



# Journal of the RVW Society

No. 16 October 1999

## EDITOR

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(see address below)*

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## THE GARLAND APPEAL IS LAUNCHED

The world première of *A Garland for Linda*, at the Chapel of Charterhouse School, on Sunday 18th July, was a wonderful occasion. The chapel was full, the composers were present for the rehearsal and the concert, and the weather stayed glorious. It was a summer evening to cherish with, above all music of the highest quality.

The nine composers - Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, Michael Berkeley, Judith Bingham, David Matthews, Roxanna Panufnik, John Rutter, Giles Swayne and John Tavener - have been inspired by the idea of a commemoration to Linda McCartney to write music which is beautiful and always accessible. The audience gave the composers a standing ovation at the end of the concert.

### Vaughan Williams

The Joyful Company of Singers, under Richard Hickox, gave inspired accounts of four Vaughan Williams's works in the first half - *Linden Lea*, *Bushes and briars*, *Greensleeves* and *Silence and Music*. Ursula Vaughan Williams was also present in the chapel to hear the work which she and Ralph contributed to *A Garland for the Queen* in 1953. *Silence and Music* will be included in the EMI Classics CD of *A Garland for Linda* to be issued early in the New Year.

### Cancer Research

In the audience at Charterhouse were trustees of Breakthrough Breast Cancer and clinicians from The Ark Facility at the North Hampshire Hospital in Basingstoke. These are the cancer beneficiaries of The Garland Appeal. It is hoped

to raise £1 million for these two organisations, enabling more research into the causes of cancer, as well as supporting clinical and educational excellence in colon and liver cancer at Basingstoke.

### Next steps

The next event is the London première of *A Garland for Linda* at St James's Church, Piccadilly, on Thursday 21st October at 7.30 pm. Tickets are available from FirstCall on telephone 0970 840 1111. November 20th has the cycle being performed in Oxford, at St Andrew's Church. Tickets are available from Oxford Playhouse on telephone 01865 798600. The



*Left to right: Roxanna Panufnik, Judith Bingham, Sir Paul McCartney, Richard Hickox, David Matthews, Stephen Connock, John Rutter and Sir Richard Rodney Bennett*

New York première takes place in the Riverside Church, Riverside Drive, New York on Saturday 4th December 1999.

Each time *A Garland for Linda* is performed, The Garland Appeal makes money to the benefit of British music in general and Vaughan Williams in particular. Let us hope for 200 performances world-wide over the next five years.

**AGM Papers are enclosed  
inside this Journal**

# Successful Launch To Garland Appeal

Photographs from the World Première



*At the rehearsal, Paul McCartney chats to Michael Berkeley. John Tavener is behind them.*



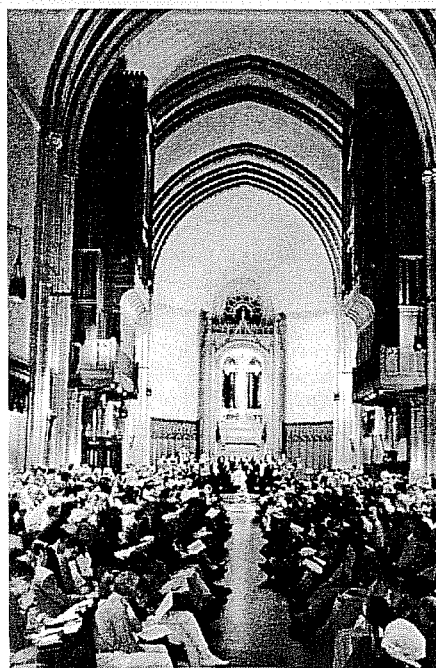
*In order from left to right: Robert Cohen (Cello), David Matthews, Roxanna Panufnik, Michael Berkeley, John Tavener, Sir Paul McCartney, Judith Bingham, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, Richard Hickox, Pippa Davies (Flute), Stephen Connock, Peter Broadbent and Robin Wells.*



*The Joyful Company of Singers perform A Garland for Linda*



*Ursula Vaughan Williams and Stephen Connock in the gardens at Charterhouse*



*A full house in Charterhouse Chapel on 18th July 1999*

# The Edge of Beyond

Whilst the basic facts of Vaughan Williams's service in the First World War are reasonably well known, the detail, including the role of the Field Ambulance, is rarely covered. Stephen Connock explores these issues in relation to Vaughan Williams's service in Northern France.

Vaughan Williams enlisted as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps Territorial Force on New Year's Eve 1914. He signed up for a four year period at the Duke of York's HQ in Chelsea. His application form and signature on Attestation are shown at Illustration 1. This was certified by the Acting Adjutant of the 2/4th London Field Ambulance which became Vaughan Williams corps until he was commissioned in the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1917.

Why the RAMC? He was living at 13, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea at the time, so it was

Lyn Macdonald's book on the medical services in the Great War, *The Roses of No Man's Land*, she says:

"Many of the orderlies were middle-aged men, well over military age, who had volunteered for the hard and taxing work as medical orderlies in the Royal Army Medical Corps."<sup>1</sup>

Having been found fit for the Territorial Force following a medical examination, the composer of two symphonies, *Five Mystical Songs* and *Towards the Unknown Region*, embarked upon Army life, and his own journey to the unknown. It was to change him forever.

## The 2/4th London Field Ambulance

The 2/4th Field Ambulance was part of the 179th Brigade, within the 60th Division. Initially based at Chelsea, where Vaughan

Williams had enlisted, the soldiers lived at home, drawing ration allowances. However, on 4 January 1915, the Ambulance moved to Dorking. How ironic for Vaughan Williams to return to his boyhood home! The unit marched an average of 15 miles a day, exploring the area around Leith Hill, of all places. The training was rigorous: squad drill, stretcher drill, first aid and lectures on military practices. Ursula Vaughan Williams described Ralph's reaction to this régime:

"Much older than most of his fellows, unused to the order expected at kit inspections, finding difficulty in wearing uniforms correctly, in putting his puttees on straight and wearing his cap at the correct angle and in many other details of daily life, he found these minor afflictions called for elementary skills he had never needed before and had not got."<sup>2</sup>

The Unit moved to Watford and, on March 15th to Saffron Walden where, for a time, the soldiers were billeted in the laundry room of Audley End House. One of Vaughan Williams's colleagues at the time, H.P. Chipperfield, tells of the formation of a band:

"It was during our occupation of Saffron Walden that the band commenced its career. The instruments were bought with funds raised from canteen profits and donations given by excellent friends of that town. We practised when we could and made a small amount of progress. The fault was, in no way due to our leader, R Vaughan Williams, but was no doubt due to insufficient practice. Time could not be spared for such a sideline in those strenuous days....."<sup>3</sup>

Vaughan Williams had formed a friendship with Harry Steggles, who played the mouth organ, and both were billeted in Bishop's Stortford with Mrs Francis Mackray at 19 Apton Road. In later years, Mrs Mackray recalled her memories of this period, to her daughter, and her recollections are reproduced in full for the first time at Illustration 2 (see page 6).

If it was welcome news to Vaughan Williams that a family approached by the billeting sergeant wanted a musician, it was not always such. The 2/4th Field Ambulance's billeting officer put it this way - about billet ladies:

"Some wanted quiet men, some wanted jolly men, some wanted old men, others wanted them young. Some wanted respectable men, and I'm afraid others didn't ...."<sup>4</sup>

The Unit were soon on the move again, this time to Sutton Veny Camp near Warminster. Civilian life was left behind. Michael Kennedy in a letter of 16th March 1999 to Alan Aldous refers to this period in the relation to *A Pastoral Symphony*:

"He said to me that the bugle-call in the slow movement was inspired by one he heard while training on Salisbury Plain."

After a year and a half of training, the 2/4th London Field Ambulance finally received

Illustration 1 - VV's Form of Attestation

convenient and practical to stroll along to the Duke of York's HQ on the Kings Road. Vaughan Williams was also 42 years old. He may have judged that the Medical Corps was more appropriate for him at this age. In

<sup>1</sup> Lyn Macdonald, *The Roses of No-Man's Land*. Macmillan 1980 p. 111

<sup>2</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams, *RPV - A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* OUP, 1964 p. 119

<sup>3</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance 1914-18*, told by The Personnel, Borough Printing, Southend-on-Sea. 1935, p. 24

This is an important reference work for Vaughan Williams's period in the 2/4th Field Ambulance. It has reference number X809/29033 in the British Library.

<sup>4</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 33.

the mobilisation orders on the 15th June 1916, whilst at Sutton Veny. The date for leaving England had been set for Thursday 22nd June. Réveillé was sounded at 1.45 am and the Unit arrived at Warminster station at 5.20 am. The train departed for Southampton at 6.30 am to catch the SS Inventor and the SS Connaught bound for Le Havre. The extract from the Unit's War Diary for this trip is reproduced at Illustration 3.<sup>5</sup> Vaughan Williams was heading for Ecoivres, a few miles North West of Arras in Northern France, on the slopes of Vimy Ridge.

### The frontline North of Arras

The area to the North of Arras, which was to be the destination of the 2/4th Field Ambulance, was the position of fierce fighting in 1915. The map at Illustration 4 sets the scene. The French suffered some 150,000 casualties in this area in 1915 alone. They attempted to take Vimy Ridge on June 16th 1915, and were partially

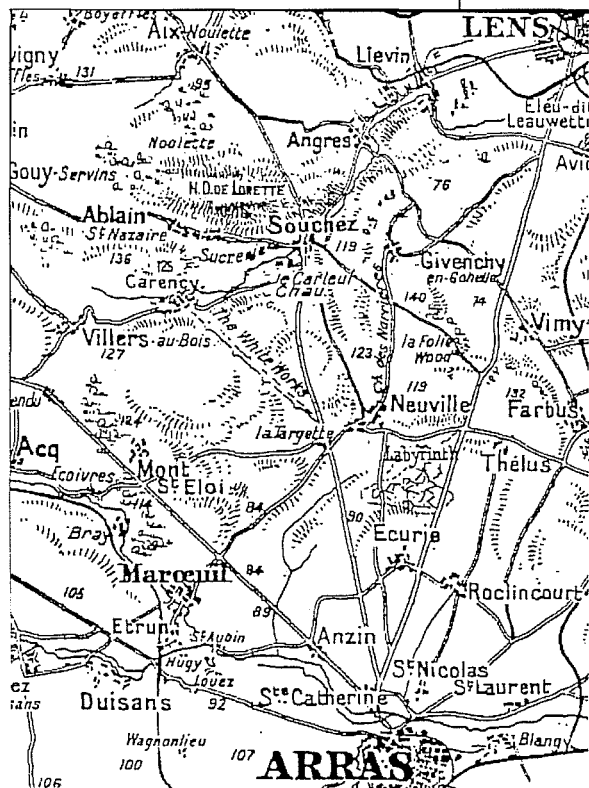


Illustration 4 – Frontline north of Arras

successful, holding Ablain St. Nazaire and Souvrez.<sup>6</sup> The British took over the sector in March 1916 after French troops were transferred from Vimy to fight at Verdun. The British Third Army found an astonishing complex of trenches, typically 18-24 feet deep, many with trap doors and barricades. The area, known as The Labyrinth, South of Neuville St. Vaast was soon to become well known to the soldiers

<sup>5</sup> Public Record Office, Reference No. WO 95/3029  
<sup>6</sup> See Nigel Cave, *Vimy Ridge – Arras*. Battleground Europe Series, Les Cooper, London, 1997 p. 17

2/4 LONDON ARMY.		WAR DIARY	vol III pg 2.	Army Form C. 2119.
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Reg. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. This page will be prepared in manuscript.		INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.		
(These headings not required.)		Summary of Events and Information		Remarks and references to Appendix
Hour, Date, Place	Event			
22. VI. 16	16.00 am. Arrived at Warminster station. 17.00 am. Departed for Southampton. 18.00 am. Arrived at Southampton. 19.00 am. Departed for Le Havre. 20.00 am. Arrived at Le Havre. 21.00 am. Departed for Ecoivres. 22.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres.			
23. VI. 16	08.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres. 09.00 am. Departed for Ecoivres. 10.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres. 11.00 am. Departed for Ecoivres. 12.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres.			
24. VI. 16	08.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres. 09.00 am. Departed for Ecoivres. 10.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres. 11.00 am. Departed for Ecoivres. 12.00 am. Arrived at Ecoivres.			

Illustration 3 – Extract from VW's Unit War Diary

of the 2/4th Field Ambulance. A German counter-attack on May 21st 1916 and other battles in the area had resulted in 2,450 British casualties, with many being buried alive in mine explosions, or shelled by 80 batteries firing along just one mile of trenches. This had reduced many of the trenches in the frontline, as well as in the Support Lines, Reserve Lines, Observation Lines and Communication Lines, to rubble, adding to the risk of sniper attack. For the Ambulance Unit, arriving in late June 1916, the poor condition of many of the trenches and duckboards was to be a major problem as winter approached.

### Ecoivres

For the troops of the 2/4th London Field Ambulance, the sea crossing was crowded and uncomfortable, even if their spirits were optimistic. They were not reassured by their first impressions of France:

"Sombre-miened French women, decrepit looking French sentries and a gang of sturdy and defiant-looking German prisoners".<sup>7</sup>

A stiff march brought them to Maizières where they headed to the South to the prolonged and never-to-be-forgotten roar of gunfire on the Somme, only a few days away from the disaster of 1st July 1916. On the 28th June

<sup>7</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 43

1916, the Unit arrived at Ecoivres:

"The rather dismal-looking village, though near the trenches, was strangely peaceful... The valley lay snugly sheltered from hostile gunfire by the rising ground on which stood the village of Mont St. Eloi, with its gaunt battered tower".<sup>8</sup>

This imposing tower is shown as it is today at Illustration 5, unchanged from how Vaughan Williams first saw it in late June 1916. (The relevance of these locations to *A Pastoral Symphony* is described in the article *The Death of Innocence* on page 11).

### The Role of the Field Ambulance

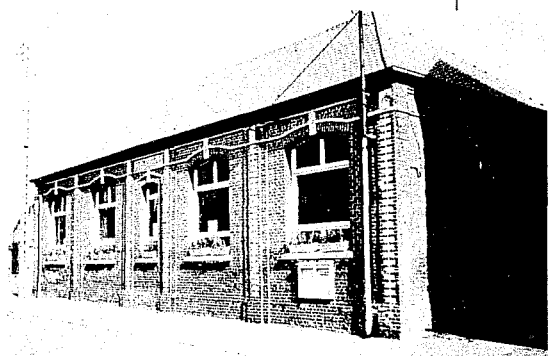
The War Diary of the Field Ambulance records the first visit of the men, west from Ecoivres along the communication trenches, to the Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) at a small hamlet called Aux Rietz. 'All my men were pleased at last to be at work' states the C.O. in the diary entry for 3rd July. The Unit took over from the 1/2nd Highland Field Ambulance (part of 51st Highland Division) and was billeted in outhouses around the Main Dressing Station (MDS) at Ecoivres. This building still



Illustration 5 – The Tower at Mont St. Eloi

<sup>8</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 44-45

stands and is today a school (see Illustration 6) along the road from the village church



**Illustration 6 – The Main Dressing Station at Ecoivres as it is today.**

(see Illustration 7). As the Ambulance walked along the mile length of Territorial Trench to the ADS, they observed the Scottish Tommies:

“What a picture they presented - clay and mud from head to foot, over uniform, equipment, rifle and everything.... their faces were white and strained ... their eyes were red through lack of sleep.”<sup>9</sup>

The task of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance was to evacuate the wounded from the Neuville St. Vaast area, on the front line held by the 179<sup>th</sup> and 180<sup>th</sup> Brigades. The focal points for moving casualties were Regimental Aid Posts (R.A.P.s) usually occupied by a Medical Officer. These Posts were in dugouts, cellars or whatever other reasonable protection could be found. From the RAPs field ambulance bearers brought the patients to two Collecting Posts. Sometimes the trenches were narrow and the stretcher had to be carried on the shoulders instead of the hands. From the Collecting Posts, badly wounded patients were transferred to the ADS at Aux Rietz, which was situated in deep dugouts providing genuine protection.

Evacuation of the seriously ill along the shell-riven road to the MDS at Ecoivres was by Ambulance wagons at night-time. Authority was given to send an ambulance to the ADS at Aux Rietz by day in respect of urgent cases only.<sup>10</sup>

The Field Ambulance retained 22 stretcher bearers at the R.A.P.s in the frontline, 22 bearers at the Collecting Posts, 10 bearers at the A.D.S. at Aux Rietz, whilst drivers and wagon orderlies lived in a shelter just outside the area of the frontline. This wagon rendezvous was dispensed with as the war progressed, and only severe cases

were transported. The wagon orderlies and drivers became available for duty at the M.D.S. at Ecoivres.

### The edge of beyond

Neuville St. Vaast was flattened by 1916:

“Nothing stood more than 5 feet high and we lived in cellars and dug-outs.... We were surrounded by buried bodies. There were rats by the million”.<sup>11</sup>

The smell and sight of dead bodies were ever present, as was the threat of shelling, or sniper fire. The trenches were waterlogged in front of Mont St. Eloi. The stretcher-bearers and wagon orderlies, including Vaughan Williams, had to grope their way along in almost total darkness, lit only by the occasional glare of the Very lights. As one of Vaughan Williams’s colleagues, Private C. Young, put it:

“We were too wet and miserable for speech, we are automatons, wound up and propelled by one fixed idea, the necessity of struggling forward”.<sup>12</sup>



**Illustration 7 – The Church at Ecoivres**

Another colleague, C. Chitty, adds:

“Among the sick and wounded who passed through our hands was to be seen much of the pathos and tragedy of war. I recall one fine-looking lad who had lost his three chums. They had been blown to pieces in a mine or shell explosion while he himself had completely lost his reason. He was so quiet, gentle and amenable it was pathetic to hear him implore us to allow him to go

out and gather three wild flowers in memory of his three lost friends”.<sup>13</sup>

The men worked in two-hour spells of duty. Private Young describes the work of stretcher bearing:

“Slowly we worked our way along the trenches, our only guide our feet, forcing ourselves through the black wall of night and helped occasionally by the flash of the torch in front. Soon our arms begin to grow tired, the whole weight is thrown onto the slings, which begin to bite into our shoulders; our shoulders sag forward, the sling finds its way into the back of our necks; we feel half suffocated, and with a gasp at one another the stretcher is slowly lowered to the duckboards. A twelve-stone man rolled up in several blankets on a stretcher is no mean load to carry when every step has to be carefully chosen and is merely a shuffle forward of a few inches only.”<sup>14</sup>

All the time, the Germans were roughly 200 yards away, well within the range of trench mortar.

One of Vaughan Williams’s roles was on the motor ambulances between the trenches - the R.A.P.s and Collecting Posts therein - the ADS at Aux Rietz and the MDS at Ecoivres. This was dangerous work particularly at the Aux Rietz - La Targette cross roads:

“At this point two trolley lines converge on the Engineering Dump and the road goes steeply down-hill through the wood and is quite dark, except for the light from hurricane lamps of people moving about which only tend to make it more difficult rather than easier. Further the cross roads at Aux Rietz and La Targette are both dangerous corners as is also the road between them”.<sup>15</sup>

The roads were bad with shell holes which became more numerous as time went on, and became scattered with debris from surrounding houses. A few hundred yards as the crow flies seemed to the men to take an eternity, as they moved to the Edge of Beyond. How different from the Ecoivres to Mont St. Eloi road today! (See Illustration 8).

### On the march again

The Unit believed they would be transferred to the Somme to the South of Arras. However, they received instructions to travel to the South of France, and arrived at Marseilles on 17th November 1916:

<sup>9</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 47

<sup>10</sup> All the details are contained in *Notes on the Evacuation of the Wounded in the Neuville St. Vaast area*, by the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, June to October 1916.

Public Records Office, W095/3029, (War Diary Vol. III, Appendix 6)

<sup>11</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 47

<sup>12</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 62

<sup>13</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 71

<sup>14</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 62

<sup>15</sup> Major Layton, C.O. of 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, 30.11.16 in Appendix 6 of *War Diary Vol. III*. Public Records Office W095/3029.



Illustration 8 – The Ecoivres to Mont St. Eloi road today.

rhythm returned and with it a sense of escape from the grip of the trenches".<sup>16</sup>

On the 10th November, they embarked on HMT Transylvania, heading for Salonika.

The nightmare of the trenches was over, and the Unit had survived largely intact. As the CO put it:

"We never went into an action from which we came out a mere handful.... We were not at Paschaendale, but we saw enough at

Vaughan Williams had taken a huge personal risk when enlisting, but he had survived trench warfare at its worst. But at what price?

(Alan Aldous follows Vaughan Williams's service with the 2/4th London Field Ambulance in Salonika on page 7, and explores Vaughan Williams's period as an officer on page 9. The impact of all this on Vaughan Williams, as a composer, is considered by Stephen Connock in *The Death of Innocence* on page 11).

Mrs. H. E. Mackray's memories of Dr. Vaughan Williams (née Helen E. Mackray).

When the recruiting officer asked my mother whether she would take some soldiers, she suggested he might find any who were interested in music. I remember her saying how the next day a soldier arrived announcing himself as "H. Williams". He had two other soldiers who came at the same time, Pte. Saagles and Pte. Edwards.

All my family were at that time at or near home. It was our custom to gather for music in the evenings and frequently we were joined by friends.

My father played the viola, Connie, my sister, played the violin, my brothers Frank and Charlie played the clarinet, and Alec, the trumpet. My brother Charlie, and my husband Charles Mackray, who was also with us, were also in the Field Ambulance.

Other songs and pieces at that time played by us all. Pte. Edwards - who also has made entries in the autograph albums of my sister Connie and myself - had, before joining the army, been singing at the Palladium in London.

I remember that at Christmas V.W. was due to go home, but he arranged that Pte. Saagles should have the leave instead so that he might be with his family. V.W. asked my mother whether he might stay with us. I remember a great hamper arriving for him and he gave us packets of food, and farm butter. We had a very happy time.

It was I believe in 1950 that the Rural Music Schools held their 21st Anniversary at the Albert Hall. Dr. V.W. had composed a piece of music especially for the orchestra. My brother Frank and myself were playing, and my mother was in the audience. She

Charlie was later to meet V.W. in France.

"Mr. Williams" had been with us two or three days before my mother learned from the other soldiers that he was in fact Dr. Vaughan Williams.

I remember when I was practising the piano I would hear him come up the passage - he always wore carpet slippers, the soldiers did much marching - he would quietly open the door and come in to listen. On occasion he helped me with my harmony. I was having lessons with the organist of the parish church of St. Nicholas, Lesley Dupère. Dr. V.W. played the organ at this church for Church Parades.

Sometimes in the evenings when we were playing V.W. would come in and borrow my father's viola and join in. The music we played was often in the lighter vein. Pte. Saagles was usually called upon to sing. "When Father papered the parlour." Many a joke arose from this and when V.W. wrote in my autograph book this song was represented with

saw Dr. V.W., and at the end of the performance my brother took her to speak with him. She told me how after all those years he remembered her, and asked after all her family. She died last year, ninety-one years of age. She often used to speak of V.W. and was very sad when she heard of his death.

My mother's name: Mrs. Francis Mackray,  
Her address at the time: 19, Apton Road,  
Bishop's Stortford,  
Herts.

Illustration 2 – Mrs Mackray recalls her memories of this period in a letter to her daughter.

"It reminded us of old times, to be marching together as a Unit from Ecoivres.... Gradually, as hamlet after hamlet was left behind, the old march

Neuville St. Vaast to realise its horrors."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 75

<sup>17</sup> Major Layton, *Tales of a Field Ambulance*, p. 15



# Ralph Vaughan Williams in Salonika

by Alan K. Aldous

In another article in this issue of the Journal, Stephen Connock describes Vaughan Williams's experience with the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance near Vimy Ridge in France from June to November 1916. The 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance was part of the 179<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the 60<sup>th</sup> Division. In October 1916, the 60<sup>th</sup> Division including the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance began relocating to Salonika in north-east Greece. Salonika is a city, but the word is also used to refer to the area of Greece around that city in which allied troops were stationed in the First World War.<sup>1</sup>

In late October 1916, the men of the 60<sup>th</sup> Division marched from the Vimy Ridge area to Eaucourt Sur Somme, some 30 miles west of the area on which the Battle of the Somme was beginning to wind down in a sea of mud. From nearby Longpre, they travelled by cattle trucks to Marseilles where they embarked for Salonika.<sup>2</sup>

As will be discussed below, although Vaughan Williams's time in Salonika provided him new experiences with people and terrain that were very different from those of England, he ultimately became bored and dissatisfied in Greece. He wanted to take a more active role in the allied effort. As will be described in another article in this issue of the Journal, he was allowed that opportunity as an officer with the Royal Artillery following his time in Salonika.<sup>3</sup>

## Why Salonika?

French and British troops first arrived in Salonika in neutral Greece in October 1915 to aid Serbia. Serbia had been at war with Austria-Hungary and later Bulgaria at the time the French and British troops arrived. Although initially neutral, Bulgaria later sided with the Central Powers. The number of Allied troops increased until by the summer of 1916 there were 300,000 Allies, plus 100,000 Serbian troops in Salonika.<sup>4</sup>

When the 60<sup>th</sup> Division arrived in November 1916, the Bulgarian front was about 40 miles of Salonika. For the first few months Vaughan Williams was in Greece, it was relatively quiet, although several raids of the enemy lines were reported.<sup>5</sup>

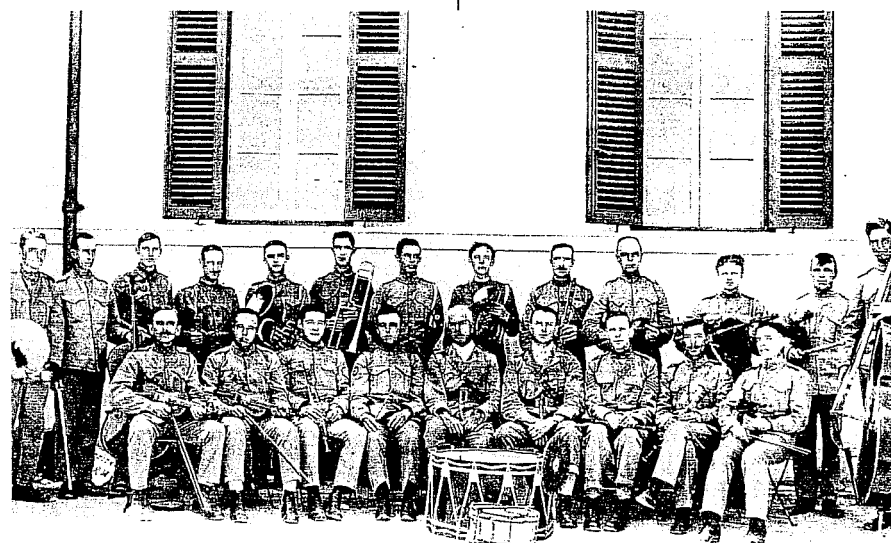
The Allies planned an attack on the Bulgarians at the front in the general area of Lake Doiran near the Greece/Macedonia/Bulgaria border. From approximately 24 April to 22 May, 1916 the resulting Battle of Doiran was conducted. There were heavy Allied losses, with little gain. The 60<sup>th</sup>

Division took part in the Battle of Doiran in the Battle on the Machukovo front, east of the Vardar river. The 60<sup>th</sup> Division had an advanced dressing station at Smol church in Selimli Dere, and near Reselli, with main dressing stations at Oreovica and Kalinova.<sup>6</sup>

## Vaughan Williams's Time in Greece

Harry Steggles was a friend of Vaughan Williams in the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance from 1914 to June 1917 in England, France and Greece. Harry recalled "Salonica brought a change of scenery and activity or inactivity...."<sup>7</sup>

Although the front was some 40 miles north of Salonika, the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance was stationed in Katerini, approximately 35 miles south of Salonika and 15 miles north of Mount Olympus. Mt. Olympus was



VW with his 'orchestra' in Salonika (he is 4<sup>th</sup> from left in front row).  
(With thanks to A.J. Fairchild)

plainly visible from Katerini. The 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance arrived in late November 1916. At least some of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Ambulance was likely to have travelled to be closer to the front during the Battle of Doiran. The existence of operating railroad trains made transport of wounded troops from dressing stations to hospitals far from the front much easier.<sup>8</sup>

Vaughan Williams had carried a stretcher in France. Presumably, the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance took part in the battle of Doiran and Vaughan Williams assisted as a stretcher carrier or otherwise. One reason to suspect Vaughan Williams was involved in the Battle of Doiran is that he wrote a letter to his wife Adeline indicating his whereabouts by sending a scale in the Dorian mode in one of his letters.<sup>9</sup>

Major T.B. Layton of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance described Katerini as being "very insanitary, refuse, faeces and manure are lying about all over the place; flies are already present and typhoid is present among the civil population." Layton later wrote "The houses both in the town and surrounding villages are all characterized by their extreme cleanliness within and the extreme dirtiness of their yards without."<sup>10</sup>

"A' Section Standing Orders by Major T.B. Layton" of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance give an interesting daily routine for December 1916:

"Reveille .....	6.20 a.m.
Breakfast .....	7.45 a.m.
Fall in .....	8.30 a.m.
Orderly Room & Sick Parade	8.45 a.m.
Dinner .....	1.00 p.m.
Tea .....	5.00 p.m.
In billet .....	8.00 p.m.
Lights out .....	9.00 p.m."

<sup>11</sup>

Lights out at 9.0 p.m. provided for a long night's sleep. Harry Steggles described sharing a "bivvy" with VW, which was "a

little less than the area of a double bed...." "We had a groundsheet and blanket a piece and all our worldly goods included razor, comb, lather brush, also Isaiah and Jeremiah [which were] two empty pineapple tins in which we lit charcoal and after whirling them round and round like the old fashioned winter warmer we rushed them into the 'bivvy' and sealed up any air intakes we could find. I think we slept more from our rum ration plus carbon monoxide from Isaiah and Jeremiah than fatigue. One lost everything in these confined spaces, but Bob [Harry's name for RVW] always gave up the chase with a grunt saying, "Find it in the morning", and the great man slept."<sup>12</sup>

Harry described another incident in the "bivvy". "It was a filthy night in the Balkans. We both sat with our knees drawn up in the 'bivvy' looking at a guttering

candle, water creeping in, plus snakes, scorpions and centipedes. A few shells were sailing over which thrilled Bob, a typical Bairnsfather 'Better' 'ole' scene; when Bob suddenly said: 'Harry, when this war ends we will (a) dine at Simpsons on saddle of mutton, (b) see Carmen.'<sup>13</sup>

received. "One correspondent recalled that Vaughan Williams attended all the 2/4th reunions in the 1920s.... Vaughan Williams's manner of wearing his uniform, particularly his puttees, was highly individual, but all the Unit liked him. His comrades often recalled how he trained the Unit's drum and fife band. Sometimes his

transferred to England to training for a commission as an Officer. Harry Steggles recalled: "It was no disrespect to our officers when he said good bye to them using the words, and standing stiffly to attention: 'My regret at leaving is that I shall cease to be a man and become an officer,' a last jab at the military term 'officers and men.'<sup>18</sup>

Alan K. Aldous



2/4th London Field Ambulance in Salonika  
(With thanks to A.J. Fairchild)

Other than the moments of excitement in the Battle of Doiran, the time of Vaughan Williams was fairly monotonous and involved some unpleasant and unfulfilling tasks. However, Vaughan Williams had opportunities with music. For example, Harry Steggles recalled: "It was in the shadow of Mt. Olympus that R.V.W. conducted our Christmas carols for what was to be the last time, in 1916. The black velvet of the night, the moon lighting up part of Mt. Olympus, we sang all the carols out in the open, a treasured memory." Harry also recalled their "going out one evening in a village in the Balkans when we heard singing coming from a shop, which looked like an old English blacksmith's. As we entered the gloom, guitar music was heard and some evil-looking armed Greeks were dancing. RVW was quite interested for he immediately bought more wine and wrote down the tune as they danced, much to my amazement."<sup>14</sup>

Another opportunity for music came from George Milne, commander of British Troops in Salonika, who encouraged his army to entertain itself to relieve the monotony of the campaign. As described by Alan Palmer: "All available talent was utilized: the 2/4th London Field Ambulance of the Royal Army Medical Corps, for example, had a band which was trained by Private R. Vaughan Williams." An interesting and perhaps unlikely source of information is a journal, *The Mosquito*, The Official Organ of the Salonika Reunion Association. A request for persons having a recollection of Vaughan Williams was made in the June 1958 issue of *The Mosquito*, presumably at the request of James Day. As reported in the September 1959 issue, eight letters were

language was military rather than musical."<sup>15</sup>

Harry Steggles and others reported on some of the activities that were unpleasant and/or unfulfilling to Vaughan Williams. Harry Steggles reported: "RVW didn't mind what he did as long as we got on with the war. But Salonika was too dilatory for him. We went on mosquito squad work which consisted of filling in puddles to prevent mosquitoes breeding; he thought this useful in an abstract way. But what caused him the most anguish was to sit down and wash red bricks, which were laid on the ground to form a red cross; as protection from German planes; he swore one day, saying 'I will do anything to contribute to the war, but this I will not do.' I have never seen him so annoyed."<sup>16</sup>

Sir Stuart Wilson wrote: "In the first war he was a private in the R.A.M.C. [H]e spent months in a transit camp in Salonika, where his chief task was to separate solids from liquids in their primitive sewage arrangements: 'After that,' he said, 'I learned to call nothing common or unclean.' This is confirmed by J. Ellis Cook, who was in the 60th Division in Salonika: "Mr. Ralph also told me in front of his mother, the last three weeks he was in Salonika he was in the Summer Hill Camp and doing latrine fatigues all the time." Apparently, VW could have avoided latrine duty by taking "part in the concert party or divisional theatre at Gavlanchi," but chose not to because "they were doing remarkable well and he thought he would be useless under the circumstances."<sup>17</sup>

In June 1917, Vaughan Williams was

<sup>1</sup> Colonel P.H. Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division (2/2nd London Division)* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1927), chapters VII and VIII. The city Salonika is perhaps more famous by the name Thessalonika, which was visited over 1900 years ago by the Apostle Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division*; chapter VII; Ursula Vaughan Williams, *RVW: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Clarendon Paperbacks 1992), p. 122. For a description of the Battle of the Somme at this time, see, M. Brown, *The Imperial War Museum Book of the Somme* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1996), pp. 214-29.

<sup>3</sup> U.V.W., *RVW*, p. 124, states Vaughan Williams wrote a letter from Salonika to his wife Adeline telling her of his "utter discontent."

<sup>4</sup> Ian V. Hogg, *Dictionary of World War I* (Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group 1997), pp. 37, 190 and 191; Jay M. Winter, *The Experience of World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press 1989), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division*; Major-General Sir W. G. MacPherson *et al.*, *Medical Services General History, Vol. IV*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1924), pp. 130-31.

<sup>6</sup> MacPherson *et al.*, *Medical Services*, pp. 130-34; Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division*; Hogg, *Dictionary of World War I*, pp. 61-62; Winter, *Experience of World War I*, p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Steggles, *The R.C.M. Magazine*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (1959), p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division*, Ch. VIII; MacPherson *et al.*, *Medical Services*, pp. 130-34.

<sup>9</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 24; also mentioned in U.V.W, *RVW* p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> Layton, *Notes on Hospital Accommodation in Katerini, 13/1/17*, WO 95/4927; and *Report of T.B. Layton from 11 December 1916 to 10 March 1917*, page 1, "3. Houses and Personal Cleanliness," WO 95/4927.

<sup>11</sup> WO 45/4927, App II, December 1916.

<sup>12</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 22-23

<sup>13</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 23. Harry further recounts their dinner at Simpsons on the Strand following the War as promised. Id. The phrase "Bairnsfather 'Better' 'ole' scene" refers to a cartoon of Bruce Bairnsfather, who created famous cartoons of the First World War. Hogg, *Dictionary of World War I*, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Palmer, *The Gardeners of Salonika* (London: André Deutsch Limited 1965), p. 144; Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division*; *The Mosquito*, No. 127, September 1959, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Stuart Wilson, *The Music Times*, (London) October 1958, p. 538. Stuart Wilson "knew R.V.W. personally and continuously for close on fifty years." Id. J. Ellis Cook, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> Steggles, *R.C.M. Magazine*, p. 24. The 60th Division left for Egypt on the same day RVW left for England to begin training with the Royal Artillery.



# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AS AN OFFICER

by Alan K. Aldous

Other articles in this issue of the Journal describe Vaughan Williams's activity in the 2/4th London Field Ambulance from 1914 to June 1917. In June 1917, he left the London Field Ambulance in Salonika to return to England to train for a commission as an officer. Amongst his parting words to those in Salonika were "My regret at leaving is that I shall cease to be a man and become an officer ...."<sup>1</sup>

## Officer Training in England

On arriving in England, Vaughan Williams reported to the War Office in London. There, he was given a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery. The Royal Artillery was divided into three branches: the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA), the Royal Field Artillery (RFA), and the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA). The primary differences between the RGA and RFA were that the RGA used larger, less mobile guns, which were positioned further from the front.<sup>2</sup>

On or before July 26, 1917, Vaughan Williams made an application for training as an officer, specifically requesting to serve in the RGA. In the form, he listed his occupation as "Doctor of Music".<sup>3</sup>

Vaughan Williams did not receive the rank of officer immediately. Rather, he trained as a cadet from August to December 1917. A Statement of Services record for Vaughan Williams indicates that he joined the No. 2 R.G.A. Cadet School, Maresfield Park [Uckfield, Sussex] with the rank of private on 1 August 1917. It further indicates he was commissioned in the RGA on 23 December 1917. Vaughan Williams had the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. Most of the cadets were more than 20 years younger than

Vaughan Williams, who turned 45 while at the school.<sup>4</sup>

Referring to his time in cadet school, Ursula Vaughan Williams wrote:

"It was a noisy place, and Ralph found he needed every atom of concentration he had to grapple with unfamiliar subjects, for he was determined to do well in the passing-out examination. He therefore took a room in a cottage outside the grounds where he could work in privacy and silence, two qualities unknown in the cadet school. This arrangement was secret, for cadets were supposed to remain inside the grounds. He and a young cadet, John Tindall Robertson, and one or two others who were admitted to this working room, made a hole in a hedge, disguised with removable branches, through which they could come and go without passing a sentry. By this means, and by remembering to be in when they would be expected to be in, they achieved a measure of freedom, and Ralph was able to pass out not discreditably. Tindall Robertson took on Harry's [Steggles] role--"<sup>5</sup>

Tindall Robertson wrote:

"R.V.W. kept an avuncular eye on us, the rawest of raw schoolboys, and I, for my part, did my best to help him both with his work and in seeing that he got his equipment and so on right for parades. He was not one to whom the proper arrangement of straps and buckles and all those things on which the sergeant major is so keen, came easily. Neither was it easy for him, then in middle age, to learn and retain all the miscellaneous information which was pumped into us. But he achieved it by dogged perseverance and toil."<sup>6</sup>

## Return to France

On 1 March 1918, Vaughan Williams embarked from Southampton for France. He joined the 141 Heavy Battery of the 86th Brigade just before the German advance on 21 March 1918. The significance of the German advance of the spring of 1918 can only be appreciated when contrasted to the relative stalemate of November 1914 to March 1918. Despite a series of pushes by

the French and British resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of men, the front had moved little since 1914. Then, in late March 1918, the Germans began a huge advance that penetrated the British lines. Ground that took the British years to gain was lost in days and the British were in retreat. Vaughan Williams was caught up in this retreat. He wrote to his close friend Gustav Holst sometime around the summer of 1918:

"The war has brought me strange jobs -- can you imagine me in charge of 200 horses!! That's my job at present -- I was dumped down on to it straight away, and before I had time to find out which were horses and which were wagons I found myself in the middle of a retreat -- as a matter we had a very easy time over this -- only one horse killed so we were lucky."<sup>7</sup>

The horses were used to pull a 60 pounder gun. The 60 pounder was an impressive gun through which a 60 pound shell was launched up to a maximum of nearly 7 miles. The 60 pounder was provided with amatol-filled HE, shrapnel, smoke and gas shells in many varieties. The gun weighed about 4480 lbs. and was 14 feet long when fully extended, but recoiled 4 ½ feet. With its carriage, the total weight was close to 10,000 lbs. Hence, several horses were used in transporting the 60 pounder.<sup>8</sup>

W.A. Marshall, a fellow officer, wrote:

"I first set eyes on Vaughan Williams in 1918, in April, I think at the battery horse-lines... It was during the retreat which began on March 21st, when the gun position was near Fontaine-les-Croisielles, some miles south of Arras and north of Bullecourt. We had retired twice and, when I first met Vaughan Williams, the guns were in position behind a wood, Athens Wood. ... Vaughan Williams had not been with us for long and was in charge at the horse lines -- not a 'cushy' job by any means, especially at that time."<sup>9</sup>

Fontaine-les-Croisielles, where Vaughan Williams joined the 86th Brigade, is about twelve miles south-east of Ecoivres where Vaughan Williams was stationed with the 2/4th London Field Ambulance from June to October 1916. Over the summer and early fall of 1918, the 86th Brigade headed east and south in France and then north-east into Belgium in October 1918.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Steggles, *The R.C.M. Magazine*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (1959), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> N. W. Routledge, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, Anti-Aircraft Artillery 1914-55*, (Brassey's (UK), 1994), pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently, when Vaughan Williams left Greece, he expected to continue with the Field Ambulance. Ursula Vaughan Williams, *RVW: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Clarendon Paperbacks 1992), p. 125. The personal service record (PSR) of Vaughan Williams is held in the Public Records Office (PRO) in Kew, WO 374/75055. The PSR includes an "Application for Admission to an Officer Cadet Unit with a view to appointment to a Temporary Commission in the Regular Army ..." completed by Vaughan Williams in his own handwriting.

<sup>4</sup> *Statement of Services, Personal Service Record*, WO 374/75055, PRO Kew; U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> *Heirs and Rebels*, edited by Ursula Vaughan Williams and Imogen Holst (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 46; U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> I. Hogg, *Allied Artillery of World War One* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 65-70.

<sup>9</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> The locations of the 86th Brigade can be followed through its War Diary, WO 95/325 located in the PRO, Kew. Ursula Vaughan

The fortunes of the allies changed in August 1918. The once unconquerable German army began to collapse, leading to huge allied advances and the surrender of many thousands of German soldiers. General Ludendorff declared "8 August [1918] was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war .... Our war machine was no longer efficient." On 8 August 1918, the 86th Brigade was about 15 miles south-east of Amiens, France. The War Diary of the 86th Brigade reports for 8 August 1918: "Brigade opened fire at 4.20 a.m. on Neutralising and Harassing Targets and Concentrations... Ceased firing at 10.30 a.m. - targets out of Range."<sup>11</sup>

While in France, Vaughan Williams took advantage of opportunities for music. For example, a fellow officer reported: "He spent a lot of such spare time as he had in getting up concerts, vocal, by and for the troops, mostly drivers. I can't think he enjoyed them much, in view of the talent available. I saw him once or twice, drooping despondently over the keyboard of a ghastly wreck of a piano while drivers sang sentimental songs -- execrably as a rule, to his accompaniment."<sup>12</sup>

Vaughan Williams was well liked and enjoyed the company of others. Ursula Vaughan Williams stated: "[Ralph] had not found the R.A.M.C. officers congenial. They were, in general, separated from their men by professional qualifications as well as by rank, and he had been aware of a great gulf fixed. He got on much better with the Gunner officers and found there was a far closer link there between officers and other

Williams has in her files seven maps that she described as "Ralph's trench maps." In fact, some but not all of them show German and British trench lines in France. The maps include an Ordnance Survey map dated 1916, entitled "Lens" that includes Arras and could have been used by Vaughan Williams whilst he was in Ecoivres, June to October 1916. The maps also include four Ordnance Survey maps dated October 1917, August 1918, and September 1918, which include areas south and south-east of Arras, and could have been used by Vaughan Williams in March through October 1918. Each of these four maps shows trench lines. Finally, two of the maps are of areas in Belgium and may have been used after the Armistice.

<sup>11</sup> A. Livesley, *The Historical Atlas of World War I* (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1994), p. 166, War Diary, WO 95/325, 86th Brigade R.G.A.

<sup>12</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 129.



*VW with large mortar in background*

ranks than he had known in the Ambulance."<sup>13</sup>

Vaughan Williams's dedication is illustrated in a story related by his batman, A.J. Moore, who "remembered one day when they were following up retreating Germans and were in action in the open -- Ralph was suffering from a temporary indisposition and feeling so ill that he could not stand, and so he was directing his section while lying on the ground."<sup>14</sup>

Moore wrote:

"The O.C. Battery came along past where I was standing, about fifty yards behind the guns, took in the situation at a glance, turned to me and said 'Moore! Tell Mr. Williams he is to go to bed.' 'Yes Sir. Mr. Williams, Sir, the O.C. says you are to go to bed.' 'Damn him!'

"Later I suffered a temporary indisposition myself and still remember his kindness to me on this occasion. I think Lieut. Vaughan Williams had the respect of the whole battery as a kind, firm and considerate officer. In wartime, with heavy guns, powerful horses and all the work of dealing

with the equipment necessary to the Battery, tempers can easily get frayed; with him this rarely happened."<sup>15</sup>

On 2 September 1918, Ludendorff told the German Government that an immediate armistice was imperative. The front in northern France soon moved into Belgium where it remained until the Armistice on 11 November 1918.<sup>16</sup>

### Following the Armistice

On 12 December 1918, Vaughan Williams wrote to Gustav that he was "slowly trekking towards Germany, not a job I relish, either the journey or its object. I've seen Namur and Charleroi..." both of which are cities in Belgium and were behind the German line prior to the Armistice. The letter continues: "We usually march about 10 kilos a day and rest every 4th day -- it's a tiresome job watering and feeding horses in the dark before we start (though I must confess that there being 8 subalterns in this Bty. my turn of turning out early for this only comes once a week).

Then usually 2 or 3 wagons stick fast in the mud on the 1st start off and worry and delay ensues, ...."<sup>17</sup>

Soon after the Armistice, Vaughan Williams was made Director of Music, First Army, B.E.F., France. His appointment to this position was part of the army's desire to give the men recreation and educational opportunities prior to their demobilisation. His successor (then Lieut.) E.R. Winship wrote of Vaughan Williams:

"At the time of his demobilisation, in February 1919, there were already nine choral societies, three classes, an orchestra and a band. ...

"This was evidently a restful and happy period for him back as he was at music and awaiting demobilisation. Later on in life he sometimes referred to those happy old days spent at Valenciennes."<sup>18</sup>

*(continued on page 13)*

<sup>15</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> Livesley, *Historical Atlas*, p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 131-32.

# The Death of Innocence

Stephen Connock considers the impact of the war, and the years of suppression, on Vaughan Williams as a composer.

Ursula Vaughan Williams has summarised the immediate impact on Ralph of being demobilised:

"Return was not a simple and joyful release. He was going back to a world that lacked many of his friends, and in familiar surroundings their loss would be more vivid than in the separation of war. He was also going back to discover how his own invention had survived the year of suppression, wondering whether it could come to life again or whether it was lost for ever and, if so, what he could do with his life."<sup>1</sup>

The summer of 1914 had been warm and sunny, a summer of collecting folk songs, of walking with Holst. The *Five English Folk Songs* received their London première on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1914 and Vaughan Williams was busy writing *The Lark Ascending* and the *Four Hymns*. With hindsight, the summer had seemed even more idyllic than it was. Siegfried Sassoon remembered days of playing cricket, Wilfred Owen of quietly teaching English in rural France.

How all this was to change. 'Never such innocence again' Philip Larkin was to write.<sup>2</sup> The smell of dead horses and dead men, water in the trenches, rats, the sound of gunfire, the sense of utter disorientation in the darkness of the trenches.

No man could be immune from the impact of the trenches. Thousands suffered mental trauma, some - like Ivor Gurney - never recovered. Most never spoke of the war at all, even to close friends. A few exorcised memories of the war by writing about it. Sassoon was one of the most prolific:

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz -

<sup>1</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams, *RVW - A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* OUP, 1964, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> In the poem *MCMXIV*

Never such innocence  
Never before or since,  
As changed itself to past  
Without a word - the men  
Leaving the gardens tidy,  
The thousands of marriages  
Lasting a little while longer,  
Never such innocence again

See Philip Larkin, *The Whitsun Weddings*, Faber and Faber, 1964 p. 28.

The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?

Do you remember the rats and the stench of corpses rotting in front of the frontline trench -

And dawn coming, dirty white, and chill with a hopeless rain?

Do you ever stop to ask, 'Is it all going to happen again?'<sup>3</sup>



Ralph and Adeline Vaughan Williams  
at Cheyne Walk, 1918  
(courtesy of Ursula Vaughan Williams)

Paul Fussell in his superb book *The Great War and Modern Memory*<sup>4</sup> identifies a number of experiences in the First World War which impacted upon the soldiers' consciousness:

- The collective isolation of trench warfare
- A nervous obsession with the activities of 'the other side'
- The mysterious and impenetrable nature of enemy terrain
- An obsession with 'No Man's Land' and the unknown world beyond it
- The idea that the war would never end
- The importance of sunset and sunrise and the sky as one of the redeeming features of the war

<sup>3</sup> *Aftermath 1919*, see *Collected Poems 1908-56* Faber 1961

<sup>4</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, OUP 1975

- The camaraderie of one's fellow soldiers
- The ironic proximity of home
- An acute consciousness of mortality and the brevity of time.

T. S. Elliot, in 1921, wrote of 'dissociation of sensibility'.<sup>5</sup> Sassoon, in his *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, wrote:

"The man who really endured the war at its worst was everlastingly differentiated from everyone except his fellow soldiers".<sup>6</sup>

Even though soldiers rarely talked about the war, the images remained vivid all their lives. This happens when every moment may be one's last - each moment is treasured and remembered. Acuteness of observation, too, was one of the hallmarks of a good soldier and military training emphasised alertness.<sup>7</sup> Vaughan Williams had already shown himself to be especially sensitive to poetry (Whitman, Barnes, Herbert and Stevenson, for example) to nature and to possess a visionary quality most clearly heard at this time in the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. Such a deep thinker would surely have been more influenced by the grim experience of trench warfare than many others. What would a romantic musician in a soldier's coat make of it all?

## *With rue my heart is laden*

Vaughan Williams's peacetime life appeared to resume where it left off in 1914. He was invited to teach at the Royal College of Music, as a Professor of Composition. He re-commenced work at the Leith Hill Musical Festival, leading rehearsals and joining the Festival Committee. He took over from Sir Hugh Allan, as Musical Director of the Bach Choir, which he led until 1926. He and Adeline moved to Sheringham in North Norfolk and the composer revised his *London Symphony* and put finishing touches to *Hugh the Drover*. He received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music at Oxford in 1919 to complement his doctorate he gained at Cambridge in 1901.

Composing, performing, attending committees - life would seem to have quickly returned to normal. Vaughan Williams undoubtedly threw himself into work as a way of lessening the emotional impact of the war. He was, too, stable and strong-minded and generally optimistic. For him, there was not the need to express outrage, or disdain, as with Sassoon.

And yet there is music written after 1919 which could not have been conceived before

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Fussell p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, p. 280.

<sup>7</sup> See Paul Fussell p. 326.

The inclusion of *Flos Campi* may surprise some, but to me, this work has a coolness, an impersonal quality, a remoteness which qualifies it as a work of detachment.

In these works, there is a mysteriousness and impersonal feel, reflecting perhaps the isolation, the darkness, the disorientation, the day to day reality of the dead and wounded in the war. These are the things not to be spoken about – 'why speak they not of comrades that went under' says Owen in *Spring Offensive*. Vaughan Williams turns to images of death and uses clouds as a metaphor for transience:

The sea-shells lie as cold as death;  
Under the sea;  
The clouds move in a wasted wreath  
Eternally;

(*Motion and Stillness*, 1922)

The half moon westers low, my love  
And the wind brings up the rain;  
And wide apart lie we, my love,  
And seas between the twain.

(*The Half Moon Westers Low*, 1927)

Vaughan Williams returns to this impersonal, solitary and remote style of writing at later points in his career when he contemplates grief, and the transience of life – for example in the final movement of the *Sixth Symphony* (reflecting the 'cloud capp'd towers' of *The Tempest*), or in the *Sinfonia Antartica*.



Illustration 1 – Looking west towards the church at Ecoivres

the experience of war. There is a disembodied, detached and solitary feel to the song cycle *Along the Field* (1927) or to *Motion and Stillness* from the *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925). The sense of loneliness and sadness pervades *A Pastoral Symphony* (1920-1921), especially the fourth movement, where Vaughan Williams remembers the suffering and loss of so many in Northern France. These works are composed alongside warmer, more direct pieces, such as the *English Folk-Song Suite* (1923) and the beautiful *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* (1922).

Trying to understand Vaughan Williams's response to war through the music – in the absence of written or verbal commentary – is a matter of judgement. Care is needed to avoid over interpreting certain compositions, something Vaughan Williams himself was always quick to reject (for example in relation to his *Fourth Symphony*). The change of style and musical language between, say, the pre-war *Songs of Travel* and the post-war cycle *Along the Field*, or *The Lark Ascending* (1914) compared to the, *Violin Concerto* (1925), is so stark that the impact of his wartime experiences must be counted the major factor on his development as a composer.

Post-war, his works can be grouped into three categories:

### 1. Works of Comfort

These works act as a clarifying and restorative force for Vaughan Williams. They remind him of the essence of what he valued before the war, and thus re-energise and comfort him.

These include:

- Revisions to *A London Symphony*
- The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* (1922)
- Old King Cole* (1923)
- The English Folk Song Suite* (1923)
- Hugh the Drover* (1924)
- On Christmas Night* (1926)

### *Six Studies in English Folk-Song* (1926)

These connect him to his past, consolidating his strengths and maintaining his love of folk-song.

### 2. Works of Detachment

These works show a new idiom, and a simpler, even austere, musical language. There is a solitary feel to the music which is also generally quiet, restrained and unsentimental. The works of detachment are less easily recognised as Vaughan Williams. They display economy of means and often set works which speak of death, loneliness and separation:

With rue my heart is laden  
For golden friends I had...



Illustration 2 – Looking east towards Neuville St. Vaast

In this last poem of *Along the Field*, who would not feel Vaughan Williams is remembering Butterworth, Ellis and his other friends lost in the war?

The works of detachment include:

- Mass in G minor* (1922)
- Along the Field* (1922 and 1927)
- Flos Campi* (1925)
- Four Poems by Fredegond Shove* (1925)
- Sancta Civitas* (1925)

### 3. Works of Catharsis

One composition is clearly and expressly related to the war – *A Pastoral Symphony* (1921) and can be seen as a necessary or cathartic work for Vaughan Williams. In a letter to Ursula Vaughan Williams of 4th October 1938, the composer related that it was at Ecoivres that the *Pastoral Symphony* began to take shape:

"It's really wartime music - a great deal of it incubated when I used to go up night after night with the ambulance wagon at Ecoivres and we went up a steep hill and there was a wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset - it's not really lambskins frisking at all as most people, take for granted".<sup>1</sup>

Illustrations 1 and 2 show the view from the steep hill at Mont St. Eloi as it is today. Illustration 1 looks West towards the church at Ecoivres (the church itself is pictured on page 5) and illustration 2 looks East to Neuville St. Vaast and what was in 1916 the front line.

The wordless cantilena for soprano, accompanied only by a drum-roll on A, which opens the fourth movement, is particularly poignant. This lament is followed by a *contabile* melody of remarkable expressiveness that it seems to bring to the surface all the pain and sorrow of the war.

### Never such innocence again

By the end of 1920, with *Sir John in Love* and *The Poisoned Kiss*, Vaughan Williams's warmth, vitality and personality had fully re-emerged in his compositions. He would never return to that innocent lyricism of *Hugh the Drover*, but a maturer, more rounded romanticism remained, allied to a forcefulness and vigour (*Job*, *Fourth Symphony*) which was quite new. His love of *Pilgrim's Progress* was undimmed, and the wartime popularity of this work would not have been missed by Vaughan Williams. The soldiers' identification with Christian and his burden on his back (each soldier would be required to carry about 60 lbs of kit) was clear, and the waterlogged craters became Sloughs of Despair in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Was Vaughan Williams's lifelong admiration for *Pilgrim's Progress* also a response to the War?

Vaughan Williams's First World War experiences were to shape his musical responses - particularly the Works of Detachment - adding new depth to his already complex musical personality. If he had died at Neuville St. Vaast he would still be remembered, but his compositions since the war confirmed his stature. We are all fortunate indeed that Vaughan Williams survived the trenches, the mortars and the sniper's bullets, to continue to give us such wonderful music.

*Stephen Connock*

(continued from page 10)  
(VW as an Officer continued)

### A Request for Promotion Denied

A fascinating letter is included in Vaughan Williams's personal record. In October 1920, one and one-half years after Vaughan Williams was demobilised, a request was made for him to be promoted from 2nd Lieutenant to the rank of Lieutenant. Major Stanley Smith wrote the following letter on 19 October 1920 to "The Secretary, War Office, London, S.W.1.":

"With reference to your W.I.4035(M.S.4.D) of the 15<sup>th</sup> Instant, re promotion of 2nd. Lieutenant R. V. Williams, R.G.A., I beg to state that this Officer was attached to the Battery under my command from February to August 1918. During this period I found him a most reliable and energetic officer. His age, however, is very much against him, and therefore he is not as smart as might be expected. I also particularly noticed he was most untidy in his ways and dress.

I cannot say that I can recommend him for promotion to higher rank.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant," signed Stanley Smith Maj. Rg. Late/OF 141 HB R.G.A.<sup>2</sup>

The comment regarding him being "most untidy in his ways and dress" was one repeated by several people at different times in his life. For example, Harry Steggle wrote that Ralph was "very ungainly in khaki and was taunted by some of the wags. I gradually found myself helping him when in billets, with his equipment, for his cap was never straight, even when 'chinstraps will be worn'; if it was, his cap badge was all askew, his puttees were his nightmare ...." As quoted above, Tindall Robertson wrote: "I, for my part, did my best to help him both with his work and in seeing that he got his equipment and so on right for parades. He was not one to whom the proper arrangement of straps and buckles and all those things on which the sergeant major is so keen, came easily." Iris, Lady Wedgwood, wife of Ralph Wedgwood, cousin and friend of Ralph, wrote: "I was always surprised and slightly disturbed by Ralph's utter disregard of his appearance and clothes ...."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps his appearance was part of what lead Elizabeth Maconchy to say: "Many

people have said he was 'humble', but I think of him as above both pride and humility; he was simply himself. He knew his own worth, but for other people's valuation of it, or for official recognition or worldly success, he couldn't have cared less."<sup>4</sup>

### Assessment of Vaughan Williams in the Great War

Clearly, Vaughan Williams chose to be part of the British effort against Germany's aggression. There was no draft (compulsory service) at that time; and at age 42, there was no fear of his being drafted, were it to be instituted. Further, he could have sought out a more comfortable job in the military and remained in England. He participated because he felt it was his duty and the right thing to do. However, he was not a fanatical patriot or warmonger. He hated the death and destruction of war.

Regardless of his motivation for joining up in late 1914, he could not have anticipated what the next four and one-half years would bring. To be sure, the war brought him personal discomfort and separation from England and those people and things he loved in it. It also brought Vaughan Williams face-to-face with the horror of war through seeing the wounded and dead and hearing of the death of close friends, such as George Butterworth. There was also the uncertainty of wondering how long the war could go on whilst hundreds of thousands of his countrymen were being slaughtered. Although the British command may be rightfully criticized for the tactics they chose, we owe a debt of gratitude to those, including Vaughan Williams, who implemented those tactics and sacrificed so much to save Europe.

Finally, although it is impossible to know the precise effect the war had on his music, it did have a profound effect. For example, it seems doubtful that he would or could have written works such as *A Pastoral Symphony* or *Sancta Civitas* had he not experienced what he did. Through understanding Vaughan Williams's experience in the Great War, we can have a greater appreciation for the man and his music.

*Alan K. Aldous*

<sup>2</sup> In a letter dated 13 November 1920, the 19 October 1920 letter was forwarded to "2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant R. V. Williams, R.G.A., (S.R.) Sea Salters, Alexandra Road, Sheringham" with an explanation that his request was being denied. Both letters are available in this Personal Service Record, WO 374/75055, PRO, Kew.

<sup>3</sup> *RCM Magazine* Vol. 55, No. 1, p. 21; U.V.W., *R.V.W.*, p. 127; *RCM Magazine*, Vol. 55, No. 1, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *RCM Magazine*, Vol. 55, No. 1, p. 33.

<sup>1</sup> Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.*, p. 121.

# YOUR LETTERS

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



## VW and Hardy

A rather belated letter – relating to your Thomas Hardy and RVW *Journal* page 25.

I wouldn't normally write about such a small matter, but as Ralph was such a merciless stickler about "errors of fact" I think I ought to point to one regarding *Hodie*. Ursula has got it wrong. I only met the Vaughan Williamses in the summer of 1957, so it cannot have been me who was working with her on poems at the time – 1954 or before.

After Ralph's death we did indeed plan some Christmas poetry and music programmes together but certainly not before.

**Simona Pakenham**  
Chipping Norton

## Grotesque VW

At last someone has said it ('Vaughan Williams I hate' *RVWS Jnl* No. 15) and I can unburden myself of the long-held secret, that I too have a (very short) list of RVW works that I cannot get along with!

But I find my list does not coincide with that of Rob Furneaux; especially in the case of the second *String Quartet*, the final movement of which I particularly love.

There are very few RVW pieces I dislike, but one in particular makes me almost cringe with embarrassment. That is the *Festival Te Deum in F*, where the composer seems to be trying to force folk melodies into where they do not belong. I agree wholeheartedly with AEF Dickinson in his book *Vaughan Williams*, where he says the entry of *Dives and Lazarus* near the end of the *Te Deum*, borders on the grotesque.

Having got that off my chest at last, may I make a comment on the other Rob Furneaux article in the *Journal*, the letter in which he supports the slow release or recordings of RVW works. That's all very well, but a bit tough on older VW admirers! I hope to live to hear all the published works on CD. I am not anxious for the Grim Reaper to deprive me of pleasures like those afforded by some recent releases. I am thinking in particular of *Household Music*, *Death of Tintagiles*, *Dirge for Fidele*, not to mention tantalising bits of *The Poisoned Kiss* broadcast on the Radio.

If any of you have not yet heard that early

song *Dirge for Fidele*, it can be found on Collins 14882, exquisitely sung by Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Simon Keenlyside. How it has remained so little performed for all these years amazes me. One problem is that Collins have stopped issuing CDs. So

if you see it in your local record shop, snap it up without delay!

**Michael Gainsford**  
Leics.

## Sir Dan Godfrey and *A London Symphony*

I feel sure RVW Society members would like copy of *A London Symphony* conducted by Sir Dan Godfrey on CD. How many do you think would be firm on this? I have in mind two possible schemes.

Firstly, if the numbers warrant it, Pavilion might be able to consider an issue, with some other suitable items. The soon-to-be issued double CD of RVW should give a useful pointer to sales possibilities. Should this not be viable, and today's climate for CDs is not ideal, there is another possibility.

If you were able to guarantee say 100 copies sold, I would be prepared to transfer the records onto CD (providing we can locate good copies of course) and then to arrange duplication just for subscribers. Of course there would not be any printed sleeve notes, although if a notewriter were willing to do some notes, these could be duplicated as well.

Perhaps members could let me know their views on this when they have considered the ideas.

**Roger Beardsley**  
16 Highfield Road, North Thoresby,  
Nr. Grimsby, DN36 5RT

(Editor's Note: Members should contact Roger Beardsley direct at the address above)

## VW I would like to hear

I was intrigued by Rob Furneaux' "VW I hate" in *RVSWJ* 15. There is no VW I would describe that way, but there are inevitably some works that I like less than most. For me, these include the first *String Quartet*, and *Towards the Unknown Region* which, in spite of its title, still seems too comfortably Edwardian, and its main theme too reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's *Legend*. Like Rob, I was unsure about the *Violin Sonata*, but I would like to hear it again and perhaps reconsider my opinion. The major work that I had most problems with was *On Wenlock Edge* – mainly on account of the over-optimistic settings of *Summertime on Bredon* and *Is my team ploughing?*; the simpler settings by Graham Peel and George Butterworth respectively seem much closer

to the spirit of Housman's poems. But a fine recent performance by John Mark Ainsley has caused me to accept VW's versions, albeit with some reservations.

A more important category is "VW I would like to hear but can't". At a splendid weekend devoted to 20<sup>th</sup> English song by the Peter Warlock Society, Lewis Foreman, in his talk on E J Moeran, said that Moeran's crucial early musical experience was hearing a performance of VW's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> *Norfolk Rhapsodies*. Although the composer withdrew these, it is almost certain that one day they will become available. Rejected early works of many composers have been revived and thrown interesting light on these composers' early development.

A slightly different case is the original version of the *London Symphony* – I should particularly like to hear the passage whose excision disappointed Bax! Recordings of the original versions of Sibelius's *Violin Concerto* and 5<sup>th</sup> *Symphony* have in no way obscured the final versions of these masterpieces, but have rather given fascinating insights into the composer's way of working.

A different category altogether is the unfinished works, notably the *Cello Concerto* and the opera *Thomas the Rhymer*. I very much hope that one day permission will be given for these works to be completed, if it is practicable and if a composer can be found who is able and willing to attempt such a task. No one can pretend that Elgar's 3<sup>rd</sup> *Symphony* is as good as it would have been if Elgar had completed it himself, but most of us are extremely grateful to Anthony Payne for his amazing achievement. As VW died suddenly, there is presumably not even the dilemma, as with Elgar, of completion probably going against the composer's wishes.

It would be nice to think I might live long enough to hear these buried works.

**Tony Noakes**  
Stanmore

## A Garland for Linda

This concert was unquestionably the highlight of my year. Word cannot express my admiration for the sheer professionalism, control and dedication of Richard Hickox and his Joyful Company of Singers. If it seems that I am carping on the following notes then please understand that any complaints I had were more than compensated for by the pleasure of being present at such a wonderful event. My sincerest congratulations!

The journey to the *Garland Tribute* at Charterhouse took us past the Dorking Halls and the Church of St. Martin, along the Wescott Road where the White Gates



would have been, along the Downs, past Leith Hill and on towards Charterhouse above the River Wey. It could have been a musical pilgrimage, following a route, with which Vaughan Williams would have been familiar. It was a journey not only filled with expectation but with doubt.

When I first heard about the Tribute it seemed such an ambitious project so I expected the usual sort of thing.

'Mr. So and So was delayed at such and such an airport' etc. or

'Unfortunately Mr. So and So is unable to be with us and sends his regards'

In the grounds of Charterhouse, I inquired from a security member if Sir Paul McCartney had arrived. I was reassured. According to the guard, his helicopter had indeed landed. So it looked like it really was ON! But still, even as we were ushered into the chapel I was scrutinising my programme. It should have further reassured me. I needed visual proof. I waited anxiously to see if Richard Hickox and his white jacket really were going to appear or whether I was still the victim of a hoax.

And yes - he **did** walk on and he was wearing his white jacket and how beautiful those first bars of *Linden Lea* and then *Bushes and Briars* sounded. Then, as John Tavener's hymn ascended into the vaults of the chapel, I knew that Hickox this day was on a higher plain and the Joyful Singers were inspired. This was a special day. This day was unique!

Of course we came to hear the music. We came to support Cancer Research. But we also wanted to see Sir Paul McCartney in person ... and John Tavener ... and Rutter. We wanted to see all 9 composers who had donated their unique contributions. We wanted to see the people we had read about. Not to gawp, not to stare - just to be able to say we had seen them.

Aesthetically the chapel seemed as right for this event as paint was to canvas. The generosity of the school to make it available was unquestionable. The association with Vaughan Williams, the soaring vaults and the chapel's monastic ideals made us willing occupants of the most uncomfortable seats known to man. Perched like choristers in the Quire of an abbey, ideal for communal singing or praying, the chapel was less so for listening to music. Vision obscured, on the wrong side of the aisle, hearing hampered by our sideways position and nearer the exit than the altar, the music was still glorious and, we would see them at the end.

As somebody near me remarked:

'To be in a room with a legend...'

Finally, it was the end and yes, the composers would be presented to the audience. I was going to see John Tavener and Paul McCartney even if it meant straining my neck and even if it was only a glimpse. As everybody stood up to applaud tumultuously in a standing ovation, but more to get a better view, I cynically thought. Through a sea of heads I was left wondering...

*Are You there?*

*God where are You?*

I saw McCartney once. I was a student waiting for a bus. He was with Linda in an open top sports car and they looked really happy. It was the same summer I lost my mother from breast cancer, still in her thirties.

That day was on Park Lane 29 years ago - but I at least **I saw him.**

*Surrey*

### *An Oxford Elegy*

After our brief correspondence late last year, I thought you might be interested in the enclosed letter from EMI. The promised reissue of *An Oxford Elegy* seemed to be taking a long time, so I wrote to EMI again, asking when it would be coming out.

I am disappointed that *Fantasia on Old 104th* does not feature on either of the discs, and have written to ask if there are any plans for reissuing it at some stage. It will be good to have the Boulton *Job* back again (I am assuming it is the 1970s version - I missed it when it was first issued on CD, and have long since disposed of my old LP; I now listen to Handley, but, I must say, I prefer this Boulton!). The *Concerto* must be Vronsky and Babin, which used to be coupled with the Boulton *8th Symphony*. I am quite looking forward to hearing them again, too.

*Ray Hoole  
Suffolk*

"Many thanks for your fax. Yes, the CD is due out in Sept. tho not now with the *Old 104th Fantasia*. I have made it a sort of 80th birthday tribute to Sir David Willcocks, as follows:

#### *Oxford Elegy*

*Whitsunday Hymn* (prvly unpud; lovely tenor solo from R Doveton)

*Flos*

*Sancta Civitas*

All digitally re-mastered 1999. Cat. No. CDM 5 67221 2

Out the same time is Boulton's *Job*, c/w the *Cto in C for two pianos* (the cto first time on CD): CDM 5 67220 2.

*Richard Abram  
EMI"*

### **Down Ampney**

I was passing Down Ampney whilst travelling to a business appointment and thought that I must stop and see the place that gave us RVW.

The setting of the church was truly delightful and could only be an English scene, first as RVW's music is so quintessentially English, and the church itself is very attractive and well cared for, though plain.

However, it struck me as sad that more is not made of the connections with RVW, however brief they were, and I started to think that there ought to be an exhibition with memorabilia, facsimiles of manuscripts and other items of interest.

On reflection, Dorking might be a more appropriate place for such a venture, given Vaughan Williams's long association with the town and the Leith Hill Festival.

Elgar is commemorated in the museum in the place of his birth, Holst has his museum in Cheltenham, though sadly threatened with closure, and the Snape Maltings are a constant reminder of Britten.

RVW, possibly the greatest of them all, has no "shrine", apart of course from his grave in Westminster Abbey and it would be wonderful if the RVW Society could use its influence to press for a fitting memorial and place of pilgrimage for his many admirers.

Forgive me if you have had letters on this subject before I joined the Society.

*Nigel Blore  
Essex*

### **Down Ampney - Reply from Chairman**

Many thanks indeed for your letter of 5th August. We are very conscious of the need for a commemorative museum for VW and the Trustees have developed a plan to convert the bell tower area of the Down Ampney church to this purpose. This has the support of the Parish Council and the Vicar of Down Ampney who is a VW enthusiast. The problem, as always, is money. We need about £25,000 to do the job properly. We have some ideas for fund-raising and I will keep members involved through the Journal.

With your agreement I will publish your letter and my reply in the October *Journal*. Any other ideas for fund-raising please let me know.

*Stephen Connock  
London*

(continued on page 23)



# Vaughan Williams, Charterhouse and The Unknown Region

An edited version of a talk given with musical illustrations for the RVW Society AGM 11th October 1998 at Charterhouse by Robin Wells.

Vaughan Williams entered Charterhouse in January 1887. A brief account of his days at Charterhouse may be found in his book *National Music* and further reference to his time at the school may be found in the biography by Ursula Vaughan Williams. Although classics and games were very much the order of the day, the arts and music were mildly encouraged. The school magazine gives programmes and accounts of concerts - they usually consisted of solo songs, some instrumental solos and the occasional large ensemble. Concerts always began with the National Anthem and ended with the school song *Carmen Carthusianum*. One significant concert took place on 5th August 1888, which marked the first public performance of a work by VW, the *Piano Trio in G*. Strangely, there is virtually no musical reference at all to VW in the school magazines of those years. But there is mention of him in the detention book dated 19th February 1887.

The entry says "R.V. Williams - playing the fool". RVW was a normal boy!

VW maintained his links with the school and in 1940 he was invited back to Charterhouse to open the new Music School. The concert which followed the opening concluded with Haydn's *Toy Symphony* in which VW was invited to play the cuckoo.

John Wilson, who became Director of Music at Charterhouse in 1947, had been a pupil of VW at the Royal College of Music in the thirties. One of his projects was to revive the *Charterhouse Masque* which had not been performed since 1935. For the revival of this pageant, John Wilson approached VW to ask if he would consent to write some solemn music involving the whole school for the final tableau - *The Eviction of the Monks*. This task the composer agreed to undertake with the condition that he be permitted to include as a grand climax the school song *Carmen Carthusianum*. VW regarded this music

composed by William Horsley, Organist of The Charterhouse 1838-58 as among the very best of school songs. He was amused that to mark his 'generous service' and to honour his seventy-eighth birthday, the school was given a half-holiday. (A recording of this music was played).

Two years later the composer attended a concert of his music which was given in the Chapel to mark his eightieth birthday and he also wrote an article for the School Magazine about Carthusian Music in the 80s in which he recalls studying the piano, the organ, the violin, the viola, playing in the school orchestra and singing in a performance of *Judas Maccabaeus*.

VW's music still continues to feature regularly in our concerts and chapel services. The centenary year 1972 gave the school the opportunity to sing the *Sea Symphony*, to give a lunch-time performance of many of his hymns at Westminster Abbey, to mount an exhibition of RVW - his life and work in pictures, to give a concert at Down Ampney Church, and to make a

the Charterhouse Summer School of Music. In the year 2000 we shall be celebrating 25 years of the Charterhouse Summer School of Music with a very special Festival entitled *VW and the 21st Century*. I hope that members of the Society will be involved in some way.

The generous help and interest in the school shown by the RVW Trust must be acknowledged and in 1976, a scholarship provided for the first RVW Composer-in-Residence, Roger Steptoe. The interest of the RVW Trust continued further with funding towards our production of *Pilgrim's Progress* in 1972, towards Roger Steptoe's opera *King of Macedon* in 1980 and the building of the RVW Music Centre in 1984. This building, although fulfilling a need for more teaching and practising accommodation, is a living, thriving musical environment which commemorates not only the name of Ralph Vaughan Williams but English Music in its widest sense. There is a small semi-permanent display of RVW and English Music, and a large collection of

Square. 12/3 No repetition.  
Pete. 12/3 many extra school  
Wes? }  
0-1-24 }  
1333 }  
Extra School  
Williams H. 12/3 late on Sunday  
Barwell m. 1.2.3-6 most inefficient  
Rathbone 1.2.3 mis behaviour  
Ogilby m. 1.2.3 vide Saturday  
Jimmis m. 1.2.3 misbehaviour  
Blake m. 1.2.3 skipping Extra lesson  
R.V. Williams 1.2.3 playing the fool

W. Lock  
O.P. H. 12/3  
W. Lock  
O.S.H.  
Mr S. Sharpe

## Excerpt of Charterhouse Detention Book showing entry for RVW at bottom

recording of the *Masque* music. But perhaps the most significant event for the school in 1972 was the fully staged performance of his opera *Pilgrim's Progress*.

In 1945, VW together with the Surrey County Music Adviser, Norman Askew, established a Summer Music Course for young musicians in Surrey. This Summer School settled for many years at Gypsy Hill College, Kingston until in 1975 it moved to Charterhouse where it is now established as

scores, books, memorabilia, CDs and LPs of his music.

In 1985 the Carthusian Trust, in recognition of the help received from the RVW Trust, established the US Research Fellowship. This award funds an American post-graduate to come and live at Charterhouse while carrying out research into the works of VW. Appropriately enough, the first Fellow, Dr. Byron Adams came from Cornell University where VW had spent time as visiting professor in 1954.

To date there have been fourteen Fellows covering a wide area of VW's work which we hope to publish in 2000.

The VW/Charterhouse link was strengthened further in 1996 when the school was host to the Leith Musical Festival during the rebuilding of the Dorking Halls. To commemorate that occasion the school purchased a copy of the bronze relief originally commissioned by Leith Hill from sculptor David McFall.

The next stage in our RVW story is to build a small extension to the existing Vaughan Williams Centre and to establish a permanent resource and study centre so that visitors can have easy access to scores, books and recordings. Ralph Vaughan Williams is one of our greatest Old Boys. His contribution to English music over the past century as a composer, arranger, conductor, teacher, lecturer, researcher and in his encouragement to fellow musicians, is probably unsurpassed. We are justly proud of his achievements.

A composer's music does inevitably go into decline after his death. But today forty years on there is clearly a very high demand for performances of his music and he has probably never enjoyed greater popularity as a glance at the gramophone catalogue will show. And while it may be that despite the hype of ClassicFM, the same works are played again and again, that is usually for a very good reason. It is music of high quality, it is music for the people and music to which the people enjoy listening. Vaughan Williams was a man of the people.

As we approach the millennium the words of the American poet Walt Whitman, *Toward the Unknown Region* have taken on greater significance. VW was introduced to Whitman's poetry at Cambridge by Bertrand Russell. He came to admire it and he turned to it on several occasions. Is there any significance in his choice of this poem for his first major choral work in 1907? The opening reads:

*Darest thou now O soul,  
Walk out with me toward the unknown  
region....  
No map there, nor guide....  
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human  
hand,*

Let us listen to VW's setting of these words. The music has a slow, relentless but nevertheless purposeful tread. Was VW associating himself symbolically with these ideas of moving into the unknown? Life is an unknown journey. It was an unknown journey for VW as he set out from home to go to prep school in Rottingdean, to Charterhouse, to Cambridge, to study abroad with Bruch and Ravel and into the world. And so with music we are always asking ourselves the questions "Where are

we going? What is the future music?"

That question is particularly apposite today as we approach a new century. But were things so very different one hundred years ago? In 1895 at the Royal College of Music, VW met and formed a lasting friendship with Gustav Holst. Then, as now, a new century was dawning, and nobody knew what the future held. They were young students and they questioned the future of music. They thought then that composition as they knew it had reached a dead-end. They sought a different direction from that of the English musical renaissance and the grandiose music of Parry and Elgar which reflected the voice of their time – of Imperialism, Nationalism and of Pomp and Circumstance. Nevertheless, VW was to produce his share of music for occasions when he came to contribute works for the coronations of 1937 and 1953, as well writing *A Song of Thanksgiving*.

VW and Holst relied greatly on each other for confidence and for criticism of their compositions. VW was not always sure himself about his own music. As he composed the *Fourth Symphony* he found that he was following strange and powerful new paths. When he had finished it he said during a rehearsal to Sir Adrian Boult: "I don't know whether I like it, but it's what I meant." On another occasion Holst suggested to him that there was far too much percussion in *Job*, and begged him to cut some out. "Over-scoring has always been one of my vices, and it arises, I am convinced, from the fact that I am not always sure of myself and have not the courage of my convictions, and that I must hide my nakedness with an apron of orchestration."

At Cambridge VW had met the philosophers G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell and the historian George Trevelyan. Back at the Royal College of Music he and Holst joined the College's Literary Society where they discovered the works of Swinburne, Hardy and Housman. The Debating Society heard them speaking on such issues as 'The future of English music'. Holst interested VW in the idealistic Fabian-style Socialism of William Morris and Bernard Shaw. Together, Holst and VW pursued their mutual criticism and worked on what they called 'Field Days' to improve their music. When in 1899 VW gained his doctorate, it seemed that there was nothing more he could learn academically, yet he was still unsure of his direction. He had great admiration for English church music, for Purcell, for Wagner, and for certain European nationalist traits. He realised that he must search nearer to home to find and preserve a genuine national culture. This he was to find in the highways and byways of the English countryside. His search ended in 1903 when he met George Potiphar who sang the song *Bushes and Briars* as many

times as requested until VW had written it all down.

This was the beginning of a life-time's interest in folk-music and a culture which was to dominate his compositions for the remainder of his life. And this is why I mentioned earlier that VW was a man of the people. He was never happier than when in his search for folk-music he was talking to the locals or writing down their songs over the hedge in a country lane, or in the local hostelry. He spent many years in search of this music of the people. It was in folk-music that he found his inspiration and gave him his sense of direction. VW could now set about writing his own stuff as he called it. He used folk music and dressed it in contemporary clothes, while still remaining true to strong ideals, traditions and influences of the past. It is new, it is unmistakably his as he acknowledges the rich counterpoint and choral writing of the Tudor composers and Bach, the formal structures and daring of Beethoven, and the romantic harmony and orchestral palette of Brahms. But at the centre of it all is the people's music - folk-song and the rebirth of a national language and culture.

The words at the end of Whitman's poem read:

*Then we burst forth, we float....  
Equal, equipt at last....  
them to fulfill O soul.*

VW sets them in a manner which is powerful and triumphant. He was "equipt at last" for his own future. And what a future it was to be. Still delving into the unknown - consider just how many innovative works there are in his output.

With many composers, their symphonies provide an autobiographical, musical panorama. So with VW, the symphonies offer a complete breadth of style across the whole spectrum of form, structure, instrumentation, colour and imagination. Each symphony stands on its own as a very personal statement; each has something to say; each is as Whitman might have said: "*full of fresh thoughts*". Each breaks new ground in every way - into the unknown.

VW was feeling his way for most of his life, often unsure and lacking in confidence as he admitted to Holst. But when we listen to the music are we ever conscious of that lack of confidence? I think not. The music was re-written, polished and honed until it flowed easily with no rough edges.

His versatility and imagination never cease to amaze. There are so many areas where he ventured for the first time. What are the precedents for so many of his works?

Consider the curious *Piano Concerto* and its subsequent adaptation for 2 pianos; his

penchant for unusual instruments and combinations - some very slight; the *Romance for Harmonica*; what are the precedents for that piece? Larry Adler kept sending it back to VW asking him to re-write passages until in exasperation, VW eventually told Adler that if he complained any more about the piece he would rescore it all for bass tuba. Perhaps that is the origin of the *Tuba Concerto*, another unfashionable solo instrument. Consider the idea of viola solo with wordless chorus in *Flos Campi*. Remember his use of the saxophone and the flügelhorn in the symphony orchestra. There is music for every conceivable occasion - from a friend's wedding to a coronation.

Last year at this time we were fortunate enough to be able to re-appraise the operas; think of the range of subject, of emotion and imagination which these pieces cover when there was little English opera tradition for him to follow. At this point I would pay tribute to our Chairman who, with his indefatigable drive and enthusiasm was responsible for bringing those opera performances into being last year. The recent recording of the *Death of Tintagiles* was his idea and soon we will all be able to hear *The Pilgrim's Pavement*.

We have heard his music for the *Charterhouse Masque*, but there were other

Masques and Pageants, now mostly forgotten. How many main-stream composers would agree to edit a hymn book or a carol book? VW did both with great authority and distinction. Is there any medium for which he did not write? What was left untapped? William Cole said to VW "There is one thing you haven't written, and that is an Anglican chant." Needless to say, a chant soon appeared for Psalm 67. VW was very much a man of his time and the complete all-round composer as Bach had been. He also shared Bach's immense practicality for adapting and arranging.

I know that today I am addressing the cognoscenti but nevertheless there may be something of VW that you are still waiting to hear for the first time. My music teacher at school would ask me "Do you know such a piece of music?" and if I said "No" he would tell me how lucky I was that I still had that piece of music to discover for the first time. VW was always venturing into the unknown and I would encourage you to do the same.

There are times when perhaps a composer's music should be left undiscovered. One such piece which served its purpose well at the time was written for the wedding of Barbara Gordon Clark. Using the initials of her name VW wrote a *Passacaglia* for the organ. This is a fun piece, and very

personal and the dedicatee would have been highly honoured, but nobody would pretend that it is great organ music, and it is probably best left undisturbed.

At the beginning of this century it took Schönberg ten years to formulate a new style of composition - Serialism, and since then we have been through all manner of *avant-garde* fashions. I use the word fashions advisedly because that is precisely what they are, and they rapidly change. But we all know anything which has real quality and value will always last and must be preserved.

So, one hundred years ago, today, and in one hundred years time we ask the same question - what next? The answer is still Toward the Unknown Region. With all art forms, creative artists will continue to use the past as their inspiration for the future. VW set those final words of the poem in a manner which is full of confidence and optimism. That is what we must carry into the next century.

*Robin Wells*

# 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:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 2.00 p.m. | Tea at Charterhouse School.   |
| 2.30 p.m. | AGM commences.  |
| 3.45 p.m. | 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> |
| 5 p.m.    | Concluding remarks and refreshments.  |
| 5.30 p.m. | 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, are enclosed with this Journal.

# WHERE SHELLED ROADS PART: RVW, BRITTEN AND THE GREAT WAR

Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony* is still one of his least known major works, and it's a matter for wonder how many of the people who do hear it are aware of its true nature: "War-time music", as the composer himself wrote in 1938. Certainly, even musicians and critics were not aware of this for many years. The word "Pastoral" didn't help; there must have been at least an element of irony in the use of this word. Ursula Vaughan Williams and Michael Kennedy, in their important books of 1964, emphasised the work's battlefield origin, Kennedy indeed referring to it as a war requiem. Thus after forty years vital facts began to be generally available for the greater appreciation of this great work.

In attempting to explore the war-time nature of this music I shall compare and contrast part of it with a detail from Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. Both composers were approaching fifty when they completed these works forty years apart, Britten with most of his best music well behind him, VW with his full flowering well ahead. How different their careers were, and in the twenty-five years and more that their composing lives overlapped there was mutual musical antipathy. They inhabited different musical spheres, for the most part but there are occasional points of contact where reasonable comparison could be made: their late Blake song cycles, for example, the piano concertos, *Hodie/Spring Symphony*. Rather than make the obvious comparison of *Dona Nobis Pacem* with *War Requiem* (and not altogether to RVW's disadvantage) this little study will focus on the bugle call in the second movement of the *Pastoral* and Britten's setting of Wilfred Owen's poem, "Bugles sang...", in the *Dies Irae* of *War Requiem*.

Neither composer uses an actual bugle, thus freeing the music from literal representation and broadening and deepening its expressiveness, but bugle calls are centrally important for both composers, as inspiration and as reference points. Motifs from the bugle calls are used well before and after the appearances of the bugles in both works: the bugle music is pervasive.

The second movement, *lento moderato*, of *A Pastoral Symphony* has at its heart a cadenza for natural trumpet that represents – or represents – the bugle call, including a repeated wrong note, that VW heard being practised in the evenings of June 1916 when he rode in the RAMC ambulance to the battlefield. During the cadenza the trumpet alludes to this, repeating many times the same interval of a falling minor third: B $\flat$  – G. This interval is the basis of the motif – a

falling minor third that usually consists of a dotted crotchet slurred to a quaver – that both unifies and intensifies the whole second movement.

In the several minutes music of the second movement leading up to the trumpet cadenza this motif is heard in several guises: in the horn solo at the start, on the first and second violins, on unison oboe and cor anglais, on solo viola: an unassertive, plaintive sound that gradually impresses itself through repetition in otherwise unemphatic meandering music. Eventually the strings, always hushed, become even quieter (*ppp*), and the only other instruments playing suddenly stop: the moment has arrived to which everything seems to have been leading: the natural (valveless) trumpet cadenza.

It lasts for over a minute, eleven bursts of notes, of varying overall length, usually ending with rising, drawn-out notes in the fashion of military bugle-playing. The falling minor third is incorporated seven times. At the end of the last phrase the trumpet solo rises to a final sustained double forte high G, and then the whole orchestra (for the first time in the symphony) crashes in: the twilight elegy has become a protest meeting.

But soon the wind instruments fade away, leaving the violins to repeat the motif, much as they did very early in the movement, only this time more urgently and over even more sombre notes on the lower strings. This is the most poignant moment: all the reiterations of the motif have become a plangency that breaks the heart... Well not quite: a clarinet sings consolingly and gives a brighter tone to the motif.

The strings regain their tranquillity and meander on with the wind instruments till there is another hush... And two solo melodies are played simultaneously but separately: a natural horn plays the trumpet cadenza against a clarinet tune that closely resembles the opening horn solo (at the start of the movement) with its use of the motif. However, there is no harmonic counterpoint between the clarinet and valveless horn: each is an isolated voice. Sometimes the clarinet seems to be giving the horn a spiritual lift, but these concurrent solos are disturbing, too. At the end of the solos the pianissimo strings stop; they start again on an ascending theme of emptiness (it prefigures the *Epilogue* of the *Sixth Symphony*). After four bars, three bars from the end of the movement, they rise to a very high A, far above the stave, to repeat the motif; rest; then give the last rendition (in

this movement) of the motif, on sorrowful, long drawn out notes, A to F, *pppp*.

This restrained music is taut with thoughts that lie too deep for tears. It is a wordless pastoral elegy (of Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Arnold's *Thyrsis*), and though the landscape where it was conceived was in northern France, it came from the heart of an Englishman: those deep thoughts are "as deep as England" (Ted Hughes). Though they must remain implicit, those thoughts are also universal: the still, sad music of humanity.

Whereas Vaughan Williams is reserved and uses camouflage, Britten in *War Requiem*, using Latin and English texts, is going for maximum emotive and even propaganda effect. Stravinsky evidently labelled *War Requiem* "Kleenex music"; if most of Stravinsky's post-1918 music is considered arid as it is, is not he one of the Great War's casualties? Vaughan Williams, after full engagement in the war, may have distanced himself from its violence (at least, until the *Fourth Symphony*), but not from all its emotion, as we have seen. Britten, however, wears his heart on his sleeve and creates a huge public expression of the pity of war, by way of violence and terror, with a backdrop of Divine Judgement and Eternity. Paradoxically, (Lord) Britten rather than Dr. Vaughan Williams was often the establishment composer; the *Pastoral* (and the *Fourth*) by a patriotic volunteer orderly and committed musical nationalist is largely private and entirely personal – and agnostic.

The text of "Bugles sang..." is not a single poem but an arrangement of fragments, made after Owen's death by Edmund Blunden:

Bugles sang, sadd'ning the evening air;  
And bugles answer'd, sorrowful to hear.  
Bugles sang, - Bugles sang.  
Voices of boys were by the river-side.  
Sleep mother'd them; and left the twilight sad.  
The shadow of the morrow weighed on men.  
Bugles sang.  
Voices of old despondency resigned,  
Bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.

(Owen used "Bugles sang..." only once; the words have been repeated three times for the performing version.)

Though all the fragments appear on the same page of MS, they do not seem to be parts of a single poem-in-the-making. They were used by Owen as a source for other,

finished, poems. There are at least two distinct ideas: (a) the trenches in the evening, worried soldiers grumbling before sleeping; (b) boys frolicking by a river, before an early bedtime and peaceful sleep. These two scenes presumably come together only in Owen's memory or imagination; Blunden's editing gives the impression of virtually a single scene, with boys and men juxtaposed, which even if it were not very unlikely would contradict the carefree happiness of the boys' day. Further, the sense of lines 8-9 is very awkward. The subject of the verb "slept" is "voices": plainly this is a first draft. But Britten's setting overrides these problems. He takes the liberty of repeating "Bugles sang..." three times as a refrain at several points, which itself pulls the disparate lines together, and the music masterfully exploits the sounds of the passage and unifies it: "Bugles sang... Bugles answer'd... Voices of boys... Voices of old despondency". Owen himself, in several of his poems, showed an acute interest in sound-effects: here Britten's aural imagination is responding to every opportunity, and the overall effect is of a single song - of innocence and experience, that recurring theme in his œuvre.

The "Bugles sang..." section of the *Dies Irae* begins with horns intoning the rising three-note phrase that is soon to accompany the refrain, "Bugles sang..." and to reappear sometimes falling throughout. (The same phrase has already been used in the brass fanfare at the very start of the *Dies Irae* and, mournfully, shortly before the start of this section: an effective unifying device.) The phrase on the horns is answered by a twittering flute (plus a harp), initiating the dialogue that is to be the basis of the whole section: horns (suggesting bugles, war, frightened soldiers); then flutes (carefree boys). Though the flutes contrast with the grave horns, the three-note phrase used on the horns and throughout the *Dies Irae* is cunningly incorporated into the mincing tune of the flutes: to the boys, ignorance is bliss, but one day they will be "wise".

The first words, "Bugles sang...", are introduced by horns and accompanied by flutes; "And bugles answered..." is followed by a new but complementary theme on horns. The original horn phrase twice introduces the verbal refrain. Now for the first time two flutes, lightly agitated, introduce "Voices of boys..." and sketch the background for the boys' playtime and bedtime. But after the first two words of "The shadow of the morrow", back come the horns in a dirge. The next sound-words are "Voices of old despondency", and here the horn accompaniment rises to a climax reinforced by strings; and after the second "morrow" ("Bowed by the shadow of the morrow...") the instruments and voice stop. Then the final word is sung: "...slept", and followed by the playful flutes, whose final note is drawn out diminuendo to the

conclusion of the section. The sleeping soldiers, it is suggested, may be re-experiencing innocence in what could be their last sleep of this earthly life.

And, as if the sleepers are already dead, the judgement music of *Dies Irae* returns with "Liber scriptus proferetur" - the book recording all the deeds of men: there's no escape, in this life or the next. Moreover, the next Owen poem, following "Salva me, fons pietatis" (Rescue me, fount of pity) is "Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death". It bursts brutally into the Latin pieties of the soprano and semi-chorus petitioning for suffering humanity: if the Judge is to show mercy, it is postponed indefinitely. I have continued my commentary beyond the "Bugles sang..." music in order to emphasise the context of Britten's setting of Owen's poems, and to bring out the irony and tension thus generated. The vivid and immediate poems need the *Requiem* for the cosmic reference such a grand scheme demands; the *Requiem*, in a largely agnostic world, where even religious faith is usually dilute, benefits, to many minds, from the verbal doubts expressed by Owen, the self-sacrificing, embittered former would-be priest.

This highly inventive, intensely felt music is essentially decorative, elaborating and enhancing both English and Latin texts, which have been combined with powerful and enlightening results. There is, though, in "Bugles sang..." a certain striving for effect; the music is mannered (always a risk in Britten's music - no wonder he hated being parodied), over-stretching the verbal material, partly in the effort to provide a chamber correlative to the gigantic orchestral *Dies Irae* music before and after it. Furthermore, is Britten an Ancient Mariner who has never been to sea? Vaughan Williams's reticent integrity in the *Pastoral* provides a telling comparison. I am reminded of A.E.F. Dickinson's comment on VW that he had "such experience of modern warfare as enabled him to handle the subject, artistically, without the often thin-skinned righteousness of those who have never fought" (essay in *The Music Masters*, Ed. Bacharach, 1954). Perhaps it would be unfair to apply this to Britten, but the comment is not altogether irrelevant, and it speaks worlds of the already significant and still very promising composer who, in his forty-second year, voluntarily broke off his career and served his country, mostly in a lowly position, till early 1919. The *Pastoral Symphony* is the work of one who not only feels but knows: there is drama, for those with ears to hear, but no melodrama.

It may be objected that I am not comparing like with like: Britten is responding to texts to produce a choral work commissioned for the resurrected Coventry Cathedral, while Vaughan Williams is free. Even the

*Pastoral's* fourth-movement vocalise passages - which tantalisingly echo the "bugle" cadenzas - seem to stress that the subject is beyond words, for they employ the human voice yet deny it intelligible utterance. Stephen Banfield, in his excellent recent book on Finzi (p. 187), certainly compares like with like: Finzi's and Britten's settings of Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush*. Britten, he writes, has produced "a performance for tenor and piano who represent the birds", whereas Finzi's long piano introduction creates a landscape, and his baritone voices the thoughts of a human observer. Quite. Banfield does not evaluate these songs; my point here is that the sober and direct setting of Finzi, which puts on no show, is the better song, and it allows the poem's tacit philosophy to come through.

Or again, for comparison with a war poem, the pre-1914 Housman poem, *The lads in their hundreds...* is intensely moving in its setting by Butterworth: the simple tune that parallels the anapaests of the verses has a subtle ironic lightness that renders the words overwhelmingly poignant. Housman never experienced combat, nor does he attempt to depict it. Had he done so he could not have written so subtly; yet what he did write, in Butterworth's gently devastating setting, is no less affecting than any of Britten's settings of Owen. Housman/Butterworth would not, of course, fit into the grand drama of *War Requiem*. The problem of fitting the microcosm into the macrocosm was self-imposed by Britten, and if he did not always provide a musical solution - if "Bugles sang..." is (a pun too far?) a little overblown - we can nevertheless be grateful for a flawed masterpiece.

How Butterworth would have set war poetry had he survived we cannot tell, but we do know that the post-war *Pastoral Symphony* of his friend has a poise similar to that of the spare *The lads in their hundreds...* and though scored for a large orchestra it is devoid of grandiose gestures. In its "massive quietness" (Tovey) it has a curiously eighteenth-century, almost Mozartian control (if we except the *pesante* third movement) that enables it with every nuance to vary emotion and mood (the intemperate *tutti* outburst after the natural trumpet cadenza in the second movement is in this context almost as deafening as it is surprising). Tchaikovsky, Mahler, even Britten, by comparison, can seem at times, for all their general refinement, bombastic! And this war-time music that transcends war seems to draw sustenance from

"... sweet wells

Even from wells we sank too deep for war,  
Even the sweetest wells that ever were,"  
(to adopt lines that Britten used from an early draft of Owen's "Strange Meeting" to follow the *Libera me* of *War Requiem*). The

(continued on page 23)



# Henry Steggles on VW in the Great War

Private Henry Steggles was a great friend of VW during the war, and afterwards. He had a great sense of humour which appealed to Vaughan Williams. His comments on VW in the Great War first appeared in the *RCM Magazine* of 1959.

*From Henry T Steggles:*

RVW of Charterhouse and Cambridge, myself of L.C.C. Old Kent Road School. What a contrast, old enough in years to be my father, yet young enough in heart to be a comrade. The gap in our social standards was terrific, but I was always at ease in his company, in fact the great guiding influence he had upon me is with me to this day. He used to say I was much better educated than he was because I could use tools and do things that mattered. I replied, "Yes but you can read Latin, I cannot." His terse reply was, "Latin's a dead language anyway." But then that was typical of this great hearted man.

I joined the R.A.M.C. on August 14, 1914, and Dr. RVW soon after, but I think it was when we moved to Dorking that I first began my career with him. I am not sure how, except that he was very ungainly in khaki and was taunted by some of the wags. I gradually found myself helping him when in billets, with his equipment, for his cap was never straight, even when "chinstraps will be worn"; if it was, his cap badge was all askew, his puttees were his nightmare and so I believe I lent a hand to ensure that he went on parade to quote his own words "in a correct and soldier-like manner," for no one knew who he was and I certainly did not.

"Bob" as I knew him, for I couldn't call him Williams and RVW seemed impertinent, and Bob it has been up to his death, became intrigued with my mouth organ playing, especially the improvised notes, for it was the old fashioned "suck, blow" instrument not the modern type of harmonica used by virtuosos to-day.

A very fit man really, apart from his flat feet, and until we were issued with ambulances, for he was appointed wagon orderly, he would march miles with the rest of us. He slouched rather than marched and suffered a lot no doubt, but he never complained. I can see him now in my mind's eye his huge frame bent forward, his pack perched on his back and wobbling as he marched either to singing or mouth organ, no mean effort for a man of 42 years

of age. He enjoyed life and on one occasion the unit went to church parade, Bob played the organ, I pumped for him. The tune? A popular song of those days, *Make your mind up Maggie McKenzie* duly disguised, as the troops moved reverently to their seats.

He used to say he would compose the real songs soldiers sang after the war, but he was afraid no one would publish them.

Most army routine was deadly to him: saying it was soul destroying. Stretcher drill was his *Bête Noire* for he could never see any sense in it, neither could anyone else for that matter, except those who made the drill up. Of the Regimental March Past, "Her sweet smile haunts me still," he said they gave all the good tunes to the army and only having this sentimental humbug left gave it to the R.A.M.C.



*Henry Steggles and RVW*

Make no mistake and do not underrate him, he took his turn and more than his turn nobly and unflinching in all the army had to offer in those days, from the lowest forms of fatigue duties, up to transport of wounded from the front line, and was all for the prosecution of the war.

Even to swearing, he said one day to me, full of envy, "Do you know, Wardy Ho Ho (a transport driver) swore right off without repeating himself for five minutes." Bob's efforts in this direction were always the same "Damn, Blast, Hell, Bloody" said in that order, when he was really annoyed such as when someone knocked his mug (shaving) over when in tents, or when smoking he would take some flake tobacco and ram it into his pipe, without rubbing it between his hands, and then would come his

favourite swear, as his matches went trying to light a too tightly packed pipe.

He formed a choir from the Field Ambulance and we were introduced to *Comrades' song of Hope, Feasting I watch*, etc.; great fun this, and for the first time in my life I learnt the beauty of Christmas Carols which I'd never heard before.

A billet at Bishops Stortford comes to my mind for we were with a really musical family. Bob played the piano or viola, sometimes the daughter joined at the piano, our host played the viola, a son a clarinet and another a trumpet. I arranged what must have been an early jazz drummer's outfit of flower pots, fireirons and a borrowed drum from the band. It was here that I learnt the beauty of Morris and Country Dance tunes from RVW. What happy times they were, especially when the great man accompanied me as I sang *When father papered the parlour* which he loved and we performed together in France at Divisional Concerts, and since that time at reunions. Pte. Steggles accompanied by Pte. Vaughan Williams!

The trenches held no terrors for him. On the contrary, he was thrilled one day when he was allowed a peep at the German front line trenches. He had no knowledge of fear, at times I was anxious because of this.

He could not bear cruelty to animals. On one occasion in France near the Somme he said I was to taste *pâté de foie gras* and then he would tell me how it was made. I did, and haven't touched it since. On one occasion he went and straffed a native in French for alleged ill treatment of a donkey.

He was more at peace with himself in the fighting areas, for we were getting on with the war, not forming fours in squad drill, and what was more important it didn't matter quite so much about dress for he was on the motor ambulances between the trenches and our dressing station.

"Barns infested, rats for the use of," was his favourite description of our billets, in fact he loved the army method of cataloguing and in particular a medical pannier which contained among others, the item "Tapes, pieces of, two" which he always quoted.

I don't think I ever remember him reporting sick and apart from a perpetual snuffle his health was excellent.

Salonica brought a change of scenery and activity or inactivity, for we were stationed near Mt. Olympus and lived in "bivvies". In the confined space of a "bivvy" a little less than the area of a double bed, many times did Bob use his terrible swearing formula. We had a ground-sheet and blanket a piece and all our worldly goods included razor, comb, lather brush, also Isaiah and Jeremiah. I must explain these, for it was the name given by RVW to two empty pineapple tins in which we lit charcoal and after whirling them round and round like the old fashioned winter warmer we rushed them into the "bivvy" and sealed up any air intakes we could find. I think we slept more from our rum ration plus carbon monoxide from Isaiah and Jeremiah than fatigue. One lost everything in these confined spaces, but Bob always gave up the chase with a grunt saying, "Find it in the morning" and the great man slept.

He introduced me to Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, at this time and I still have the book.

It was in the shadow of Mt. Olympus that RVW conducted our Christmas carols for what was to be the last time, in 1916. The black velvet of the night, the moon lighting up part of Mt. Olympus, we sang all the carols out in the open, a treasured memory.

We were out one evening in a village in the Balkans when we heard singing coming from a shop, which looked like an old English blacksmith's. As we entered the gloom, guitar music was heard and some evil-looking armed Greeks were dancing. RVW was quite interested for he immediately bought more wine and wrote down the tune as they danced, much to my amazement.

I cannot let one or two personal events pass without recording as tribute to this great man. He advised me to become a Commercial Traveller after the war, as I had the priceless knack of getting on with people he said. I asked if I should take a special course of salesmanship. His reply was short and typical: "No Harry, just be yourself." I am now in my fiftieth year with the G.E.C and many of those 50 years as a Commercial Traveller.

Another incident comes to mind. It was a filthy night in the Balkans. We both sat with our knees drawn up in the "bivvy" looking at a guttering candle, water creeping in, plus snakes, scorpions and centipedes. A few shells were sailing over which thrilled Bob, a typical Bainsfather "Better 'ole" scene; when Bob suddenly said: "Harry when this war ends we will (a) dine at Simpsons on saddle of mutton, (b) see *Carmen*."

It was many years after the war when a postcard arrived saying we will (a) dine at

Simpsons, (b) see *Carmen*. I had forgotten all about it but RV never! What a night it was, my first introduction to opera. I had gone to a lot of trouble to get myself up in the very best clothes I had fearing almost lest my shoes got dirty before I met Bob in civvy street. I duly waited outside Simpsons in the Strand for the arrival of the great man, feeling very fluttery. He suddenly loomed up with the old familiar gait I knew so well, I trembled lest he was wearing a dinner suit for I hadn't such a thing in those days, but no, he wore a huge, very old and comfortable looking Norfolk suit, complete with a large straw hat such as one would wear in the garden and brown with age.

My fears were that we would not be dressed well enough for admission to this select restaurant. But with an outstretched hand, a "my dear Harry" and a pat on the shoulder, in we went. To my amazement the waiters bowed to him and even dusted the seat where he sat, ignoring me completely. I then had my first lesson in how to handle waiters, with saddle of mutton, red currant jelly, Port and Stilton, for Bob was in complete command. It also left a lasting impression in my mind that a man with the terrific personality of RVW could wear anything he chose and command respect.

RVW didn't mind what he did so long as we got on with the war. But Salonica was too dilatory for him. He went on mosquito squad work which consisted of filling in puddles to prevent mosquitoes breeding; he thought this useful in an abstract way. But

what caused him the most anguish was to sit down and wash red bricks, which were laid on the ground to form a red cross; as protection from German planes; he swore one day, saying "I will do anything to contribute to the war, but this I will *not* do." I had never seen him so annoyed.

He wrote home I believe a ? Dorian music scale which gave a clue to his whereabouts, this was quickly followed by a Commission in the Royal Artillery.

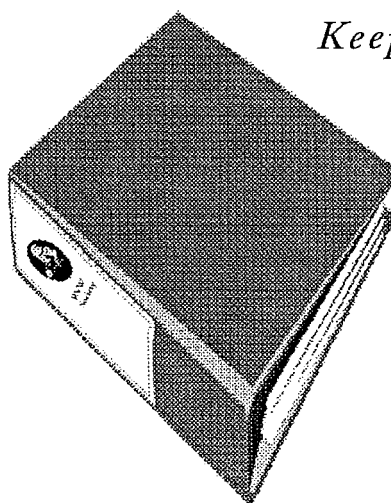
To me it was a bitter blow for we moved to Egypt and he always regretted it. It was no disrespect to our officers when he said good bye to them using the words, and standing very stiffly to attention: "My regret at leaving is that I shall cease to be a man and become an officer," a last jab at the military term "officers and men".

To me he was the greatest human being I've ever known. He taught me the meaning of *noblesse oblige* and many other things, the love of music, although I cannot play an instrument, literature, Shakespeare in particular, Burns, etc. He has not died in so far as I am concerned!

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### Three Choirs Festival

You may recall that last year I complained concerning the absence of RVW music in the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival programme and that ours appeared to be the only society which had not arranged some sort of meeting or reception.

This year was very different. I was thrilled to be part of such a well-attended lecture (the presence of so many young people was especially encouraging) and to meet fellow enthusiasts.

My only regret is that none of the Society's officers was introduced to us. It would have been a splendid opportunity for us to thank you all.

**Stephen Friar**  
**Dorset**

(See Simon Coombs' notes on this lecture on page 27)

### Diversity

I read with interest the reader's letter which expressed the view that not all RVW's work was good. I wasn't quite sure whether it was disappointment or surprise he was expressing. Like any creative artist to achieve the unachievable and then sustain it is their reason for being. The composer Neilson longed to have a simple job so his brain could gain some respite from the torture of his compulsive need to be creative. Inevitably at some time every artist will fail short of the exacting standards that they set for themselves and it doesn't matter who they are. Mozart, Beethoven and even Bach are not exempt from criticism nor was Leonardo, Vermeer or Rembrandt and why should Vaughan Williams be any different?

Most people are drawn to a composer by something they perceive to be unique to that composer. In the case of RVW, many are drawn by the rapturous melodies, the 'achingly beautiful' tunes from *Dives*, *Job*, *Tallis* and *The Serenade*. They then expect more of the same. It often puts me in mind of the time of the Beatles when fans bought their records in advance without hearing them first! So it often then comes as a shock when the next piece isn't at all what they expected. Similarly with RVW; for many it often comes as a shock to hear *Sancta Civitas*, or the *4th Symphony* or the *Riders to the Sea*. For me it shows his range and diversity as a composer. Someone who could never be accused of complacency and as someone whose creative power never waned even as it's supposed to in old age.

I for one am grateful for the diversity of his output. Some works are sketches for others so why expect them to be masterpieces? It is fascinating to hear echoes of one work in another. Sometimes I have the need to 'refresh my palette' and listen to the simpler works. His simple piano teaching works I delight in listening to and his songs. I am fortunate in that there is only one work I just cannot cope with. With all due respect to Larry Adler, I cannot abide the sound of the harmonica. Like RVW's 'allergy' to the harpsichord I have a similar one to the harmonica played in that way. Now if it was Sonny Boy Williamson playing then that would be a different matter!

**Surrey**

### Priory Records

This is probably too late for the June *RVW Society Journal*, but I heard yesterday from Priory Records that their CD of VW's *Village Service* is now available. The number is Priory PRCD 664 (*Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis*, Vol. 20). It is performed by the choir of Keble College, Oxford (not St George's Windsor, as I reported previously, & as it appeared in the last *Journal*). It is coupled with works by Willan, Wood, Howells, Arvo Pärt, Cook, & Harwood.

Incidentally, starting in 2000, Priory are undertaking a complete recording of the *New English Hymnal* (in chronological order). This contains 40 pieces with RVW associations (i.e. 'included with permission of RVW') as it says in the preface to *NEH*. Of these, there are no fewer than 17 works which were *not* included in the recently released CDs by Conifer & Carlton!

**M Gainsford**  
**Leics.**

### Film on VW

I thought your members might like to know that I have all but completed the first draft of a screenplay on Ralph, and have begun the second. I am hoping to return to London to read it through with Ursula, who very warmly invited me back to her home. I've worked on it for several years.

I have also received two phone calls and a letter from Mr. John Schlesinger, the British/American movie director and I spoke at length with him on the 'phone regarding his interest in reading the screenplay, and possibly directing it. Ursula knows him well she says, as she was "his sister", I take it in a manner of speaking as well as "mother for the Finzi boys".

**Michael Haddon**  
**California**

profound pastoral quality of this symphony is no mere escape route but a natural and cultural resource "too deep for war".

I will conclude with an intriguing remark made by a very thoughtful critic, Oliver Neighbour.

In "Reconciliation", the third movement of *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Whitman's poem anticipates the theme of Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting", which Britten included in his *War Requiem* just before the *In paradisum*. Britten had always disliked Vaughan Williams's music, but when the older composer died he wrote movingly of their shared beliefs (Kennedy, *Works*, p. 346). That the *In paradisum* may be felt, perhaps uniquely in Britten's mature music, to carry a suggestion of Vaughan Williams about it may be due to one of those (often short-lived) reconciliations that death is apt to induce in the mind of the survivor.

(p. 221 (footnote) *Vaughan Williams Studies*, Ed. Frogley, C.U.P., 1996)

I would like to suggest a parallel between part of *A Pastoral Symphony* and the glorious serenity of the *In paradisum* / "Let us sleep now" music near the end of *War Requiem*. The part I have in mind is the sostenuto for full orchestra at the climax of the fourth movement.

**Roger Juneau**  
**Repton, Derbyshire**

# Concert Reviews

## *Hugh the Drover*

Vaughan Williams: *Hugh the Drover*  
Cambridge Arts Theatre:  
Saturday 14 August, 1999

English Touring Opera's 1999 Summer School amply demonstrated how much can be achieved by a mere week's hard work, dedication and amateur enthusiasm under experienced professional guidance at the Cambridge Arts Theatre on August 15. Their week's course culminated in a lively, colourful and theatrically effective performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams's first opera *Hugh the Drover*, before an enthusiastic capacity audience that included the composer's widow.

The opera was convincingly directed by James Robert Carson, choreographed by Andrew George and stage-managed by Emma Bullas; the musical direction was in the highly capable hands of Mark Shanahan and his 'orchestra' – pianist/répétiteur Nicholas Bosworth. Assisting them, they had Atlanta Duffy, whose ingenious, no-nonsense designs combined with Giuseppe de Lorio's economical but imaginative stage-lighting to provide a musical and theatrical experience that was both spirited and impressive.

It is right to mention the professionals first, as it was their expertise, tact and skill that licked the performance so effectively into shape. The production style was throughout simple but by no means cheese-paring: faithful to the composer and the work and utterly devoid of those gimmicky directorial ego-trips that pass for originality when copious – perhaps extravagantly abundant – funds are available. It was by no means 'penny-plain' however; and the colour and zest of the show were much more than just tuppence coloured. Stage movement on the part of the chorus was well-devised and commendably disciplined, lighting and costumes (save perhaps for a somewhat grotesque and ill-fitting uniform for the heroine's prosaic and tediously respectable father) modest but effective. The principals, Anna-Clare Monk as the feisty heroine Mary, Howard Kirk in the title role and Simon Thorpe as the ill-bred baddie John the Butcher, all brought plenty of character to their parts.

The amateur chorus and minor-part soloists set about their task with a will and with splendid dedication. In *Hugh*, the chorus has a great deal to do. They are required to perform far more effective and interesting music than is the usual lot of operatic

choruses save in a mammoth spectacular such as *Aida*; and the ETO Summer School students had devoted both zeal and conviction to mastering their moves and their music. Clearly, Mr. Carson and his colleagues can teach as well as do.

The real hero of the evening was alas unable to be present, for he died over forty years ago. Possibly the greatest composer ever to be trained at Cambridge, Vaughan Williams knew what he wanted when he composed *Hugh*. Compared with his later stage works, the action of the piece may be criticised on dramatic grounds, as may his failure to create a genuinely sinister rather than a merely boorishly hearty baddie, but after all, not even Mozart, Wagner or Verdi hit the bull all the time in their earliest operas. What mattered was that Vaughan Williams scored several bulls despite the odd inner or near miss. The sheer exuberance of his splendid blend of Italianate lyricism and forthright English folk-song solidity came across well. Vaughan Williams's musical style expanded considerably after he had composed *Hugh*, but it remains one of the first-fruits of his maturity: exhilarating, stageworthy and above all full of robust energy.

James Day  
Cambridge

## *Sixth Symphony at Birmingham*

On January 28th I attended a performance of VW's *Sixth Symphony*, given by the CBSO under their new conductor Sakari Oramo, at Symphony Hall in Birmingham.

Although the days are now, thankfully, long gone when RVW symphonies were the exclusive field of British conductors, I first came to VW's music when this was so, and was a little apprehensive as to how a Finnish conductor would handle this work. I need not have worried.

The programme was such that the orchestra was augmented as one work succeeded its predecessor. The strings alone opened with a lively account of Bartok's *Divertimento*. Then followed Mozart's K 491 *Piano Concerto*, with Lars Vogt as soloist. This, the only concerto that Mozart wrote in a minor key, came across as a very subdued work. Quite frankly, it took me by surprise. I should have done my homework. Although of course I have heard all Mozart's Piano Concertos, there are so many of them that I find it difficult to remember which is which. I'd expected something much more light hearted.

After the interval came the Vaughan

Williams, the orchestra augmented by a saxophone (believe doubling bass clarinet) and three percussionists. But just the one harp.

From the first bar it was clear that we were in for a treat. Oramo tore into it with great gusto. The second movement, with its insistent 'two hot sausages' rhythm, was full of menace. The third was almost manic, with its jazzy cross rhythms and wailing sax. As this sank into a tired silence we were into the really testing part of the symphony. Oramo achieved a performance of which, I am sure, the composer would have approved, bearing in mind his recorded comments after Boult's 1953 recording. A true *pianissimo* was achieved by the strings, if at one point the brass seemed a little too loud. But it is, I would imagine, as good as impossible for brass instruments to reach a string *pianissimo*.

The strings have a major role in this movement, and some measure of how softly they played was well (if rather disconcertingly) demonstrated during this performance. I could clearly hear, over the music, the rumbling stomach of a man in the audience sitting about seven seats away!

The movement and the work faded into silence - it really was impossible to tell when it had ended without watching the conductor. After a moment or two's pause, the audience broke into rapturous applause, with at least three curtain calls for the orchestra and conductor.

Oramo had passed the test.

Michael Gainsford  
Burbage, Leics.

## *Serenade for Music in NYC*

Just four weeks after a flawless version, in the same hall, of *The Lark Ascending*, the Manhattan School of Music saw a performance of the *Serenade to Music*, although this time the orchestra was the MSM Philharmonia (the school has several orchestras), augmented by the Barnard/Columbia Chorus. (Beforehand I had occasion to commend the school's regular conductor, Glen Barton Cortese, for programming "so much Vaughan Williams": performances of RVW's music are still so rare here that two seems a lot.) Though this gorgeous piece of music shone through, the playing seemed perfunctory, which was all the more disappointing in view of Maestro Cortese's mention, in his always informative programme notes, of how much Rachmaninov (who'd just played his *Second Concerto*) was moved by the piece at its first performance. A better performance was



given Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloë* (*Suites 1 & 2*), employing the afore-mentioned chorus. Rounding out the programme was an occasionally lovely but overlong piece for soprano (Christina Arethas) and orchestra, *La Luce Eterna*, by New York composer Francis Thorne, who more than 20 years ago co-founded the American Composers Orchestra with Dennis Russell Davies.

**Martin Mitchell**  
New York

### More VW in New York

Thank heavens for the America's younger generation. While RVW seems to go ignored here by the major orchestras — at least by those that have recently performed in New York — it was a rare privilege for me recently to hear two RVW works on two successive evenings in two of the three local music schools, Manhattan and Juilliard (Mannes is the third). On Friday, May 21, Maestro Glen Barton Cortese and the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, who have recently done two other RVW pieces, gave a respectable performance of the *Tallis Fantasia* on a program also consisting of a brief cello concerto written in honour of Eleanor Roosevelt (50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by a Chinese woman, Chen Yi (who studied with English composer Alexander Goehr), along with Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*.

The next evening, the Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra, made up primarily of teenagers, gave a very good performance, under Bulgarian-born conductor and Juilliard teacher Rossen Milanov, of *A London Symphony*. This was a special treat because none of RVW's symphonies, even the *London*, are played here with any frequency. (A performance of the *London*, under André Previn, was scheduled at Juilliard five years ago but was cancelled when Previn took ill.) Maestro Milanov gave the work all he had, and the young orchestra responded with great energy and enthusiasm to produce a splendid performance that was thrilling even though it could perhaps have been a little tighter. Also on the programme was *Music for Orchestra* by Korean-born local high-school student Solbong King and a truly memorable performance of the Elgar *Cello Concerto* by the obviously gifted 18-year-old Catlin Sullivan, who appears to be another Jacqueline Du Pré in the making.

**Martin Mitchell**  
New York

### English Prom

Forty years ago, it was the fashion to devote a whole promenade concert to the music of one composer. Come to think of it, forty years ago all nine of RVW's symphonies were played during the season as a memorial tribute.

By 1999, it has become unusual to hear a concert of music of a single country. Thus it was a treat to listen to an all-English programme, including RVW's *Ninth Symphony*, which was receiving only its fourth performance at the proms. What a remarkable work it is!

The concert opened with Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*. Leonard Slatkin is generally excellent in English repertoire but this rendition owed a little too much to "brio" and sounded scrappy in places. There were no complaints, however, about Walton's *Violin Concerto*, elegantly played by Joshua Bell, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in close attendance. In the sixty years since its first performance, by its dedicatee, Jascha Heifetz, this *Concerto* has grown in stature and public appreciation and this Albert Hall audience gave it a warm reception.

After the interval, we had a chance to hear a rare, late work by Britten, *Phædra* was first performed by Janet Baker at Britten's last Aldeburgh Festival in 1976 and received its only previous prom hearing the following year. It is a rich, dramatic piece and Louise Winter gave it a strong performance, marred only by some uncertain diction at times. Nevertheless, it whetted the appetite to hear her Judith in *Bluebeard's Castle* or her Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*.

The concert ended with RVW's *Ninth Symphony*, which some critics have dismissed as an unworthy culmination. On this hearing, however, it emerged as powerful, moving and worthy to stand as the summation of our country's finest symphonic sequence. Of course, it lacks the big tunes of earlier works, but the orchestration is masterly and the construction taut, and the BBC SO played it as if they were glad to get back to it after 39 years.

This concert was sold out, helped by a good attendance from Society members. More all-English programmes, please Mr. Kenyon!

**Simon Coombs**

Please see Crossword on back page

### RVW Crossword No. 2

### ANSWERS

1. Epithalamion, 5. Sky, 6. Cuckoo, 10. England, 11. Jean, 15. Year, 16. Ballade, 17. Towers, 19. Cat, 20. Percy Dearmer, 1. Easter Hymn, 2. Ivy, 3. Hic, 4. Imogen, 7. Coda, 8. Manchester, 9. Ale, 12. Carter, 13. Oboe, 14. Old, 18. Sea, 19. Cam.

# Meet the Trustees – Andrew Neill

Andrew Neill has been a Trade Finance consultant for over 28 years and now represents a number of overseas companies in London. Besides music, his other interests are cricket, history, photography, hill walking and his family. He has two daughters; Anna who plays the violin and Sally who plays the piano. His wife, Victoria, is a physiotherapist.

Andrew has a wide interest in music (Hildegard of Bingen to Maxwell Davis), and is involved in a number of British musical societies, including The British Music Society, The Richard Strauss (of which he was a founder member), The Barbirolli, RVW and Elgar. He joined the latter in 1967 after a visit to the composer's birthplace and became secretary in 1978, a post he held for 6 years. He worked in Sydney for 2½ years in the mid 1980s, during which time he broadcast extensively on Elgar's music. Andrew was elected to the Chairmanship of the Society in 1992.

Although Andrew remains frustrated at the universal lack of confidence British concert promoters have in the music of their country, he finds himself returning more and more to his musical foundation, the music of Bach and Mozart, as he becomes older.



Andrew Neill

# Desmond Hawkins – An Appreciation

From the reproduction of his article *Thomas Hardy & the BBC (RVWS Journal No. 15)* members will have noted the passing of Dr. Desmond Hawkins at his home at Blandford, Dorset on 6.5.99.

At our last conversation in February, Dr. Hawkins showed great interest in this edition; sadly he will not have seen his reproduced article, and did not see even in draft my *Thomas Hardy & religion* in which he generously allowed me to edit his verbal contribution.

He may previously have seen Alain Frogley's compelling thesis on the relationship between *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and VW's *9th Symphony*.

Desmond Hawkins had a long career, distinguished in each of its varied parts: his early years in literary criticism and publication associated him with the work of D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Dylan Thomas, from this it might wrongly be assumed that all he ever wanted to do was to write, his own facility in this field was remarkable.

Later, he joined the BBC and undertook the radio dramatisation of most of the major Hardy novels, (see *RVWSJ No. 3*). His writings continued to promote Hardy and Wessex, both in its literature and landscapes

with such books as *Hardy's Wessex*, *Cranborne Chase* and *Avalon & Sedgemoor*.

In the first of these, Desmond demonstrated his thoughtfulness and depth of understanding in reviewing the concept of Wessex created by Hardy: "...It gained strength and variety from the writings of Richard Jefferies and R. D. Blackmore, the archæology of Pitt-Rivers, the folk song collections of Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams, the adopted literary talents of W. H. Hudson and Edward Thomas..."

As controller BBC South & West, Desmond Hawkins set up the BBC Natural History Unit from which developed the now international industry in wildlife and natural history programmes with their world-wide promotion of conservation and ecology. This was recognised by a lifetime achievement award to him shortly after his 90th birthday last year.

Obituaries are sad but apart from retrospective appreciation they can often ameliorate the loss with some good... I remember reading in the *Journal* of how the late Robin Ivison of this Society passed away after visiting a cricket match which he enjoyed.

Desmond was no less addicted to what he called 'the King of games', he had once seen Hobbs & Sutcliffe open for England, the memory of it never left him, he would have exchanged his whole career to have done the same. Our last conversation was about cricket in Dorset and, ironically, a promising player by the name of Hardy.

Despite his long and distinguished career Desmond Hawkins was a modest, thoughtful and kindly man whom it was gratifying to know; many of his books are out of print but readers who seek them out via libraries or second hand book sales will be likewise rewarded.

David Tolley



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# VAUGHAN WILLIAMS IN A NEW CENTURY

A conference to be held from 10.00am on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November 1999 until 4.45pm  
on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November 1999 at

The British Library Conference Centre, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB.

The keynote speaker will be Michael Kennedy and there will be a special concert at the Royal College of Music on the evening of 19<sup>th</sup> November which will include the first modern performance of Vaughan Williams's *Quintet in C minor* of 1903.

## Provisional list of speakers and titles:

Michael Kennedy	Keynote speech: Vaughan Williams - then and now
Stephen Banfield	Vaughan Williams and plain speaking
Philip Brett	'Williams the Headmaster and Britten the Promising New Boy in the National School of Composition'
Hugh Cobbe	Yrs VW: Vaughan Williams as a letter-writer
Stephen Connock	The Death of Innocence: Vaughan Williams and the First World War
Tim Day	Vaughan Williams and 'the greatest of all composers'
Jenny Doctor	VW and the BBC
Jochen Eisentraut	Vaughan Williams: National Music, Art Music and the Vernacular
Alain Frogley	<i>The Wasps</i> for WASPs: Vaughan Williams and American musical politics
Deborah Heckert	The composer as historian: Vaughan Williams, Tudor music, and the genre of masque
Guido Heldt	Dialectics of Development - Nature and Structure in <i>In the Fen Country</i>
Duncan Hinnells	A deeply 'political' composer? VW as leader and victim of cultural communities
Andrew Herbert	VW and Stratford
Eric Hung	National Hero or Self-Involved Zealot? Robert Falcon Scott in Film and Symphony
Julian Onderdonk	Folksongs and hymn tunes
Julian Rushton	The gritty lyricism of the <i>Fourth Symphony</i>
Roger Savage	<i>The Scholar Gipsy</i> : An Unwritten Opera
Eric Saylor	The nature of spirit: subtexts in the <i>Pastoral Symphony</i>
Malcolm Taylor	VW and the EFDSS

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## The Three Choirs Lecture

The Society organised a lecture as part of the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester, during August this year. Splendidly chaired by Ron Bleach, one of our trustees, and attended by about 60 members and future members (?), the talk was given by Lewis Foreman, one of our leading experts on English music and musicians.

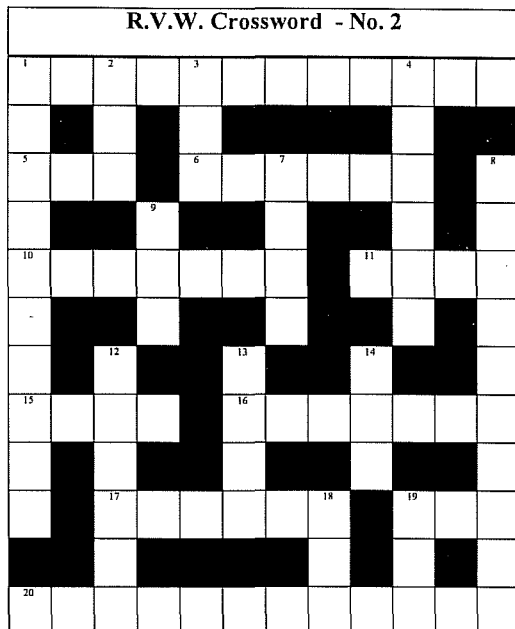
His title was "Bach, Bunyan and Uncle Ralph". The talk was copiously illustrated with recordings of RVW conducting his own music, which left open the question of whether the generally brisk tempi were the product of the recording imperatives of the '78 era, or the natural preference of the composer.

The audience were frequently amused, endlessly fascinated, and, after 90 minutes, left wanting more. We look forward to Hereford next year!

Simon Coombs

*For details on how to register for the conference,  
please see leaflet enclosed with this Journal.*

# R.V.W. Crossword - No. 2



## ACROSS

1. Cantata based on a work by Edmund Spenser (12)
5. Above the roof in an RVW song (3)
6. Sings along with the nightingale in an RVW folk song (6)
10. According to *EH 185* this should arise in Guildford (7)
11. The final movement of *String Quartet No. 2* is a birthday present for her (4)
15. *The Springtime of the\*\*\*\** (4)
16. Song of *Jesus Christ* a French folk song arrangement (7)
17. They are cloud-capp'd in *Three Shakespeare Songs* (6)
19. *Foxy* was RVW's favourite (3)
20. Crema de Perry, no, not an exotic Italian liqueur, but an anagram of a Reverend gentleman who approached RVW for a little help with some hymns (5,7)

## DOWN

1. First of a set of three published in 1929 (6,4)
2. Clinging plant featuring in the chorus of an *Acre of Land* (3)
3. This Latin must have been taught at Charterhouse in RVW's time! (3)
4. Daughter of RVW's greatest friend (6)
7. Appendage of a musical work (4)
8. Ten Marches (anag.), where *Symphony No. 8* was premièred (10)
9. Belly, God send thee enough of this (provided it's good) (*Sir John in Love*) (3)
12. A Bold one was collected by RVW at Tilney All Saints in 1905 (6)
13. Concerto first performed in 1944 (4)
14. The Hundredth is this, and getting more so each day! (3)
18. The First Symphony (3)
19. Perhaps RVW in his University days went punting on this reversed raincoat? (3)

## Answers on page 25

- Stephen Connock was made an M.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 1999.

## News and Notes

- Richard Hickox will be conducting *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the Three Choirs Festival in 2001. The director will be Joseph Ward.
- The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra are performing VW's 4<sup>th</sup> *Symphony* on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2000. (01292 611222) and VW's *Sinfonia Antartica* on 5<sup>th</sup> May in Aberdeen (01224 641122).
- The coupling on the EMI CD of *A Garland for Linda* will be VW's *Silence and Music*.

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Call for  
Papers!

The June 2000 edition of the Journal will examine VW and Bach.

The deadline for contributions is April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

**Next Edition:**  
**February 2000**

**Focus on**  
**George Herbert**