretations of Hardy's prose (or prose-evocations) must be mentioned - Baron Frédéric d'Erlanger's opera based on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1906), Rutland Boughton's *The Queen of Cornwall* (1924), and Gustav Holst's *Egdon Heath* (1927), deriving from *The Return of the Native*. The first I do not know, but I trust it is nearer in feeling to the central Hardy than the last.

There are not a large number of song-settings. *The Oxen* has attracted composers at times (notably Professor Edward Dent, whose privately published music has not been made generally

available). Some remarkable songs by Gerald Finzi are directly in sympathy with Hardy the poet, and there is also a beautiful cycle by Robin Milford, apart from a set of seven by the present writer which are quite forgotten. A few other scattered settings may be found.

\*

It can hardly have escaped the notice of any reader of Hardy's novels that his mind was keenly attuned to visual objects. Apart from his vividly pictorial descriptions and his acute observation of nature, apart, too, from his increasing use of landscape as the novels progress - not so much as a background as in the character of a principal in the drama - there are continual references in his prose works to architecture and to painters of older schools - to him they are a normal standard of comparison with his own sight. Hardy was artful in and for a time practised architecture; he designed his own house 'Max Gate' in Dorchester. What is not so clearly realised is that he was equally keenly attuned to sounds - was, in fact, a practical musician (as I have said), if only in a humble way.

A third point cries out for mention. Hardy used music in his novels as a potential force for drama no less than Shakespeare did; we must allow, it is obvious, for the differences between the media of written prose to be read and acted verse to be spoken and heard - the time-scale is not the same, for one thing. It has long been my literary contention that Hardy follows in the direct line from Shakespeare, and one of my points of argument (the only one with which we are here concerned) is this very use of music.

To bolster up that argument with quotations from and references to most of the novels (even the later prose works) and to the poems *passim* would be easy; but it would also be tedious, lengthy, and perhaps beyond the scope of interests of the readers of these lines.

I have thought it best, therefore, to examine one typical novel in some detail with a few parallel references. It is a method which from a particular point may throw a focussed light on other relevant spots in the wider field; and it has the advantage of being short and easily followed by reference to the one book itself.

The book I have chosen is not the obvious one - *Under The Greenwood Tree* of 1872, in which the whole plot turns upon the village choir and orchestra - was it not first entitled *The Mellstock Quire?* - but *Far From the Madding Crowd*. It was the next but one on (1874) and is (if I may venture to say so) the best introduction to Hardy for any beginner, young or old; also, it stands up to reading splendidly after thirty-five

years.

\*

The first thing a perceptive reader notices about Hardy's musical sense is his awareness of noises, and his use of them in painting his pictures. In all the novels as well as in the poems we find recurrent examples of the sharpness of the author's ear; he hears and remembers the noises of nature - the rustle of the wind in the dry grasses and heather on Egdon Heath, and the sighing of the saplings in *The Woodlanders*. Human-made noises catch his attention no less, like the creakings of Miller Loveday's ancient machinery in *The Trumpet-Major*. Furthermore there are innumerable attempts to reproduce those sounds onomatopoeically in the prose (e.g. 'the cluck of the oars' when Sergeant Troy escapes from drowning) and frequent recourse to musical simile and comparison.

After a short prelude, *Far from the Madding Crowd* opens positively symphonically, with mysterious evocations of sound that recall Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony*. On Norcombe Hill at night, 'the instinctive act of human kind was to stand and listen and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left waited or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir.' The rustlings of nature are suddenly pierced by 'the notes of Farmer Oak's flute'. The whole human scene is ushered in before our eyes by means of our aural memory and imagination.

In a dozen other places in the book, this dramatic and pictorial use of noises can be observed; a few of them are the breaking out of his sheep at night, the description of Bathsheba's homestead, various clocks ticking and chiming (very commonly used by Hardy), the great storm, Joseph Poorgress's journey, 'the Gurgyle - its doings', the birdsong when Bathsheba awakens in the thicket.

That flute of Gabriel Oak's, however, is no mere *arabesque*; it is a *leitmotif* of the whole work. It 'plants' Oak's character, makes friends for him at Warren's Malthouse (where he plays instead of singing 'ba'dy songs'), earns him sorely needed pennies in the market-place, and persists all through. A linked *motif* is the piano which he promises Bathsheba if she will marry him. The piano means for Hardy not only an instrument of music; it represents too the new trend of educated music-making in the home, as against the communal music-making of the village choir and Church band and wait-singers at Christmas and perhaps at other surviving festivals of country gaiety. For him it symbolises the newly sprung-up culture of the middle classes, created by the Industrial Revolution, and so he treats it as a symbol of social position, and that for him

(continued on page 21)



# News about our Fifth AGM

The next AGM of the RVW Society will be held on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> of October at Charterhouse School, Godalming, Surrey.

We are delighted that Nicola and Alexandra Bibby will be performing a two-piano recital of Vaughan Williams music as part of the AGM.

The full programme is as follows:

- |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mid-day</b>   | Special Tour of Sir Hubert Parry's house at Haslemere.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>3 p.m.</b>    | Tea at Charterhouse School.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>3.15 p.m.</b> | AGM commences.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>4 p.m.</b>    | Celebrity two-piano recital by Nicola and Alexandra Bibby:<br><i>Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes (arr. Russell)</i><br><i>Fantasia on Greensleeves (arr. Foss)</i><br><i>Introduction and Fugue</i><br><i>Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis (arr. Jacobson)</i> |
| <b>5 p.m.</b>    | Concluding remarks and refreshments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>5.30 p.m.</b> | AGM concludes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend the 1999 AGM. Full details, including the 1998-99 Annual Report and Accounts, will be sent to members on the 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1999.

(Editor's note: Nicola and Alexandra Bibby are performing the Introduction and Fugue at St. John's Smith Square on the 8<sup>th</sup> July at 7:30 p.m.)



**Vaughan Williams: *Symphony No. 6 in E Minor*  
*In the Fen Country/ On Wenlock Edge*  
Ian Bostridge/ LPO/ Bernard Haitink  
EMI Classics 5 56762 2 (68.41)**

This is an excellent CD. Having been a little disappointed by the previous release in this series (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> *Symphonies*) it is gratifying to find Bernard Haitink once again a superb interpreter of VW.

The dramatic and ultimately pessimistic 6<sup>th</sup> *Symphony* is given a most arresting performance, from the powerful opening dissonance to the eerie finale Haitink is in complete control. Perhaps the famous tune in the first movement could be more expansive but there is great menace in the second and wonderful playing in the

jazz-infected *scherzo*. The epilogue's meandering towards oblivion benefits from a crystal clear recording from the EMI engineers.

The two fill-ups to the symphony are well worth the price of the disc alone. In the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the RVWS Journal I suggested that Ian Bostridge would be an ideal tenor for *On Wenlock Edge* ...and so he is. Here, in the orchestral version, his pure-toned voice is quite perfect for this wonderfully atmospheric song-cycle with the excellent digital sound and very refined playing from the LPO this is the best recording of this version of the work I know, the bells have never sounded so clear on Bredon Hill.

*In the Fen Country* is another pre-1914 work, an evocative Tone Poem inspired by the East Anglian landscape and revised in 1935. Perhaps it is reminiscent of the conductor's native Holland for he certainly brings great sympathy to this symphonic impression of an open-skied countryside.

*Robin Barber*

(continued on page 27)

# RVW Remembered

## AN AFTERNOON WITH RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Frank James Stanek sends us the following story, courtesy of Laurence Taylor, a composer, teacher and violinist. It was part of the programme notes, written by Mr Taylor, for a wonderful concert by The Princeton Chamber Symphony in January of 1997. Under the baton of Music Director Mark Laycock the orchestra performed a very moving and memorable version of RVW's *Fifth Symphony*.

As a fourteen year-old, I first encountered the music of Vaughan Williams through Stokowski's recording of the enigmatic *Sixth Symphony*, followed by a scratchy 78 r.p.m. recording of the *Fourth* in a sizzling performance under the composer's direction. That was probably an unusual introduction to a composer whose most popular pieces (*Tallis Fantasia*, *London Symphony*) give a decidedly different first impression! Eagerly engaged in my own composing, I soon dashed off a letter to RVW seeking advice and encouragement. A similar letter to Leonard Bernstein had earned me a tart secretarial note explaining that the Great Man had better things to do with his time, so I was not expecting much. I should have known better. However, there soon arrived a warm-hearted, amusing letter from London written in the spirit of an older professional sharing ideas with a younger colleague. My cheeky comments regarding an "improvement" to his *Fourth Symphony* [a revised ending to the slow movement] led him to say that "for a long time I have been like the old lady with the 'Lost Chord': trying all combinations until I hit on the right one!" I liked this man instantly.

Several years later, while still in college, I made a bicycle tour of Europe and arranged to visit RVW and his wife while in London. On 19 August, 1958 I jumped into a rumpled "wash and wear" suit, scraped the mud from my cycling shoes and made my way to 10 Hanover Terrace, Regent's Park. It proved to be an enthralling couple of hours. RVW and his wife, Ursula, welcomed me into the drawing room and the three of us sat on a sprawling sofa before a table soon heaped with cakes and many cups of tea. He was dressed in a shaggy woollen sweater, wearing comfy slippers... he was tall, with bushy white hair and inquiring eyes behind owlsh spectacles. The room was full of books on all subjects, including a much-annotated early edition of *Leaves of Grass* and a beautifully bound facsimile of Bach's *B Minor Mass* sitting on a music stand. Except for a craggy bust of the composer perched in the corner, there was no evidence in the sitting room of Vaughan Williams, composer. We immediately

plunged into spirited conversation not at all hindered by Vaughan Williams's deafness — he produced a picturesque early 19th century Ear Trumpet at moments during conversation, claiming it to be vastly preferable to squeaky modern "deaf aids"! As I noted in my journal at the time, he was "modest, quite direct and somewhat rough-hewn in manner, witty and with a lively sense of humour."

We talked about composers: his studies with Ravel, which were launched by Ravel assigning RVW to "compose a little minuet in the style of Mozart" — which he promptly refused to do! "How did he react to your refusal?" I asked. "Oh, we had a jolly time and soon became quite good friends," was RVW's reply. He recalled his studies with Stanford, in particular the day when he (RVW) arrived with a new string quartet. "I was convinced that it was the greatest thing ever written in that form up to that time, but Stanford's comment was, 'all rot, my boy, all rot!'... I would never say anything like that to a student today... even if they are devoid of talent I try to send them away with something to look ahead to." (RVW was capable of firing a zinger when necessary: during a semester spent at Cornell in 1954, after patiently enduring the grating dissonance of a student composition, he suggested to the composer, "my dear fellow, if a tune *should* occur to you, don't hesitate to jot it down!")

Inquiring about my own work, RVW asked a loaded question: "Young man, have you composed in large forms? ... a symphony?" Having written a dozen quite forgettable symphonies while still in short pants, I nervously dodged the question. However, he went on to say that his old friend Holst had said that "anything worth doing is worth doing *badly*!" - but then he turned to me with a fierce look and barked out, "mind you, I have always felt that young composers should write string quartets — no HUMBUG can go on, as in an orchestral piece!" That stern admonition was followed by another: " — And if you do anything, *don't try to be original*!" I blinked in confusion. "If you are original you will be so without trying, and it will take care of itself!"

Vaughan Williams's devotion to the memory of Gustav Holst was quite notable — they came from the same generation, and shared a deep musical bond. There was also a warm admiration for the work of Bartók, with whom RVW clearly felt a musical kinship.

RVW also felt that American music was on its way: "Now it can progress with great speed, freed of the bonds of Europe. Now, in finding itself, American arts are taking their proper place." He had special praise for Samuel Barber among other American composers. (Some years later Barber told me that when RVW heard his *Dover Beach* on a visit to the Curtis Institute, he encouraged the young student composer, admitting that "I have tried many times without success to set that poem — and you have done it!")

(For all their pleasure in American life, RVW and his wife admitted to three reservations:

crew-cuts, cottage cheese — and to my amazement — pumpkin pie! "Pumpkin is a vegetable!" On the other hand, they were enthusiastic about corn on the cob... )

Within a man nearly 86 years of age there still was a mischievous lad. RVW was pleased that I had visited his old university, Cambridge, and had shown the good sense to cycle out to see the often overlooked cathedral at Ely, ten miles from Cambridge. "You know, when I was at the university, many years ago, in the winter when the Cam froze over we used to ice-skate down to Ely to attend the services at the cathedral. In the warm months, I used to take the train. It used to arrive a bit late for the service, and I would enter the cathedral just as they began to sing the psalms. Ah, it was marvellous!" To me, looking back, that was a clue to the powerful link between the music of RVW and the great tradition of Tudor church music. RVW himself was an agnostic (some would say perhaps a "Christian agnostic"), but with a deep spiritual sensibility and an awareness of the unfolding of tradition as an invigorating element in a creative life. When I told him that often people found it remarkable that he would write contemporary music, yet on a tonal basis, he replied, "I don't write contemporary music... I just write music. Too often the critics look for the enticing, "fashionable" aspects of new music, instead of its honest worth." Ursula Vaughan Williams summed it up with a characteristic twist: "I have always felt that fashion is quite all right for shoes, but out of place in music. Perhaps it may be galling to have one's fame after 500 years, but somehow it seems best not to give a damn what anyone says —" — and go ahead and write what you must write," RVW finished. "I have long believed, as with folk music, that music, now and in the future, must be thought of as many different flowers from a common stem. The continuing line will prevail."

After two hours I took my leave, and sat for a while in the late afternoon sun in Regent's Park, reflecting upon the time I had spent with a most wonderful man. A week later, cycling along Edinburgh's Princes Street after a week in the Highlands, my eye caught a headline on a newspaper kiosk: "Famous Composer Dies" - and somehow knew instinctively what the news was. I bought the evening paper and learned that RVW, on the morning of the first recording session for his recent *Ninth Symphony* suddenly felt unwell and died of a heart attack.

Laurence Taylor

Laurence Taylor has been a member of the Princeton Chamber Symphony almost since its inception, playing violin and writing program notes. Mr. Taylor is also a composer and teaches at the College of New Jersey.

# HARDY IN THE MUSIC OF VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

by ALAIN FROGLEY

Hardy's own profound love of music, and his understanding of its place in human experience, is well-known; composers' and musicians' love of Hardy has perhaps been less explored.<sup>1</sup> When we consider composers who have shown an interest in Hardy, Ralph Vaughan Williams does not immediately spring to mind. Unlike Benjamin Britten or Gerald Finzi, he left no major collections of Hardy settings. His list of works reveals only a handful of associations with the writer: a brief quasi folk-song setting of a lyric from *The Dynasts* in 1908; some incidental music to a radio serialisation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in 1950; a setting of *The Oxen* in the cantata *Hodie*, composed in 1953-54.<sup>2</sup> Some critics have pointed to affinities between the creative personalities and achievements of writer and composer; for instance, in the first major study of Vaughan Williams,<sup>3</sup> the composer's friend and publisher Hubert Foss drew extended analogies between Hardy and Vaughan Williams. Nevertheless, direct contacts in the music have seemed to be minimal.

This strikes one as surprising when one turns to the most authoritative biography of the composer, that written by his second wife, Ursula Vaughan Williams:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One exception to this is Stephen Banfield's *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early Twentieth Century*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> For further details of these works see Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, London, 1964. A revised edition of this book appeared in two volumes, the first retaining the original title (London, 1980), the second as *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, (London, 1982). All subsequent references are to the revised edition. In a 1956 letter to Kennedy, in connection with an anthology of English poems that Kennedy was suggesting the composer set to music, Vaughan Williams wrote "I do not know whether I dare to set Hardy..." (Kennedy, *Works*, p. 387).

<sup>3</sup> Hubert Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, London, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, London, 1964.

Ralph read all Hardy's novels, and one summer followed Tess's footsteps in her walk from Flintcomb-Ash to Emminster. He thought *Tess* the greatest of the novels and his other favourite was *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He felt there were too many overheard conversations in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, though the first chapter of that and the majestic beginning of *The Return of the Native* — Holst's as well as Hardy's *Egdon Heath* — were often re-read... When the cinema became capable of great themes, Ralph longed for a film to be made of *The Dynasts*, so naturally suitable for the screen, and he would have liked to write the music for it.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of this, the few short musical homages to Hardy emerge as tokens of something much deeper, a vital current of attachment to the author's works that ran throughout Vaughan Williams's long life. It is interesting to note, though, that Vaughan Williams never met the writer<sup>6</sup> (incidentally, both men held the Order of Merit, but Vaughan Williams did not receive the honour until some years after Hardy's death). His friend Gustav Holst was on good terms with Hardy, however, and Vaughan Williams was intimately involved with the composition during 1927 of Holst's tone-poem *Egdon Heath*, which is prefaced by a quotation from the opening of *The Return of the Native*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85. In connection with *The Dynasts*, it is interesting to note that although "much tempted", Vaughan Williams turned down on account of overwork an opportunity to write the music for a radio adaptation of the play in 1951 (BBC Written Archives Centre, 910 WIL/111 1947-51, letter from BBC 9 March 1951, VW's reply 11 March 1951).

<sup>6</sup> The composer wrote to BBC producer Eileen Molony "I never met Thomas Hardy to speak to..." (BBC Written Archives Centre R41/241, T.L.S., 17 March 1954). The two men did correspond however, in connection with the setting from *The Dynasts*, which Hardy was happy to approve. See Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R. V. W.*, p.84.

<sup>7</sup> See Imogen Holst, *Gustav Holst: a Biography*, sec. (rev.) ed., London, 1969, pp.

Until recently, Vaughan Williams appeared to have left us nothing on the scale of *Egdon Heath* by way of tribute to Hardy. But a new investigation of the manuscripts for the composer's last completed major work, the *Ninth Symphony*, suggests otherwise. It has long been known that this symphony was originally conceived to some degree as a programmatic work. In his notes to the first performance in April 1958, Vaughan Williams confessed that the second movement had initially possessed a programme, but that this had "got lost on the journey".<sup>8</sup> With the publication in 1964 of the official "musical biography" of Vaughan Williams by Michael Kennedy,<sup>9</sup> it little more of this background was revealed. The *Ninth* began with an idea for a symphony about Salisbury and the surrounding area, a part of the country that had always fascinated Vaughan Williams, particularly through its associations with *Tess*, and the programme seems to have involved the whole symphony, not just the second movement.<sup>10</sup> The idea was apparently soon abandoned, however, and apart from the casual reference in his programme note, and the few hints given to Kennedy, and to Ursula Vaughan Williams, the composer revealed nothing more. Writers on the work have been content to let the matter rest: while noting, for instance, that the symphony represents "Vaughan Williams in his most Hardy-like frame of mind",<sup>11</sup> they have assumed that the programme left few traces in the finished work.

The composer's sketches and other manuscripts for the symphony now in the British Library,<sup>12</sup> show that the situation is

126-27, 130; also Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.*, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> These notes are quoted in Kennedy, *Catalogue*, pp. 246-52.

<sup>9</sup> See n. 2.

<sup>10</sup> See Kennedy, *Works* pp. 369-70.

<sup>11</sup> Hugh Ottaway, in *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, BBC Music Guides, London, 1972, p.59.

<sup>12</sup> Add. MSS 50378-84. For a fuller exposition of the Hardy connections of the slow movement of the symphony, see my "Vaughan Williams and Thomas Hardy: *Tess*



more complex. Above certain themes and movements, verbal inscriptions appear that seem to confirm the existence of the original Salisbury programme. In the main, the inscriptions are isolated and merely tantalising, although it is helpful to have the basic connection with Hardy confirmed by the original title of the first movement of the symphony, "Wessex Prelude". In the case of the second movement, however, the manuscript sources offer significant new insights into the music, as the inscriptions here are both more numerous and more specific. Two principal titles appear, "Stonehenge" in association with the opening theme of the movement, and "Tess" linked with the main idea of the central section. "Tess" clearly points us to Hardy's novel, and, assuming the two inscriptions are related, "Stonehenge" leads us to the last few pages of the narrative (Michael Kennedy recalls that this was another Hardy passage that Vaughan Williams had read many times over<sup>13</sup>). The theme headed "Stonehenge" in Vaughan Williams's sketches emerges in the finished symphony as a remote and plaintive flügel horn solo. It does not seem fanciful to hear in this the "booming tune" of the wind in the stones that greets Tess and Angel when they stumble across Stonehenge. Throughout the first part of the movement, the flügel horn solo is juxtaposed with what Vaughan Williams described as "a barbaric march theme", and this structure could perhaps be taken to reflect the description of Tess and Angel groping their way between stone pillars separated by windy spaces, the two contrasting musical themes representing space and stone respectively. The menacing character of the march idea captures something of the brutal pagan past of Stonehenge that Hardy so pertinently evokes.<sup>14</sup>

Then, as in the novel, the focus of the symphony movement shifts from

and the Slow Movement of the *Ninth Symphony*", *Music and Letters*, January 1987.

<sup>13</sup> In conversation with the author, March 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Kennedy provides another association for this theme, stating that it was "originally intended for the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain" (*Works*, p. 380). No further information is provided, but various factors point to the famous Tidworth poltergeist of the seventeenth century (see Keith B. Poole, *Ghosts of Wessex*, Newton Abbot/London, 1976, pp. 118-26). A more distant threatening and military association for this theme may have been suggested by Hardy's "Channel Firing", where the sound of naval guns out at sea — which the dead mistake for the last trump — is heard "As far inland as Stourton Tower/And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge". Vaughan Williams was fascinated by Stonehenge, mentioning it several times in his own writings, and he found it at times a terrifying place (see Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.* p. 65).

Stonehenge to Tess and her concerns, the central section being based on the graceful but troubled theme headed "Tess" in the sketches. Tess's arrest is not portrayed, it seems; but after an interjection redolent of a fateful shadow, the Tess theme rises to a powerful climax, and at this point the most explicit link of all between symphony and novel is forged. Under a return of the opening theme of the movement, in combination with the "Tess" theme, bells, gongs and harps toll seven times. The march theme interrupts, continues for some time, and then a final eighth bell stroke is heard. This passage must surely refer to the final chapter of *Tess* (which, it will be recalled, follows straight on from the scene at Stonehenge), where Angel and 'Liza-Lu climb the bill out of Winchester and hear the clocks chime eight, the time of Tess's execution. By separating the seventh and eighth bell strokes, Vaughan Williams even captures the "paralysed suspense" with which Angel and 'Liza-Lu await the final chiming of the hour. The movement then ends with an attenuated reminiscence of the "Tess" theme; a final appearance of the flügel horn solo; and, finally, an unexpected major chord that seems unmistakably to hint at transcendence, whatever Hardy may have intended at this point.

It seems clear from Vaughan Williams's own hint in his notes to the symphony that the second movement — and, we can now say, *Tess* — was at the heart of the programme of the *Ninth Symphony*. And it is not just an isolated episode. By piecing together various other programmatic implications in this work, it is possible to see the reference to *Tess* as part of a wider theme, involving innocent suffering and religious experience, embodied in a kind of pilgrimage culminating in Salisbury Cathedral; there may also be some more oblique echoes from Hardy, but these cannot be explored here. Also, underlying musical connections exist between this second movement and Holst's *Egdon Heath*. It must be said that the composer eventually deleted the inscriptions in the manuscripts and no titles appear in the published score; but the musical ideas with which the inscriptions were once associated appear essentially unchanged in the finished piece, and it seems simply that Vaughan Williams decided not to reveal the programme to his audience. This should not greatly surprise us; he had an extremely ambivalent attitude to programme music, even in those works to which he had assigned descriptive titles, such as *A London Symphony*. Furthermore, in addition to his notes to the symphony, Vaughan Williams left us one more hint that he might not want the programme to be completely forgotten. In connection with a proposed exhibition of his manuscripts at the première of the *Ninth Symphony*, he insisted that the sketchbooks be put on display: "I usually destroy my rough copies,

but I have kept these, as I thought it might be useful to show the scaffolding."<sup>15</sup>

The *Ninth Symphony* was written in the same decade as two of the other three homages to Hardy, the radio music for *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and the setting of *The Oxen*. This late crop seems in many ways appropriate and congruent. *The Oxen*, for instance, is in harmony with the complex attitude to religious experience expressed in many of Vaughan Williams's late works, and this spiritual affinity is reflected at some level of artistic means. During his last decade, Vaughan Williams developed a musical style that brought the sharply polarised elements of his earlier musical language into a rich and complex synthesis: the tendency to alternate between works of profound serenity and those of troubled violence gave way to a vision of constantly shifting implications, confident assertion turning to doubt and back in a few bars. This style is perhaps epitomised by the *Ninth Symphony*. I was struck to find what might serve as a telling interpretation of this style in an article not on Vaughan Williams, but on Hardy, in a recent issue of this journal; what is more, the author's concern at this particular point is the last paragraph of *Tess*:

For (Hardy), it is the four sentences taken together which constitute a human truth, by catching in varying lights our condition, flux followed by reflux, the fall by the rally;...<sup>16</sup>

It is fitting that a composer who was so close to Hardy in many ways, yet who had resisted any large-scale involvement with the writer in his music, should finally have made that commitment — albeit in virtual secrecy — in his last major work.

*From the Thomas Hardy Journal, October, 1986, pages 50-55. Reproduced with the kind permission of The Thomas Hardy Society and the author. Alain Frogley is preparing a fuller treatment of this subject for a forthcoming OUP book.*

Alain Frogley

<sup>15</sup> Oxford University Press Archives, File 810E/Old J, TLS to Alan Frank (head of music), 15 February [1958].

<sup>16</sup> Ian Gregor, "Contrary Imaginings: Thomas Hardy and Religion", *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, ii:2 (May 1986), 21.

# YOUR LETTERS

*We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page*



## Fascinating 2 CD Set

I thought your members might be interested in our forthcoming Vaughan Williams release. It will be a 2-CD set, consisting of: 8 Folk dances, arranged by Cecil Sharp, conducted by RVW, 1/30

10 Folk songs/Carols arranged by RVW, with the English Singers, of 1927/8

*On Wenlock Edge* – Pears/Britten/Zorian Quartet, of 1945

*Tallis Fantasia* – Boyd Neel/RVW supervision, of 1934

*Symphony No. 4* – BBC SO/RVW, 1937

*Symphony No. 5* – Hallé/Barbirolli, 2/44

**John Waite**  
**Pavilion Records Ltd.,**  
**Wadhurst, East Sussex**

## CD Covers

Roger Juneau's "Survey of RVW CD Covers" deals interestingly with an original topic. My suggestions for the *Antartica* are the photograph of Scott's party at the South Pole, and the Edward Wilson painting of a circular solar halo over the icy landscape.

As for the *Tallis Fantasia*, this could use the melody as it appears in Archbishop Parker's *The Whole Psalter*, published in 1567; or possibly the title-page; the second psalm metricated to "why fum'th in fight the Gentiles' spite...?"; or other suitable extract. In 1997 I visited Lambeth Palace Library to look at the copy, there and take notes in pencil of its contents, including an acrostic psalm on MATTHEVS PARKERUS which appears before Psalm 119. Your readers could follow suit but would need first to arrange their visit with the librarians (telephone 0171 898 1400). I cannot say whether the library would allow photocopying for cover purposes; this mode of reproduction is normally forbidden for such a precious book.

**Frank McManus**  
**Todmorden**

## Sensitivity

The folk singer Jim Bloomfield ('and also...', RVWSJ No. 14) was apparently more considerate about the possible effect of his lyrics than is Sir Paul McCartney about Linda's. (See recent correspondence in *The Times* etc.)

**Michael Gainsford**  
**Burbage, Leics.**

## Free Lending Library

I am willing to help with a "free lending library". I have a lot of discs, and any serious but impecunious members are welcome to borrow any of them for the cost of postage. Members should ask in the first instance whether I have what they need.

**Barry Fogden**  
**27 Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks,**  
**Kent, TN13 3LJ**

## Hubert Foss

I am the daughter of the late Hubert Foss, the founding editor and first manager of the Music Department of the Oxford University Press. In 1998 the Department celebrated its 75th anniversary with many musical events and also the publication of a small book *An Extraordinary Performance: Hubert Foss, Music publishing and the OUP*, by Duncan Hinnells.

However, 1999 is the centenary of my father's birth, and to celebrate this, following two successful recitals in Brighton and Oxford, a CD of these concerts has been recorded and is available from me at £6.00 (including p&p).

I am taking the liberty of writing to you in the hope that you can bring the CD to the notice of your members/readers, who would, I think, find the recital most interesting. Perhaps you could include this letter in the next issue of your Journal? I would be most grateful.

**Diane Sparkes (née Foss)**  
**Southampton**

## A RECITAL OF SONGS

by  
WALTON, WARLOCK,  
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS,  
IRELAND, GURNEY,  
BRITTEN, TIPPETT,  
HOWELLS

## HUBERT FOSS

(1899-1953)

COMPOSER	PUBLISHER
BROADCASTER	CRITIC
PERFORMER	WRITER

'Hubert's creation of the musical department of the Oxford Press was nothing short of epoch-making in English music...[He] was the only music publisher who was a real musician himself, as well as being young, energetic and enterprising  
(Professor Edward Dent)

## Frank Dineen – R.I.P.

I regret to inform you that Frank died recently – quietly on his own, peacefully. He had very little near family so I thought I should let you know.

I'm glad he was able to do something worthwhile in his retirement – I imagine he had done enough to put RVW's Essex activities into your archives.

We were colleagues for many years on the committee of the Brentwood Branch of the United Nations Association but had to close the branch when there were only 3 members left able to be active on the committee.

Knowing of my interest in music Frank had kept me in touch with his work.

**Peggy Owen**  
**Shenfield**

(Editor's note: We are all very saddened by Frank's sudden death. He was working on a book for us about VW in Ingrave. I have a draft and will try and publish it in his memory).

## Just a Thought...

It may seem odd for an ardent VW fan to state this, but I'm pleased that not all VW's works are available on CD. Why? Well, it's not because I wouldn't like to hear the unrecorded pieces; the reason behind my statement lies in the 'living composer' feel that it gives VW. If he were a Chopin or a Grieg whose every musical note has been recorded and more of whose works are unlikely to be unearthed in the foreseeable future he certainly would seem dead.

As it is, we are from time to time treated to a  
(continued on page 11)

## A RECORDING TO CELEBRATE

both  
the 75th anniversary of the founding of the  
Music Department of the Oxford University Press (1998)  
and  
the centenary of the birth of Hubert Foss,  
its founding editor and first manager,  
by coupling his own songs with those of some of the  
composers he encouraged

**Gordon Pullin - tenor**

**Charles Macdonald - piano**

**Diana Sparkes (née Foss) - reader**

As a result of the encouragement of those who attended the recitals of this programme in Brighton and Oxford, it has now been recorded, and is available as a CD.  
price £6.00 (inc. p&p) from

Mrs Diana Sparkes,  
16 Leigh Road,  
Highfield,  
Southampton SO17 1HF

# THOMAS HARDY AND THE BBC

by DESMOND HAWKINS (formerly Controller, BBC South and West)

To be blessed with an indigenous writer of the stature of Thomas Hardy is a good fortune for any BBC Region. It would be inadequate to describe him as a "regional" writer in the sense that one might apply that description to Hawker of Morwenstowe or East Anglia's Richard Cobbold or indeed — to come closer home — to William Barnes: nevertheless there is in Hardy a quality which he shares with Robert Burns and Emily Brontë, a quality of "rootedness" in a particular place, a distinctive landscape. Burns belongs to the literature of the world, but there is no denying the special affection he inspires in the Scots. Hardy similarly could never be regarded as the exclusive property of the people of Wessex, but he speaks to them with a special intimacy. To that degree he is "our man". When we read Gogol or Conrad or Flaubert, we explore ourselves in essence but not in detail: in essence, because human nature does not change with nationality. It is the details that separate us. In the *Wessex Tales* we recognise details also, habits of mind, forms of speech, the physical context of our own existence. The grand design is for all to admire. Wessex people have the added pleasure of fingering the very texture of their native way of life.

It is no surprise, then, that the name of Thomas Hardy recurs constantly in the programmes of the BBC's South and West Region. If you were to look back through the files of *Radio Times* — a formidable task, since they cover 40 years! — you would find many talks about the man and his work, readings of his poems and stories, and dramatisations of his novels. My own recollections do not go back earlier than the War but I believe *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Trumpet-Major* were broadcast in dramatic form in the thirties. Hardly a year has passed since without some fresh Hardy broadcast, up to last year's production of *The Dynasts*. And still more are planned for this Festival year.

My own broadcasting connection with Hardy's work began in an indirect way, with an invitation to write a critical book about his novels and short stories. With this object in view I read or re-read every word of Hardy's fictional prose. As I became immersed in his stories I recognised increasingly the *dramatic* power of many of his scenes. Time and again he constructs a *coup de theatre* like the opening of Fanny Robin's coffin or the denunciation of Mayor Henchard as he sits on the Bench of

magistrates. Similarly the rustic chorus murmurs *audibly*, in spoken rather than written words, as the background of his tragedies. As a young man Hardy had an ambition to become a playwright and took a walk-on part at Drury Lane in order to learn something about the technique of theatrical production. In the event, of course, it was the novel which was the dominant medium of his time, and so to the novel he turned his energies. I wonder which medium he would choose if he were alive today.

The BBC's drama producer in Bristol in the ten post-war years, when radio was unchallenged by television, was Owen Reed. He was an extremely sensitive interpreter of west-country drama and had built up a group of authentic dialect actors. The newly launched Bristol Old Vic had brought to the city powerful leading players like Nigel Stock and Paul Rogers. Here were the ingredients of a Hardy company and with their help we created a run of Hardy dramatisations which were heard nationally and in several countries overseas. Three of the novels, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Woodlanders* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, made serials of ten or twelve episodes and became a regular feature of Sunday evening listening. A fourth, *The Return of the Native*, followed much later, in 1960. Of the three I dramatised, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was probably the outstanding success. It is of course superb material to re-create in dramatic form. The book is so packed with incident that it needs an extremely flexible medium like radio or film to encompass it all. In radio, with its emphasis on words, there is the added advantage that one can reflect Hardy's prose style directly. To heighten the action we wanted specially composed music; the composer whose name sprang immediately to our minds was Vaughan Williams. The idea appealed to him and he wrote for us the magnificent score which he later developed and published as *The Casterbridge Suite*.

In writing the scripts I wanted to preserve sections of Hardy's descriptive prose, but I did not want an impersonal narrator. To solve the problem I took the very shadowy character of Henchard's daughter and made her my story-teller. This became a very exacting part to play and we thought we were taking a gamble when we gave it to an inexperienced young actress from Glastonbury: we need not have worried — she gave a superb performance, which is hardly surprising as her name was Barbara

Jefford!

It worth recalling these bygone days? I think it is, for two reasons. I hope Miss Jefford will be joining me in Dorchester at the Corn Exchange on 16<sup>th</sup> July as one of the judges in the Festival Play Competition. And on 28<sup>th</sup> September at 8.30 p.m. we shall start broadcasting a new production of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in ten episodes, with the original Vaughan Williams music.

(Reproduced with kind permission of  
Dr. Desmond Hawkins)

David Tolley adds the following information, given to him in 1995 by the BBC producer Brian Miller... "the original Vaughan Williams music specially commissioned and recorded for the 1951 production of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* does exist on a separate Archives disc. I have handled and heard it. It was commissioned from Dr. Vaughan Williams in 1949 or 1950 (he was paid ten guineas — I've seen the original commissioning memo) and conducted by the late Eric Robinson.

Unfortunately the recording is of poor quality and the orchestration sounds rather thin to reach the soaring heights of Vaughan Williams."

(Editor's note: Sadly, Dr. Hawkins passed away at his home in Dorset on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1999).

---

(continued from previous page)

première recording. And as members are no doubt aware one can spend a lifetime in slowly and painstakingly collecting VW CDs as they are released. Thus VW gives the impression of being a living composer who is still producing music. How depressing it would be if everything were committed to disc and the whole lot could be obtained in one go.

My conclusion: let's have the occasional première, but not too many too quickly please.

This reminds me of an occasion when, some time ago, I approached an assistant in a Plymouth music store enquiring: 'Excuse me, but have you got Nielsen's *Fifth Symphony*?' 'Is it his latest release?' responded the assistant — I think she confused him with Nilsson the pop singer. Or on the other hand did she know something I didn't — perhaps that Nielsen, like Elvis Presley, isn't really dead!

Rob Furneaux  
Yelverton, Devon

# Had he and I but met...

by Stephen Connock

**Stephen Connock explores the common influences and differences between Thomas Hardy and Ralph Vaughan Williams.**

Despite very different social backgrounds, common early influences can be detected which shaped the development of Thomas Hardy and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Both were steeped in religion in their early years. VW learnt hymn music from Stainer and Bramley, Hardy from Tate and Brady, which was one of a number of well-thumbed Anglican hymnals in use into the nineteenth century. Hardy's second wife tells us, in *Early Life*, that:

Thomas was kept strictly at church on Sundays as usual, till he knew the Morning and Evening Services by heart, including the rubrics as well as the New Version of the Psalms.

*Psalm the Hundred-and-Ninth* which figures so prominently in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is from Tate and Brady. Vaughan Williams's church-going in his early years was even more thorough, attending daily church service at Charterhouse School. VW and Hardy knew the Bible well, and both appreciated the language of the Authorised Version. The book of *Job*, too, was a clear influence on both men.

## Responses to Darwin

Both men were also shaped by the tumult surrounding Darwin's work. Hardy's responses were complex. In his novels and poetry he struggles with life's contradictions which were more often destructive, often tragic. God figures little in this endeavour, Hardy preferring to speak of the influence of Fate, or the all-powerful President of the Immortals, as shaping man's destiny. Irony or humour are typical responses to religious issues, for example:

The Village Sermon. If it was very bad the parish concluded that he (the vicar) wrote it himself; if very good that his wife wrote it; if middling, that he bought it, so that they could have a nap without offending him.

Vaughan Williams's responses were also deep and difficult to characterise. An atheist in his period at Cambridge University, his views became more ambivalent. The affirmatory quality of the *Fifth Symphony* suggests a complete identification with Bunyan's Christian beliefs. Yet VW

continued to assert that he was an atheist. As Ursula Vaughan Williams put it, he was both a Pagan and an un-Pagan, capable of being Christian, agnostic and atheist at different times in his long life.

## Folk-music

A further early influence common to both Hardy and Vaughan Williams was folk-music. Hardy was a musician, as his father had been before him. His affectionate accounts of the Mellstock Quire in *Under the Greenwood Tree* testifies to his love of music. *Time's Laughingstocks* is full of folk influence, as are the novels. Who can forget that wonderful moment in John Schlesinger's film of *Far from the Madding Crowd* when Bathsheba (Julie Christie) sings *Bushes and Briars*?

Not in Hardy, but an inspired choice! VW's absorption of folk-song is too well-known to be repeated here. The contours, melodies, colour and spirit of folk-music is as deep in Vaughan Williams as it is in Hardy.

## Style and Philosophy

If religion, hymn-music and folk-song are common threads, what of each man's style and philosophy? On style, there are some similarities. Hardy's verse can be irregular, harsh and often ungainly, yet with moments of tenderness and beauty. As to the erratic moments, one can almost hear Hardy saying 'I don't know if I like it, but it's what I meant'. VW, who did express himself in this way could also write music which is blunt and uncompromising, although this is a less noticeable feature of VW than of Hardy. Hardy's works are strongly topographical, and his ability to portray life's emotions against a Wessex background gives his work a unique power. Vaughan Williams, too, could write descriptively as in the *Norfolk Rhapsody* or *In the Fen Country*, although again this is less pronounced than in Hardy. The poet and novelist's tone is often elegiac, almost always pessimistic. For example in *Bereft*, (*Complete Poems*, 157):

In the black winter morning  
No light will be struck near my eyes  
While the clock in the stairway is  
warning  
For five, when he used to rise.

As Samuel Hynes has pointed out it is almost always Autumn or Winter in Hardy, and 'black winter' at that. The clock gives a 'warning', a typical Hardy idea of giving

objects emotions. The sense of loss in the poem, as in so much Hardy, is almost unbearable.

VW, on the other hand, is rarely elegiac - with the exception of the beautiful *An Oxford Elegy* - and never obsessed with death. In this sense, and only this sense, Mahler is closer in spirit to Hardy. Hardy endlessly confronts reality and finds darkness therein; Vaughan Williams is markedly more optimistic, noble and warm-hearted. At times, his romanticism, as in *The Poisoned Kiss* or *Hugh the Drover*, can appear idealised, even superficial. VW was capable of music which is tragic, as in *Riders to the Sea* or the *Death of Tintagiles*, but the effect is uplifting. Hardy and Vaughan Williams share a reticence of personal expressiveness, although VW in *A Pastoral Symphony* and Hardy in those poems of 1912-13 following the death of his first wife, do show their feelings in ways which are profoundly moving.

## The Oxen

The First World War brought Vaughan Williams closer to Hardy (and Housman), leaving forever the fragrant world of the Rossettis. It is significant, as David Tolley points out (see page 2) that VW chose to set *The Oxen*, one of Hardy's least pessimistic poems. It is a beautiful work, one of the inspired moments in *Hodie*. The Hardy influence on the *Ninth Symphony* is explored elsewhere in this edition of the Journal, but clearly the influence of 'Fate' became of more significance to VW in his eighties than before.

There are many limitations in comparing a writer (who plays) with a musician (who writes), but it can be tentatively concluded that there are more differences than similarities on philosophy, yet certain similarities on style. VW would not say, as Hardy does:

People call me a pessimist., and if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that 'not to have been born is best', then I do not reject the designation

Both men lived into their eighties and, most importantly, both created great and universal works of art.

Although both men never met, I feel sure that as Hardy put it:

Had he and I but met  
By some old ancient inn,  
We should have sat down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin!

Stephen Connock

# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, THOMAS HARDY AND VILLAGE CHURCH PSALMODY

by Alan Dodge

Ralph Vaughan Williams and Thomas Hardy had a number of similar characteristics. They both achieved greatness in their professional work, eschewed titular honours, but then accepted the Order of Merit. They loved the English countryside, and were inspired by it. Furthermore they both contributed to the recording of the ways and music of ordinary people, one feature of this being village church psalmody.

After the Reformation and until the 1830s, the singing of metrical psalms was the major, if not the only musical feature of English village churches. These consisted of the Old Version of Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins and others, completed in its final form by 1562, and the New Version of Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady published in 1696. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, certain tunes became associated with particular psalms, or were specifically written for them. An example of the former is the tune the Old 100<sup>th</sup>, from the French Genevan Psalter of 1551, which became associated with the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm in the Old Version. An example of the latter is the tune written by Thomas Ravenscroft for the 104<sup>th</sup> psalm which became known as the Old 104<sup>th</sup>. A glance through the alphabetical index of any traditional hymn book will show a number of tunes with the Old prefix. With an increasing number of new tunes, alternative systems were used, and the most common were place names such as Bristol used by Ravenscroft in 1621. Vaughan Williams's tune for the hymn *Come down, O love divine*, he called *Down Ampney* after his birthplace, and with a tongue in cheek perhaps, *Sine Nomine*, (without a name!) for *For all the Saints*.

From around 1740 the groups of singers that led the psalmody from specially erected west galleries were embellished by the addition of one or more orchestral instruments.<sup>1</sup> Hardy's father, grandfather and uncle were part of the string band in Stinsford church in Dorset until the early 1840s.<sup>2</sup> The demise of such a band and the installation of a harmonium is fictionally painted in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The replacement of the singers and bands was

paralleled by a replacement of metrical psalms by hymns. Thus by 1861 when *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was first published, only the words of the old 100<sup>th</sup> psalm and the New versions of psalms 34 and 42 were in regular use. Both Hardy and Vaughan Williams expressed regret at the passing of the old tunes, psalms and singers. Thomas Hardy writing in 1896 in a Preface to *Under the Greenwood Tree* (originally written in 1872), said:

"One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist or harmonium player... the change has tended to stultify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings."

One can also detect Hardy's true feelings as expressed in the novel itself when the old choir/band listen to their replacement playing the harmonium... "the venerable body of musicians could not help thinking that the simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth were more in keeping with the simplicity of their old church than the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce." After visiting Stinsford churchyard in 1922, Hardy is reported to have said, "The liturgy of the Church of England is a noble thing. So are Tate and Brady's Psalms. These are things that people need and should have."<sup>3</sup>

Although Vaughan Williams grew up later in the Victorian era, and the old psalmody had almost vanished, (the last band in Wessex at Winterbourne Abbas ceased in 1897) he also made a stand for what had been lost. He made some trenchant comments in lectures on National Music given in 1902 (published 1934):

"In this country the old tunes, which had served our forefathers so well, lasted well into the last century. Then came a change. The village band which, with all its shortcomings, was a definite artistic nucleus in the parish, was superseded by a wheezing harmonium... The organist had usually developed his technique at the expense of his musicianship, and his taste was formed on the sickly harmonies of Spohr, overlaid with the operatic sensationalism of Gounod; and church hymns had followed suit. Our old psalm tunes were among the best tunes

in the world, and even the less excellent ones were absolutely suitable for congregational singing, but in 1861 there appeared a compilation called *Hymns Ancient and Modern* which gave the death-blow to the old system... Will anyone dare to say that the effusions of the Barnaby school represent the English people? Hard-working men and women should be given bracing and stimulating music, not the unhealthy outcome of theatrical and hysterical sentiment." (quoted from ref.<sup>4</sup>) Some of these ideas were further explored in the Preface to the English Hymnal, first published in 1906:

"Many of the tunes of the present day which have become familiar and probably merely from association, popular with congregations are quite unsuitable to their purpose. More often than not they are positively harmful to those who sing and hear them... the only correct music is that which is beautiful and noble. As for simplicity, what could be simpler than *St. Anne* or *The Old Hundredth*, and what could be finer?"

It was while working on the music for the first edition of *The English Hymnal* that Vaughan Williams came across the nine largely forgotten tunes that Thomas Tallis had written for Archbishop Parker's Psalter in 1557. The Third Tune he incorporated into the hymn book as a setting for Joseph Addison's words "When rising from the bed of death". The noble simplicity of this tune inspired Vaughan Williams to write one of the most popular, profound and timeless pieces of 20<sup>th</sup> century English music, the *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis*, first performed in Gloucester Cathedral in 1910. The eighth of Tallis's tunes was modified by Ravenscroft in 1621, and after 1732 used as the invariable accompaniment to Bishop Thomas Ken's Evening Hymn, *Glory to Thee my God this night*. This hymn and tune, usually called Tallis Canon were known and loved by Hardy throughout his life. Both he and Vaughan Williams returned time and again to the old psalmody in their works. For example in Hardy's *Late Lyrics* published in 1922, one poem is entitled "On the tune called the Old-Hundred-and-Fourth", and in "The Chapel-Organist", from the same collection, there is a list of old psalm tunes including

(continued on page 27)

<sup>1</sup> Dodge, A. D. "West gallery music and musicians in Wessex", in "Georgian Psalmody 2. The interaction between urban and rural practice". pps 7-11, SG Publishing, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Dodge, A.D. "Thomas Hardy and Wessex church music in transition", in *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, Vol XIV, pps 56-67, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Coxon, P.W. "Hardy's favourite hymns", in *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, Vol XIII, pps 42-55, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, M. *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* pps 33-34, OUP 1964.



# On the Trail of Tess

by David Tolley

In the biography, Ursula Vaughan Williams described Ralph's deep interest in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and records that he "...one summer followed Tess's footsteps in her walk from Flintcomb-Ash to Emminster". Although no specific date is given this comes under the heading 1908-10, and may be presumed to be approximate to that period.

Emminster clearly represents Beaminster, readers may know that 'Flintcomb-Ash' is an invented name, now identified with the village of Plush where Tess's lodging is noted although the farm described does not exist and must be imagined to be somewhere on the surrounding chalk/flint upland.

No information on Ralph's route in the footsteps of the fictional Tess is available, but it is known that from the 1890s onwards numbers of people made this pilgrimage, and in 1904 Hardy's friend Hermann Lea produced a small guide book, followed by a more substantial guide to Hardy's Wessex in 1913. It is therefore probable that in common with many others, VW used Lea as a basis

for his route.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone wishing to make this pilgrimage will, for reasons of time if nothing else, probably not undertake the wearisome trail as given by Hardy to Tess or followed in reality by Vaughan Williams. Therefore the following makes use of Tour pamphlet No. 3 produced by M.R. Skilling and E.P. Fowler for the Thomas Hardy Society.



*Illustration 1a – somewhere on High Stoy - foreground is field with flints (from the collection of Vera Jesty)*

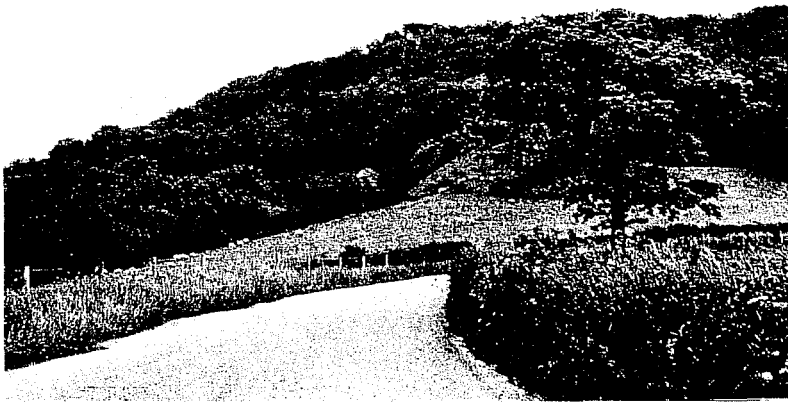
Leave Dorchester by the B3143, through Piddletrenthide to Plush, continue eastward along the narrow road towards Mappowder. This road passes between Church Hill and Nettlecombe Tout: "*Hardy's own map has a cross in ink about a mile south of Nettlecombe Tout, but his description better fits the high ground of Church Hill to the left. On either side can be found 'stony lynchets and myriads of loose, white flints'*".<sup>2</sup> (see illustrations 1a and 1b)

It should be noted that much of the arable is now grass, readers of the novel will recall the depressing picture drawn by Hardy of 'Flintcomb-Ash' as a 'starve-acre place', the landscape 'whitey-brown' and the village in decline 'uncared for by itself or by its lord'.

As to the harshness of the upland terrain, Mrs Vera Jesty, a Vice President of the Hardy Society, comments from her knowledge of the area: "...it is very easy to imagine what it was like in the days when farming depended on labourers and field-women, when it



*Illustration 1b – flint field above Doles Ash Farm (from the collection of Vera Jesty)*



*Illustration 2 – High Stoy,  
(along the escarpment overlooking Blackmoor Vale  
(from the collection of Vera Jesty)*

*is cold and thick mud underfoot and no sign of habitation for miles except for isolated farm buildings."*

The presumed Tess route given by Lea leaves Church Hill<sup>3</sup> by a footpath crossing the B3143 to another footpath crossing westward to a minor road. Turning northwards this lane forks towards Cosmore and leads to a path across to Lyons Gate on the A352. From here the route is more precisely described by Hardy: "*keeping the vale on her right she steered steadily westward... crossing the high road from Sherton Abbas (Sherborne) and Casterbridge (Dorchester), and skirting Dogbury Hill and High Stoy... still following the elevated way she reached the Cross-in-Hand where the stone pillar stands desolate...*"<sup>4</sup> (see illustrations 2 and 3)

This unclassified road drives westwards along Batcombe Hill, crossing the A37 Dorchester-Yeovil Road at Holywell, continuing



*Illustration 3 - Cross-in-Hand – en route to Emminster.  
Also where Alec made Tess to swear not to tempt him again.  
(from the collection of Vera Jesty)*

directly on brings one to Evershot (*Evershead*), where Tess breakfasted at the cottage immediately before the church, (signed *Tess Cottage*) before continuing through the village via Benville Lane, (see illustrations 4 and 5). This crosses the A356 directly to Beaminster (*Emminster*).



*Illustration 4 – Tess's Cottage and Church and "Sow and Acorn" (from the collection of Vera Jesty)*



*Illustration 5 – Tess's Cottage: Evershot (from the collection of Peter Rushforth)*



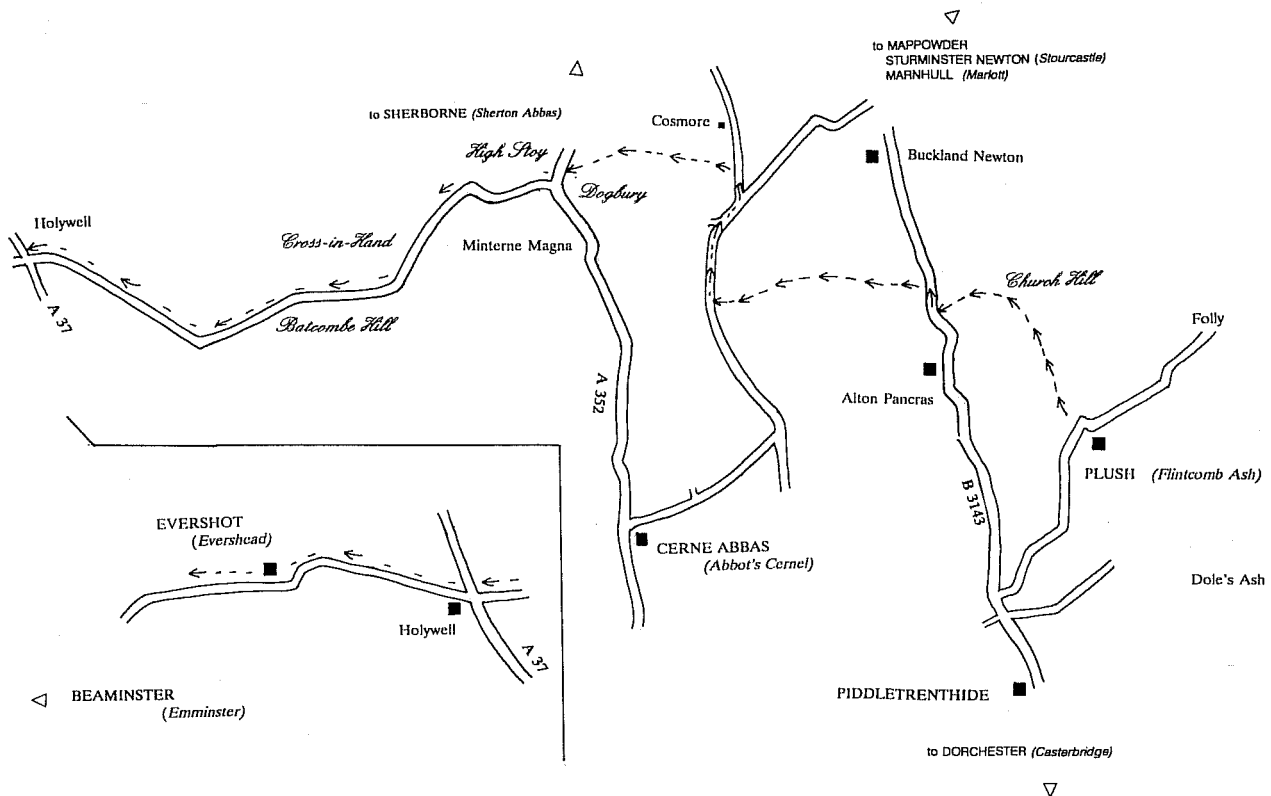
*'Emminster Vicarage' – taken around 1933  
(from the collection of Vera Jesty)*



*Minterne Magna (en route to High Stoy)  
(from the collection of Peter Rushforth)*

Tess's nerve failing and her intention to visit Clare's parents being unfulfilled she retraced her course via Evershot where her attention was taken by the voice of an itinerant preacher, the 'converted' Alec d'Urberville preaching in a barn there. Observing Tess, Alec followed and caught up with her as she approached the road along Batcombe Hill, at the Cross-in-Hand stone he enjoined her to swear on it that she will not tempt him again. After this they parted, Alec to Abbot's Cernel (Cerne Abbas) to preach, Tess to return to Flintcomb-Ash.

In addition to the novel, Hardy wrote two poems: *Tess's Lament* (141) and *We Field-Women* (866) which particularly refers to Flintcomb-Ash.



On the Trail of Tess – map by David Tolley

*We would like to express our grateful thanks to Vera Jesty, Peter Rushforth and Olive Blackburn of the Thomas Hardy Society for their help with this article, including the map and the photographs, as well as with the Journal overall.*

<sup>1</sup> An updated version of the Lea Guide is available from Penguin ISBN 0 14 00 8799 0.

<sup>2</sup> Tour No. 2 / Pamphlet 3 Thomas Hardy Society ISBN 0 904398 09 9. Tourist Information Centre 11 Antelope Walk Dorchester DT1 1BE (01305 267992). This leaflet covers also Marnhull (Marlott). For those wishing to explore other Tess or Hardy sites when in the area a full set of these guides is available from the Thomas Hardy Society, PO Box 1438, Dorchester DT1 1YH. £3 plus £2 p+p.

<sup>3</sup> Tess's lodging has been identified with the gabled building entering the village of Plush, it is therefore logical that her journey would start from this point. See Ch. 42 / see also *The Landscape of Thomas Hardy*, Denys Kay-Robinson (p95/96).

<sup>4</sup> *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Ch. 44

# 'All Things are written in the mind'

## Perspectives on Thomas Hardy and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

by Kevin Mitchell

Amongst the names of literary figures which meant much to Vaughan Williams - George Herbert, William Blake and John Bunyan - it is perhaps surprising to find that of Thomas Hardy the Dorsetshire novelist and poet who lived from 1840 to 1928. Although Vaughan Williams may have made little direct creative use of Hardy's writing, his importance in the English creative tradition was not lost on the composer.

Some commentators have indeed, when considering Vaughan Williams, compared his achievements to those of Hardy. In 1950 Vaughan Williams's friend and publisher Hubert Foss found that 'the symphonic style of Vaughan Williams approximates closely to Hardy's method of writing. Neither will dogmatize: both seek a new and particular truth each time.'<sup>2</sup> Hugh Ottaway writing of Hardy's imagination and compassion in the face of tragedy noted his 'Vaughan Williams-like blend of grandeur and intimacy, cosmic visioning and homely lyricism'<sup>3</sup> and Wilfred Mellers in stating that Hardy's 'agrarian revocations in poetry and prose sprang from anguished recognition of loss' concluded that Vaughan Williams, was sensitive to the 'effects of change from an agrarian to an industrial society and, significantly turned to Hardy late in his life.'<sup>4</sup>

However we know that VW read *Jude the Obscure* when a student at the RCM when its publication (in 1895) was greeted with hostility, and Ursula Vaughan Williams in her biography of RVW has written 'Ralph read all Hardy's novels, and one summer followed Tess's footsteps in her walk from Flintcomb-Ash to Emminster. He thought *Tess* the greatest of the novels and his other favourite was *Far from the Madding Crowd*... the first chapter of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*... and the majestic beginning of *The Return of the Native* - Holst's as well as Hardy's *Egdon Heath* - were often re-read.'<sup>5</sup>

Compared to Holst, Britten and Finzi - to name but three overtly inspired by Hardy - there are few direct contacts in Vaughan Williams's music, but after making due allowance for the differences in art form, affinities are revealed which shed light on their creative thinking 'for these two artists had so much in common, in qualities of style no less than in their human responses. What, then are these affinities?

These can be found in the extent they both inherited, and rejected, their literary and musical traditions; in how religion shaped their creativity within the nineteenth century liberal humanist tradition and in their aesthetic, stylistic and creative power.

Hardy was part of the Romantic tradition. As a novelist 'he turned backwards, not forwards, in order to discover the most appropriate mode for his art. If he had masters, they are Shakespeare and that British novelist who learnt most from Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott.'<sup>6</sup> He learnt much from the Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth, who insisted that poetry must be written in 'the real language of men' and shared with him an interest in man's relationship to his natural environment. Radical ideas stemming from Keats Shelley and Swinburne are to be found in his writing.

Yet, he did not live totally in the past. Intellectually he was seen together with George Eliot, Henry James, Meredith and George Moore to be a man of advanced even heretical views, dealing in his novels with the decline of religious practice and loss of faith, the role of women, marriage and divorce laws and sexual attraction across the class barrier together with the decline of rural life and traditions. The exploration of these explicit matters in his novels earned him much critical outrage and public hostility!

But, he was being pulled in two directions for 'although intellectually Hardy was a man of the future, aesthetically he was a man of the past'.<sup>7</sup>

RVW likewise looked back to a musical tradition of which he felt a part and which he looked to in order to nourish his own musical style, which was enriched by his knowledge of 16th century polyphonic composers, Elizabethan and Jacobean

dances and Purcell's music. If there was no sustained tradition of English instrumental music after Purcell, this could not be said of choral music, for as VW recorded in his *Musical Autobiography* 'We pupils of Parry have, if we have been wise, inherited from Parry the great English choral tradition which Tallis passed on to Byrd, Byrd to Gibbons, Gibbons to Purcell, Purcell to Battishill and Greene, and they in their turn through the Wesleys to Parry. He has passed on the torch to us, and it is our duty to keep it alight.'<sup>8</sup>

This indebtedness to an earlier age is of course apparent in the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* the unaccompanied *Mass in G Minor* and the *Phantasy Quintet*, to name but three works.

But like Hardy he was also an innovator and sought to take his music in new directions by forging a national style based on folk-song, an original use of modality including an exploration of the harmonic implications of the modal scales which in turn led to 'the technique of organic evolution' of his themes and a move away from orthodox sonata form, exemplified for example in the quietly daring *Pastoral Symphony*.<sup>9</sup>

Another facet of Hardy's genius which he shares with RVW is his celebration of English popular culture as manifested in hymns, ballads, country-dances and folk-songs handed down over generations and preserved in rural parish communities. His knowledge of country-dances was learnt at his father's side, for as a boy he accompanied him on the violin at village weddings, New Year's Eve parties and other local festivities where on one occasion 'he was stopped by his hostess clutching his bow-arm at the end of a three-quarter-hour's unbroken footing to his notes by twelve tireless couples in the favourite country-dance of "The New-Rigged Ship"'.<sup>10</sup> His love of hymns and carols stemmed from his attendances at Stinsford church and references to folk-songs are sprinkled throughout the novels, for example in *Far From the Madding Crowd* *Dame Durden* and *The Seeds of Love* are

<sup>1</sup> Rupert Brook: *Lines for an Ode - Threnody on England*. Faber.

<sup>2</sup> Hubert Foss: *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Harrap. 1950. p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Ottaway: *Vaughan Williams Symphonies*. BBC Music Guide. 1972. p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Wilfred Mellers: *Vaughan Williams and The Vision of Albion*. Albion Music. 1997. pp. 30,31.

<sup>5</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams: *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Oxford. 1964. p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> Lord David Cecil: *Hardy the Novelist*. Constable. 1943. p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Cecil p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Vaughan Williams: *A Musical Autobiography in National Music and Other Essays*. Oxford 1972. p. 182.

<sup>9</sup> James Day: *Vaughan Williams, Master Musicians*. Oxford. 1998. p. 255.

<sup>10</sup> *The Life and Works of Thomas Hardy*, by Thomas Hardy edited by Michael Millgate. Macmillan. 1984. p. 28.



sung. The importance of all this has been admirably summed up by Samuel Hynes: 'Virtually everything that is excellent in Hardy's work is localized, and taken together, poems and novels amount to a kind of imagined parish history. Hardy was willing to call such writing provincial, but he did not see this as a limitation.'<sup>11</sup> Yet, 'as a countryman, he belonged to the world that was passing. That rural England, which was hallowed for him by every tie of childish sentiment, was beginning to crumble before his eyes'.<sup>12</sup> Recalling a harvest supper which took place when he was a boy he noted that this 'was among the last at which the old traditional ballads were sung, the railway having been extended to Dorchester just then, and the orally transmitted ditties of centuries being slain at a stroke by the London comic songs that were introduced'.<sup>13</sup>

In a letter to Rider Haggard in March 1902 he returned to this theme when he wrote that 'village tradition - a vast mass of unwritten folk-lore, local chronicle, local topography and nomenclature - is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion... there is no continuity of information, the names, stories and relics of one place being speedily forgotten...'.<sup>14</sup>

For Vaughan Williams the vital importance and liberating influence of folk song cannot be overestimated. Not only were the tunes strikingly beautiful but they were part of a tradition - albeit a previously hidden one - for he described a folk song as being 'like a tree, whose stem dates back from immemorial times, but which continually puts out new shoots...'.<sup>15</sup>

He obtained first-hand evidence of folk music at Ingrave, Essex in December 1903 when *Bushes and Briars* was sung to him. He realised that these tunes were about to disappear and if not recorded would be 'lost to the world forever'; thus he collected over 800 songs and variants before 1914. These tunes fired his imagination so that he was able to make creative use of them for he knew 'how rich in suggestion the folk song may be to a well equipped and sympathetic musician'.<sup>16</sup>

It was to be the same with hymns. When he was asked to be the music editor to what became the *English Hymnal* in 1904 he was determined that it would be a 'thesaurus of all the finest hymn tunes in the world'. He wanted people to have good tunes to sing and believed that art which grew out of a community best served the community. Like Britten, he wanted to be of use. His creed reflected Hardy's provincialism: 'Every composer cannot expect to have a world-wide message, but he may reasonably expect to have a special message for his own people, and many young composers make the mistake of imagining they can be universal without at first having been local... If the roots of your art are firmly planted in your own soil and that soil has anything individual to give you, you may still gain the whole world and not lose your own souls'.<sup>17</sup>

For many nineteenth century thinkers the crucial question - particularly after the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859 - was whether the Christian faith in which they had been brought up, was true. Even though Hardy had by the age of twenty-five lost his early beliefs, he came to accept the agnostic principle in the difference between 'morals' and 'theology'. He recorded that he was 'churchy; not in an intellectual sense, but in so far as instincts and emotions ruled'.<sup>18</sup> David Cecil noted that having been 'Brought up in a society in which the tradition of mediæval Christianity had lingered longest, he was indelibly marked by that tradition... he revered the Christian ideal of virtue, above all, he took for granted the Christian view of the supreme importance of each individual human being. But... he had no personal sense of a spiritual world to support him against the attacks of rationalist critics on Christian doctrine'.<sup>19</sup> Yet even though he rejected theology in the face of scientific discoveries and his interest in Positivism he retained some belief in the paranormal for, as he wrote in the First World War, 'Half my time - particularly when writing verse - I 'believe' ... in spectres mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places, etc., etc.'. <sup>20</sup> This has led some, like David Cecil to conclude that 'he felt that the loss to human happiness involved by the new scientific interpretation of life far outweighed the gain. He felt a wistful yearning for the comfort and the beauty of the old belief; <sup>21</sup> for others, such as Merryn Williams 'however much he might want to believe in Christianity (and poems like... *The Oxen* suggest that he did want to sometimes) he refused to let himself be

persuaded against his judgement. He went on being an agnostic all his life'.<sup>22</sup> But even so, for a man so haunted by the past, this did not prevent him from looking back to the time in his life - and his early church going years at Stinsford - when his faith was certain, with some affection and nostalgia.

*The Oxen* which contrasts a youthful belief - advocated by 'an elder' - that the oxen were kneeling at midnight on Christmas Eve, with the older poet's doubts that 'So fair a fancy few would weave/In these years!' states that:

'If someone said on Christmas Eve,

'Come; see the oxen kneel'

he would 'go with him in the gloom/Hoping it might be so'. Timothy Hands has commented that 'the narrator only admits that he would go off in search of the phenomenon, not, as too many sentimental readings of the poem have tended to believe, that he is at all confident of finding it'.<sup>23</sup> Harold Orel concluded that 'no facile conclusion that the past is a better place may be drawn from Hardy's deliberate contrast between time-periods; but faith came more easily then'.<sup>24</sup>

Of Vaughan Williams's religious beliefs we know that he was an atheist when he was at Cambridge and 'later drifted into a cheerful agnosticism; he was never a professing Christian'.<sup>25</sup> His code of conduct has been well described as 'based on the chivalrous ideals of high-minded Romantic agnosticism that still accepted the altruism of the Christian ethic while rejecting its supernatural element'.<sup>26</sup> He was 'a man whose mind rejected Christian theology [but was] profoundly moved by the Christian tradition as an embodiment of human hopes and aspirations'.<sup>27</sup> This was why he found inspiration in the Holy Bible and in the writing of Blake, Herbert and Bunyan and was drawn to make a masterly setting of the Mass, responded to the book of Job, the ecstatic poetry of Herbert and the power of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. However, he was 'like Thomas Hardy,... a first-generation atheist with a deep attachment to the past, which means a disappointed theist'.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore surely no accident that of the two settings he made of Hardy's poetry, one was of *The Oxen* and that he made reference to a ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain when considering associations for the second movement of the *Ninth Symphony*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Hynes: *The Hardy Tradition in Modern English Poetry*. Thomas Hardy Society Journal. October 1986. Vol. II No.3. p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Cecil. p. 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Life*. p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Life*. p. 336.

<sup>15</sup> *English Folksongs* by R. Vaughan Williams. London, 1912. Quoted in *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Michael Kennedy. Oxford. 1980. p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, *Works*. p. 35 and see Tony Kendall: *Through Bushes and Through Briars: Vaughan Williams's earliest folk-song collecting*, pp. 48-68 in *Ralph Vaughan*

*Williams in Perspective*. Edited by Lewis Foreman, Albion Music Limited. 1998.

<sup>17</sup> *National Music and Other Essays*, pp. 9,11.

<sup>18</sup> *Life*. p. 407.

<sup>19</sup> Cecil. p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Life*. Letter to Dr. G.W.Saleeby. p. 400.

<sup>21</sup> Cecil. p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Merryn Williams: *A Preface to Hardy*. Longman 1993. p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Hands: *Thomas Hardy*, Macmillan. 1995. p. 96.

<sup>24</sup> Harold Orel: *The Final Years of Thomas Hardy, 1912 - 1928* Macmillan, 1976. p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams. p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> James Day: p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> Ottaway. p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ottaway. p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> See Alain Frogley: *Hardy in the Music of Vaughan Williams*. *Thomas Hardy Society Journal*. October 1986. pp 50-55.

We have seen that Darwin's theory of evolution was important to Hardy. Parry adopted evolutionary theories when writing of musical history and these in turn were accepted by RVW who confirmed that 'Hubert Parry, in his book, *The Evolution of Music*, has shown how music like everything else in the world is subject to the laws of evolution',<sup>30</sup> and in his essay on William Shrubsole, who composed one superb tune, *Miles Lane*, he wrote 'it takes a thousand small composers to make a great one'.

Both men also held a place in a democratic tradition. Hardy was a Romantic and Romanticism was a democratic movement which sought to give literature, not just to the few, but to the whole people. Vaughan Williams never forgot Parry's dictum to 'write choral music as befits an Englishman and a democrat.' - words which were to echo through his own writings, particularly his essay, *Who Wants the English Composer?*: 'The composer must not shut himself up and think about art, he must live with his fellows and make art an expression of the whole life of the community'.<sup>31</sup> Both men were part of the nineteenth century liberal humanist tradition. This can be seen for example in their approach to honours. Hardy did not wish to be 'hampered by accepting honours from any government - which are different from academic honours...'<sup>32</sup> After he ceased writing novels he did then feel able to accept the Order of Merit in 1910 and when Vaughan Williams also accepted this honour in 1935 he was true to a tradition of Cambridge men of his background and generation - like E.M.Forster and G.M.Trevelyan - in only accepting 'honours which came after their name, but not before it'.<sup>33</sup>

There are few direct links between them - they did not meet and RVW only made a setting of a lyric from *The Dynasts* in 1908, wrote incidental music for a radio production of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in 1950 and set *The Oxen in Hodge* in 1953-54. In addition it is now clear that episodes of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* played a significant part in the creation of the *Ninth Symphony*.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that 'he made little creative use of him, probably because the severity of Hardy's vision was at odds with his sanguine, even optimistic

temperament'.<sup>35</sup> Yet, this did not prevent him making settings of A.E. Housman and J.M.Synge with their tragic vision of the world! It is interesting to speculate what would have become of *Hugh the Drover* if Hardy, instead of Harold Child (who knew Hardy and visited him at Max Gate) had provided the libretto for the opera about English country life which was to be 'real as far as possible - not sham'.

They never collaborated but a conjunction of their creative powers would have revealed further affinities. One of Hardy's greatest strengths is his power of visualisation - the reader sees, in his mind's eye, the action of the story. His creative impulse expressed itself in pictures: 'He, as it were, begins by drawing the curtain aside and giving you something to look at... No other English novelist has so great a power of visualisation: it is Hardy's most important weapon, and it is the basis of his whole method'.<sup>36</sup> His books are a series of scenes and 'His technique... is that of the modern director of films'. He not only presents a broad outline in the large heroic manner, but also provides significant detail - see, for example, chapter 22 of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* when Knight slips from a cliff top. Hardy presents a general picture of the scene which then focuses on to a detailed study of the fossils embedded in the cliff face.

RVW called upon similar powers of visualisation, which is evident not only in his ability to evoke scenes musically, but also in bringing about and hastening the very act of creation. When writing for the film *Scott of the Antarctic* much of the music was composed before he had seen any of the shots, so powerful was his 'visualisation' of the scenes it was to accompany - the idea had fired his imagination. It was the same when writing *Job*. He had seen Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* which acted as a catalyst so that in 1928 he wrote to Gwen Raverat that 'I am anxiously awaiting your scenario - otherwise the music will push on by itself which may cause trouble later'.<sup>37</sup> That he noted the number of Blake's engravings on his score, added stage directions and devised his own scenario are all further evidence of his visualising abilities.

This was noted by *The Times* critic after hearing the *Sea Symphony* in 1910: 'The opening two chords produced an almost visual effect upon the hearers as though a curtain were drawn back and the expanse of sea revealed'.<sup>38</sup>

He was thus perfectly equipped to meet the challenge, when the opportunity arose, to write compelling, vivid film music - he

composed scores to eleven films between 1939 and 1958. It is no surprise to learn that 'when the cinema became capable of great themes, Ralph longed for a film to be made of *The Dynasts*, so naturally suitable for the screen, and he would have liked to write the music for it'.<sup>39</sup> However, when in 1951 the BBC produced a six part drama by Henry Reed, based on *The Dynasts* VW through overwork turned down the opportunity to write the music although he was 'much tempted'.<sup>40</sup>

This is not to suggest that much of his music has a programmatic basis, for as is well known, he did not believe in meanings and mottoes, but simply that his power of visualisation, like Hardy's, was a significant one.

Hardy's love of nature and his feeling for landscape and the environment are so well known that they do not need detailed examination here. The crucial point to be made is that even though his novels present the most elaborate study of landscape in English literature, Nature is not just seen as fair and beautiful - its harsh, unrelenting face is shown and man's relation to the natural world is often seen as one of struggle. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native* with its portrait of Egdon Heath:

'The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the mournful sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain, will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking of mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are... now';<sup>41</sup>

Being a countryman, Hardy, with his acute sense of the past and history as recorded in the landscape, presents an unsentimental view of Nature whilst celebrating the simple, traditional pleasures of rural life, ruled by the seasons.

The 'pastoral' school of English music has been frequently misunderstood as have Vaughan Williams's contributions to the genre. It is too simplistic to dismiss a work like the *Pastoral Symphony* as 'a cow looking over a gate'; this symphony, shaped by the experiences of the 1914-18 war is predominantly sad and reflective and there is an unsentimental steeliness about its language. Vaughan Williams found beauty in the blasted landscape of wartime France, just as he found it on the west coast of Ireland when portraying in *Riders to the Sea* the life of 'a community as rounded as the belly of a pebble one would pick up on a

<sup>30</sup> Vaughan Williams: *Should Music be National. National Music and Other Essays*. p. 6. and see Jeremy Dibble: *Parry, Stanford and Vaughan Williams: the creation of a Tradition*, in *Ralph Vaughan Williams In Perspective*, pp. 25-47.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Kennedy, *Works*. p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Life* p. 352.

<sup>33</sup> David Cannadine: *G.M.Trevelyan: A Life in History*. Penguin. 1992. p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> See Frogley. *THSJ* and *Music and Letters*. January, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> Mellers. p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Cecil. p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy. *Works*. pp. 202-203.

<sup>38</sup> Kennedy. *Works*, quoted on p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams, p. 85.

<sup>40</sup> Frogley: *THSJ* see note 5.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hardy: *The Return of the Native*. 1878. Oxford World Classics p. 4.

shore, a people shaped by the sea's hardship... and touched extravagantly to life by the constant presence of death.<sup>42</sup> There is harshness also in *Sancta Civitas*, the *Piano Concerto*, *Job*, the *Fourth* and *Sixth Symphonies* and *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and though parts of these works may be brutal, Vaughan Williams considered them to be beautiful. In keeping with Hardy's reference to Iceland, he was amongst the 'more thinking of mankind' in finding drama and beauty in the wastes of Antarctica. Like Hardy, he recognised the simple pleasures of country life when he went in search of folksongs before 1914.

When considering form, Hardy in his poetry respected the conservative tradition but he remained inventive by playing 'endless variations on inherited stanza forms, and rarely repeated one.'<sup>43</sup> Vaughan Williams too stood by existing forms but his originality in devising new ones has not been fully appreciated 'because his respect for tradition made them appear as mere deviations from old ones.'<sup>44</sup> A case might also be made for a parallel between Vaughan Williams's Symphonic Epilogues and the final pages, aptly rounding off Hardy's novels - see especially *The Return of the Native* and *Tess*.

Even though both men may have left few followers - in Hardy's case one thinks of Edward Thomas, D.H. Lawrence, Blunden, Cecil Day Lewis and Larkin; Finzi, Ireland, Patrick Hadley and Howells may be said to have followed Vaughan Williams - both left a distinguished, memorable and original body of work which now forms an indelible part of our culture. Writing after Hardy's death, Charles Morgan noted 'the contrast between the plainness, the quiet rigidity of his behaviour, and the passionate boldness of his mind.'<sup>45</sup> Following VW's death, Herbert Howells wrote of the 'deeply-felt and spiritual reserves that are an inevitable part of high genius',<sup>46</sup> and Michael Kennedy noted that 'No one ever left his company without feeling that they had been strengthened and enriched... What a rich harvest this wonderful man has left us, a musical testament of beauty of a breadth unrivalled in English music. He is part of the fabric of our nation, with Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Hardy and Elgar.'<sup>47</sup>

A final comment on Vaughan Williams that 'He was temperamentally more in accord with the imperfection of epics than with the

perfection of miniatures'<sup>48</sup> can be equally applied to Thomas Hardy.

K D Mitchell

(continued from page 5)

(Thomas Hardy and Music continued)

means one more factor in the drama of position versus solid work, ambition versus rough achievement, which is the central core of so much of his prose-writings. We observe the piano as of vital dramatic importance in the semi-autobiographical *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and also in *Jude the Obscure* as a telling factor in the triangular equation of Jude, Phillotson, and Sue Bridehead. In passing, we might perhaps mention the importance (in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) of Farfrae's Scottish song in winning his first appeal of popularity against the rougher Henchard whom he finally supplants.

Jan Coggan, who is a purely Shakespearean character, is, we notice, labelled with a traditional song; he sings at the Harvest supper, he hums while he is scything, he jollies up the macabre party at the Buck's Head (poor Fanny lying dead outside in the wagon) with a rollicking ditty about tomorrow.

As we scan these entrancing pages, so authentic yet imaginative a record of a past civilisation, we find continual references to traditional music, and to traditional systems of making music. Hardy always adored the music he had heard in his youth. He loved the old quadrilles, the old hymn-tunes, the music he knew; in Verdi he was interested as a Phoenix who 'had only just arrived at maturity at the age of three score years and ten or thereabouts, so that to complete his life he ought to have lived a hundred and fifty years'. But he was more touched musically by Edward Strauss's Viennese waltz-band, by 'Smart's fine tune *Wiltshire*', and by the carol-singers who in his old age had to come to him so that he could hear them. Thus, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, we encounter the Eleventh Dragoons playing *The Girl I left Behind me*, a danceband at the revel, the clock chiming 'Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre', a band at the Sheep Fair, the Assize Judge's trumpeters, the choir in Church overheard singing *Lead, kindly Light*, and the musical greeting of the village for the finally wedded Bathsheba and Gabriel. Hundreds of other examples from diaries, novels, and poems could be easily adduced; two may strike a

sympathetic vibration in the minds of the one or two readers - the choir-practice near the beginning of *Two on a Tower* and Jude's laborious journey out to Gaymead to beg from the cynical and disillusioned organist a copy of the hymn-tune that had so deeply touched his heart.

To those who would appreciate the important part music played in Hardy's novels, especially the earlier novels, I would recommend the following passage from the *Early Life of Thomas Hardy* by his second wife, Florence Hardy. It will show him as the musician he was - not the up-to-date follower of fashionable concerts, but the innate practitioner. At the time spoken of (1862-7) Hardy was articled to the architect (Sir) Arthur Blomfield. One of his strange ways was that 'he and his pupils, including Hardy, used to get on with their architecture by singing glees and catches at intervals during office hours. Having always been musically inclined - and, as has been stated, a fiddler of countless jigs and reels in his boyhood - Hardy could sing at sight with moderate accuracy from notation though his voice was not strong... Hardy also sang, at Blomfield's request, at the opening of the organ at St Matthias's Church, Richmond.'

I have made but little reference here to the poems - to *The Maid of Keinton Mandeville* for example (*Late Lyrics and Earlier*), about Bishop's *Should he upbraid*; 'many years after (1878) Hardy was accustomed to say that this was the most marvellous old song in English music in its power of touching an audience.' All the volumes of verse are a mine of musical reminiscence; to a musician the very lists of the poems' titles are an invitation to dally, turning the pages to read the singer writing about his beloved art. Nor have I more than fringed the subject of music in the prose works - short stories like *A Fiddler of the Reels* I have had perforce to pass by.

If, however, I have made a music-lover or two turn to Hardy as the musicians' own novelist, and a Hardy-lover or two look once again at the novels and poems from a newly enlightened musical angle, I have not wasted paper and ink.

(Reproduced from *Music 1951*,  
edited by Ralph Hill)

<sup>42</sup> W.R. Rodgers. *Introduction to Collected Plays*, J M Synge. Penguin. 1952 p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Hynes. *THSJ* p. 47.

<sup>44</sup> James Day. p. 253.

<sup>45</sup> *Life. Selected Post Hardyian Revisions*. p. 528.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in *Journal of the RVW Society*. No. 12 June, 1998. p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Journal RVW Society* No. 12 June, 1998. p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Burnett James: Sleeve note to *Fantasia On a Theme of Thomas Tallis* conducted by Sir John Barbirolli EMI ASD 2698.

# The Epilogue to Symphony No. 6 – A different Analysis

by Robert Allen

The composer's programme note for this movement is as follows:

It is difficult to describe this movement analytically. It is directed to be played very soft throughout. The music drifts about contrapuntally with occasional whiffs of theme such as



with one or two short episodes such as this, on the horns



and this on the oboe



At the very end the strings cannot make up their minds whether to finish in E flat major or E minor. They finally decide on E minor which is, after all, the home key.<sup>i</sup>

Whilst agreeing with the composer that this movement is not easy to analyse, I am really surprised how little attempt most writers on this work have made to examine it in detail<sup>ii</sup> and have ended up giving the rather misleading impression that it does indeed just 'drift about'. The composer was clearly in no hurry to give too much away about his music, though a connection with Prospero's farewell speech from *The Tempest* was revealed in the 1950s.<sup>iii</sup> Rather than attempting to fathom the sense of mystery about it or choose between the bleak scenarios that others have attached to it I would just like to concentrate here on the structure of the music, which does seem to me to have a firm construction.

I would like to provide some signposts at least for listeners who, like myself, prefer to have at least some idea of how the music is progressing as they listen. I am not sure that most writers on it, whether overly influenced by the composer's note or not, really do this, and it is after all the longest movement of the work.

While most of the movement is clearly related to the opening bars, and especially the part of the opening phrase that turns back upon itself as quoted in the first example, the way it is treated can be divided up into the following:

1. As a very free fugal exposition first of all, and much abbreviated on its return.
2. A continuation as a single line or in octaves (what Scott Goddard termed 'many sinuous extensions of this fugal theme') against a series of major or minor triads which often move chromatically.<sup>iv</sup>
3. With the theme in longer note values (augmentation) against two or more other versions of it in counterpoint.
4. As a brief canon.
5. As a bald statement with just a tremolando accompaniment.

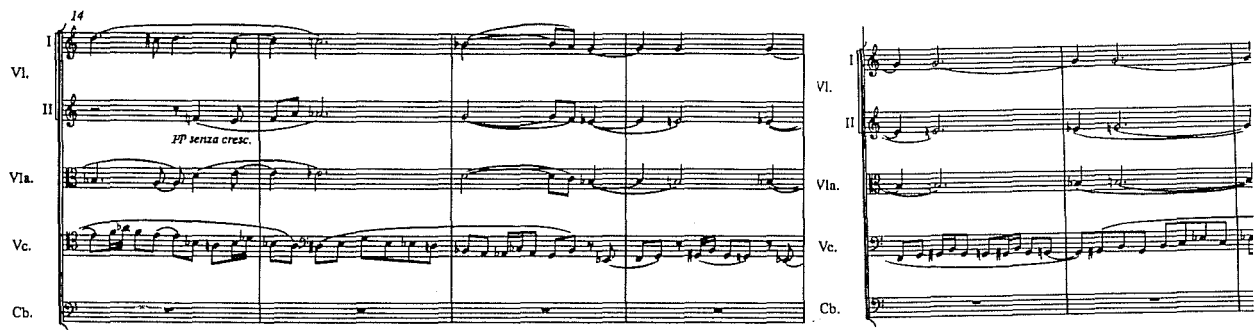
Of the two episodes the composer refers to, the first is the only section not to use the distinctive rhythm of two semi quavers followed by two quavers. Instead, there are even quavers on solo cello, then with clarinets as well, framed by the repeated dissonant chords quoted in RVW's note. These quavers in fact take up the cello writing from bars 19 – 20, which in turn is based on the part of the theme with minor 2nds and 3rds (e.g. the end of bar 1).

The other episode starts with what sounds like a new theme on the oboe but it soon refers back to the opening motive. Its continuation is quite different, however, with falling triplet phrases of a more lyrical character (taken up briefly by clarinet and then bass clarinet with low strings). This is the opening of the theme:



What I think causes some confusion in attempts to describe this movement is that the fugal texture is only intermittently maintained, not really occurring in these episodes or in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> types of treatment I refer to above, unlike the briefer *Epilogue* of the 4<sup>th</sup> *Symphony*, which culminates in full-scale fugal treatment.

I believe it is possible in fact to discern distinct exposition, development and recapitulation sections, as in other RVW symphonic finales. A.E.F. Dickinson refers to a return to the start in tremulous strings ... initiates a stage of restatement<sup>V</sup> after which the rest of the movement does seem like a recapitulation (from 4 bars before fig. 9 in the score to the end). Even the famous ending, alternating between E flat and E minor as the composer describes, has occurred much earlier in the movement (without double basses or pizzicato the first time round) and I find it extraordinary that this is never referred to by any of the commentators I have read. This is the first version:



Having established where the recapitulation begins, actually with the same notes of the theme on the 1<sup>st</sup> violins, now an octave higher, but with the answer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> violins now transferred to the violas (still over a pedal roll on E in the timpani) one can attempt to distinguish a development section. I accept that this is rather controversial, as no one else mentions it, but to me, the previous 15 bars, which link the lyrical episode and the restatement of the opening (i.e. from fig. 6 onwards) could be heard as an, admittedly short, development section or episode. My reasons to claim this would be as follows:

- (a) It introduces no new material but brings together earlier motives and indeed develops at least one of them.
- (b) There is an attempt to establish new key centres, first B flat (but against a background of E and G sharp) then F sharp and D, before a series of chromatically inflected phrases reaches up to a top D flat and then down, 6 bars later, to a bottom F and E for the return of the opening in F minor.
- (c) Simply that it precedes and contrasts with a definite return to the opening material and key (disguised only by the use of tremolo in the strings).

The lyrical triplet figure from the end of the previous episode is repeated immediately after bald major key restatements of the opening theme (on muted trumpets and trombones). Then the brief canon at fig. 7 itself leads directly into a restatement a tone lower and then expansion of the second and third solo oboe phrases from that episode. This is the most obvious point of development (with recurring triplets – such a RVW fingerprint) and I don't understand why no one (?) has noticed it or thought it worth mentioning; (could it be that in the score it is disguised by a page turn just at the point of the distinctive upward leap of a major 6<sup>th</sup>?)



The scoring here is for strings in octaves with harmonies provided by clarinets in three parts. This section is therefore an example of the second type of treatment I mentioned above. The harmonies begin on D major at fig.7 but then slide chromatically up to A minor and then B minor with a series of 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion, largely minor, chords, finally dropping to end on D minor.



This sort of harmonic treatment does also occur in the exposition, with a series of 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion major triads for flutes, and 1<sup>st</sup> inversion minor ones for horns (with the 4<sup>th</sup> horn doubling the top line of the chord two octaves below) around fig. 3, but although the chords also move chromatically they do not bring any escape from F minor for very long.

Having worked backwards in this movement it is about time to present an outline of the exposition and how it relates to the whole. The first part of it is clearly a very free fugal exposition - free in the sense that the opening motive in the 1<sup>st</sup> violins is not imitated in the other string parts. Thus the 2<sup>nd</sup> violins answer with a descending phrase rather than an ascending one and when the violas enter they omit the first three notes of the opening. The cellos then enter on B flat with the subject in the major key, but soon move towards the premonition of the end of the work already quoted (also with it in the major).

These opening 19 bars are then followed by another 19 in which the theme is twice treated to augmentation, first by the flutes and then by clarinets and pizzicato double basses. This treatment is separated by the series of chords for flutes and then horns already referred to, which accompany phrases based on the opening theme for cellos and then strings in octaves. Then at fig. 4 occurs the first of the subsidiary episodes referred to by the composer, with the repeated punctuating chords for muted brass and then divided strings. The other episode, with the oboe theme, follows on directly at fig. 5, and here the accompanying triads are minor ones in root position for muted trombones and then muted trumpet and trombones, again moving chromatically.

I would be inclined to summarise all this as:

A A1 B C

with B and C as the two episodes. When we come to the recapitulation A is shortened to just two and half bars, A1 follows, again with augmentation, this time on solo harp and then clarinets and harp (but missing out the section with chromatic triads), B is slightly shortened, and C by half (but still on the oboe)<sup>vi</sup> and the movement then fades away with an extended version of the last part of A, in effect, a coda.

Having gone through all this I think I now see why no one has described the *Epilogue* in this fashion before - I only hope it was worth the effort! I just felt it was time someone had a go and I would of course be interested to hear other ideas.

I would just like to finish with a few other related thoughts. Firstly, that RVW's approach to orchestration in this movement is very much in the mould of J.S. Bach, i.e. he generally selects the instruments he wants for each individual section and sticks with them - this clearly helps one to distinguish one section from another.

The importance of the bass clarinet in this movement should be pointed out: it provides the link from the *Scherzo*, has an important solo just before the end (episode B), and generally supplants the bassoon (which only has one short phrase) with its more sepulchral tone quality. The strings, muted throughout tend to have the sections of intricate counterpoint, while wind instruments supply either exposed solo lines or block chords.

RVW's reliance on basic major or minor chords to provide block harmonies has been commented on adversely in this work ("pallid formulas of shifting triads")<sup>vii</sup> but surely with so much chromatic writing in this movement in the individual lines and also in the movement from one chord to another, some occasional semblance of stability is desirable; and, as I have described, each small section in which they are used tends to have a different type of chord - root position, 1<sup>st</sup> inversion or 2<sup>nd</sup> inversion. More complex harmonies occur in the first episode and its recurrence (reminding me of Debussy, if anyone, when the solo strings take over towards the end). The *Epilogue's* opening fugal section is perhaps the most austere part, with frequent clashing false-relations between the violins, (e.g. E against E flat).

Because of the chromaticism and general ambivalence between E and F, right from the opening, this is a rare example of a movement by him, obviously not in C major or A minor, not to be given a key signature.

I know there are other aspects of this music which I have failed to do justice to, but my intention here was simply to provide a guide to the surface features as they appear to me, not the undoubted depths.

**Robert Allen**

---

<sup>i</sup> Taken from Kennedy, Michael: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, OUP, 1964, p. 582.

<sup>ii</sup> An exception, but dealing largely with the intervallic structure, is Cooke, Detyck: *The Language of Music*, OUP 1959, pp. 265-270.

<sup>iii</sup> Kennedy, *op cit.*, p.302.

<sup>iv</sup> In *The Symphony* (edited by Ralph Hill), Penguin, 1949, p. 380.

<sup>v</sup> Dickinson, A.E.F.: *Vaughan Williams*, Faber, 1963, p. 331.

<sup>vi</sup> Quoted as the final example in the composer's programme note.

<sup>vii</sup> By Peter Evans in *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain, Vol. 6 The Twentieth Century* (edited by Stephen Banfield), Blackwell, 1995, p. 186.

# URSULA ON VW AND THOMAS HARDY

Stephen Connock discusses the influence of Thomas Hardy on RVW with Ursula Vaughan Williams

SLC Why did Ralph respond so deeply to *Tess*?

UVW He was fascinated by *Tess*. He went on walks to find her. He felt it was a fantastic story. He decided, however, that he did not want to write an opera on it - he felt it was too long and too complicated. When he visited Stonehenge, he said he could feel the impact of the place on *Tess*. We both knew Stonehenge very well. We visited it one Mid-Summer's day. It was ridiculous! The Druids came out in their little white night-dresses and black socks, and everyone sat on the stones!

SLC Ralph was less impressed with the *Mayor of Casterbridge*. Why was that?

UVW He felt there were too many characters in this story, and too many coincidences which happen to them. He was impressed with *The Return of the Native*, and loved Gustav Holst's marvellous piece.

SLC Hardy has been said to have a 'twilight view of life'. This seems so different to Ralph's.

UVW Ralph had his moments of pessimism, especially during and after the First World War. He was capable of getting very cross with people if things went wrong. He could get frustrated with people. Ralph also responded to the romance of Hardy. As to the pessimism, it seemed to be more relevant in the War. The negative works of Hardy we both found rather boring. Ralph did not respond to any particular philosophy of Hardy. He never met him and never wanted to either.

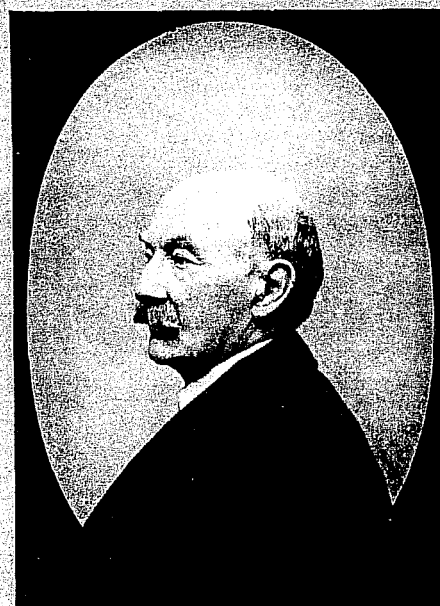
SLC Turning to the few works of Hardy that Ralph set, tell us about the song *Buonaparty*?

UVW Ralph found he could not read the whole of *The Dynasts*. Can anyone? Can you? I don't think that this particular song is very good, but Ralph had fun in doing it. (see Stephen Connock's review of a new recording of this song on page 27)



SLC What of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* music?

UVW He was delighted to receive a BBC commission to write this music. He re-read the novel, and enjoyed writing the music, which he liked when it was finished.



**A classic photograph of Hardy**  
(copyright Vera Jesty - reproduced with her kind permission)

SLC Tell us about *The Oxen*.

UVW I was working with Simona Pakenham at the time, and remembered this poem when Ralph was looking for texts for *Hodie*. It worked well with the nativity theme. I suggested the poem to Ralph. Ralph looked at it and said 'that's the one, of course I will include it!' He was very excited by it and what a wonderful setting it is! You know Ralph was terrified at the first performance of *Hodie*. He sat in a little room at the front of the church with the soloists waiting to go on, staring at gravestones and scrolls of the dead all around him! It was a difficult piece to conduct, especially the start. In the event, it went beautifully and Ralph was very pleased with that.

SLC What is the influence of *Tess* on the *Ninth Symphony*?

UVW Yes, there was a link. I knew *Tess* had moved him. At the time of writing this symphony, he sat and thought about *Tess*. He had a great feeling about the injustice of the Gods. That was what he was thinking about. It was all very involved, but it was the influence of the President of the Immortals that fascinated him at the time of the *Ninth Symphony*. As the work evolved, however, this influence lessened. His last symphony was leading him into another place. It is an extraordinary symphony. It is very difficult for me to listen to it.

SLC Michael Kennedy had asked Ralph to do a cycle on Hardy poems. Why did Ralph not respond to this request?

UVW He did not want to write another major piece. He felt it was a lovely idea, but he had other things to do, including the *Cello Concerto*. He wrote a nice letter to Michael declining the invitation.

SLC Your last thoughts on Hardy's influence on Ralph?

UVW It was the power of the stories that moved him - this and the romance.

*Ursula Vaughan Williams met Stephen Connock to discuss Thomas Hardy in November 1998.*

# The Famous 'Karajan' Tallis

## A few Thoughts

by Mark Asquith

If you are a fan of the 'Austrian Dictator' which is as I recently heard Herbert von Karajan described, then the EMI 'Karajan Edition' was a welcome and long overdue project. Of particular interest to me were his early post-war recordings in Vienna and those he made with the Philharmonia from 1951-60. Though the documentation was dismal, the series did bring his first Sibelius records back into the catalogue. Of greater value to RVW members was of course the return of the November 1953, Kingsway Hall recording of the *Tallis Fantasia*.

I had not heard this version until the reissue emerged and I suppose I was slightly troubled by the thought that overseas conductors frequently draw great laurels for their execution of British repertoire when, with the exception of Rattle and Sir Colin Davis this is not reciprocated in core late romantic European material. For example Solti was a first choice 'Building a Library' in Elgar, Monteux's *Enigma*, Steinberg's *Planets* and Previn's Walton and RVW have found their way to the top of recommendations before now. Boult's Brahms, Shostakovich and Schubert have long lain dormant and Barbirolli's romantics have emerged (Mahler excepted) on the super-bargain labels. The 'world' figures like Bernstein, Previn, Monteux, Solti and even Stokowski (American really) have had their recordings of British music on the shelves under a variety of guises.

I do not have access to a comprehensive Karajan discography but as far as I know or have ever seen, he recorded only 3 English works and only *The Planets* more than once. Apart from his mass of Delian issues (over 90 out of just under 500 recordings) English Music played only a small part in Beecham's visits to Abbey Road Studios (No RVW, just 3 Elgars) so we must not be too hard on Karajan though he would not record Belshazzar's Feast. Statistics apart I wonder what makes Karajan's *Tallis* special and what, if anything marks it out from say Boyd Neel or Boult.

Well I suppose we need to consider the orchestra which was the cream of London orchestral talent under its feisty creator Walter Legge. At that time the early teething problems were being eased and the sheer volume of recording and concert work was beginning to meld a superb orchestra. Secondly the recording venue is self recommending even in the very early days of the LP. Thirdly Karajan had to remake his reputation after his fall from grace at the hands of the Nazi machine and suspicions as to his attitude to Herr Hitler's régime. Fourthly, he had by today's standards, considerable rehearsal time both for concert and specifically in this case, recordings. Finally it is reasonable to assume that Karajan knew not one note of the work before he came to London and thus approached it in a way not

open to more Anglophile conductors.

Boyd Neel's première is incomparable but the strength of that pre-war recording also illustrates the uniqueness of Karajan's. Neel had RVW present and there is a sense of excitement in the playing and a ruggedness of tone that emphasises the unison playing of the main theme and the separateness of the quartet. Karajan's conception is more inclusive because I believe he was shaping the sound *and* the orchestra simultaneously. The string playing does not quite match the luxurious tone found in the 1959 *Ein Heldenleben* or the famous analogue recordings of Shostakovich's 10th, Honegger 2 and 3, Prokofiev 5 or the highly contrived sound in the box of Schoenberg *et al*. These recordings it need hardly add were in stereo *and* when Karajan reigned in Berlin without parliament so to speak. Neel's players had in front of them music from a man whom they knew and respected and they played it to the best of their ability. Karajan's Philharmonia were presented with another dimension, Karajan himself. This dynamic could have gone wrong. Readers will recall Leonard Bernstein's remarkable view of the *Enigma Variations* when he played it with the BBCSO. Barbirolli's classic recording we might remind ourselves was also a special occasion in a unique venue suggested by an American film composer!

After all is said and done, Karajan's *Tallis* is a wonderful record with greater clarity perhaps than Haitink to match that recording's sense of mystery and an increased overall conception to del Mar's CBSO recording. Again these are in stereo. I think Barbirolli combines both and what I would call English musical imagery. Karajan has method and supreme execution.

It is as if Karajan took the music and thought that this will show what I can do with a fine orchestra. One of the virtues of Karajan's Bruckner, and he said this himself, is that he had a grasp of the whole piece but that it took him many years to achieve this. With the *Tallis Fantasia* one can imagine that with under a quarter of an hour's music, Karajan's holistic approach, if I might be excused such a word, was unequivocally in evidence.

I wonder whether readers believe this Karajan *Tallis* to be English Music. Boult's late 1950s Nixa recording (in mono) is about as Pastoral as you can get and the difference is apparent. Karajan understood what RVW was putting on the page but I suspect Sir Adrian and Sir John, in the modern vernacular, knew where it was coming from.

In conclusion I would see Karajan's *Tallis* as the most remarkable recording of this extraordinary piece. Barbirolli remains my favourite with Boyd Neel not far behind but it is a shame Karajan did not record it in stereo.

If it had been with the Berlin Philharmonic that would have given RVW members something to chew over!

Mark Asquith  
Shropshire

## Concert Reviews

### Glorious Lark

On Friday, 2 April, at 8 p.m., Korean-American violinist Ik-Hwan Bae performed *The Lark Ascending* with the Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia in John C. Borden Auditorium of the Manhattan School of Music at 122nd Street and Broadway. The orchestra played under the baton of Glen Barton Cortese, resident conductor and director of orchestral studies at the school. It was a glorious performance of the Vaughan Williams, as good as any I have heard on record and superior to the one I reported on a few years ago that took place at the nearby Riverside Church, which did boast perfect acoustics for the piece's more literal aspects. Mr. Bae was equally good — in effect proving his mettle and abilities beyond doubt — in the concert's second piece for violin and orchestra, Hindemith's demanding *Concerto* from 1939. Britten's Opus 1 *Sinfonietta* and *Cristina's World* (after the Andrew Wyeth painting) by Oklahoma composer Kenneth Fuchs (formerly of the Manhattan School of Music) rounded out the adventurous and highly satisfying programme.

Martin Mitchell  
New York

### Previn's Seventieth birthday

André Previn celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday with two concerts at the Barbican in London. The first, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, began with the *Fifth Symphony*. The orchestra was the London Symphony. It is over 20 years since I last heard Previn in this work, and this latest reading did not impress. Previn seems to have become more ponderous with age. Possibly he is not well. Whatever the reason, that sense of ecstasy so marked in his LSO recording on RCA was missing here. It was an average performance which simply failed to take wing. The *Romanza* missed that element of spirituality which can make this movement so special — as it is in Richard Hickox's new recording of this work, also with the LSO on superb form.

I heard Previn in New York with the New York Philharmonic in Richard Strauss in January and had the same impression of a rather tired performance. Felicity Lott injected some energy and vitality to the proceedings but the NYPO sounded and looked bored.

Let us hope Previn recovers his zest in time for his seventy-first birthday celebrations.

Stephen Connock

# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

## I HATE

by Rob Furneaux

Well, now that I've got your attention with a shock headline which I think might have an impact in VW Journal terms an a similar scale to the Sun's 'Freddie Starr ate my hamster', I'll try to explain:

Have you noticed that since its inception the VW Journal has been almost entirely filled with articles praising the works of VW? That's obvious I hear you say - especially in a journal dedicated to advancing the cause of one of the twentieth century's greatest composers. Thus, I thought it was about time that an occasional article appeared containing a note of criticism. Perhaps I should qualify that statement - before the first poisoned pen letter arrives:

I, of course, am an ardent advocate of VW's music, but recently it occurred to me that surely there must be a few works of his that I don't have an all embracing passion for. It took considerable thought initially to come up with any works on my personal VW reject hit list. After all, the vast majority of his works are superb pieces of music; but any composer with such a large output must surely have occasionally committed to ms paper a work which wasn't quite up to his usual standard.

At first I was hard pushed to come up with anything. All nine symphonies are, after all, masterpieces in their own right; as are the concertos and operas. Eventually however, one or two pieces did occur to me.

So here I am as devil's advocate submitting my very short list of dislikes (if this doesn't prompt a flow of letters to the Journal nothing will!).

1. *Sonata for violin and piano in A minor.* I suppose this piece never really 'grabbed' me because I am not the most sympathetic listener to works for piano and violin; and for me this piece seemed to lack substance. I can only describe it as an orchestral piece in search of an orchestra.
2. *String Quartet No. 2.* Although I love the *Phantasy Quintet*; this one left me cold - perhaps VW had a cold when he wrote it.
3. *Hodie.* (I feel a lynching on the way) (*Editor's note: Yes - led by me!*) Perhaps I should hurriedly point out that I am not criticising the music; which on the whole is vintage VW; but the subject. *Hodie* to me doesn't sound like a Christmas piece and would have

been better off shaped as a cantata and a separate set of Christmas songs. The most puzzling section for me is 'the birth of Jesus Christ' where the style and gravity of the music has much more in common with the devil than Jesus. It, after all, has considerable similarity with the Devil music of *Job*. The opening section also seems to me a strange eclectic mixture of styles, which although enjoyable in its own right doesn't seem to me appropriate in this context.

Anyway, that's my short list of dislikes - and I can already sense the hackles of the reader rising. But after all, I think it's a good thing for a composer not to be considered totally beyond criticism. I would - after all - sound a little insipid if I stated that every note which VW wrote was thoroughly perfect; a little occasional criticism's not a bad thing. Also, of course, I realise that sometimes criticism can go too far. So I'm very glad to say that my views don't coincide with those of a friend of mine from Plymouth who, when asked about the works of VW said: 'Well, I quite like *Greensleeves*, but the rest's rubbish. (!)

Rob Furneaux  
Yelverton, Devon

(continued from page 6)

(Record Review continued)

**Thomas Hardy recording –  
VW's Early Hardy setting**

**Hubert Foss and his friends.  
Gordon Pullin (tenor), Charles  
Macdonald (piano), Diana Sparkes  
(reader) on HJF 001CD (mid-priced).**

It was a happy coincidence that this CD was issued at the same time we were planning the Hardy Edition of the Journal since it contains VW's early setting of Thomas Hardy's *Buonaparty*. The CD is certainly enjoyable with Diana Sparkes, Hubert Foss's daughter, including informative readings on her father's relationship with VW, Tippett, Howells, Walton, Warlock, Ireland and Britten. The songs are well chosen, and include Howells' beautiful *King David* as well as folk songs like *The trees they do grow high*, the basis of Hadley's wonderful work.

As to the Hardy setting, this turns out to be a jaunty, humorous song in Vaughan Williams's sea-song style. *We be the king's men hale and hearty* receives a typically hale and hearty setting with pulsating piano accompaniment. It is fun, and will remind members of *The Devil* and *Buonaparty* from *Hugh the Drover*. The performance is fine.

It is good to be reminded of Foss's remarkable contribution to British music, especially when it contains a recording of VW's Hardy song.

Stephen Connock

(continued from page 13)

(VW, Thomas Hardy and Village Church  
*Psalmody* continued)

*The Old Hundredth, Saint Stephen's, Mount Zion, New Sabbath and Miles Lane.* Later in the poem there come these lines:

"Meantime the sun lowers and goes; shades deepen; the lights are turned up,  
And the people voice out the last singing:  
tune Tallis: the Evening Hymn".

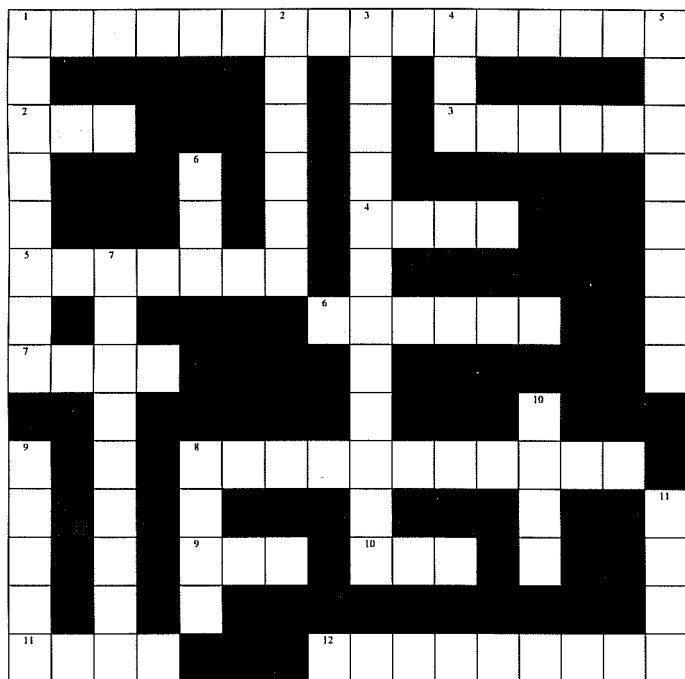
Likewise, Vaughan Williams made great use of some of the old psalm tunes in the last decade of his life. For example, the *Fantasia on the 'Old 104th' Psalm Tune* for piano solo, mixed chorus and orchestra was published in 1950. This utilised Ravenscroft's tune with the Sternhold and Hopkins words. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, eventually performed in 1951, most effective use was made of the Scottish metrical psalm tune *York* in both the prelude and epilogue to this work. His love of *The Old Hundredth* was brought to a triumphal climax at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey on June 2nd 1953. The words "All people that on earth do dwell", were appropriately arranged to be sung by "all people". These words from the Old Version were originally written by William Kethe who later was Rector of Child Oakford, Dorset from 1561 to 1600.

It was appropriate that at Hardy's funeral at Westminster Abbey on 16th January 1928, Isaac Watts' metrical version of the Funeral Psalm (psalm 90) "O God our help in ages past" should be sung to Croft's tune *St. Anne*. While, at the burial of Vaughan Williams's ashes in the same building on 19th September 1958, his setting of *The Old Hundredth* was sung.

Many readers of Thomas Hardy's works have been introduced by them to the history and practice of pre-Victorian church bands. It is most appropriate that the West Gallery Music Association, founded in 1990 to revive and perform the old metrical psalmody and other works of the period, should have as its patron Ursula Vaughan Williams.

Alan Dodge

# R.V.W. Crossword – compiled by Linda Hayward



## ACROSS

1. Festival of Britain Fiasco?  
— not so now! (8,8)
2. — Studies in English folksong (3)
3. Itinerant Hugh (6)
4. Concerto 1st performed in 1944 (4)
5. For an unusual instrument (7)
6. 2nd half of 3 rondels for voice  
and string trio (6)
7. Rising songbird (4)
8. Not a case of foot & mouth (7,4)
9. I — to thee... to the tune Abinger  
not Thaxted? (3)
10. Choral Symphony (3)
11. Early five part song (4)
12. Epic symphony (9)

## DOWN

1. Not Symphony No.6, as one  
would expect (8)
2. Biblical, Elizabethan and  
Public School inspirations (6)
3. Romantic Liaison? (8,4)
4. 1st word of ballet title (3)
5. Golden anniversary with the  
help of Shakespeare (8)
6. Area ripe for folk song collecting  
— but all his own tunes! (3)
7. 1st half of 6 across (9)
8. Variants of symphony in D (4)
9. Blackmored by the? (5)
10. Dedicated to Gustav (4)
11. Concerto for heavyweight (4)

Answers on page 3

## Requests

Michael Goatcher of 51 Newbiggen Street, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex CM6 2QS would like Prelude LP – PMS1502 – of VW songs by Robin Doveton (tenor) and Victoria Hastings (piano).

Call for  
Papers!

The February 2000 edition of the Journal will focus on George Herbert. Members who wish to contribute on the poet, poems or on the *Five Mystical Songs* should contact Stephen Connock. The deadline for the February issue is December 31st, 1999.

## News and Notes

### Albion Music Limited

#### Publications available by post:-

<i>The Collected Poems of Ursula Vaughan Williams</i>	£15.00 plus £1.65
<i>Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion</i> by Wilfrid Mellers (370 pages; new edition)	£15.00 plus £2.55
<i>Vaughan Williams in Perspective</i> (edited by Lewis Foreman)	£20.00 plus £1.75
125 <sup>th</sup> anniversary set of six cards with watercolour views of VW's houses by Bridget Duckenfield (blank for own message)	£5.00 plus 50p
<i>Vision of Albion</i> poster, with Blake imagery (a superb memento of the 125 <sup>th</sup> anniversary) (measures 28" x 23")	£10.00 plus £2.00
<i>RVW - A full discography</i> by Stephen Connock (75 pages, 1995)	£10.00 plus 65p
<i>RVW: A Bibliography</i> by Graham Muncy and Robin Barber	£6.00 plus 50p

Back issues of the Journal are available at £2.00 each.

All cheques should be made out to Albion Music Limited and sent to:

Stephen Connock, Willow House, 3 Burywoods, Bakers Lane, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5AW

for immediate delivery.

- It is hoped that a large number of members attend the RVW Society's talk at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester this year. The date is Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> of August at 11 a.m in the Abbott's Kitchen. Lewis Foreman is the speaker and he will be concentrating on VW and the Three Choirs Festival. Tickets are £4.00 and are available from the box office.
- The Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club are performing *The Poisoned Kiss* in London on May 8<sup>th</sup>. Although notification was too late to let members know, this rare outing for VW's comic extravaganza will hopefully be reviewed in the October edition of the Journal.
- *Hugh the Drover* is being performed on August 14<sup>th</sup> at Cambridge Arts Theatre commencing at 7.30.

Next Edition:  
October 1999

VW and  
The First  
World War