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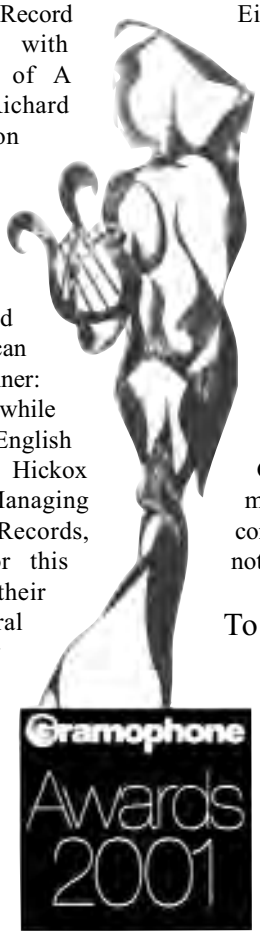
A Famous Victory

By winning the coveted Record of the Year award with RVW's original version of A London Symphony, Richard Hickox, the London Symphony Orchestra and Chandos will bring this wonderful music to a new and sizeable audience. What a superb achievement! As David Mellor put it at the Barbican when he announced the winner: 'Above all, this is worthwhile recognition for a great English composer'. Both Richard Hickox and Brian Couzens, Managing Director of Chandos Records, thanked Gramophone for this Award which followed their success in the Orchestral Record of the Year category announced earlier in the evening. Richard Hickox thanked Ursula Vaughan Williams and Michael Kennedy for their support in enabling the 1913 version of the symphony to be recorded. He concluded by thanking Stephen Connock and the RVW Society for their role as Technical Adviser to the Chandos VW series of recordings. A proud moment for the RVW Society. Richard Hickox then concluded proceedings by performing Butterworth's poignant The Banks of Green Willow to an appreciative audience.



A remarkable year for RVW

RVW's music was remarkably well represented in the Award categories. In the Orchestral section, alongside Richard Hickox's A London Symphony, there was Bernard Haitink's EMI record of the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies. RVW songs from John Mark Ainsley on Hyperion was nominated in the vocal category. Even more importantly, the Maggini Quartet's Naxos recording of RVW's String Quartet Nos. 1 and 2 and the Phantasy Quintet won the Chamber Music Award. The Maggini Quartet was at the Barbican to receive their first - and richly deserved - Gramophone Award. As the Editor of the Gramophone put it, this is great music by performers entirely convinced of the worth of every note.

To do and to dare

Chandos have gained renewed confidence in pioneering RVW recordings as a result of this Award. Next to come is the Fourth Symphony with the Six Choral Songs (In Time of War) and then A Pastoral Symphony, coupled with the world premier recording of the Norfolk Rhapsody No.2. Most importantly, perhaps, is the first recording of the Poisoned Kiss, scheduled for 7 - 12 January 2003, subject to funds being raised by The Garland Appeal.

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Focus on Ivor Gurney

And more ……

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Guest Editorial

by Rolf Jordan

'In times of national trauma we tend to seek out works of art that speak to us with depth, wisdom and humanity. It's that quality of gravitas that great art alone can provide…'

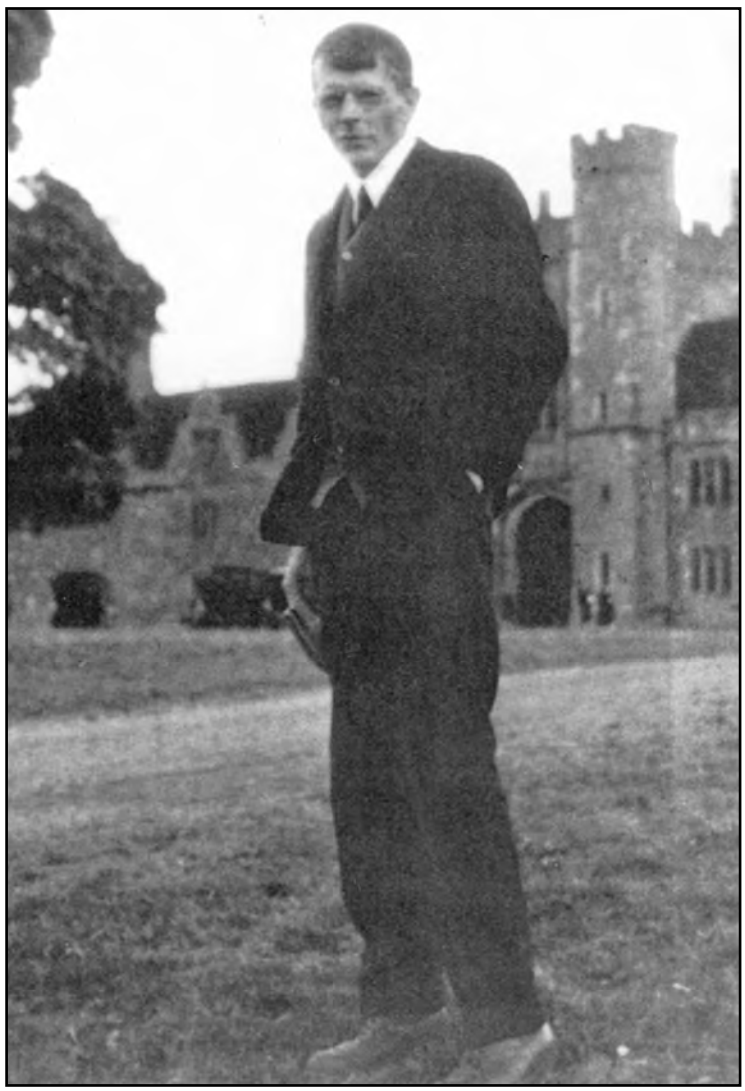
Even news-speak has been struck dumb with the events it can only call 'September 11', it was very much the background to the preparation of this journal. That Ralph Vaughan Williams and Ivor Gurney can speak to us during such times is a measure of their greatness. We may read Ivor Gurney, a 'mad' poet, for the sanity of his war poems, or find tranquillity in his music when order seems to have vanished from the world. Like Vaughan Williams, he speaks with authority.

It is one of life's great paradoxes that chaos can bear beauty, in both nature and art. Think only of the fragile poppy, growing from disturbed earth, the same source as Vaughan Williams's Pastoral Symphony.

It may be reassuring to learn that the quotation heading this editorial does not come from Vaughan Williams (though it may well have done), but a modern composer – who has also set Whitman - John Adams. Adams, like Vaughan Williams, has found that, much to his dismay, he is now a composer in wartime. Despite the chaos humanity regularly inflicts on itself, we can, at the very least, find strength in music.

I would like to thank the following for their invaluable help in preparing this journal: Anthony Boden, Chairman of the Ivor Gurney Society, for smoothing many paths during my research; Graham Barker and the staff of Gloucester Local Studies archive for their help during my visit; Andrew Motion, the Poet Laureate, for his kind permission to reprint his article; Pamela Blevins, both for her enthusiasm and supplying the bulk of the unpublished photographs; and lastly, the Gurney Trust, for permission to reproduce all the letters, photographs and poetry used throughout.

Above:
Ivor Gurney in 1922, outside his aunt's house at 1 Westfield Terrace, Gloucester, just two weeks before his committal to Barnwood House.



Right:
Asylum Years (Photograph by Marion Scott)

Ivor Gurney: A Personal View

by Anthony Boden

This is an edited text of a talk given at the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper (Ypres), Belgium, on 14th October 2000.

I do not for a moment believe, as some still believe, that Gurney was possessed of no more than a regional talent; that he was a minor figure of limited local interest in the county and country of his birth. Gurney was that rare being; both poet and composer, the first Englishman to be dually-gifted in these two arts since Thomas Campion in the reign of Elizabeth I. His output was prodigious. He left us around one hundred songs and over three hundred poems and verse-pieces, and the best of both mark Gurney out as a creative spirit touched by genius.

Since the publication in 1978 of Michael Hurd's excellent biography, The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney, the facts of Gurney's life have become well known. He was born in Gloucester on 28th August 1890, the second of four children. His father, David, was a tailor who, as a boy had been apprenticed at the town of Wimbourne in Dorset and whose patron there was the local lord, Sir Ivor Bertie Guest. Thus David Gurney gave his older son the name Ivor Bertie Gurney. 'Bertie' was pronounced Bartie, which in turn gave rise to Gurney's nickname as a young man, 'Bartholemew'. Ivor's mother, Florence, was a highly-strung, somewhat unstable young woman, and life at home was far from placid or easy.

Gurney was baptised on 24th September 1890 at All Saints Church in Gloucester, where his cousin, Joseph Gurney, was the organist. The service was thinly attended: apart from Ivor, his parents and the vicar, the only other person present was the curate of All Saints, the Reverend Alfred Cheesman, who, in the absence of any other, agreed to be the child's godfather – and this proved to be a stroke of singular good fortune for Gurney. Cheesman, a bachelor, well-known in Gloucester for his efforts on behalf of underprivileged youngsters, took his responsibilities as godfather extremely seriously. As Gurney grew, Cheesman quickly recognised the boy's artistic sensibilities, gave him free access to his considerable library, and thus introduced him to a world of literature and ideas.

Gurney began his schooling at the National School in Gloucester, but it was Cheesman who encouraged Ivor to try for a choral scholarship at Gloucester Cathedral, acceptance for which would bring with it both a place in the cathedral choir and an education at the King's School, founded by King Henry VIII in the sixteenth century. Ivor was successful, and he entered the King's School, where F.W. Harvey was already a pupil, in the autumn term of 1900.

David Gurney, Ivor's father, was a countryman at heart. He had been born in the tiny village of Maismore, close to Gloucester, and, although obliged to earn his living in the city, knew a huge amount about the countryside, including the names of wildflowers, trees, birds and insects. Every Sunday he would walk from the family home above the tailor's shop in Gloucester to visit his elderly mother in Maismore, taking with him gifts of eggs and butter, and often taking his older son too.

Gurney was composing music from 1904, encouraged by two sisters, Emily and Margaret Hunt, family friends who had travelled widely in Europe and who shared a deep love and understanding of German music of the nineteenth century. It was also the Hunt sisters who took young Ivor out of Gloucester to discover for the first time the breathtaking beauty of the Cotswold Hills.

In 1906 Gurney became articled to the organist of Gloucester Cathedral, Herbert (later Sir Herbert) Brewer, with whom he studied music alongside two other young men, Herbert Howells and Ivor Novello, both of whom, in their very different ways, were to make a considerable impact on British music. Gurney forged particularly close friendships with Howells and Harvey, and what Marion Scott, the Registrar of the Royal College of Music, said of Gurney could apply equally to all three. 'His education', she said, 'may be said to have begun with the beauty he saw about him, the lovely countryside, the hills, the Severn river'.

Although both Gurney and Harvey had attended the same school, it was not until 1908, when both men met on a tram in Gloucester, that their close friendship began. Harvey was, at this time, articled to a local solicitor, but his mind was preoccupied. In Gurney he found a like spirit and a shared love for poetry, music, cricket, football, table tennis, for England – and especially for Gloucestershire. If Alfred Cheesman opened Ivor's eyes and ears to Kipling, Tennyson, Housman and other 'moderns', I believe that Gurney and Harvey discovered together the keys to open the magic casements of the Elizabethans: of Fletcher, Nashe, Ben Jonson and, above all, Shakespeare. Harvey took Gurney home to 'The Redlands', a large farmhouse at Minsterworth, close to Gloucester; here he found a ready welcome from Harvey's family, good conversation and companionship, and a grand piano!

Both men, Gurney and Harvey, were much moved by A. E. Housman's Shropshire Lad poems, first published in 1896 to great acclaim, ten years later. Gurney had already written to Housman's publisher for permission to set some of his poems, and one of these, a setting of 'On your midnight pallet lying', composed in 1907, is thought to be Gurney's first completed song. In 1908 he composed settings of Housman's 'Loveliest of trees', and 'Is my team ploughing?', both of which songs he revised in 1920 for inclusion in his song-cycle The Western Playland for baritone, string quartet and piano.

A turning point for both Howells and Gurney was reached in 1910, a year in which the Three Choirs festival was held in Gloucester, Howells had asked Brewer if there was to be any new work in the Festival programme. 'Yes', Brewer replied 'a queer mad work by an odd fellow from Chelsea – something to do with Tallis'. The work in question was the Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis by Ralph Vaughan Williams, a piece so essentially English, so different from anything they had heard before, that, following the performance, Gurney and Howells spent much of the night walking about Gloucester, talking excitedly about it. From that moment both men were determined to become composers.

Ivor Gurney

In 1911 Gurney won an open scholarship to the Royal College of Music, which he entered in the autumn term of that year. His composition teacher was Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, who famously said that of all his students – Vaughan Williams, Arthur Bliss, Gustav Holst, John Ireland and dozens more – Gurney was potentially 'the biggest of them all. But the least teachable!' The registrar of the college was Marion Scott, a woman who was to become the most influential figure in Gurney's life; she was thirteen years older than Ivor and to him was always to remain either 'Miss Scott' or 'my dear friend', but without her it is extremely doubtful if we would know anything of Gurney's poetry or music.

Gurney moved into rather shabby rooms in Fulham, and in order to increase his meagre income took a job as organist at a church in High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. Here he was befriended by the churchwarden, Edward Chapman, who had come to live in High Wycombe in 1914. Chapman invited Gurney home to lunch every Sunday. Before long, Ivor was considered very much part of the Chapman family, enjoying hilarious games of ping-pong and cricket, walks in the country and songs at the piano with the four Chapman children, Kitty, Winnie, Arthur and Marjorie (Micky). All four of the children clearly adored their new friend, whose sparkling personality, huge sense of fun and energetic enthusiasm for all their games they found irresistible. Before very long Ivor had fallen in love with Kitty and proposed marriage, even though she was still only seventeen years old. It was not to be.

In 1913 Gurney, a lifelong manic-depressive whose natural exuberance was often blighted by fits of depression, had found himself close to a nervous breakdown. Obliged to take time off from the RCM, he returned to Gloucestershire for a few idyllic weeks, living and working at Framilode. But by July 1914 he was back at college and able to write to Will Harvey: 'Willy, Willy, I have done 5 of the most delightful and beautiful songs you ever cast your beaming eyes upon. They are all Elizabethan – the words – and blister my kidneys, bisurate my magnesia if the music is not as English, as joyful, as tender as any lyric of all that noble host.'

When war came in August 1914, Gurney tried to enlist alongside Harvey in the 1/5th Glosters. He was rejected due to poor eyesight, but in February 1915 was accepted as a Private in the 2/5th Glosters and sent off too Chelmsford in Essex for basic training.

Now Gurney's thoughts turned to verse, but his first efforts give no hint at what was to follow. Much of his early verse treads the path of the Georgians; an absolutely original and individual voice was yet to come.

Herbert Howells, medically unfit to serve, was spared the horrors of the First World War. On Gurney's departure for Laventie on the Somme Howells dedicated his Piano Quartet in A minor: 'To the Hill at Chosen and Ivor Gurney who knows it'. Chosen Hill in Gloucestershire had been a favourite walking place for the two men.

Through the war and the misery of the trenches, Gurney, who was a signaller, turned more and more to the writing of verse, opportunities for musical composition being clearly rare. These early trench poems reflect Gurney's hatred of war and his longing for Gloucestershire. It was a poem by Will Harvey that inspired one of Gurney's few songs to be composed in the trenches. Harvey's war had begun at Ploegsteert, an experience which drew from him the poem, 'In Flanders', which Gurney saw in the Glosters Gazette. 'That says everything for me', Gurney wrote to Marion Scott, 'it is the perfect expression of homesickness…. That will be in anthologies hundreds of years from now surely.' Gurney's setting is dated 'Crucifix Corner, Thiepval, Christmas Day 1916'.

On the morning of 16th August, 1916, Harvey and Gurney met, shared a conversation, and Harvey lent Gurney his pocket edition of Robert Bridges' The Spirit of Man. Later that day Harvey, by now decorated for bravery and commissioned, went out alone across no-man's land to reconnoitre the ground in preparation for leading an attack that night. He did not return. Gurney wrote to Marion Scott: 'The thing that fills my mind most is, that Willy Harvey, my best friend, went on patrol a week ago, and never came back. It does not make much difference; for two years I have had only the most fleeting glimpses of him, but we were firm enough in friendship, and I do not look ever for a closer bond, though I live long and am lucky in friendship as heretofore'. But Harvey's going did make a difference – and Gurney distilled his thoughts into a perfect poem

To His Love

He's gone, and all our plans
Are useless indeed.
We'll walk no more on Cotswold
Where the sheep feed
Quietly and take no heed.

His body that was so quick
Is not as you
Knew it, on Severn river
Under the blue
Driving our small boat through.

You would not know him now…
But still he died
Nobly, so cover him over
With violets of pride
Purple from Severn side.

Cover him, cover him soon!
And with thick-set
Masses of memoried flowers –
Hide that red wet
Thing I must somehow forget.

However, Harvey had not been killed but captured by the Germans. He spent the next two and a half years in seven different prison camps.

March 1917 found Gurney longing for Gloucestershire. Whilst at war-shattered Caulaincourt he sketched out a song-setting of one of his own poems.

Song

Only the wanderer
Knows England's graces,
Or can anew see clear
Familiar faces.

And who loves joy as he
That dwells in shadows?
Do not forget me quite,
O Severn meadows.

Gurney seldom requires his accompaniments to illustrate a particular aspect of the poem. He provides a generalised kind of accompaniment; what Michael Hurd has called 'a fluid animation of rich harmonies, appropriate but rarely specific. The poem dictates the melodic line, the final effect being a superb "reading" elevated into music'. For him, nature mingled with music in a real sense. 'Trees', he said, 'are the friendliness of things: the beech with its smooth A major trunk, its laughing E major foliage; the Scotch fir which, passionate or still, is always F sharp minor!' And with Gurney, superb as a song-writer and poet, it is impossible to separate words from music; the poet from the composer.

The few songs which Gurney was able to write whilst in the trenches are, like 'Severn Meadows', valedictory in nature. They include Sir Walter Raleigh's farewell to life, 'Even Such is Time', and a magnificent setting of John Masefield's 'By a Bierside'.

Gurney, who always considered himself a composer first and a poet second, now, through force of circumstances, turned more and more to verse. Everything he wrote was sent back to Marion Scott, who undertook to type out every poem; she it was, too, who contacted the publishers Sidgwick & Jackson, who, amongst others, had brought the poems of Rupert Brooke and Will Harvey before a wider public in 1916. The result was the publication in October 1917 of Gurney's first collection of verse under the title Severn and Somme.

On 7th April 1917 Gurney was shot in the arm, spent some time at a military hospital in Rouen, and was then transferred to a machine gun battery at Passchendaele. One month later, on 17th September, he was gassed at St. Julien, invalided back to Britain, and admitted to the Bangour War Hospital, Edinburgh.

Ivor Gurney and Herbert Howells

At Bangour he was nursed by a pretty little V.A.D. nurse called Annie Nelson Drummond - and promptly fell in love again. But this time Gurney had every reason to believe that his feelings were fully reciprocated. In a letter to Howells he wrote: 'O Erbert, O Erbert…. I forgot my body walking with her; a thing that has not happened since…when? I really don't know.' By November he was fit enough to leave hospital and was sent on a signalling course to Seaton Delaval in Northumberland, where he found life cold and meaningless. Depression began to haunt him once again, as it had in 1913. In February 1918 he was returned to hospital, this time in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and from there to Brancepeth Castle, County Durham. By May his mental condition had worsened and he was sent to Lord Derby's War Hospital at Warrington for treatment of a 'nervous breakdown'. At about this time, Annie Nelson Drummond severed her correspondence with Gurney and his mind turned to black despair.

On 19th June he wrote good-bye letters to Sir Hubert Parry, principal of the Royal College of Music, and to Marion Scott: 'I know you would rather know me dead than mad'. He was found wandering by the canal at Warrington, but the courage to end his life failed him. Comradeship, love and hope, seemingly all had deserted him.

On 4th July he was transferred to the Middlesex War Hospital at Napsbury, and there he remained until his discharge from the Army in October 1918 with a pension of twelve shillings per week. The war ended in November.

Back in Gloucester, Gurney faced a seemingly hopeless future: instability and depression had descended into a profound mental collapse. Life at home was as fractured as ever, and Ronald Gurney, his younger brother, was far from sympathetic with his plight. However, friends rallied round. Edward Chapman visited; he even offered to adopt Ivor, a generous gesture that was rejected by the Gurney family. But gradually the clouds parted. A good pre-war friend John Haines, took Ivor for a restorative walking holiday in the Black Mountains; and then in December 1918 he was invited by Ethel Voynich to join her and some of her friends on a Cornish holiday. The creative spirit was awakened

In February 1919 Will Harvey at last returned from his long years of captivity. He was wasted and ill, but nonetheless within four weeks he and Gurney were able to give a recital together in Stroud, Harvey singing and Gurney playing the piano.
On 10 May 1919, David Gurney, Ivor's father, died, and Ivor went to stay with the Harveys at 'The Redlands'. By the autumn he was fit enough to return to the Royal College of Music, where his composition teacher was now Ralph Vaughan Williams. In 1919, too, a second volume of verse, War's Embers, was published by Sidgwick & Jackson. In November of that year John Masefield invited Gurney and Harvey to visit him at his Oxfordshire home. Recognition was beginning to come. Gurney resumed his post as organist at Christ Church in High Wycombe and with it his close friendship with the Chapman family, finding with them, as he put it, 'the home-life which is so strong and sweet a stimulant to any sound art'. 1920 and 1921 proved to be the two most productive years of his life. Dozens of songs poured from him.
'Words, I want words', Gurney told his friends and, inevitably, poems by Jack Haines and Will Harvey were amongst the many that he set to music.

Throughout the years 1919 to 1922 Gurney was driving himself hard, physically as well as creatively. We find him walking by night from London to Gloucestershire. He had been, he once wrote, 'a night-walker from age sixteen'. In 1921 he took a job on

a Gloucestershire farm (Dryhill Farm), where his labours included digging, delving and felling trees. It seem that physical exertion was essential to settle his nerves; to quiet the imagined voices and radio waves with which he now felt himself to be bombarded. Also, following exertion came inspiration. In his essay, The Springs of Music, he wrote: 'Visions of natural fairness were more clearly seen after the excessive bodily fatigue experienced on a route march, or in some hard fatigue in France or Flanders – a compensation for so much strain. One found them serviceable in the accomplishment of the task, and in after-relaxation. There it was one learnt that the brighter visions brought music; the fainter, verse, or mere pleasurable emotion'.

The problem, it seems to me, was that as the years passed, he found that ever more exertion was necessary to induce his visions and relaxation. Modern physiologists would probably explain Gurney's ordeal by pointing out that the brain releases endorphins in response to exercise, or pleasurable experiences, such as listening to music. The natural 'high' that individuals experience from running, for instance, is an example of endorphin-enhanced pleasure. Gurney was, I believe, unwittingly making use of this naturally induced stimulus, which he had first noticed during the rigours of army life. However, the time inevitably came when to find mental peace needed ever greater exertion. Now too, it seems to me, he was torn between the discipline and structures of his studies under Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music and his need of the inspiration that only Gloucestershire could satisfy, for, although Gurney is undoubtedly a poet and composer of national and international importance, he knew absolutely that he belonged to and was possessed by a particular place. Through all of this, between 1919 and 1922, Gurney made the transition from minor poet to major.

In 1922 Gurney gave up his studies in London and went to live with an aunt at Longford on the outskirts of Gloucester. He had tried to earn his living in various ways: church organist, cinema pianist, farm labourer, tax clerk, but all attempts eventually failed, as did his relationship with his aunt. He then arrived, uninvited and less than welcome at his brother's house in Gloucester city, and announced that he intended to live there. Ronald took him in but the experiment was a disaster. Ivor continued to live erratically. His eating habits were dramatically irregular. He would often come into the house at the dead of night following long nocturnal walks and, in searching for candles and food, disturb Ronald and his wife, Ethel. He would leave mud on their furniture, and alarm them with his terrified conviction that the police were torturing him with bombardment by radio waves. Medical help was sought, and in September 1922 Gurney was certified insane and admitted to Barnwood House mental hospital in Gloucester. Here he began to write the first of dozens of letters of appeal to the great and the good, to the police, to universities, to the American States, and to friends and colleagues, crying out for release or death.

Gurney made a desperate night-time escape from Barnwood, smashing a window and cutting his hands in the attempt, and running off in his pyjamas. He was recaptured by the police and returned, but the family decided that he must be confined somewhere well away from Gloucestershire. With the help of Marion Scott and other London friends, including Vaughan Williams, Walter de la Mare and Arthur Benjamin, arrangements were made to transfer Ivor to the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford in Kent. On admission he pleaded only to be allowed to return to farm work.

Gurney coped with asylum life by blotting it out; his body was imprisoned but his mind was elsewhere. He received visits from friends: Marion Scott, Will Harvey, Herbert Howells and Helen Thomas, the widow of Edward Thomas, among them. Helen Thomas discovered that Ivor refused to go into the asylum's grounds because 'it was not his idea of the country at all – the fields, woods, water-meadows and footpaths he loved so well, and he would have nothing to do with that travesty of something sacred to him'. And so his mind inhabited the past. He continued writing songs until 1926, but their quality diminished; his poetry, on the other hand, gathered quality and strength. Gurney's best war poems belong to these asylum years; they have such immediacy it is as if, in his mind, the war carries on.

Gurney was in that asylum for fifteen years until he died of tuberculosis on Boxing Day, 1937. He was 47 years old. Only then was he permitted to return to his beloved Gloucestershire to be buried at Twigworth on the last day of the year. His godfather, Canon Alfred Cheesman, officiated at the service and Herbert Howells played the organ. Will Harvey, by now a rather shabby figure, walked from his home in the Forest of Dean; as Ivor's coffin was lowered into the ground, he dropped a final tribute to his friend into the grave: a small sprig of rosemary. To it was attached a tiny card upon which Harvey had written, 'Rosemary for Remembrance'.

However, in the congregation was a young man who was to ensure that Gurney's reputation did not fade into oblivion. Gerald Finzi had heard the soprano Elsie Suddaby singing Gurney's song 'Sleep' in 1920 and felt it to be one of the finest things of its type that he had heard. With his friend Howard Ferguson and his wife Joy, Finzi set out to gather Gurney's poems and songs from every source possible, including, of course, from Marion Scott's unique collection. Without the immense effort of these four, it is unlikely that we would know anything of Gurney's work today.

Answers to crossword No.9

Across: 1. Dipsacus, 7. Blake's, 9. Solo, 10. Tallis, 13. Carnal, 14. Acre, 16. Milton, 18. Falstaff.

Down: 2. Paradis, 3. Adler, 4. USA, 5. Aunt Jane, 6. Apollyon, 8. Down, 11. Lark, 12. Partita, 15. Dives, 17. Sea

Beaten down continually

by Andrew Motion

Ivor Gurney was certified insane in 1922, the same year that The Waste Land was published. The timing was a coincidence – even supposing it were possible to be driven mad by a poem, there is little evidence that Gurney read Eliot. Besides, for the previous ten years he had suffered periodic bouts of acute depression (he refers to it as "neurasthenia", in the vague terminology of the day; Edward Thomas was told he had the same thing). This was given an obvious focus by his experiences in the First World War, but was further exacerbated by his sense of displacement in the ensuing peace. The last fifteen years of his life were spent in Stone House mental hospital in Kent. The poems he wrote there continue the celebrations of the English countryside and its history, and the ruminations about the war, that had dominated the two collections with which he had first made his name as a poet: Severn and Somme, 1917, and War's Embers, 1919. But while the themes are consistent, the treatment is fascinatingly different. Predominantly Georgian qualities are consistently pressed out of shape by a mind which - for personal as well as literary reasons - can no longer trust the stabilities they represent. Gurney never departs from orthodoxy altogether, but challenges and buckles and reinvents it. The effect is not one of watching a thorough-going modernist such as Eliot emerge from a Georgian cocoon, but of seeing a simultaneously tormented and enlightened Georgian develop characteristics he would not have known to call "modernist", but which we can now see as being just that.

For years Gurney's poetic qualities have not simply been undervalued or misunderstood - they have been almost completely neglected. If he has been known at all, it has usually been as a song-writer, and as the author of a few poems such as "To His Love" and "Song" ("Only the wanderer…"). Although his first two books were well received, a third – to have been called Rewards of Wonder – was turned down in 1919, and no successful efforts were made to publish other collections during his lifetime. In 1954 seventy-eight mostly uncollected poems were edited and introduced by Edmund Blunden (carelessly rechristened "Edward" in the blurb of P. J. Kavanagh's new edition), but they created little interest. In 1973 about half this selection was reissued with the addition of a further ninety-seven previously uncollected poems chosen by Leonard Clark. Gurney's hour still had not come, and the book has long been difficult to obtain.

It has not only been literary taste which has prevented him from getting the attention and praise he deserves. During his years in Stone House, his friend and mentor Marion Scott lovingly typed out and preserved his work, but over the years her concern for its safety hardened into something like jealous hoarding. Gerald Finzi had some success in extracting songs from her private archive, and he was also the moving force behind the Blunden edition. But Blunden's selection, like Clark's, was textually corrupt. This is hardly surprising, in view of the fact that he had no easy access to the original manuscripts. Only in the last few years have the majority of Gurney's papers found their way to the library of his home town, Gloucester – and their collection has coincided with signs of awakening general interest in his work and life. He has been promoted by anthologists and critics such as Geoffrey Grigson, Jon Silkin and Paul Fussell, and in 1978 Michael Hurd published a full-length biography. And at last we have an authoritative Collected Poems.

P. J. Kavanagh's task has been a difficult one, and he has done it with insight and affection. His edition selects more than 300 poems (117 of them previously uncollected) from the 900-odd that Gurney wrote. If this seems rigorous, it is only so because Gurney wrote a number of poems on closely similar subjects – Kavanagh has chosen the ones which seem to him the most successful – and habitually produced wholly new poems rather than revising those that he thought had gone off the rails. Kavanagh has also tried to establish a chronological order, but since relatively few of the manuscripts are dated, he has had to rely on the loose structure dictated by the main events in Gurney's life. 1919 – 1922 is the best represented period; after 1926 – when Gurney's illness often prevented him from working coherently – the most sparse. There is an Introduction which avoids saying much in the way of literary criticism, but is sympathetic in its effort to interest "the general reader". For "the Gurney student" there are annotations which are intended as a guide "through the Archive" in Gloucester. There remain, of course, inescapable residual curiosities about the work that Kavanagh has excluded, and a nagging wish for a Collected Poems which is a Complete Poems – but Kavanagh has successfully avoided the dangers of making Gurney seem (as Blunden surprisingly did) a thoroughly mad modern, or of representing him too absolutely as a Georgian. He has, in effect, restored to us a poet whose achievement can be compared to that of the contemporary who has also had to wait for more than half a century for recognition: Edward Thomas.

Having said that, it is important to insist on the differences between the two poets. Gurney was more strongly influenced by Thomas than by any other writer, and he borrows phrases, cadences and situations from him, as well as emulating his subtle playing of sentences against line and line against line-break. But his work nevertheless expresses a quite distinct poetic personality. This is partly a matter of landscape: where Thomas is involved with the south of England and its (usually) specifically British past, Gurney turns again and again to Gloucestershire, and sees the landscape as a palimpsest in which traces of the Romans mingle with indigenous relics. (The more disturbed Gurney's mind became, the more frequently he referred to the Romans - because of the order associated with them, and because as an invading force they allowed him to refract his recollections of the war.) In "Cotswold Ways", for example, some of the "strangest things" he "comes across" walking are

Stream-sources happened upon in unlikely places,
And Roman-looking hills of small degree
And the surprise of dignity of poplars
At the road end, or the white Cotswold scars,
Or sheets spread white against the hazel tree.
Strange the large difference of up-Cotswold ways;
Birdlip climbs bold and treeless to a bend,
Portway to dim wood-lengths without end,
And Crickley goes to cliffs are the crown of days.

This poem, typically, takes a greater risk with its syntax than one usually finds in Thomas – the elliptical last line – and that helps to produce a completely independent-sounding manner. Where Thomas is ruminative, scrupulous and fine grained, Gurney is impetuous, occasionally naïve, and enthusiastic. The pace of Thomas's thoughts, as suggested by his poems' rhythms, is slower than Gurney's – who looks and speaks with what he calls (speaking of Chapman) a "football rush". And where Thomas's mind can relax and spread into narratives ("As the Team's Head-Brass") and also compose itself sufficiently to produce finished meditations ("Old Man"), Gurney often seems hurried and driven, seeking less for a coherent resolution than for a means of matching the integrity of his mood with a sense of immediacy in its expression. For all his sufferings in the world, his tone of voice seems less worldly-wise than Thomas's.

The breathless, breathtaking rush that Gurney manages so well was initiated by his experiences in France, but only fully developed during his subsequent deliberations. Like Thomas, he avoided giving candid responses to well-known aspects of the war. His remark that "Great poets, great creators are not much influenced by immediate events: those must sink in to the very foundations and be absorbed" comes close to rephrasing Thomas's judgement that "by becoming ripe for poetry the poet's thoughts may recede far from their original resemblance to all the world's, and may seem to have little to do with daily events". Since Gurney spent a good deal longer than Thomas at the Front, he had many more of its "daily events" to accommodate – and at least one of the strategies he evolved to deal with them makes him unlike almost all his contemporaries. Partly by temperament, and partly because he was not an officer, he eschewed the two most familiar accents of war poetry: he neither described obvious heroics, nor did he warn or remonstrate as did, say, Wilfred Owen. Instead, he adopted a tone of voice which mixes humour with incredulity and horror. The effect is to create simultaneously an impression of things being beyond his control, and a suggestion that events are so extremely pressing and demanding that the sweeping considerations one might expect – such as general estimations of suffering and pity – would misrepresent his overriding concerns at the time: which are to avoid getting hurt, or better still, to get the hell out of it and back to Blighty. Paradoxically, in other words, he contains the influence of his immediate surroundings by concentrating on their minute particulars, and by registering the lack of opportunity and inclination to consider the large moral issues that they raise. Many of his best war poems are intensely vivid accounts of a private soldier simply trying to survive – being shot at, being ordered about, resenting "this brass-cleaning life", enjoying the company of his friends, complaining about the weight of his pack and wanting a cup of tea. In "Varennes", for example, while "the infantry drilled frozen":

to the canteen went I,
Got there by high favour, having run, finished third,
In a mile race from Varennes to the next village end.
Canteen assistant, with a special care for B Company –
And biscuits hidden for favour in a manner forbidden.
Lying about chocolate to C Company hammering the gate.

Given the circumstances, Gurney managed to produce an extraordinarily large number of rounded, taut lyrics during the war. "The sound of the guns", he wrote to a friend, "should be reason enough to excuse any roughness in the technique." But "Varennes" (actually written in the asylum) illustrates the free, expressive diary form that he used increasingly often. These diary-like poems are best read in bulk – their cumulative effect is very impressive indeed – and their range is increased by a second and more familiar response to the demands of dealing with "daily events". From the very first, Gurney's extraordinarily deep love for England had led him to create a similar kind of ironical structure in his poems to that which frequently appears in the work of Owen, Blunden and others. As the title of his first book, Severn and Somme, indicates, landscapes of the present and the war are constantly being placed in his mind's eye beside those of the past and of peace. Like the details of the south country in Thomas's poetry, the towns, villages rivers and hills of Gurney's Gloucestershire are the embodiment of unwavering patriotism which, because it takes this form, is absolutely without any trace of tub-thumping jingoism. But when the war ended, Gurney's attitude to England became more complicated. To start with, he was afflicted by a strong but reasonably straightforward feeling that his country did not sufficiently appreciate the sacrifice he had made. Work was inadequate or not to be had, there was no chance to exercise the "courage" he had known in France, there was no regularity to life, and – worst of all – there was no hope of recovering the comradeliness he had found in the trenches. "As for rest or true ease, when is it or what is it?" he asks in one poem. "With criss-cross purposes and spoilt threads of life, / Perverse pathways, the savour of life is gone." In another, "Strange Hells", he beautifully imagines the waste of spirit in humdrum living which his former companions now suffer:

Where are they now, on state-doles, or showing shop-patterns
Or walking town to town sore in borrowed tatterns
Or begged. Some civic routine one never learns.
The hearts burns – but has to keep out of face how heart burns.

For all its unpleasantness, the army checked Gurney's instability by imposing some order on his life. Without it, his old characteristics returned and were stimulated by the memories of what he had lost. In spite of making various efforts to pick up the threads of his former life – he returned to the Royal College of Music (where he had been given a scholarship in 1911), wrote, and visited friends – he could settle to nothing. And although tramping round England still rekindled his feelings for its landscape, even these had a new, disturbing dimension. The act of walking, and the hardships he imposed on himself when undertaking a long journey, were almost a parody of his "moving and shifting about" in France, and therefore filled him with thoughts of the war. When he was confined, it was because he could only envisage one way out of his unhappiness:

Death is not here, save mercy grant it. When
Was cruelty such known last among like-and-like men?
An interview? It is cried for – and not known –
Not found. Death absent what thing is truly man's own?
Beaten down continually, continually beaten clean down.

Until the end of his writing life, the war and Gloucestershire remain interlocked and dominant in his imagination. So much so, in fact, that almost all of his late poems avoid mentioning the facts of his confined existence altogether. But evidence of his plight is evident everywhere. His original Georgian poetic addresses ("O blow here, you dusk-airs…") are transformed into tormented appeals to God, Death and even the police for deliverance. The early, strict and lucid lyric forms are twisted and packed to contain the bulging, irrepressible shape of his distress, and are frequently interrupted by comments which both welcome the idea of formal order and recognise that he cannot obey its requirements entirely:

I musician have wrestled with the stuff in making,
And wrought a square thing out of my stubborn mind –
And gathered a huge surge of spirit as the great barriers bind
The whole Atlantic at them by Devon or west Ireland.

Even the stable sanctities of the English landscape can no longer provide the comfort that they once did. Since he can no longer actually visit Gloucestershire, it becomes a kind of hallucination: minutely and lovingly recalled, but a country of the mind; brilliantly lit by memory, but never to be enjoyed in the present except as a thought. He writes about it, as he does about the war, as if he were a ghost. He is almost as much out of life, the poems imply, as if he had been killed in France – but instead of being actually dead, or "happy alive", he is condemned to a "liberty" in which he can only envy death and yearn for the past:

Madness my enemy, cunning extreme my friend,
Prayer my safeguard. (Ashes my reward at end.)
Secrecy fervid my honour, soldier-courage my aid.
(Promise and evil threatening my soul ever-afraid.)
Now, with the work long done, to the witchcraft I bend
And crouch – that knows nothing good. Hell uncaring
Hell undismayed.

Criticism is disabled by poetry of such urgency and pain. Yet one cannot help feeling that for all their poignancy, and in spite of the sympathy they evoke, these late poems might well have become repetitive had Kavanagh not printed only thirty-five poems from "1926 and after". Even so, it is hard not to suspect that Gurney sometimes wrote too entirely to "keep madness and black torture away / A little" for the good of his poems. If this is the price one pays for his achievement, the achievement itself is never in doubt. Although his madness meant that he was effectively locked out of England for much of his life, he was one of the very few, and one of the very best, poets of his time to adopt the jaded literary traditions he grew up with, and allow them to accommodate the anxieties and preoccupations of the post-war years. The result is a large body of work which is extremely powerful in its own right, and is also a significant landmark in literary history. Gurney - like Thomas - secured and sustained a poetic line which was specifically English but nevertheless flexible and inclusive, at precisely the moment when the radical, cosmopolitan techniques of Pound and Eliot seemed to overwhelm it. For a long time we have been told that the modernists were a race completely apart, and the only people to face up to the modern period. Now we are beginning to know better.

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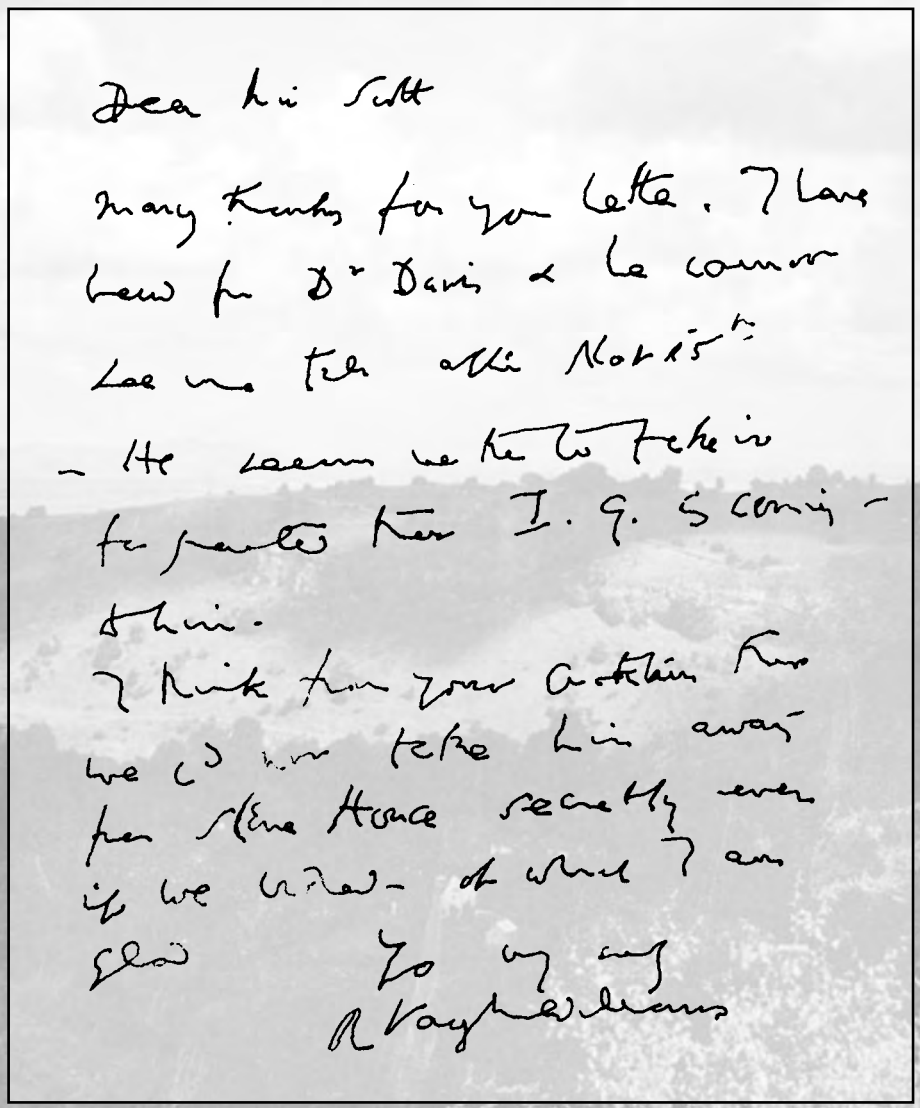


A Letter from Ralph Vaughan Williams to Mirion Scott

Ivor Gurney and his friends - the asylum years

"A living thing desires not to be cooped up... not to be left here to rust into disuse"

by Pamela Blevins

During the 15 years Ivor Gurney was imprisoned in the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford, most of the friends he cherished abandoned him. He became patient number 6420 and spent the rest of his life cut off from everything he treasured and loved - friends, conversation, ideas, walking, nature, beauty, music and freedom. To the doctors and staff, he was just another patient, a man believed to be suffering from "delusional insanity" who was "said to have been assistant organist in Gloucester Cathedral, and to have been a capable composer, and an approved poet".[1]

Gurney was transferred to the hospital on 21 December 1922, after spending three months at Barnwood House in Gloucester, where he had been committed by his younger brother Ronald in September.
While Gurney's friends were perplexed about his condition, none of them felt that institutionalising such a free and gifted spirit was necessarily the right course to follow. Gurney agreed. Although he knew that something was wrong with him, he also believed he did not belong in an asylum.

"Do not leave me here"

Within a few weeks of his arrival at Barnwood House, Gurney made his first escape but was soon returned to the facility. On 8 November he escaped again, this time by hurling a large clock through a window, jumping through the jagged hole and scaling a high wall on his way to temporary freedom. He cut his hands so badly that he eventually gave himself up to the police. His determination to remain free was as enormous as the despair he felt on being locked up in an asylum.

Gurney knew what his incarceration meant. He had already experienced the sour taste of asylum life when he had been hospitalized at Lord Derby's War Hospital in Warrington following a serious nervous breakdown in 1918. Prior to the war the facility was Winwick Asylum for the insane and it still reflected its immediate past in ways that terrified the already unstable Gurney. While there, he claimed to be hearing "imaginary voices" that urged him to commit suicide, which he threatened to do in June 1918.[2] During his November escape from Barnwood House, he again contemplated suicide by drowning, throwing himself in front of a train or shooting himself.

Gurney sent many anguished pleas to his friends to get him out of Barnwood House. "Do not leave me here," he begged his Gloucester friends John Haines and F. W. "Will" Harvey. Writing to Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gurney declared that he did not want "to be left here, where conditions are not such as one can get well in...". He told Vaughan Williams that he would do "almost anything for freedom" because he did not want to be "left here to rust into disuse".[3]

Vaughan Williams, his wife, Adeline, and Marion Scott were among the few friends Gurney could rely upon once it was clear that he would never be released from the asylum. When it first seemed likely Gurney would be committed, Vaughan Williams pledged £100 towards expenses. Poet Walter de la Mare was also generous with financial aid and wrote to Marion Scott throughout the years expressing concern for Gurney and offering his help. De la Mare was very compassionate towards Gurney.[4]

In early October, Marion Scott visited Gurney at Barnwood House and found him "not only suffering from delusions but terribly thin and weak as he had hardly eaten anything for six weeks...he could only just walk".[5] She shared her observations with Vaughan Williams, her colleague at the Royal College of Music and Gurney's former teacher. A short time later, Vaughan Williams and Scott journeyed from London to visit Gurney in the Gloucester asylum. Gurney had hoped that together they might be able to take him away but that was not to be the case, at least not then.

In the meantime, he was eating better, had begun to improve physically and was occupying "a good deal of his time in reading and writing and with his music," according to Arthur Townsend, superintendent of the facility.[6] Although Gurney was eating better, he was not eating normally. Townsend told Scott that Ivor was "taking a good amount of food, though still not as much as I should like; the difficulty with regard to food is irregularity, he will miss a meal or two and then eat an abnormal amount at another meal". He was describing a pattern of eating that had been with Gurney for many years. Unfortunately, doctors in 1922 had no way of knowing that Gurney suffered from bulimia, a serious eating disorder that exacerbated his mental instability. No attempt was made to put Gurney on a maintenance diet and to oversee his food intake.

The move to London

On 23 November 1922, Townsend suggested that Scott try to place Gurney in the City of London Mental Hospital. According to Townsend, Gurney had expressed concern that someone in Gloucester might recognize him at Barnwood House. However, the issue of payment for his care also surfaced. Townsend made it clear that the "Committee would do something for him...but not maintain him permanently without payment".[7] More importantly, Gurney's mental state was not improving.

Ivor Gurney

"I feel sure it will be far better for Mr. Gurney to be away from surroundings he knows so well...sorry we have not been able to do more for Mr. Gurney, he is such an extremely nice fellow and it is a most pathetic case," Townsend wrote to Scott on 20 December, the day before Ivor was scheduled to be transferred to London.[8]

The idea of removing Gurney from his native Gloucester did not meet with unanimous approval. His unjustly maligned mother, Florence Gurney, who has been

blamed for much of Gurney's trouble, did not want her son taken away from her, but she felt that she must agree to do what other, more seemingly sophisticated people thought best for him. As a widow in her sixties, Florence Gurney did not have the physical strength or psychological stamina to cope with him in her home nor did she have money to pay for his care.

Ronald, his elder sister Winifred and even Marion Scott regarded Florence with contempt and little understanding or compassion. Seen through their eyes, Florence appears cold, selfish and heartless, but she was not. She was a complex, troubled, disappointed and frustrated woman whose own artistic talents were never encouraged or allowed to flower. She suffered from varying degrees of manic behaviour, depression and digestive trouble just as Ivor did although not with the same intensity. Both Ivor and Florence had violent tempers and often clashed. However, these clashes were not rooted so much in differences as they were in the similarities of two people of like temperament, each seeing in the other an unsettling self-reflection. After his incarceration, Ivor pleaded with Ronald to "Look after Mother please", affirming the bond between mother and son.[9]

Gurney's friend John Haines, a solicitor and poet 15 years his senior, was "exceedingly opposed" to Gurney's transfer to London. "This is primarily a medical question and if the doctors consider removal likely to improve his health he should of course be moved; [but] unless they do, all other possible reason favours his staying," Haines informed Scott. "I am certain that he will be better attended nowhere else and I do not believe that the local surroundings really affect him adversely. What he wants is freedom to get away...".[10] Haines felt that it was important for Gurney to be near his friends and he also expressed concern about the financial burden he felt would fall to Scott since the London hospital cost more than Gurney's small Army pension paid. Money, however, was not a concern for Scott. Having Gurney near her was her primary consideration.

Once at Dartford, Gurney was merely maintained, fed and given a bed. His illness, which we recognize today as a severe manic-depressive disorder, was never treated and like any untreated illness, it grew worse with the passage of time.[11] His means of controlling the more devastating effects of his mood swings - exercise and hard physical labour outdoors - were cut off by the confines of Stone House, his residence at Dartford.

Upon his arrival at Dartford the afternoon of 21 December, Gurney was placed on "parchment" or suicide watch. Doctor's rescinded the order on the twenty-seventh after Gurney promised he would not do anything to himself. Less than ten days later he staged a successful escape while walking in the hospital grounds. He was missing for two days, eventually turning up at Vaughan Williams' home in Chelsea. Vaughan Williams had no choice but to telephone the asylum and turn him in. Ursula Vaughan Williams said years later that Ralph felt like a "murderer" when he called the hospital authorities.

Abandoned

Gurney knew he could not rely on his family for help. Ronald Gurney, the head of the family since the death of their father David in 1919, had always resented his elder brother. He felt, not without some justification, that his parents favoured Ivor and were ready to sacrifice everything for him and his music while ignoring Ronald's dreams and his needs. The brothers developed an antagonistic relationship that followed them into adulthood. Marion Scott regarded Ronald as an odious man who harboured a "violent prejudice against the arts and a supreme contempt for Ivor's writings".[12]

Ronald claimed to understand his brother, declaring that he "possessed the same nervous system and temperament". He admitted that "I myself have travelled a long way down the same road that he has gone". By late summer 1922, when Gurney was suffering an extreme episode of manic behaviour, Ronald reached his own breaking point. He was newly married, supporting his wife, his mother and his wayward brother. Ivor was out of control and threatening suicide. Ronald had convinced himself that Ivor's friends "had had enough" of Ivor's behavior, and that "he could not land himself on anyone else as [he had] done for years". After his brother was locked away, Ronald, angry, bitter and frustrated, felt that Ivor was finally "reaping the punishment of his selfishness and stubborness".[13]

At first, Gurney's friends Will Harvey, Herbert Howells and Arthur Benjamin tried to help but eventually distanced themselves from Gurney. Harvey (1888-1957), like Haines, was a poet and solicitor. He had known Ivor since their teens and they enjoyed a close relationship until war separated them. During the war, Harvey suffered two years of misery in a German prison camp and returned to England in 1919 ill and mourning the loss of two brothers.[14] After his marriage in 1920, he had less time to pursue his friendship with Gurney. He grieved over his friend's fate but seems not to have visited Gurney once he was in London. After his own experience as a POW it might have been difficult, or impossible, for Harvey to enter the prison-like facility where Gurney lived. Although Harvey kept in contact with Marion Scott, he faded as a presence in Gurney's life.

During his years at the Royal College of Music, Gurney came to regard Australian-born composer-pianist Arthur Benjamin (1893-1960) as his confidant. When Benjamin learned that Gurney was going to Barnwood House, he told Scott he did not think it was a good idea to send him to a place "whose name is a byword [for insanity] to all Gloucester, and therefore to Gurney".[15] Benjamin knew Marion Scott from his R.C.M. student days and had corresponded with her during the war. When Gurney was transferred to Dartford, Benjamin accompanied Scott occasionally to see Gurney. In 1925, he participated in a recital at the asylum and accompanied a performance of two Gurney songs. Benjamin grew increasingly uncomfortable each time he saw Ivor. He finally admitted that he found the visits too "harrowing" and never returned to the asylum after Gurney failed once to recognize him.

Herbert Howells (1892-1983), whom Gurney had known since his teens when both were pupils of Dr. Herbert Brewer, found it very traumatic to see Ivor at Dartford. The relationship between Howells and Gurney was close but edged with ambivalence, especially during the war. Howells had been the star pupil at the R.C.M., the clear favourite of their teacher Sir Charles Stanford. Howells produced the large-scale works that eluded Gurney and enjoyed early recognition, praise and success. He was exempted from military service due to his health and continued to pursue his career while Gurney spent 16 months at the Front. Gurney could not help being envious, feeling that he was in competition with Howells. At times, his attitude towards Howells reduced Howells to a verbal punching bag, directing seemingly lighthearted banter to him that was actually insulting and demeaning.

Gurney was undoubtedly hurt that Howells never set any of his poetry and must have been even more dismayed when Howells told Ivor that his verse was not "lyrical enough for setting".[16] Gurney was disappointed, too, that Howells had opted for a safe, secure and, in his opinion, ordinary life and that he was not more willing to take greater risks for his art. It did not help either that Marion Scott, Gurney's devoted friend, poured more energy into promoting Howells' music than she did Gurney's.

According to Marion Scott, Howells would not visit Gurney in the asylum unless she took the lead in making the arrangements. He would not go without her. Scott was sensitive to Howells' reluctance to see Gurney and "knowing he was dreading the

sight of Ivor in the asylum, [I] resolved beforehand to make it as easy and pleasant as possible".[17] When they met on a late December day in 1923 to visit Gurney, Howells was clearly distressed and told Scott that he "wanted to get back early to go to a party" and that he was feeling ill, possibly coming down with influenza. Once in company with Ivor, who was doing well that day, Howells kept his back turned so he did not have to see the suffering of another patient in the room. Marion had wanted Howells to visit one of the doctors at the asylum with her but he was so eager to get away that she simply escorted him to the train, leaving her alone and "sick at heart" and in tears after a very stressful day.

During the war and later, Scott tried to involve Howells in dilemmas and decisions about Gurney's mental problems and his care, but he was not equipped emotionally to be helpful or as involved as she wished. She had hoped she could depend upon Howells for support, but she learned eventually that she could not. According to his daughter, Ursula, Herbert always returned from the asylum in a state of deep depression after visits in the 1930s.

On her own

The entire responsibility for Ivor Gurney eventually fell on Marion Scott's shoulders. She became his legal guardian and for 15 years visited him regularly, took him out on day trips, supplied him with books, clothing, personal necessities, gave him money, contributed to his hospital costs and saw that his music and poetry were published. Outside of her parents, Sydney and Annie Scott and her sister, Stella, the only people upon whom Scott could rely for help and understanding were Adeline and Ralph Vaughan Williams who took an active interest in Gurney during the asylum years. They gave money regularly to help Scott pay for the portion of Gurney's care not covered by his pension, but more importantly, they gave their time.

Adeline, Ralph and Marion consulted with each other about alternative care for Gurney They arranged for treatment by a Christian Science practitioner but to no effect. A plan that might be regarded as a kidnapping plot surfaced when Randolph Davies, a Canadian doctor and con man, offered to care for Gurney privately. Hospital authorities were against taking Gurney from Stone House so Davies suggested that he be removed secretly and delivered to him for treatment. Vaughan Williams, realising the serious legal implications of such a venture, quickly dashed the plan.[18] Over the years, Adeline offered to have Gurney's poems typed, visited him on her own, reported on his condition to Scott and generally kept a watchful eye on Gurney. After Gurney's death, the Vaughan Williams helped Scott pay for his funeral and various legal expenses that had arisen.

However, no one did more for Ivor Gurney or was more devoted than Marion Scott. Her commitment to him and her sacrifices for him were enormous. They met at the Royal College of Music in 1911, a year of professional success for Scott that was tarnished by a personal crisis, the devastating failure of her relationship with composer Ernest Farrar (1885-1918). She was working as secretary of the R.C.M. student union when she first noticed Gurney in a crowded corridor. Struck immediately by his "uncommon" appearance and the "look of latent force in him", she was intrigued.[19] Two weeks later, Gurney entered her office to join the Union. It was a simple act that marked the beginning of a life long friendship that altered the course of their lives. Gurney was an attractive young man who possessed an all-consuming intellectual vitality, was exceptionally well-

read and made a brilliant conversationalist. Scott listened to him, shared his enthusiasms and encouraged his dreams. She had a keen intellect, poetic sensibility and thorough musical knowledge which he respected. To a young man like Gurney coming from provincial Gloucester to the cosmopolitan diversity of London, Scott was unlike any woman of his previous experience and he could not help being drawn to her. He shared his work with her, sought her advice and approval, trusted her judgement and eventually relied on her to help pave the road to his success. Scott fed Gurney's need for attention and he fulfilled her preference for being in the company of gifted younger men. Gurney began to fill the gap left by Ernest Farrar.

During the Great War, Scott and Gurney corresponded almost daily. He wrote long letters and sent her poems and songs composed in the trenches. They collaborated on his first volume of poems, Severn and Somme and Marion secured a publisher for him. She sent him packages of food, writing paper, socks, tobacco, newspapers, journals, copied out poems for him, did everything he asked and much he did not ask. She became his lifeline to the world he had left behind.

"My friendships are mostly queer ones, and this is queer, but believe me a very valued one," Gurney wrote to Scott. "You have given me just what I needed, and what none other of my friends could supply to keep me in touch with things which are my life; and the actuality of which is almost altogether denied me.[20] Gurney respected Scott's intellect, her sensitivity and her advice, but most of all he trusted her as he trusted no one else. With Marion, Ivor felt at ease and free to say what was on his mind. During the war the tenor of their relationship changed dramatically. As the weeks stretched into months, Gurney became increasingly dependent on her, and she became dependent on him in her own way. Her feelings for him deepened into to what became an obsessive love that never died even though she accepted the fact that there could be no physical relationship between them.[21] Together they formed a singular, unspoken partnership that would remain in place for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, Scott's image has suffered over the years thanks largely to the negative impressions of composer Gerald Finzi who, in frustration, labelled her a "possessive, incompetent, mulish old maid" and a "fragile fool". He was struggling to get her to cooperate in various projects to promote Gurney while she was struggling to hold onto the manuscripts and letters that were all she had left of Ivor. Finzi knew Scott from her middle-age into her later years. He never knew her as the beautiful, gifted, witty, passionate and sensitive woman that men like Ivor Gurney, Ernest Farrar, Herbert Howells, Sydney Shimmin, George Thalben-Ball and so many others knew.

When Gurney first met Scott in 1911, she appeared younger than her 34 years. She was petite and delicate and gave an initial impression of being a rather fragile and helpless woman, but she was, in fact, tough, pragmatic, strong-willed and demanding. She was gifted with the vision and adventurous spirit of her American ancestors that led her to become one of the most dynamic and pioneering women of her generation in England. Even as a child, she was ready to take the lead and by her teens she was an accomplished promoter and entrepreneur who developed strategies and plans that were well ahead of their time.

The young entrepreneur

Marion was a precocious child. Surrounded by music in the home, she began piano lessons early and made excellent progress despite an unimaginative teacher whom Marion found boring and uninspiring. Eventually, she abandoned the piano for the violin and knew immediately that not only

had she found her natural instrument but a "faithful friend". Like her father, Marion was attuned to the metaphysical world, even in her youth, and she believed that her violin possessed a soul. When she caressed its strings with her bow, she felt that she was awakening her violin's "fourfold voices", which revealed knowledge and "secrets deep" that brought her "close to Heaven's door".[22] Her gift as a violinist was substantial enough for her father to purchase a fine Guadagnini violin for his daughter.

Marion Scott in 1951

Marion discovered poetry in childhood, an interest her parents, Annie and Sydney Scott, eagerly nurtured along with her musical studies. Writing came easily to her as it did to all members of her family. She was also a skilled photographer. Her talents encompassed more than the arts. She had a strong aptitude for mathematics and design that prompted a friend to observe many years later that had Marion been a man, she might have chosen engineering as her profession. Like her father, she had a shrewd legal mind.

As she approached her teenage years, Marion set a goal for herself: to study violin and composition at the Royal College of Music To gain practical experience, she performed in public at every opportunity. Her first recorded solo appearance dates from March 21, 1893, when she was 15 years old. Even then, she understood the importance of introducing contemporary music to the public and often featured new works in her own programmes. She was not only attracting enthusiastic audiences, she was winning critical acclaim as well.

In 1896, she entered the Royal College of Music to study violin with Fernandez Arbos, piano with Marmaduke Barton and composition first with Walford Davies, and later with Charles Stanford. Both the musical and poetic muses had taken hold of her as they would take hold of Gurney. She was writing naive, epic verse and ballads marked by lingering vestiges of the romanticism. But her poetry also revealed a young woman full of optimism and enthusiasm, who was not repressed by the constraints of Victorian morality.

Like her friend Ivor Gurney, she seemed most comfortable composing songs, preferring the texts of Robert Louis Stevenson above others. Some of her settings include "Falmouth Town" for tenor and piano with words adapted by W. E. Henley; "Golden Slumber" for contralto and piano, a setting of Thomas Dekker; "The autumn day is fading"; "The Bells of Forrabury"; "To Sleep"; "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls". She composed song settings with string quartet and with string orchestra. On the manuscript of a student composition, an unaccompanied vocal quartet entitled, "For the Lord will not fail his people", one of her teachers, either Stanford or Davies, wrote: "Not very illuminating subjects either of these. You ought to make your voices climb about and cross one another more. They move too much in blocks. The individual parts are dull."[23]

During her college years, Marion Scott was in demand as a performer, a demand that she created by making herself known outside the walls of the R.C.M. From the time she was 15 years old, Scott understood the value of publicity and learned how to use it to benefit herself and others. She might be petite, soft spoken and fragile in appearance but she was not timid or lacking in aggression or self-confidence. She took full advantage of the exposure newspapers offered and used the medium effectively as a promotional tool. If she was giving a recital or playing in a chamber ensemble, she made certain that the newspapers were informed and more often than not, she managed to encourge a publication to send a critic.

Marion completed her studies at the R.C.M. in 1904 but remained associated with the college for the remainder of her life, starting as the co-founder of the School Union in 1906 and later as the editor of the R.C.M. magazine.

In 1905, she published her only collection of poetry, Violin Verses, which garnered eight reviews in newspapers in England, Scotland and Ireland. Once again, Marion had used her promotional skills wisely and well to draw attention to the slim volume containing only 35 pages. The reviews ranged from a few lines in The Times Literary Supplement to lengthy notices in The Musical News and in The Strad.

As she approached her thirtieth birthday in 1907, Scott was searching for a direction in her full and active life. She had friends. Men sought her companionship, but she could be possessive of them. She harboured a jealous streak that produced a smoldering, sometimes vindictive anger. She was successful in her endeavours and was building several careers. She was intelligent and persuasive, daring and witty. She was well-educated, fluent in three languages and never stopped searching for knowledge. She had an innate understanding of business and knew how to organize people. She had money, looks and charm and did not need to work for a living.

If she had chosen, she could have stayed at home and devoted herself solely to writing verse and music, but she took criticism of her creative work seriously. She accepted the fact that she would never be more than an average poet or composer and understood that her energies were best directed elsewhere.

The pioneering spirit

In 1908, she struck out on her own and formed the Marion Scott Quartet, mainly to showcase contemporary British music for London audiences. The quartet, with equal numbers of both sexes appeared primarily at Aeolian Hall and performed works by Charles Stanford, James Friskin, Frank Bridge, Walford Davies, C. Hubert Parry, William Hurlstone and others in their programmes.

When she was not on stage herself, she was busy organising other concerts of contemporary music, primarily chamber works, to introduce young composers. She had also begun to publish articles about music in various London area newspapers, tackling topics that were generally ignored by the press such as salaries for women music teachers. She played regularly in orchestras, performing under Sir Donald Tovey, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and serving occasionally as leader of the Morley College Orchestra under the direction of Gustav Holst. As a participant in the male-dominated world of music, Scott experienced firsthand the prejudice against women which resulted in poor working conditions and few opportunities for them. She became a hard-working champion for women's rights.

1911 was a year of professional success for Marion Scott. In addition to her busy performing schedule and her writing, she lectured regularly for a fee on subjects with popular appeal, including Modern English Composers, Folk Songs of the Four Races and The Evolution of English Music. She enlivened her talks by illustrating them with musical examples presented by her friends William Harris or Harold Darke at the piano, herself on the violin and vocalists Gladys Hislop and Louis Godfrey. She might be centre stage but she showcased her friends at every opportunity.

Scott also offered courses on technical subjects: composition, harmony, counter point, musical form, analysis and

orchestration. She boasted references from England's musical elite: Sir Charles Stanford, Sir Hubert Parry, Percy Buck, Sir Walter Parratt, and H. Walford Davies. Scott made certain that newspapers published notices of her lectures and that, on occasion, they sent a reporter to cover them.

By the middle of 1911, Scott and her friend Gertrude Eaton launched the Society of Women Musicians, an organization created to provide women composers, performers and writers on music with the opportunity to come together to discuss and criticise musical matters. As Scott and Eaton envisioned their society, it would promote a sense of cooperation among women in different fields of music, provide performance opportunities and advice and would even help women deal with the business side of their professional work".

The two founding women and their Provisional Council made it clear that the SWM would have no political agenda. It would be open to men, who were encouraged to join as dues-paying associate members, and promoted an agenda of equality which its founders understood would best be served by including, rather than excluding, men. Marion achieved these goals through a combination of "the ladylikeness of a Liza Lehmann and the fighting nerve of an Ethel Smyth".[24]

When Gurney met her in 1911, Scott was very successful by the standards of the day -- for a woman. He was standing at the edge of his professional life and she was prepared to help him find its centre.

An island of serenity

Sensing an emotional hunger in Gurney, Scott began to gather information about him and learned that he had not enjoyed the same happy and nurturing childhood of her experience. He came from a working-class family, dominated by his strong-willed mother. With four children, money was scarce. There was constant tension in the Gurney household and from an early age, Ivor sought companionship and support from friends outside the home. Scott absorbed this information and did what she could to provide him with new experiences, encouragement and comfort.

As one of Scott's favoured friends at the College, Gurney soon became a regular visitor to the Scott home. To guests, Westbourne Terrace seemed to belong to another world, an island of serenity anchored in the midst of a noisy, crowded city. The exterior elegance of the dwelling and the formality of some of its rooms stood in sharp contrast to the easy-going lifestyle and diversity of its occupants. The Scotts were a very close family. They were also wealthy, liberal and adventurous. In addition to Marion and her parents, the household consisted of Marion's younger sister Stella, their niece Audrey and her widower father, domestic help, and the family cats, usually numbering three. Marion and Stella shared the responsibility as surrogate mothers of their niece whom they reared as their own daughter. Audrey was the only child of the youngest Scott daughter Freda, who died from complications following Audrey's birth in 1908.

The Scott home sometimes resembled a popular hotel so varied were the people who stopped by to visit with the family. Gurney might encounter Mrs. Scott's American and Russian relatives and friends, who stayed for extended periods. He might also find himself in company with a variety of other guests who were temporarily down on their luck or in need of the Scotts' care until they could recover from whatever blow life had dealt them.

The Scotts were well-educated, progressive thinkers and generous activists who used their money and position to benefit others. Both were deeply committed to various reform movements, particularly temperance and woman's suffrage. They were unconventional parents who imposed few, if any limits, on their three daughters but expected them, above all else, to respect other people. They instilled in them a sense of fairness, compassion, duty, and a social conscience that would serve both Marion and Stella well later in life.

The backgrounds of Annie and Sydney Scott were rooted in diversity so it was natural that they would expose their children to a variety of experiences and philosophies and introduce them to people from all walks of life. There was nothing staid or predictable about the Scotts.

Sydney Scott was a well-known and highly respected figure in the legal world. Born in 1850, he was a brilliant scholar in his youth and qualified as a solicitor before he was actually old enough to practice. His knowledge of the law was encyclopedic, but his interests were far ranging and encompassed music, literature, social issues, history, and the occult. He was a partner in the firm of Scott, Bell and Company. A gifted amateur pianist, he had studied with Walter Bache, a pupil of Liszt. For a number of years, starting around 1892, he served as Marion's regular accompanist.

Gurney was at ease with Mr. Scott and enjoyed his company, but he found that Marion's mother Annie Prince Scott could be intimidating and formidable, which made him uncomfortable. She was an independent, strong-willed American whose unusual childhood and ancestry had endowed her with drive, fortitude and courage uncommon in women of her day.

No one among Gurney's acquaintances and friends could lay claim to the singular heritage that Mrs. Scott possessed. She was a member of an old Salem, Massachusetts family of adventurers, explorers and entrepreneurs. In 1838, Annie's father, George Prince, had been sent to St. Petersburg, Russia to work as a shipping clerk with his uncle and cousins in the successful Boston-based family mercantile business and counting house, William Ropes & Company. By 1842, George Prince, then only 20 years old, and his cousin were managing the busy commercial operation, which included nine American supercargo ships that crisscrossed the seas from Russia to India and from China to New England and the southern ports of the United States and to the West Indies. The firm, in business into the early twentieth century, eventually had offices in London and New York as well as Boston and St. Petersburg.

In England in June 1850, George married Marion Amelia Hall of Scarborough. They sailed immediately to Salem, where their first child, Emily was born. After the birth of their second child, Annie Ropes Prince in Salem in 1853, the family returned to St. Petersburg, where four of five younger siblings were born.

Annie's childhood in St. Petersburg was unconventional and exciting. She never returned to the land of her birth. Educated by private tutors, she was occasionally allowed to accompany her father on his trading missions to other parts of Russia. She not only experienced life among the American and English community but formed friendships with Russian children as well. She was exposed to a rich cultural life at the Winter Palace and the darker side of life portrayed in the works of Gogol, Pushkin and Dostoevsky.

It is likely that Annie Prince would have remained in St. Petersburg with her parents and siblings had she not met the promising young solicitor Sydney Scott on one of her visits to England. They were married in St. Petersburg on September 14, 1876. Annie was 23, her husband, 26. They returned to London and settled at 66 Longton Grove in Lewisham, where their first child, Marion Margaret was born on 16 July 1877. Stella Christine Millett followed in 1881, and Freda Millicent in 1884.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the family Ivor Gurney came to know had moved to Westbourne Terrace. There he met the family whose various members were never to let him down or abandon him. They understood Gurney and had the courage and compassion to sustain him through his college years, the Great War, his difficult adjustment after the war, and ultimately his bitter confinement in the City of London Mental Hospital.

Solace in the mountains

Gurney's hospitalization in 1922 tore Marion Scott's heart. In the months following, she lived on raw nerves. Her health, both physical and mental, started to deteriorate. She became apathetic and depressed but retained "a feeble stock of strength" to make a restorative journey to Switzerland in July 1923.[25] In times of trouble, Scott turned to mountains, particularly the Alps, for spiritual guidance, solace and strength. This journey, however, was not full of the usual anticipation she felt on visiting Switzerland and might "as well have been a trip to Siberia". Her first days in Switzerland were difficult and she was "uncomprehending most of the time".[26]

One afternoon at sunset, Scott entered the Zermatt Valley "and all at once I was like Pilgrim when his burden rolled off. I saw why I had been sick. It was as if God said to me, 'No wonder you have been sick and felt your strength broken: what you have been trying to do is my work - no wonder it was beyond your strength.'" [27]

Dealing with Gurney had taken a toll on her but she returned to England in September believing that her faith in "that beautiful world lying behind the visible" on earth would give her "the necessary calmness to face the misery at Dartford". She resumed familiar activities and her career as a critic and free-lance writer while maintaining close contact with Gurney. She continued to seek publishers for his songs and poems and encouraged him to compose music and poetry. She insisted that all his manuscripts be given to her by hospital authorities. To Marion Scott, Gurney was "agonizingly sane in his insanity" and still capable of producing great works.[28]

Although she drew on her spirituality to give her the strength to deal with Gurney, Scott continued to suffer for and because of him. She watched helplessly as Gurney's illness slowly consumed his genius. She confided her suffering and deep love for Gurney in no one but her sister Stella and her private journal, preferring to present herself publicly and more appropriately as his concerned friend and mentor. In writing about Gurney for publication or in sharing news about him with friends, she was matter-of-fact and never revealed the depth of her inner anguish or her feelings. Although she developed a relationship with a well-known music critic, in the privacy of her journal, she wrote about Gurney with a tenderness and compassion which reveal the true depth of her feelings for him. By the early 1930s Marion Scott was much in demand as a writer, critic and lecturer. She had begun work on Haydn that would lead to international recognition and acclaim. Her articles on subjects ranging from the violin to Haydn and Maddalena Lombardini to Hindemith and Schoenberg appeared in Music and Letters, Monthly Musical Record, the Musical Times, The Listener, Radio Times and Music Magazine.[29] She was involved in a number of music organizations in the capacity of advisor or committee member - the Royal Musical Association, the Royal Philharmonic Society, the Musicians' Benevolent Fund, the Critics' Circle, the Haydn Society and others. In 1934 her book on Beethoven appeared to critical acclaim in the Master Musicians series, and in 1936 she became the editor of the R.C.M. Magazine, a post she held until 1944.[30]

Throughout these years of success and achievement, Scott continued to show Gurney the utmost kindness and to visit him at great emotional cost to herself. In 1935, she and composer Gerald Finzi, who had first approached her about securing Gurney's reputation ten years' earlier, began making plans for a symposium on Gurney's work to be published in Music and Letters. By the beginning of 1937, Scott and Finzi were working on plans to publish editions of both Gurney's poetry and music. But it was too late for Gurney.

Gurney was suffering from tuberculosis and did not have long to live. On November 26, Scott was passing by the City of London Mental Hospital and as she wrote to Gurney, "ordered some oranges and purple grapes and a couple of grapefruits to be sent to you....I did not want to tie you up with talking today, but it was good to have sight of you, and as always, and more than ever, I honour your courage and fineness under bitter troubles and suffering. Dear Ivor."[31]

During Christmas night, Gurney suffered a lung hemorrhage and died at 3:45 a.m. on December 26, 1937. His body was returned to Gloucester and he was buried just outside the city at Twigworth on the last day of the year. Marion Scott was among the large number of mourners at the funeral, including Herbert Howells, Will Harvey, Ronald Gurney and the Finzis. Adeline and Ralph Vaughan Williams and Arthur Benjamin were not able to attend. Scott's wreath bore the message "in loving and unchanging memory of Ivor Gurney".

Aftermath

Marion Scott had collected all of Gurney's manuscripts and letters which she guarded possessively, sharing them reluctantly with Finzi because her emotional involvement with Gurney remained strong. Their efforts led to the publication of two volumes of Gurney's songs by Oxford University Press in 1938. Scott continued to promote Gurney and to write about him, submitting entries on him for the 1940 Grove's Dictionary of Music supplement and for the revised 1954 edition.

The 1940s marked a particularly prolific time in her life as a writer, critic, lecturer and editor of the R.C.M. Magazine and Proceedings, a publication of the Royal Musical Association. She was deeply immersed in research on Haydn, publishing two dozen articles about him by the early 1950s and preparing to write her book on Haydn. She was also assembling what would become the "unprecedented" Catalogue of Haydn's Works for the 1954 edition of the Grove's Dictionary of Music. She was reviewing concerts of contemporary music and writing perceptively about new works by Shostakovich, Tippett, Rawsthorne, Finzi, Hindemith, Webern and Schoenberg.

While she was working non-stop, adding to her list of accomplishments, her personal life was in turmoil. The Scotts - Marion, her mother, sister Stella and Stella's husband - fled London in the early years of World War II and spent them in Bridgwater in Somerset. After the death of her mother in 1942, Scott decided to risk returning to her bomb-scarred London home to be near the sources she needed for her research.[32]

Her own health was deteriorating. In 1945 Stella suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed. Marion had to care for her until her death in 1949. In 1953, Scott learned that she had colon cancer but she continued to work, relying on friends to go to libraries for her while she wrote at home. "My parting sight was of her propped up in bed looking very pretty and mentally the Marion Scott we had always known," recalled former RCM student Dorothy Mortimer Harris. Two weeks before Scott died, Gerald Finzi wrote to a friend saying how ill she was and that it was tragic to see her so helpless. On Christmas Eve, at the age of 76, Marion Scott died, just two days shy of the sixteenth anniversary of Ivor Gurney's death. Tributes poured in. Lengthy obituary notices were published in all the major English newspapers, and throughout 1954, articles in various music journals honored her for her contributions to music.

Scott's achievements were many and varied but it was her commitment to preserve the legacy of Ivor Gurney that kept her name alive. She devoted 42 years of her life to him and often compromised or sacrificed her own needs and work for him. More than once, her distress and anxiety for him broke her own health, both physical and

emotional. As friends abandoned Gurney throughout the difficult asylum years, it became clear that friendship alone was not a strong enough bond. To be with Gurney as he deteriorated physically, to watch his illness consume his genius, to see his sharp mind grow dull and his body frail, required the deep unconditional love Marion Scott felt for him.

It is easy to claim that Marion Scott's feelings for him were maternal given the 13-year age difference and her upper class background, but no woman endures what Scott sacrificed and suffered for so many years unless she is deeply in love.

In her journal after one of her anguished entries about Gurney, Scott wrote a poem. It has no title and no date, but its message is one of hope, fulfilment and love, and could only have been written with one person in mind, Ivor Gurney:

In time to come when we have done with time,
And the one tryant, like a worn out toy
Lies far below, impotent to destroy
Or bring about our bliss, we two will climb
Some sunny height of air, you chanting rhyme,
And well contented songs, innocent as a boy,
I by your side quite silent in pure joy.[33]

Notes

The title is a quote from a letter Gurney wrote to Vaughan Williams from Barnwood House in November 1922

1 Gurney medical records, City of London Corporation Archives.

2 When Marion Scott and her mother went to see him immediately after his suicide attempt at Lord Derby's, they were horrified by conditions in the "awful No 5 Down West Ward" where he was being held. Once the Scotts returned to London, they were determined to have him transferred to another facility and in July he was sent to the Middlesex War Hospital.

3 Ivor Gurney to Ralph Vaughan Williams, November 1922, R. K. R. Thornton, Ivor Gurney The Collected Letters, (Ashington/Manchester: MidNAG/Carcanet, 1991, p.543.

4 Writing to Scott in 1927, de la Mare enclosed a cheque for her to buy Gurney a dressing gown but he suggested that she not tell Gurney who had given the gift "as that might worry him". De la Mare was afraid to do anything that might upset Gurney. On another occasion, he told Scott he did not visit Gurney because he thought "such a visitor might be worse than useless".

5 Marion Scott notes to Don Ray, 1951. Mr. Ray, an American, was a pioneer in Gurney research, beginning his work in 1950. He corresponded with members of Gurney's family, Marion Scott, Gerald Finzi and others until the demands of his own work as a composer forced him to put aside his work on Gurney until the late 1970s. Mr. Ray continues to compose and also teaches film scoring in programs that he developed in Los Angeles and Dublin.

6 Arthur Townsend to Marion Scott, 30 October 1922, Gurney Archive.

7 Arthur Townsend to Marion Scott, 13 October 1922, Gurney Archive.

8 Gurney Archive.

9 This is hardly the request of a man who does not love his mother. Florence had her quirks to be sure, but her letters to Marion Scott, written during the years Ivor was at Stone House, are full of memories, pride and concern for him.

10 John Haines to Marion Scott, 18 November 1922, Gurney Archive.

11 For many years it was believed that Gurney suffered from "paranoid schizophrenia" and that he had been shell shocked during the war. Neither is, in fact, true. When Gurney was admitted to the asylum in 1922, doctors did not know what was wrong with him and used the general term "Delusional Insanity" to describe his condition. Later, individuals writing about Gurney's illness concluded that this vague diagnosis was "an old-fashioned term synonymous with paranoid schizophrenia" (William Trethowan in "Ivor Gurney's Mental Illness", Music and Letters, July/October 1981). The term seemed to fit 1970s and early 1980s definitions of mental illness, especially since Gurney suffered from delusional behaviour, which was then associated with schizophrenia. The fact that Army doctors declared that Gurney suffered from "Manic Depressive Psychosis...Aggravated by but not due to service" on his Ministry of Pensions disability award has, for some reason, been ignored over the years. Yet the Ministry had the diagnosis correct. A careful study of Gurney's life reveals that the onset of his illness occurred in his teens and was characterized by the dramatic, cyclic mood swings symptomatic of manic-depressive or bi polar illness. Delusional episodes, hallucinations and psychotic reactions are all recognized today as occurring in manic-depressive illness. Individuals who are institutionalised as Gurney was for long periods of time and have little or no outside stimulation often lose touch with reality, become confused, disoriented and apathetic. When Gurney was committed to the asylum, hospital authorities noted in his record that "During the war Patient suffered from shell shock". This label has stuck to Gurney ever since. It is likely that doctors assumed his nervous breakdown in the spring of 1918 was due to a delayed reaction to his war experience, which included a gunshot wound and a dose of mustard gas. Gurney had not been near a battlefield for at least six months when this breakdown occurred. In 1923, doctors, stymied by Gurney's condition and believing that shell shock might be responsible for his increasing instability, inoculated him with malaria, which was then being used experimentally to treat shell shock. It had no effect on him other than to make him physcially ill. Gurney was, in fact, severely depressed in 1918, not suffering from shell shock, delayed or otherwise, when he was hospitalized at Lord Derby's War Hospital at Warrington. But few doctors were qualified to determine was wrong with some of the soldiers who were hospitalized during and after the war with mental and emotional symptoms. Gurney did not display the usual symptoms of shell-shock and when Marion Scott tried to get him into a special hospital for shell-shocked soldiers, admission was denied because the doctors determined that he was a "mental case". Gurney himself acknowledged years later that he had falsely claimed to have suffered from shell shock because he thought that having such an affliction would help him obtain a better pension. By the spring of 1918, everything had caught up with Gurney - his 16 months in France, which had left him battle fatigued; the physical illness he suffered as a result of being gassed; his growing concern about his father who was suffering from cancer; his worries about the failing health of his dear friend Margaret Hunt; his fears about his own uncertain future after the war; his doubts about his abilities as a musician and poet; the gnawing realization that he was mentally unstable; the humiliating failure of his relationship with his VAD nurse Annie Nelson Drummond, and his uncertainty about his sexuality. In the spring of 1918, the fragile thread that linked Gurney to sanity snapped. For a detailed discussion of Gurney's illness, see the Ivor Gurney web site at http://www.geneva.edu/~dksmith/gurney/bipolar1of2.html

12 Marion Scott's notes, R. C. M.

13 Ronald Gurney letter to Don B. Ray, 3 May 1951.

14 His brother Eric died in the war and his brother Bernard was killed in a motorcycle accident near the family home.

15 Arthur Benjamin letter to Marion Scott, 15 September 1922, Gurney Archive.

16 Christopher Palmer, Herbert Howells: A Centenary Celebration, p. 43 (London: Thames Publishing, 1992). On the other hand, Howells specifically asked Marion Scott to write a poem for a hymn he had composed. Scott was not a poet of Gurney's rank.

17 Marion Scott journal entry dated December 27, 1923, Gurney Archive.

18 Davies offered a three month course of treatment and expected Scott to pay him the considerable sum of £75 in advance.

19 Marion Scott, "Ivor Gurney: The Man", Music and Letters, January 1938, pp.2-7 .

20 Ivor Gurney letter to Marion Scott, 2 April 1917, R. K. R. Thornton, Collected Letters, p. 240

21 The issue of Gurney's sex life is complex. He had a difficult time forming and sustaining relationships with women. His women friends were usually a lot older than he, safe and unattainable. During the war his romance with nurse Annie Nelson Drummond ended in devastating failure for him. Gurney seemed more comfortable in the company of men and Arthur Benjamin believed that Gurney was, like him, homosexual.

22 Marion Scott, "To My Violin", her first published poem at the age of 15. Manuscript, Royal College of Music.

23 Marion Scott Collection. R.C.M.

24 Katharine Eggar, "Marion Scott as Found of the Society of Women Musicians", speech given at a Composers' Conference in 1954.

25 Marion Scott journal, Gurney Archive.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid
28 Ibid.

29 Scott wrote music criticism and features for the nternational newspaper, The Christian Monitor, based in Boston, Massachusetts from 1919 to 1934 in addition to making contributions to many other newspapers, magazines and journals. She published an article about Vaughan Williams's film music that I have not been able to find.

30 Beethoven first published in 1934 was reprinted nine times.

31 Scott note, Gurney Archive.

32 Sydney Scott died in 1936.

33 Marion Scott's Journal, Gurney Archive. Scott reworked the text and in her final version changed the ending to read "Happy at last; I silent for pure joy / Of beauty permanent, and things at prime."
Her original last line "I by your side quite silent in pure joy" speaks more honestly of her feelings and I have restored it to the poem.

Ivor Gurney's Songs:

Recommended Recordings by Rolf Jordan

A survey of Gurney recordings published in the The Ivor Gurney Society Journal (known as The Gurnal) Volume 5, shows that although the first recording- by Nancy Evans of six songs- was in 1938, the majority of recordings came after the publication of The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney in 1977. Surprisingly, the first all-Gurney disc appeared as late as last year.

The Songs of Ivor Gurney (Hyperion CDA67243) is a twenty-five song set by the tenor Paul Agnew, accompanied by Julius Drake. It's perhaps not a good place for the curious to start: long recital discs can be quite exhausting, and if, as the performers on this disc have chosen, the performance is undemonstrative, the listener soon 'turns off'. However, the performers here are committed to showing Gurney's settings just as he intended - long vocal lines showing a profound belief of the importance of words above all. The overall effect of this disc is that of intimacy, and emphatically not one of 'performance'.

A somewhat more overpowering disc is When I Was One-and-Twenty (Chandos CHAN8831), which contains twenty Gurney songs and the two complete Housman cycles by Butterworth. Again, this is hard to take in one sitting, but it's a useful set, ably sung by Benjamin Luxon.

The same accompanist, David Willison, appears with Anthony Rolfe Johnson in a favourite recital disc of mine. Not only does it include an exemplary Songs of Travel (providing the disc with it's title), but also Butterworth's A Shropshire Lad, Ireland's The Land of Lost Content, three Warlock songs and four exquisitely performed Gurney settings. This disc may be hard to find, but I can't recommend it highly enough (Pickwick/IMP Classics PCD1065). (See review of the re-issued recording on page 23)

Another well-programmed set is Ian Bostridge's EMI collection An English Songbook, containing some fascinating songs such as Sharp's arrangement of 'The Death of Queen Jane', along with two Gurney songs including perhaps his best-known, 'Sleep'.

Hyperion have recently reissued at mid price (CDA66385) an interesting disc by Iain Burnside and the Delme Quartet of Houseman cycles. RVW's On Wenlock Edge (with Adrian Thompson) receives a decent performance, but Gurney's cycles Ludlow and Teme (Thompson again), and The Western Playland (with Stephen Varcoe), are the main points of interest. Gurney's large-scale works (such as they are) are rarely heard. It is instructive to compare the two compositional approaches on this disc, and again, Gurney's way of providing only the most of impressionistic of accompaniments to underline the words is clearly felt.

Finally, another Hyperion bargain completes the list. War's Embers (CDD22026), is a reissued double disc which commemorates 'A legacy of songs by composers who perished or suffered in World War I', and features a Paul Nash cover with fine illustrated notes within. As well as an unprecedented twenty-eight Gurney songs (the title is Gurney's, too), there are six by Denis Browne, one by Frederick Kelly (both of whom served with Rupert Brooke), a rare Oscar Wilde setting by Butterworth, six by Ernest Farrar, Finzi's beloved teacher, who only saw action for ten days; and Finzi himself, allowed a token song!

I'm not aware of their availability, but worth seeking out are two early recordings by cherished names: Wilfred Brown and Janet Baker. Janet Baker's recital on SAGA Classics ADD-EC-3340-2 is a superb recording with memorable performance of Sleep and the delightful I will go with my Father a-ploughing. This list is by no means complete - I've not included the fine recordings of orchestrations for example – and is entirely personal.

Ivor Gurney

Crying to the strong for strength

A note on Ivor Gurney and Vaughan Williams

by Rolf Jordan

Ivor Gurney's story, for someone of a much later generation than his own, like myself, can seem like the stuff of fiction, a romantic tragedy. Composer, poet, soldier of the Great War - an attractive, fascinating personality. For ordinary concertgoers, he appears as a peripheral figure, known for songs and little else. Yet he has a growing literary reputation: and a meeting of the Ivor Gurney Society[1] at its regular haunt, the pews of St Mary de Lode church in Gloucester, can resemble a wedding: poetry on the one side, music on the other.

This formerly neglected artist appears as a Three Choirs Festival chorister in the same photograph as Elgar; while the story of Gurney and Howells's attendance at the first performance of the Tallis Fantasia has entered the folklore of British musical history; and he had personal contact with many of the legends of British music - Parry, for example, in another familiar story, was 'awestruck' at Gurney's musical and physical resemblance to Schubert. Many newcomers to his music, like myself, are driven to explore his output when they realise he is a 'satellite' of Vaughan Williams.

The landscape he grew up in and celebrated has fostered many visionaries. Gloucestershire, his native county also produced Holst, Howells and Vaughan Williams. Chosen Hill, above Gloucester ('The Hill at Chosen'), offers views of other sacred places in British art - the Malvern Hills, haunted by Elgar; May Hill, familiar to readers of Masefield and the Dymock Poets; and Bredon Hill, Housman's real-imaginary setting, - 'England is not a land of clear edges; its landscape is blue-veiled and mysterious even in sunlight….'[2]

Gurney seemed to be in exactly the right place at the right time, we could say, but for those who knew him, such as Vaughan Williams, his real life was painful to witness.

During his Royal Artillery training in 1917 Vaughan Williams sent Gurney '…a friendly little note, in his queer writing. We are to know each other afterwards…. Afterwards; toujours après le guerre.' A standard expression of optimism from soldier to soldier, hope in the face of the unthinkable - witness Wilfred Owen, buying himself furniture to fill his post-war home. A month later, on Good Friday, Gurney suffered a bullet wound to his right arm (fellow poet Edward Thomas was killed on Easter Monday). A mixed blessing: the bullet only passed through soft tissue, and he soon returned as a machine gunner. At Passchendaele, he walked through a cloud of poison gas. Seven months after Vaughan Williams's good-luck letter, his war was over.

However, Gurney's pre-war depressions returned – seemingly shell-shocked on top of his gassing, he became yet another troubled veteran, even dubbed a 'mental case' on one occasion. Yet, even from the perspective of our 'caring' modern society, sympathy should have been easy to find. Thousands of returning soldiers re-lived the carnage they had witnessed: the mildest form of this, experienced by Arthur Bliss and Vaughan Williams, would be recurring nightmares.

Gurney picked up his pre-war threads and returned to the RCM in March 1919, where later that year his teacher would be Vaughan Williams, newly returned to civilian life himself. Amongst other war veterans he would encounter, Jack Moeran, who still carried shrapnel in his skull, and whose future sufferings, though of a different nature, would likewise end in tragedy.[3]

The famously unteachable Gurney probably did not receive the discipline he needed from Vaughan Williams. What did the two men talk of? Gurney's discovery, and love of, Whitman was probably deepened by Vaughan Williams: during the first period of his RCM studies, he had crawled out of his sick-bed to see the first London performance of his Sea Symphony. And Vaughan Williams must have shown interest in Gurney's own verse. As a highly literate composer, he could hardly fail to.

His attendance became gradually more erratic, and Gurney finally left the RCM in 1921, his lifestyle by then profoundly unsettled. In 1922, after a succession of failed jobs in this agitated, wandering state, we learn from a letter to Marion Scott that

….I am hoeing six acres of wheat for 30/-, and consequently have a job. Will you please cease sending the allowance therefore? It is at Sandhurst just above the Severn, and the soil is light enough. That is the most important thing, and I have written to Dr. Vaughan Williams concerning it….[4]

Holst also felt the generous benefit of Vaughan Williams's friendship; his early success with song, one expects, gave him the means to do so. Gurney, like Holst, would think nothing of walking home regularly from Gloucestershire to London during his student days.

When it became clear Gurney's mental state had deteriorated beyond reason, his brother Ronald was given £100 toward expenses for Ivor's committal to Barnwood House, Gloucester. Gurney, frightened and plagued by delusions of persecution, protested to those he thought would listen. To Vaughan Williams, he wrote urgently, in pencil, on a scrap of paper:

I would pray you believe words, and to get me term of imprisonment, dangerous public service, work, freedom to go on tramp, but chance of death always - rather than to be left here, where conditions are not such as one can

get well in, and one may never be well enough to go. Have mercy; believe words. A living thing desires not to be cooped up; often under influence; will do almost anything for freedom and usefulness, but not to be left here to rest into disuse, after so much desperate trying. Doctors and superintendent say I may go if friends call for me. I am in Barnwood House – Please free me from the possibility of staying one more week. I will obey orders, and do what I can do.

Vaughan Williams and Marion Scott saw him soon after his committal at Barnwood House, and after Gurney's move to Dartford, Adeline Vaughan Williams also regularly visited with her husband. The following excerpts from letters by Adeline to Marion Scott over the asylum years underline her caring nature; as Ursula Vaughan Williams would observe: 'disaster and misfortune brought her warmest feelings to the surface'. She had nursed her brother Jack in his dying months after the Boer War had shattered him, and Ivor obviously struck a chord in her:

…Mentally he was not so well - his talk was more chaotic (drumtaps – Shakespeare….) mixed up with his own sufferings – but still he always answered questions rationally. He seemed pleased with the tobacco Ralph brought & we also brought fruit…

…It is deplorable that the hospital does not take the trouble to see that Ivor gets fresh air & proper nourishment. My opinion of the cooking for the infirmary is favourable for one day we were there we met the trolleys coming away and I had a good look…. But it was the end of the meal and far too much was being taken away!…

We spent some time with Ivor Gurney on Monday – there was no doubt that the state of his mind was worse than when we last saw him – the idea that he has written everything & composed everything persisted throughout our visit & his thoughts were often confused but there were moments of real conversation & he spoke of real grievances ie that the best music comes on too late on the wireless & he has to miss it – he also spoke of his loneliness "No-one comes to see me" & when I praised his cutting out he said "I have nothing else to do". I did not think him looking very well – certainly older – but his colour was better & his hair looked healthier…. he gets no help at all for his mind from his surroundings – how I longed to take him away!
He was gentle as usual…

….Ralph had on the whole a good visit to Ivor – he found him with a newspaper over cricket scores – and they had some intermittent talk – he looks weak, but was not much changed from what he was before. The doctor said that he had had muscular rheumatism. Ralph asked has opinions about injections – he said they worked alright in theory but not often in practice.

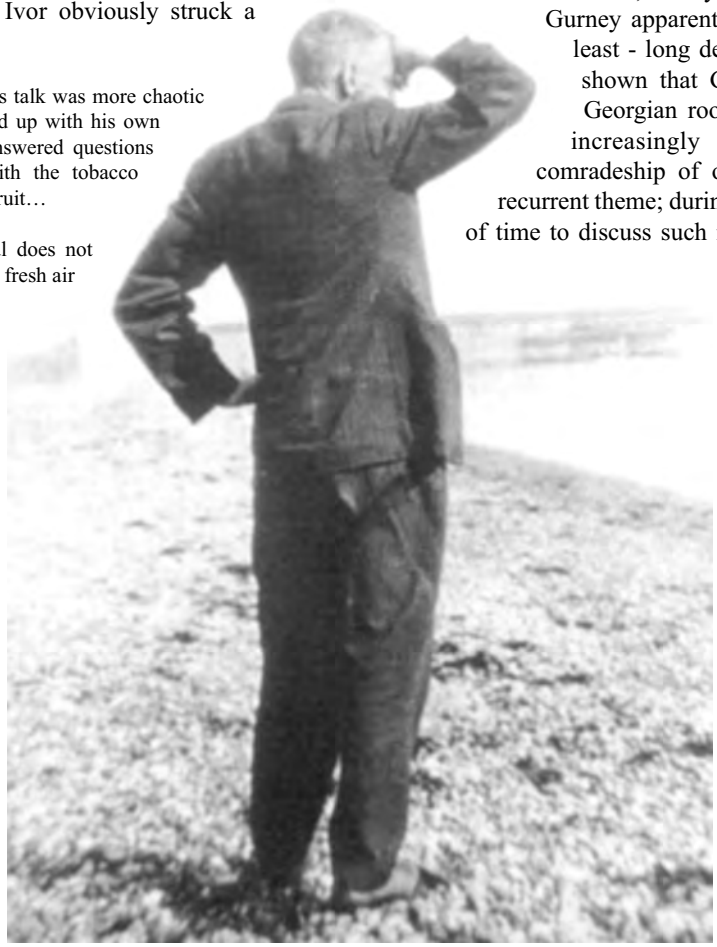
"Are you going back to Chelsea" Ivor asked Ralph showing that he remembered – they looked at the Royal Academy catalogue – Ivor remarking that the Joshua Reynolds picture of himself on the cover was the only good one in the book & then looking at the landscapes he called one the Ravel 4tet – another Cesar Franck… Ralph took chocolate & grapes & tobacco. Ivor made him take some away saying he had brought too much…

…I have had poor Ivor in my mind lately.

In the meantime, Vaughan Williams would write to Hubert Foss at Oxford University Press concerning publication of Gurney's songs. Gerald Finzi became Gurney's champion through his editorship of them.

In 1937, the first two volumes were completed, and a symposium in Music and Letters was to herald their publication. Vaughan Williams contributed a concise piece in which he recognised Gurney as both a songwriter and 'distinguished member' of the Georgian poets, who, he said, had 'rediscovered England and the language that fitted the shy beauty of their own country.'

Just as Victorian poetry was effectively banished by the Georgians, however, a more radical, political style had emerged in the 20's that would make the nature poems of Georgianism unfashionable, and by the time of his death the movement Gurney apparently belonged to, was – critically, at least - long dead. Recently, however, it has been shown that Gurney was more radical than his Georgian roots suggest.[6] Socialist thought had increasingly found hold in his work. The comradeship of ordinary men in the trenches is a recurrent theme; during the war, Gurney surely had plenty of time to discuss such matters with active Socialists: and, his return to the RCM would bring him into contact with similar sympathetic minds - such as Vaughan Williams. It should be remembered, too, that Holst was a follower of William Morris during his student years. Tellingly, in 1939, when a memorial to Gurney at West Wycombe church had been suggested to Marion Scott, she expressed her doubts to Vaughan Williams. He replied in kind; 'Ought it to be encouraged?… an artist's best memorial is his work.'



Gurney at Dover Beach, taken by Marion Scott

Vaughan Williams introduced his Music and Letters article[7] with Bunyan, and it is tempting to compare Gurney with Christian, or in this context, 'Pilgrim'. Conceivably, the germ of an idea for the prison scene in The Pilgrims Progress could well have come from the asylum visits. One of Ivor's asylum poems 'To God' contains lines which have a familiar ring:

Why have you made life so intolerable
And set me between four walls, where I am able
Not to escape meals without a prayer, for that is possible
Only by annoying an attendant. And tonight a sensual
Hell has been put upon me, so that all has deserted me
And I am merely crying and trembling in heart
For Death…..

We may never know what impression these visits made on Vaughan Williams, only that they must have been harrowing to a man deeply affected by his experiences in the casualty clearing stations of WW1. The article makes no mention of Ivor's illness - after all, at the time of writing the subject was still capable of reading it. The message is clear though, that Ivor Gurney had climbed, but not crested, the Hill Difficulty.

Tragically, the symposium would become his obituary: Vaughan Williams would mourn two musical friends at the end of 1937 - Ivor died on Boxing Day, and Maurice Ravel two days later.

Gerald Finzi, with Howard Ferguson and Vaughan Williams's help, continued his work on the manuscripts held by Marion Scott, often frustrated by her apparent lack of support, occasionally letting off steam with uncharacteristically spiteful, yet amusing, outbursts.[8] Worse was to come. After the third song volume was published in 1941, Ronald Gurney refused to allow permission for any further editions, and when Finzi was diagnosed as suffering from Hodgkin's Disease in 1951 he was given, at the most, ten years to live. From then on, all his work, including his own composition, was tackled with single-minded urgency.

Despite the publication of Edmund Blunden's selection of Gurney's poetry in 1954, by 1955 a fourth OUP song album had still not appeared. Finzi brought Vaughan Williams into the fray, hoping his by now statesmanlike presence would further matters. In May, a letter to Ronald Gurney was drafted: it is worth quoting at length:

… As an old friend of Ivor's, and at one time his teacher, and a composer myself, I am naturally interested… Mr Finzi tells me that you are quite right in saying that there is a lot of worthless stuff, amongst the remains, it is entirely incorrect to say that there is nothing worth publishing. As he has been partly responsible for collecting the manuscripts and has been through them and catalogued them, he knows that there are at least thirty or forty more that need looking at before such a decision can possibly be made. I think Dr Howells will bear him out in this opinion, and both these composers are competent to pass an opinion.
If, however, for some personal reason, you object to the further publication of your brother's work I can only repeat my conviction that we have a responsibility towards the remains of our great men, and that there is a moral duty to see that these manuscripts, whether or not you think they are fit only for the bonfire, are preserved, preferably in public possession, for future generations, to come to a decision about them.
I myself would be willing to buy the manuscripts and present them to the British Museum, unless you preferred to give them as a Ronald Gurney Bequest. In either case your name would go down in posterity as a benefactor.

This letter conjures up that photograph of Vaughan Williams with E. M. Forster at the Abinger Pageant, of which he described himself as a 'wily cattle-dealer getting round a simple rustic'. Ronald, however, was nothing of the sort, and ignored the letter. Eventually, after several further letters, Ronald responded with a hint that the manuscripts were possibly going to Gloucester Library, resulting in this little ruse from Vaughan Williams:

I should be very grateful if you would let me know how the negotiations are proceeding between you and the Gloucester Library with regard to your generous suggestion of presenting to the library the remainder of your brother Ivor's manuscripts. I feel sure that you know how grateful both the library and all Ivor's friends are to you for your munificent gift.

Neither Finzi, nor Vaughan Williams would live to see the City of Gloucester Public Library receive Ivor's manuscripts. Gerald had taken the Vaughan Williamses up to Ivor's beloved Chosen Hill during the 1956 Three Choirs Festival to show them the place that inspired the newly premiered In Terra Pax; they accepted hospitality in the Sexton's cottage at the top of the hill, and as a result Gerald contacted chicken-pox, which his weakened immune system could not cope with: he died less than a month later. However, Joy Finzi persisted with her husband's work, and having gained Ronald's sympathy, a fourth volume of songs was published in 1959. At the end of that year Ronald wrote to Joy at tell her Gerald would 'rest easier' to know he had finally placed his brother's collection on permanent loan.

Though Gurney's work was now resting in the place where it belonged, it would be still be several years before his recognition would come. A new selection of poems in the early 1970's would be followed by Michael Hurd's beautifully written book The Ordeal of Ivor Gurney. As a composer himself [9] he understandably dwelt on the musical side of Gurney - and at that time the music was certainly better known. But, as Vaughan Williams predicted, the poetry is finally getting published to acclaim.[10] The author of the best-selling Great War novel Birdsong, Sebastian Faulks, recently read Gurney alongside Wilfred Owen during a service marking the 85th anniversary of the opening of the Somme offensive, held at the memorial to the missing in Thiepval,[11] and British schoolchildren are asked to study him as part of the English syllabus.

Gurney would finally add something to that visionary Gloucestershire landscape he longed for during his incarceration. Today, memorials in Gloucester remember him, and many musical pilgrims visit his grave at Twigworth, just outside the city. Standing at its foot, they will see behind him Herbert Howells' tragic son Michael, the ultimate inspiration for his greatest work, Hymnus Paradisi; and beyond that, through a miraculous gap in the trees, the summit of May Hill; final resting place of Gerald Finzi.

The Songs I Had

The songs I had are withered
Or vanished clean,
Yet there are bright tracks
Where I have been,

And there grow flowers
For other's delight.
Think well, O singer,
Soon comes night.

Notes

1 Membership forms can be obtained from the author at 65 Coombe Road, Irby, Wirral CH61 4UW, on behalf of the membership secretary.

2 James Lavier, introduction to Fertile Image by Paul Nash. Faber 1951.

3 Moeran, had increasing head pains, eventually leading to a fatal brain haemorrhage in 1950. He feared for his sanity, and handcuffs were found on his body - presumably to chain himself to the nearest heavy object when 'they' came for him.

4 All letters quoted in this article are from the Gurney Archive in Gloucester.

5 In R. V. W., OUP 1964.

6 John Lucas, Ivor Gurney, Northcote House, 2001. An excellent critical study of the poetry.

7 Reprinted in National Music and other essays 2nd edition, OUP 1986.

8 'Maid Marion's sister has got married to a man she met in the last war, so perhaps Maid Marion will get married to a man she met in the Boer War.' From Letters of Finzi & Ferguson, Boydell 2001.

9 Try English String Miniatures, Vol. 3, Naxos 8.555069 for his Sinfonia Concertante.

10 A superbly edited range, Collected Letters, War Letters and four seperate volumes of poetry, which include extensive notes and essays is published by MidNag/Carcanet.

11 Over 72,000 names are commemorated on its walls, including George Butterworth, and my great uncle, John Jordan.

MUSIC YOU MIGHT LIKE

Rubbra's Symphony No. 1

by Gavin Bullock

If you read the guide to this year's Proms (p.27), you will have seen the following description of Edmund Rubbra's Fourth Symphony:

…[an] awesome, astringent, oppressive opening, a massive outpouring of static energy and electrifying intensity.

The opening of the Fourth is serenely beautiful but it is a wonderful description of the First Symphony! A good deal of Rubbra's music, in good performances, is now available on CD but the musical 'establishment' is still very sniffy about it. Robert Simpson commented on the First Symphony's neglect (after a performance of the First on his Innocent Ear programme):
I don't think it's the public that's the culprit; more likely the professional opinionists and the official bodies who take too much notice of them…
They are wrong, I am convinced. I have gradually got to know and love the works over 25 years and hope that this article tempts you to listen for yourself.

The First Symphony was completed in 1937. Rubbra penned the final movement first - not deliberately: it just came out that way. He had to work backwards and his reasoning led him to the conclusion that the interval of the semitone had to be prominent at the beginning. This dissonant interval completely dominates the first movement. It generates the chromatic, step-wise brass tune and the surrounding semi-tonal figures on the strings, syncopated and moving in octave leaps[1]. This figuration is nearly always present. The effect is bleak, violent and very exciting. The brass theme does not feature again but a diatonic tune, derived from it, appears and pervades the rest of the movement, giving some relief. The whole orchestra is playing much of the time though there are episodes of great transparency. There is no great peroration at the end, the whole thing fading quite rapidly to a quiet conclusion.

The fast movement is based on the Périgourdine, a French dance. Rubbra noted that it 'contains within itself all sorts of contrapuntal possibilities, and these I made full use of'. Some objected that it was not a 'proper' scherzo but another critic countered that the only possible objection was that it was the name of a Paris restaurant. This illustrates the problem some critics have had – trying to pour the music into moulds Rubbra had no intention of filling. He takes fragments of the tune and uses these independently or combined with the tune itself. It is a delightful, very clever movement of great energy. Similar movements abound in his music yet he is accused of being 'too contemplative'.

The finale is the prototype of the typical Rubbran symphonic movement and this one is in a kind of sonata form. Rubbra wrote that he never searched for a second subject: 'I am only happy if this comes spontaneously, unexpectedly, and in the right place'. The wistful opening theme is played by a solo cello and solo viola, the cello playing an octave above the viola, producing a distinctive sound. The double-dotted rhythm of this theme will be important. There is some development of this material before a more confident tune appears. As usual, everything is derived from the initial idea, either directly or indirectly. A beautiful, modal theme is the last to take the stage. The music is worked out at some length and the recapitulation omits the second theme as Rubbra reserves this for the fugal subject of the coda, which itself recalls the first theme and the gorgeous modal tune. At the end, the brass blare out the first part of the fugue subject, a note per bar, over a massive, sustained chord played by the whole orchestra in a noble and exhilarating finish. This is a deeply impressive movement with moments of great lyrical beauty.

This is an astounding First Symphony by any standards. It is 'three-dimensional' music - you can enjoy it at first hearing but to really appreciate it, you need to concentrate on the activity going on under the surface. Hugh Ottaway puts it amusingly in the original sleeve note to the Lyrita recording of the Seventh Symphony (Lyrita SRCS 119 nla[2]):

When Rubbra takes you through a symphonic movement, he seldom mentions key [in a structural sense: the music is not atonal] ; he is at pains to make clear the drawing-out of the main thematic thread, and where the texture is intensified he becomes more animated; this idea comes from here (back a couple of pages); that little accompanying figure (sings) is a contraction of this, heard still earlier (sings again, turning the pages to and fro); these string parts are a lyrical expansion of the original 'germ' (spells out the intervals), with the germinal motive itself, its note-values much lengthened, coming here in the brass….

Ralph Scott Grover, at the very end of his book, writes:
One question has been asked again and again whenever I have played records and tapes of…Rubbra works: 'why is this composer's music unknown and unperformed?' My reply has been and still is, 'why, indeed?'.

My own experience has been exactly the same.

Gavin Bullock

Symphony No 1. Sinfonia Concertante for Piano & Orchestra. A Tribute (BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Richard Hickox. Chandos. CHAN 9538

Notes

1. The Music of Edmund Rubbra, Ralph Scott Grover. Scolar Press, 1992
2. The Boult version of the Seventh Symphony is still available on Lyrita SRCD.235.

Record Review

Reviews by Stephen Connock and Jeffrey Davis

Late masterpieces

Symphony No.8 in D minor, LPO, Boult (Coupled with Rachmaninov Symphony No.3 in A minor) Decca Legends 468-490-2 (bargain price)

What at first sight appears a strange coupling is quickly revealed as appropriate and appealing. Both are late works. Vaughan Williams was 83 when he completed his Eighth Symphony, Rachmaninov was 63 when he finished his last symphony. Both works stay within their composer's established musical idiom, yet both explore new instrumental sonorities in a fresh and compelling way. Both symphonies, too, have remarkable energy - quite astonishing for composers in the last phases of their lives.

Sir Adrian Boult's performance of the Rachmaninov Third Symphony is tremendous. More than Ashkenazy or Previn, Boult brings out the exuberance and vitality of this music without diminishing the impact of those lyrical passages in the first and second movement. Michael Kennedy, in a thoughtful note, reminds us of Boult's long association with Rachmaninov's music. With the LPO of 1956 in superb form, this is a performance to cherish.

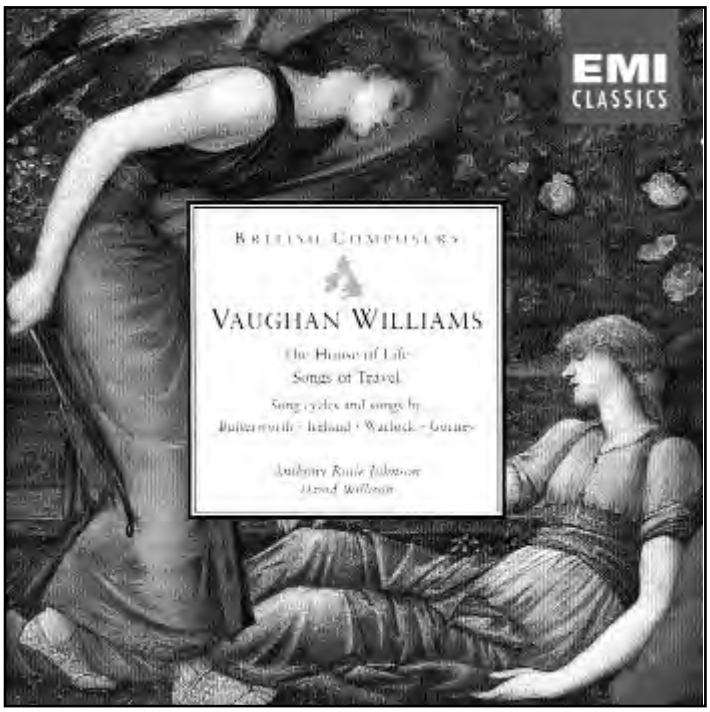
For members of the RVW Society, Boult's 1956 recording of RVW's Eighth Symphony will be more well known. It was recorded in Kingsway Hall, London, just months after the pioneering recording with Sir John Barbirolli and the Hallé. It is a fine performance without quite matching Glorious John's recording. At times Boult seems rather literal although the first movement is excellent.

At bargain price, this CD is difficult to resist, especially for those of us with a soft spot for late Rachmaninov.

Stephen Connock

Anthony Rolfe Johnson in VW songs

The House of Life, Songs of Travel, Anthony Rolfe Johnson (tenor) and David Willison (piano) (coupled with Songs by Gurney, Butterworth and Warlock) on EMI CZ5 5747852 (mid price 2CD set)



It is now over 25 years since these recordings first appeared, produced by Brian Culverhouse. Now under exclusive licence to EMI, they reappear in the British Composers' series in a valuable double CD set, at mid-price. The two RVW cycles are on CD1 and the Ireland's Land of Lost Content, Butterworth's Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad and songs by Warlock and Gurney occupy CD2.

The House of Life is, perhaps, as underrated song cycle. The first three songs – Love-Sight, Silent Noon and Lover's Minstrels – are quite lovely and beautifully sung by Anthony Rolfe Johnson. The performance of Silent Noon – at over five minutes it is very long-breathed – is almost worth the price of this set alone.

The Songs of Travel are well done, if not eclipsing memory of either Robert Tear or Bryn Terfel. However, Rolfe Johnson's warm tone and lively intelligence maintains interest throughout.

The songs on CD2 are more variable. Butterworth's cycle is the high point and Black Stitchel is one of Ivor Gurney's most memorable songs.

Overall, recommended for The House of Life and the Gurney songs.

Stephen Connock

(see page 17)

Excellent 2 – CD set

Vaughan Williams: Dona Nobis Pacem, Fantasia on the Old 104th, Toward the Unknown Region, Magnificat, Tallis Fantasia, The Lark Ascending, Concerto Grosso, Partita, Romance for harmonica.
Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Meredith Davies/Sheila Armstrong, John Carol Case, Helen Watts, Larry Adler, Jean Pougnet, Peter Katin/LPO, Orchestra Nova of London, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra.
EMI Classics, CZS 5 74782 (two discs: budget price).

This most welcome compilation covers virtually the whole of Vaughan Williams' composing career from the early Brahmsian Toward the Unknown Region, to the late Harmonica Romance, played here by its dedicatee, the late Larry Adler.
The recordings also extend from 1953; The Lark Ascending, beautifully performed by Jean Pougnet with the LPO under Boult, to 1976 ; The Partita and Concerto Grosso also played by the LPO and Sir Adrian
The most important item here is Dona Nobis Pacem in Boult's 1974 recording. This was always a very fine version and I have never heard the Dirge for Two Veterans more beautifully paced or more deeply affecting as on this performance. The soprano and baritone soloists are also first rate, giving eloquent performances.

I remember finding it impossible to locate an LP free of surface noise when this first appeared in 1974 and it is great to hear this fine version without such irritating interference, although the recording is obviously inferior to the more recent versions on Chandos (Thompson) and EMI (Hickox). Writing back in June 1998, Stephen Connock said that Dona Nobis Pacem has been well served on record. I agree but I think that this very special performance is a most welcome addition to the CD catalogue and all credit to EMI for restoring it. No credit to EMI however for not including any texts, I was surprised by this, especially as even my old Vanguard / Abravel CD does include texts.

Since the events of September 11th 2001, Vaughan Williams' message from the 1930s seems as relevant as ever.

As far as the rest of the compilation goes, it is pleasing to see the CD release of Fantasia on the Old 104th, always one of my favourites of VWs lesser known works since it first appeared coupled with the Ninth Symphony on Boult's EMI recording. When EMI issued a CD, as part of their British Composers series, of the fill-ups to the Boult series, this work was the only one not included and I have been waiting for it ever since.

The Fantasia exhibits a craggy charm, characteristic of VWs late style, with the piano writing reminiscent of the late Violin Sonata (another underrated work). I would not however agree with my brother who disrespectfully commented that the rather imposing piano introduction reminded him of the children's record "Sparky's Magic Piano!"

Peter Katin gives a fine performance of the piano part and the accompaniment is sympathetic, as always under Boult.
The Magnificat, originally coupled with Riders to the Sea on EMI, shares a similar rarified beauty with the opera and, as Michael Kennedy comments in the informative notes, is an unjustifiably neglected work possessing great spiritual resource, the vocal part is beautifully sung by Helen Watts on this recording from 1971.
The Partita and Concerto Grosso were one of Sir Adrian Boult's last VW recordings and are most welcome back in the catalogue, on their original release they were coupled with Boult's Tallis Fantasia but as that version is already available in the catalogue, we are sensibly given Sargent's version instead. Sargent gives an impassioned performance, slightly faster than the Boult (15.03 as against 16.30.)

I'm surprised that Sargent did not record more Vaughan Williams as this performance, recorded in St Augustine's Kilburn in 1959 burns with conviction, the cathedral like acoustic adding to the atmosphere.

Sargent also accompanies Larry Adler in the first recording of the Harmonica Romance of 1951 which is, if anything, more impassioned than his later version.

The second CD ends with a wonderful performance of The Lark Ascending featuring Jean Pougnet accompanied by Boult. You can also find this version on a recent Dutton disc, coupled with Boult's first recording of the Sixth Symphony and A Song of Thanksgiving but here it makes a glowing conclusion to a fascinating programme.
There have recently been several double disc surveys of back catalogue material of Vaughan Williams' music (from Chandos / EMI etc.) but I believe that this is the best of the recent issues, especially as it sees the return to the catalogue of a number of valuable VW compositions that are otherwise unavailable.

The discs are well presented with the issue containing nice photos of the young Vaughan Williams and Sir Adrian as well as a dramatic painting of The Angel of Death by Schwabe, which has clearly flown over from Suk's Asrael Symphony!
This terrific two-disc survey is also excellent value,(I picked up my copy for £8.50 from MDT mail order in Derby.)

Jeffrey Davis

Towards the Millennium with Vaughan Williams

by Robert Allan

Back in 1994, in the very first issue of this Journal (p.11), Lewis Foreman made the suggestion that it would be so useful if the BBC were to broadcast the whole of RVW's output in order of composition. There is no sign of such a thing coming about yet but in the mean time I had been attempting to listen to everything myself as far as possible, based on recordings and live performances as well as broadcasts, but inevitably excluding some pieces for which neither recorded performances nor scores were obtainable (or where the sheer quantity of short pieces was rather overwhelming, as with his folksong arrangements).

Even so it has taken me over 10 years to complete, ever since a performance of A Sea Symphony in May 1990 in Birmingham Town Hall started me off. 1990 also marked the start of the CBSO's and Birmingham's Towards the Millennium project, looking at the musical output of one decade of the 20th century each year till they reached the present, and it was this, I suppose, that inspired me to do something also rather ambitious on my own account. Unfortunately Towards the Millennium did not feature many works by VW, neither were there many performances elsewhere when I needed them – I tried to follow his chronology as closely as possible, as far as could be established, and avoided going back to hear earlier pieces once I had moved on beyond them.

A Sea Symphony was not, of course, his first significant work, even though it was a landmark, but in the end I decided to continue forwards from c.1907 and only go back to his earliest published pieces after I had reached the last ones. While I had aimed to reach VW's 9th Symphony by the year 2000, as things worked out this was not to be until the very end of it. Thus, in fact, on New Year's Eve I found myself listening to Boult's EMI recording, after spending several weeks preparing as usual by study of the score, and without pre-planning this at all reached those final dissolving E major chords just on the stroke of midnight !

Since then I have gone back and listened to or played through as many as possible of his early songs, choral pieces and finally, the orchestral In the Fen Country. There are still some works which have only become available on record in the last few years (such as The Death of Tintagiles), so I will obviously wish to hear them too before long, but basically I feel I have achieved what I set out to do and am really glad I undertook it.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to the various music hire libraries for making unpublished scores available. I was very grateful that Oxford University Press in particular was willing to send me often quite bulky scores for a month's perusal. At the same time it does seem to say the least unfortunate that full or study scores of several of his bigger choral works and operas have never been available to purchase – these include Five Mystical Songs, Sancta Civitas, Magnificat, and The Sons of Light, which all have very interesting orchestration; and most notably The Pilgrim's Progress, where the published vocal score in many places simply does not give an accurate representation of the music as performed (in terms of expression marks and sometimes actual notes). In the latter case there are admittedly complex reasons for this (see Roy Douglas's two books on the composer for slightly differing accounts), but with the Pilgrim being a work especially close to its composer's heart is it not really unfortunate that this still has not been rectified? [1]

Of all the causes that the RVW Society could espouse I think that moral, or even financial support for the preparation of adequate study scores should be a high priority. The only at all recent new publication I am aware of is that of the orchestral version of On Wenlock Edge, from Boosey & Hawkes, whilst a popular piece such as The Wasps Overture can now apparently only be obtained on hire, not sale, from Faber Music.

Another regrettable situation is where a study score has been edited by Roy Douglas but a solo part, such as of the Oboe Concerto, is still being sold with incomplete or even contradictory markings. In general my impression is that later works had less markings anyway, but maybe that makes the ones that are given even more important.

On the other hand even Sir Adrian Boult once wrote that "the interpreter of Vaughan Williams need not feel too closely tied up to the details of the score above all he should aim to convey to his audience the power and integrity of its inspiration" (The Musical Times, Oct. 1972, p.957-8).

A couple of years ago I contributed my thoughts on the Epilogue of the 6th Symphony to this journal (no.15, p.22), and now I would just like to add some ideas from study of the last three.

Sinfonia Antartica

Study of the slow 3rd movement reveals a kinship between most of the themes, simply in that they are strongly based on the drop of a semitone. This interval is apparent right from the opening repeated flute figures and the horn theme that develops from them, and is then a feature of the pianissimo theme in octaves before figure 4 and the cantabile one for violas and cellos at figure 6 in particular. The great final climax pits full organ against repeated octave B naturals in the orchestra which eventually slip to B flat and A and then circle round B again before the recurrence of the flute semitones and the horn theme (now on muted trumpets).

Some of these themes are ones which were not used in the film soundtrack and may even have been composed especially for the Symphony. Whichever is the case, their choice here from all the themes available seems to indicate the composer's wish to unify his symphonic material as much as possible.

Another interesting feature of this movement is, I think, the fact that the main tuned percussion (vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel and celesta) which have been such a characteristic feature of this symphony up to this point are only used in the first half of this movement and then not heard again in the work. (Actually the vibraphone itself is only to be heard at all for a few bars of the 1st movement!) I'm inclined to feel that the major climax is such a turning point of the 3rd movement that the more 'picturesque' aspects which the percussion could be said to represent are replaced by a

greater emphasis on the human aspects of the Antarctic situation in the remainder of the work, ending, of course, in tragedy as the biting wind is given the very last word …

Eighth Symphony

This work is one which it has been too easy to under-estimate, but listening to the recording by Vernon Handley I was struck by some unexpected similarities between the 1st movement and parts of the 4th Symphony. In particular this relates to the number of tritones that occur in both. Reading as much as I could about No.8 I feel that not enough emphasis is placed on the fact that although the very opening presents a motive of two perfect fourths, very often on later occurrences at least one of them is altered by a semitone to give an interval of a tritone. This then brings about some of the angular and dissonant developments in the middle of the movement. When finally the opening recurs the perfect fourths have almost all been replaced by augmented ones.

Ninth Symphony

What has struck me especially is the similarities between the 1st and last movements i.e. that both have very contrapuntal development sections (and both including a similar rising theme), involving the whole orchestra for quite a large part of the time, climaxing unambiguously in C major with marcato tutti passages on rather similar rhythms ('blared out' to quote the composer's programme note). They both then fade away in C minor before jumping to E major for the following section (which is rather longer in the case of the 1st movement).
In other ways the two are quite different – the 1st using a smaller range of themes and without the frequent changes of tempo and metre of the 4th (which as the composer wrote is really two movements linked together). It seems that the episode at the mid-point of this movement (figure 14) was reduced from 25 to just 3 bars before publication. I had wondered if the extra bars had been removed after the first performance, but listening to a recent broadcast of the recording of that performance made clear that this was not the case.

During the course of my study of VW's works I attempted to make detailed notes on his use of harmony and orchestration in particular, but I have yet to go back and make sense of them - I am hoping that they will benefit me when I come to hear each one again. I must also add that I do not feel that my experience has made me an expert on VW - for one thing it is now about 10 years since I heard major works such as A London Symphony in full. I do feel that he is a composer that benefits from repeated listening, however, as almost all the pieces that at first seemed elusive or awkward fell into place convincingly in the end. Of course some of them aim higher than others but to me many of the rather neglected shorter ones, such as the Three Choral Hymns or A Vision of Aeroplanes are still well worth investigating. The ones that I have been disappointed in are largely those that I have been forced to try and play myself and to cope with the often ungrateful piano accompaniments!

Above all, such a wide-ranging composer provides many benefits when listened to regularly, devotedly and hopefully without too many preconceptions. Obviously there are other less systematic ways of approaching his large output, but the chronological one has given me the sense of having travelled with the composer on that journey towards the unknown region, and in my case, towards the millennium as well!

Robert Allan

Note

1 Working with RVW (1972) and working with Vaughan Williams (1988)

RVW Society News

New Membership Rates

The followed revised subscription rates were agreed at the AGM in October 2002 and are with immediate effect:

Annual membership minimum rates

UK	
Full	£20
Concession	£12
Europe	
Full	£22 or 35 euros
Concession	£13 or 21 euros
World	
Full	£28 or US$40 or A$75 (Australian) or equivalent
Concession	£17 or US$24 or A$45 (Australian) or equivalent

News of our Eighth AGM

Members might like to know that the Eighth AGM of The RVW Society will be held at Charterhouse School on Sunday 13 October 2002, commencing at 3.00 pm. Our special guest on this occasion will be the celebrated pianist Eric Parkin, who will talk about British piano music of the 20th Century as well as giving a recital. He will perform some of Vaughan Williams' solo piano music, as well as pieces by Ireland and Bax. More details in the June and October editions of the journal.

RVW Walks

We have received notification from Belinda Knight that she and her colleague, Bronwen Mills, are considering holding a series of Vaughan Williams' walks around the Dorking area this year. The dates are:

Saturday 20 April	10.30 am and 2.00 pm
Saturday 20 July	10.30 am and 2.00 pm
Saturday 12 October	10.30 am and 2.00 pm

All walks begin in front of the Dorking Halls in Dorking and cost £3.50 per adult. Members interested in joining the walks should arrive at Dorking Halls at the appointed time. Members can contact Belinda Knight, who is a Blue Badge qualified guide, at belindaknight@yahoo.com

CONCERT REVIEWS

Behold, the Sea Itself
RVW returns to Leeds Town Hall
As I waited for the concert to begin I marvelled, not for the first time, at the Victorian splendour around me, so redolent of that confident age when, it seemed, great ventures could be undertaken, great things achieved. The recent refurbishments of decoration and seating are fine and now, with improvements to the troublesome acoustics, we seem to have kept faith with those who came before us nearly 150 years ago.

And then I fell to thinking about the identity of the person who might have sat in my seat that day in October 1907. Had she, perhaps, been a middle-aged music teacher from Roundhay or Headingley or Moortown who had loyally supported the Musical Festival all her adult life? And what, I thought, had she made of the large, somewhat ungainly figure who had climbed onto the podium to conduct the first performance of his newly commissioned choral work Toward the Unknown Region? Of the music itself, so unusual, so different from what she was used to? Or, indeed, of the text, by the American poet Walt Whitman, so strange itself, so cosmic? Had composer, music, text, disconcerted her, excited her? And, when, three years later that same composer had returned to conduct another first performance, of his Sea Symphony, had she returned? If so, how startled, surely she must have been by that magnificent opening, an antiphonal fanfare for brass and voices that must have sounded as though the sea itself had broken through the stout walls of the hall.

At the pre-concert talk in the large and lofty Albert Room, packed, with people having to stand at the back (unprecedented at such an event in my experience) Philip Miles had, albeit briefly, taken us through the two works which were coming together, perhaps for the first time in this hall, and the other great English work in the programme, Elgar's Introduction and Allegro for Strings. And he had one VW anecdote I hadn't heard before : after one of the premieres the great man, resting in an hotel prior to returning home, had been approached by a member of the chorus in a hearty, no-nonsense fashion and invited to accompany him back home where, the man assured him, his wife would cook him a 'nice Yorkshire steak'. VW, it seemed, politely declined!

Time to begin and I noted that the handsome gallery, at least, was more or less full. On came the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Owain Arwel Hughes and, after the Elgar, the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus and the soloists, Claire Rutter, soprano and David Kempster, bass. Truth to tell, neither work counts among my favourites out of the great VW canon, but that is merely because in a large circle of intimate friends, of which they form a part, I have a very special regard for others - On Wenlock Edge, the Tallis Fantasia, Serenade to Music, the Fifth and Eighth Symphonies, above all, Job, surely one of the greatest works of the 20th century. But it all sounded splendid. And what richness, what imagination, what enormous energy, what spirituality there are in these two works! When, in the Symphony, the chorus sings Wherefore unsatisfied soul? Whither, O mocking life? it is as if VW and Whitman touch, unerringly, upon the very essence of man's earthly existence, at once a great journey and a great mystery.

Prior to the concert starting I had fallen into a conversation with the man in the next seat. Was he, like me, a VW enthusiast? I asked him. No, he was not. At the end of the first work he sought my reaction. Splendid, I said. He made no comment. Throughout the Symphony he sat impassively, seemed hardly to glance at the text his wife was holding out before her. Ah well, perhaps Beethoven and Mahler are his men (though not, I suspect, Stravinsky or Schoenberg!)

I went out in the crisp evening air and picked my way through the throngs of Leeds 'Saturday night lifers', absorbed in other pleasures. I, at least, was well satisfied.

And on the following morning, by a happy chance, I found myself in church singing Hymn No. 305 - yes, For all the saints who from their labours rest, Walsham How's familiar words enhanced by that sturdiest of VW's hymn tunes, Sine Nomine. And how particularly resonant seemed the words of the last verse:

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, son and Holy Ghost
Alleluia

So, in this fledgling 21st century, with terrors already upon us that are new yet, in essence, frighteningly old, VW's and Whitman's voices, proclaiming beauty and strength and vision, have already been heard in the Royal Albert Hall, in Symphony Hall, Birmingham and now in Leeds Town Hall.

Something to cling to in the enveloping darkness.

Michael Nelson

A Prom for all seas, all ships . . .
A Sea Symphony, Royal Albert Hall, 10th September
BBC SO & Chorus; Trinity College of Music Chamber Choir; Philharmonia Chorus Joan Rodgers, soprano; Simon Keenleyside, baritone, Leonard Slatkin, conductor

The concert commenced with a riveting account of Schoenberg's brief and rarely performed A survivor from Warsaw. It was new to me, but held the attention with that combination of music and drama that some of us need to overcome serialism. It was followed by the first "complete" performance of Goehr's second musical offering - a more extended work that will, it is to be hoped, remain a rarity for many years to come.

The composition of the first half determined the audience for the second; sadly the Albert Hall was barely half full - as thinly attended a prom as I have yet seen. Is it the programmers or the rest of us that are the philistines?

When A Sea Symphony got under way, the empty seats missed a treat, for this was a truly memorable performance. This is a big symphony, and the forces were fully capable of doing it justice in that grand space. The massive choir exuded discipline, and became an expressive instrument in the expert hands of Leonard Slatkin.

Slatkin, conducting with his hands, not a baton, was an expressive figure to watch, conducting eloquently and yet energetically, bouncing up and down at one point by way of encouragement. The moods of the sea were eloquently conveyed - the urgent restlessness of the full chorus, the warm sea breeze of a solo violin, the gentle wash of the Trinity Chamber choir right up in the gods. The pace was generally fast, yet there was a sense of majesty about all that we heard.

Joan Rodgers and Simon Keenleyside were well matched as soloists, their lovely vibrato filling the space. How could they make themselves heard over full orchestra, double choir and organ? Yet they did so, with no loss of beauty or tenderness.

As the final movement died away, what foretaste was offered by the closing bars? Was it Neptune, the Symphony of sorrowful songs … or just waves lapping the beach, at night, alone?

It still seems astonishing that this powerful, wholly choral, symphony should be RVW's first symphony, close to the beginning of his musical flowering. Could it be that he was actually as precocious as Mozart, and that the long delay before the mature works appeared was due to a search for a soul, for a unique musical identity?

As the audience and Slatkin departed, the latter probably for a well earned bath, I spoke to a lady who had been sitting in front of me. I explained that I had been asked to review the concert for the RVW Journal, that I thought it had been wonderful, and could I say so in my review? Ursula said she thought it was wonderful too, so that would be alright.

John Francis

A Splendid Serenade

On the 1st of April 2001 The Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, under the direction of Artistic Director Donald Nally presented "Serenade To Music", A Concert of British and American Classics and Premieres, in Philadelphia's beautiful and historic Academy of Music. The concert featured Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music, Gerald Finzi's Intimations of Immortality and his Magnificat, op.36, and the world premiere of American composer Jake Heggie's piece My Grandmother's Love Letters.

The concert opened with Finzi's Intimations of Immortality, a large work for chorus, full orchestra, and tenor solo. Mr. Nally skillfully guided all forces through the changing and colouful score. Mark Panuccio gave a fine tenor performance as did the chorus, all well supported by The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.

The second half began with Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music. Before they started Mr. Nally introduced the piece and asked that the audience not drift too far off while basking in the sheer beauty of the music. As the opening strains of the introduction wafted through the Academy you could sense a collective deep breath, as we prepared to be carried away, and we were. The chorus, soloists, and the strings were at their finest form, it was a glowing performance.

The concert continued with Heggie's colourfully scored "Loveletters", and concluded with Finzi's Magnificat, op.36. At the end of the concert the audience enthusiastically responded with many ovations for the conductor and all of the performers.

It was a great night for British music in Philadelphia. Congratulations all around for what was a wonderful evening of choral music, indeed a splendid serenade.

Frank James Staneck

The Pilgrim's Progress in Bristol
Bristol Phoenix Choir and Bristol Phoenix Orchestra; Leslie Bunt, conductor; Nick Abbott, assistant conductor.
10 November 2001

As far as recently built places of worship go, the grade 2 listed Clifton Cathedral in Bristol is an archictectural cliché; it has all the vernacular charm of a multi-story car park stairwell. However, for the purpose of this rare amateur performance of The Pilgrim's Progress such apparent shortcomings in a venue are turned on their head, and one begins, perhaps, to find a less judgemental attitude toward the intentions of the architect. The bare, unadorned concrete spaces proved to offer an excellent acoustic, and the sole visual reminder of the building's purpose is a slim crucifix springing unobtrusively out of the floor. The sterility of the surface only serves to heighten the spirituality which must be brought in rather than out of the building.

This review is not intended to be a defence of modern architecture; there is, however, a salutary lesson here for anyone considering a future staging of Vaughan Williams' masterpiece: it is well known that he was opposed to church performances (not wishing to see his work become a 'festival oratorio'), but then, buildings such as this simply did not exist in his lifetime.

One's own spiritual side cannot be distracted in such modern buildings – the vision can't be 'loaded' with any particular decoration, which is pretty much what VW meant when he wrote that he intended his work to appeal to listeners of any faith.

Acting was kept to a minimum during this performance, and only Wanton and Bubble had any sort of costume – feather boas – but there was plenty of movement, full advantage being made of the spacious performing area, a dramatic 'widescreen stereo' effect being the result. It is tempting to think how just a little imaginative use of special lighting would have added even more value for money.

The performance itself occasionally went a little slower than, say, the Royal Opera House performance, as one might expect, but everything was sure-footed as a result. This was most apparent in the first half, making much of the second half, which was often perfect, seem all the more enjoyable. The sole technical hitch must have been baffling to the uninitiated, and was a great shame: the batteries in Appolyon's mike mysteriously failed, creating a dalek-like fuzz over the loudspeakers. Admittedly, an element of discomfort is often brought by seasoned listeners to such rare repertoire- 'will there be any magic?'- and even professionals can make their instruments squeak at the wrong moment, but by the time Pilgrim reached the Delectable Mountains I too felt totally at ease. And I confess that when the voice of the Bird wafted down from the balcony, I was already spirited away somewhere other than my immediate surroundings.

All the singers deserve praise; this must have been a huge undertaking, but two in particular will stay in my memory. Niall Hoskin (Head of Modern Languages as Bristol Cathedral School), as Pilgrim, quite naturally, and Sue Green, who was delightful as the Woodcutter's Boy.

Perhaps, then, the future of this beautiful work rests in such buildings. The dismay Vaughan Williams felt after seeing his vision converted into something resembling a pantomime surely reflects a certain lack of confidence on the part of its producers. This work does not need costume or a theatrical set: all its landscapes are to be found in the mind, and the music is richer than any backdrop can ever be.

Rolf Jordan

Letters

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

Heartbeat

We had an odd VW experience last Sunday night when watching a programme called Heartbeat. One of its features is that, being set in the 1960's, it uses pop music of that period as background. Imagine our surprise when on the appearance of a character later identified as an art thief the background music suddenly came up as the March Past of the Kitchen Utensils! Even odder was that when this character got into the wine cellar of a stately home which had just been open to the public and started to sample the bottles we had a snatch of The Lark Ascending - wildly inappropriate. These two pieces came back later on in the episode as well as what I think was another movement from The Wasps Suite. (It's a while since I heard this.) All very curious. Heartbeat is produced by Yorkshire Television and they also put out a programme called Dales Diary, which uses The Wasps Overture over the opening and closing titles. I wonder if there is a sort of VW 'mole' working for YTV?

Michael Nelson

An Oxford Elegy

I wonder if any of my fellow members recall the performance of An Oxford Elegy on (I think)Boxing Day 1968?

It was performed on the BBC third program by the BBC Concert Orchestra and Chorus, conductor Marcus Dodds and leader Arthur Leavins, the narrator being Sir Bernard Miles. Subsequent recordings on disc have been abysmal. In each case the narrator seemed to have little or no understanding of the music or the words, yet alone the ability to bring the two together, whereas Sir Bernard achieves this with superb intonation, note particularly "all the live murmur of a summers day" and "still waiting for the spark from heaven to fall". Luckily, I taped the performance and although it is far from perfect, I treasure it! I wonder if The RVW Society could approach the BBC with a view to issuing it on CD? I think that if members were able to hear this performance not only would they be stunned by the brilliance of Sir Bernard Miles but that this splendid and somewhat neglected work would be accorded the significance and appreciation that I feel it deserves. Perhaps, if necessary Messrs. Michael Kennedy and Brian Kay could be prevailed upon to bring to bear any influence they may have with the BBC to release a recording this forgotten gem.

Len Evans

More on David Mellor

I share Chris Cope's delight, expressed in his letter to the October journal, with the very evident enthusiasm for VW's music shown by David Mellor in his programme on Classic FM, and agree that it would be highly appropriate for such a prominent champion to be associated with the Society.

Just one point troubles me. One Sunday I remember hearing one of these broadcasts as I motored contentedly down the M3. All was sheer joy until Mr Mellor informed his guest (and a significant section of the Nation) that VW "had a strong religious faith". Despite the shock of this revelation I managed to maintain a straight course but please, if only to avoid possible repetition, might it be arranged for someone to have a quiet word in the Gentleman's ear?

Peter Rose
Herts.

Wartime context for Fifth Symphony

In edition No 22 William Hedley's masterly article on RVW and the Second World War explains a lot about the Fifth Symphony, and other articles touch on aspects of the War as it affected VW and Ursula but nothing seeks to relate the character of the music in the Fifth to the general moods in this country that pervaded much of the years of its composition, and particularly 1940 and 1941.

I was evacuated from London to a village below the North Downs not so far from Dorking, and I recall the sense of uncertainty that hung over that stretch of the English countryside and no doubt the rest of the country in the darkest days of 1940. That strange stillness in the air, then the siren, then stillness again. One would look up to see the German bombers come in, and then see them fly back, after which silence again in the skies and dark smoke on the horizon. Would there be an invasion? There was anxiety as to whether we would survive. Was all that was so permanent and serene about England and the beauty of its pleasant land and the way of life of its peoples to be destroyed forever? No one knew what might happen. One looked up into the skies for hope. The outlook at times was indeed "bleak and disturbing" (cf. Whittall although he senses this lingering on at the end of the symphony). But somehow a sense of inner resolution endured, and faith in the survival of all that was worthwhile in our way of life.

People went about their business up and down the country, and by night the home guard, wardens and police did their jobs in the blacked-out urban areas and across the darkened landscape. Often the rumbling of bombs and the ack-ack in the distance pervaded the night. Life went on. People prayed. And then busied themselves, trying to keep cheerful.

In this country and abroad people were dying for the sake of all that our parents believed in, and those left at home could but pray. The land seemed to cry out for goodness to prevail over tyranny. If one believed that God pervaded the fields, the trees, the hills, the whole landscape, one could not despair. One had to have faith that we would win. But the most one could do was to be resolute; utter a prayer for peace and hope that it would be the war to end all wars.

Churchill articulated the spirit of invincibility and gave the country renewed hope. And there were turning points in the War when confidence became stronger. Glory to God for saving mankind even if an anxiety about the future remained.

I was only eleven at that time but I believe I sensed the spirit and moods of those times. And when I listen to the Fifth Symphony this is how it speaks to me. For me the "pastoral" quality is more about those wartime skies, the clouds, the light coming through to a troubled threatened landscape, the anguished cry of humanity when the only thing left was to have faith that goodness would survive, and then the threatening clouds clearing, bringing a promise of peace. Of course I can only write words: the music speaks for itself.

Peter Bull
London

Maxwell Davies

In Tony Noakes's letter in the October edition he asks whether any members of the Society had heard Maxwell Davies' Antarctic Symphony, and if so with what reaction.

I can only answer for myself of course, but my response is (a) yes, & (b) awful. I didn't even bother to save the recording.

Michael Gainsford

Joyce Hooper

(3.9.1909 – 29.6.2001)

Music-lovers will be greatly saddened to hear of the death of Joyce Hooper at the age of 91. Joyce has been the doyenne of musical life in Reigate and Redhill for many years. She has taught, conducted and adjudicated at festivals in the borough and her influence has extended to the Leith Hill Music Festival and beyond.

She required the highest standards of the choirs and orchestras she conducted and her insistence on quality and integrity was a reflection of her own musical standards. This, mixed with a delight in what could be achieved and an unforced enjoyment of the varied personalities of her students, performers and friends made her truly loved. She will be greatly missed.

Joyce founded Surrey Opera, a group whose productions reached professional levels. She also conducted her own Bach Choir, Madrigal Choir and her earlier Oriana Choir. She played a great part in the continuing success of the Leith Hill Festival and was responsible for much of the amazingly high standard of musicianship in this part of Surrey. Through her connection with the Leith Hill Festival she came to know the

composer Ralph Vaughan Williams who had a great respect for her musical, vocal and conducting skills.

Joyce received the MBE for her services to music. At the investiture the Queen mentioned Britten's 'Noye's Fludde' in which Princess Anne had sung whilst a pupil of Joyce's at Benenden. Joyce also taught at Roedean, and will be remembered by former pupils of the then Reigate County School for Girls.

Joyce made a wonderfully happy and beautiful home for her husband George, the artist. Theirs was a marriage of great felicity. After George's death Joyce's friends rallied even more devotedly. In the last few years Joyce had needed full-time care and in the last few weeks she needed constant attention but her passing, on 29 June 2001 was quick and peaceful.

Helen Corkery
Reigate

A Sea Symphony

It was recently reported in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, that in November, angry audience members stormed out of a performance of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Apparently "The ASO is offering an occasional break from tradition: adding visual effects to selected concerts; increasing interaction between the musicians on stage and the audience… While some audience members were stimulated by the aggressive mixed media show [A Sea Symphony by Ralph Vaughan Williams, with the poems of Walt Whitman and a high-tech video installation by a Polish computer artist] many found it difficult to listen to the music while the video flashed and churned and depicted a story all its own – connected only subtly to Whitman's text and not connected to the music at all. In three jumbo panels behind the orchestra, the black-and-white video depicted women cutting cloth, banners waving, clocks spinning."

One cannot help but wonder at the ill-advised decision to undertake such a travesty, particularly with this powerful work, which has enough nuances in the interaction between music, soloists and chorus to satisfy anyone who cares for music. The odd thing is that some audience members were "stimulated" by the whole charade, supporting the fact I suppose, that many people need some visual content to enjoy anything – perhaps a legacy of endless TV watching.

The above was included in a "Social Studies" column by Michael Kesterton in the Canadian Globe and Mail newspaper, who agreed that music should be paid attention to without distractions. I had his permission to quote the piece.

Alan J Hanks,
Aurora, Ontario

After the Pilgrim's Progress
In Memory of Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

He is almost half a century gone now.
But lightning will find a path to earth.
And so, as applause crackled round
The concrete spaces of Clifton cathedral,
She rose, frail, in a public guise,
The Composer's widow, to receive
The burgeoning electric gratitude
That sought the maker of this morality,
The House Beautiful of his music.

London, 1958, I think of generous rooms
Near Regent's Park, where the score of the Ninth
Lies as yet unheard; and, in Liverpool,
John and Paul's teenage skiffle.
Five miles across London streets
In a bedsit in Herne Hill, a baby in a pram:
Something becoming me that had fallen
Out of eternity and drew common breath
In a city for seven overlapping months.

That August, on the eve of the Ninth's recording,
He left, first (as she, the younger, had known likely).
She stood in the Abbey, and laboured at the Life.
Years passed. I learned to stand, and to steer
The radiogram's cream bakelite stylus
A serious boy thrilled alike by 'Ticket To Ride'
And the white tragedy of Sinfonia Antartica,
The soprano's desolation, the 1950s wind-machine;
The blue Decca sleeve with the bronze head.

Remembrance Sunday. Temple Meads
Is a castle prinked in cold sunlight.
I see another self here, twenty years ago,
Waiting for answers and a train west:
Poor battered pilgrim, first love newly
Broken like dry bread, bitter and needful,
A repast whose grievous colour stained
The Tallis and the Fifth until twenty more years
Allowed that music to salve, partly redeem

And at forty become away. I trudged again
With Scott, saw afresh the vaulted arches
Of the Fantasia stained now with sun;
Felt Pilgrim rise in the 'Romanza', found
That July meadow starred with lark song.
In the register at Down Ampney church
For 1872, I traced his name and Arthur's –
Who died when Ralph was only three
Never to hear his son's achievement:

A child born under Victoria, amongst talk
Of Swinburne, Eliot and Darwin
(Not Kennedy and McCartney),
Who lived to composer after Hitler's defeat
A song of thanksgiving and the Progress.
I think of last night's concert, and ambition,
As, ticket in hand, I descend the steps,
And that instant, synchronously, on the left,
Led by a guiding arm, is his wife Ursula.

We await the same train. On the platform
I put aside reserve and two generations,
Introduce myself with a clumsy phrase.
I meet a smile, pale eyes, other times;
Grasp mortal fingers that knew
Older hands that inked immortal chords.
I touch a current, a stream of days that lead
Back down the years, to flickering reels
In monochrome; to two Englands –

One, nostalgia's partial lie, that country
Imagined as better, more certain, more secure,
With which his melodies are confused;
And that other - a struggle, an idea
That flickers on and off like a picture
On a faulty television – of visionary green,
Gold and blue, where his lark sings truth;
Where Bunyan and Tallis, Blake and Shakespeare,
Are transfigured to another mode.

She speaks of a lost manuscript, of 'Rafe',
And it seems even now he glances over Regent's Park
Then goodbyes, boarding, connections at Swindon.
It is 11.00 am. The watched Cenotaph is silent.
Thoughts of war dead, his friends (like Butterworth),
The Third, wrought from 'Corot-like landscapes'
And ambulance duty. A flame gutters.
She travels on to London, as the long tracks
Before and behind sing with all our passing.

Rikky Rooksby

Tribute to RVW by Hubert Foss

Music stands in the skies, stirring this strong
Truth-seeking poet (broad frame and valiant heart)
To English thoughts, uttered with sensitive art
Now in the lark's, now in the angels' song.
Shakespeare and Blake, Herbert and Bunyan throng
This stage, where ale-wife Elinor takes her part
Next Pilgrim, Galanthus, cockney, Hugh from his cart
And scholar from his Vulgate. Here is young
England's music. His quest has spanned the years
And made sweet sounds of them. Here greatness lies.
He will out-sing our wonders and our fears.
England's beauty he found, in hymn, symphonies,
A child's song or a man's. His outlines fold
In mist of history. England, he is not old.

Submitted to the Society by Graham Muncy.
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BOOK REVIEW

Vaughan Williams' Ninth Symphony by Alain Frogley
(Oxford University Press, 2001)

Given an under rehearsed première on 2 April 1958 by a conductor, Malcolm Sargent, who, faced with such subtle and complex music, was hopelessly out of his depth, [1] Vaughan Williams' Ninth Symphony has always languished in the shade of its eight predecessors. After the first, unsatisfactory, performance, certain members of the musical press indulged themselves by expressing obtuse, facile and ideologically coloured opinions concerning the new work, thus erecting serious barriers to a balanced assessment of the symphony. As Michael Kennedy records "There was no denying the coolness of the critics' reception of the music . . . The adjectives 'silly' and 'asinine' were applied to the second movement." [2] Faced with the seemingly hermetic nature of the symphony, even sympathetic commentators often found themselves at a loss; in the earliest edition of his useful short biography of the composer, James Day provides the following daunting characterization of the work: "the Ninth Symphony has a grim, chilly, almost nightmare-like tinge at times."[3]

Vaughan Williams' final symphonic score was clearly - and urgently – in need of an enlightened reassessment. All scholars of Vaughan Williams' music will rejoice that Alain Frogley has written just such a volume about the Ninth Symphony, and that the result of his meticulous scholarship is to illuminate the glory of this astonishing late work. But Frogley's work transcends even this noble aim, for the insights that he offers into the genesis of the Ninth Symphony shed a new, fascinating and utterly convincing light upon Vaughan Williams' creative process.

In the introduction to Vaughan Williams' Ninth Symphony, Frogley notes that his book represents "the most detailed study of any kind examining a single Vaughan Williams work, and the first modern scholarly monograph on the composer." (A few sentences later, the reader is disconcerted to learn that Vaughan Williams' Ninth Symphony is, as Frogley asserts accurately, "the most detailed sketch study of any single British work to appear in print.")[4] Although Frogley is moved to defend sketch studies as a valid method of investigation in light of musicological developments that have taken place during the last two decades, his manner of using the precise tools provided by a detailed study of sketches, drafts and holograph manuscripts is invariably placed within a humane cultural context.
This book is the result of an extended period of reflection, and represents a heroic labor of both love and scholarship. Any musicologist familiar with Vaughan Williams' manuscript - and there are not many - can attest to the challenges presented by the composer's often unwieldy, obscure and, at times, virtually illegible musical handwriting. (Not that his cursive script is any easier to decipher, even for a musicological hierophant that has parsed the squiggling runes that flicker across the pages of the composer's correspondence.) Not only has Frogley mastered the composer's handwriting: he has expertly unraveled the cuneiform jottings that make up Vaughan Williams' musical script. Vaughan Williams was quite nonchalant about his sketches and holograph manuscripts: he often simply discarded sketchbooks and gave away manuscripts to friends such as Adrian Boult and Michael Mullinar. (There are no extant preliminary sketches for the Sixth Symphony, for example.) Nearing the end of his career, and surely aware that it would be among his last orchestral scores, Vaughan Williams took pains to preserve the sketches for the Ninth Symphony, so that the gestation of the score is revealed in breathtaking detail. By using a process of informed deduction that bears comparison to the production of an elegant geometric proof, Frogley explicates the gradual accretion of musical ideas, variants and revisions that finally coalesced into the definitive score of the Ninth Symphony. By so doing, Frogley demonstrates the elderly composer's astonishing grasp of compositional technique, especially in the creation of wholly original large-scale formal structures. As Frogley chronicles the way in which Vaughan Williams created, arranged and discarded material for his symphony, the attentive reader realizes gradually the incandescent intensity with which the composer concentrated on the production of as full and perfect a consummation of his inner vision as was possible; like a sculptor, he chipped away at his material until his work assumed its true perfection.

Like an art historian who uses x-ray photography to expose the first thoughts of a great painter, Frogley uses his formidable musicological expertise to bring to light the composer's initial impulses and inspirations. He meditates brilliantly upon the inner narrative of the symphony, a narrative to which Vaughan Williams teasingly alluded in his regrettably facetious and defensive note for the score: "It is true that this [second] movement started off with a programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh no, we never mention it - and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean."[5] Frogley cuts through the composer's habitual ambivalence, and, by deciphering the clues that Vaughan Williams scattered through the sketches for the symphony, discovers how such seemingly disparate elements as Hardy's novel Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Stonehenge, Elgar's oratorio The Apostles and Salisbury Cathedral were connected in the composer's mind and contributed towards the creation of this great work.

Based on this evidence, Frogley rightly surmises that the Ninth Symphony represents an extended musical metaphor for a pilgrimage, an affecting journey toward the unknown region by a composer who in his mid-eighties was still capable of renewing his technique, style and expressive range. Far from being either a chilling block of cold aural granite or the final inchoate effusion of a doddering compositional dinosaur, Frogley's masterful research reveals the Ninth Symphony as a colorful, impassioned and masterful composition that sums up the vast experience of a thoroughly professional and inspired composer. Like the protagonist of Wallace Steven's beautiful poem "To An Old Philosopher in Rome," the aging composer achieved in his final symphony "Total grandeur of a total edifice, chosen by an inquisitor of structures.

For himself." By substituting "notes' for "words" in the final lines of Steven's poem, we can perhaps begin to approach the uncanny and numinous power of this great score: "He stops upon this threshold, as if the design of all his words takes form/And frame from thinking and is realized."

Byron Adams

Notes

1 For a vivid eyewitness account of Sargent's rudeness to the octogenarian composer, see Roy Douglas invaluable little volume Working With Vaughan Williams (London: The British Library, 1988), 91-3.
2 Michael Kennedy, The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 342-3.
3 James Day, Vaughan Willliams (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1975), 165.
4 Alain Frogley, Vaughan Williams' Ninth Symphony (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 6.
5 Quoted in Michael Kennedy, A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 233.

RVW Remembered

Joyce Hooper's memories of Vaughan Williams

by Helen Corkery

For many years Joyce Hooper, whose obituary appears elsewhere in this issue (see page 28) devoted her musical life to the enrichment of music in Surrey.

Founder of Surrey Opera, and well-known as a conductor of choirs and operatic productions, Joyce told me that she could not speak of her own career without recalling the influence of Ralph Vaughan Williams. It was through her long association with the Leith Hill Festival that she came to know him.

When the young Joyce Gayford, as she was then, started her career as singer, conductor and teacher she found herself in the flourishing musical environment generated around the Festival. Standards were good and support keen, yet surprisingly, Vaughan Williams' wider view of the state of music in England was, at the time, one of dissatisfaction.

Writing in 1931, in his preface to Sir William H Hadlow's small but compendious book "English Music" RVW lamented the existing state of affairs, and asked if England did not indeed deserve the earlier epithet "a land without music." He regretted the lack of general support and the apologetic attitude of those who were genuinely interested. He called for an enrichment at what we would now call "the grass roots", for without a lively common ground we could never produce great composers or virtuoso performers. The same was true of literature, he said, which could not rise to great heights without a vigorous foundation.

Yet he could not have complained of lack of vitality in his own immediate locality, Dorking, Surrey and the surrounding villages and small towns. The Leith Hill Festival drew all their choirs together for an exciting annual musical event.

At the time of the founding of the Festival by his sister Margaret, jointly with Lady Farrar, in 1905, Vaughan Williams was busily collecting folk-songs, co-editing the New English Hymnal, and composing some of his major works, including A Sea Symphony and Toward the Unknown Region. He associated himself actively with the Festival, becoming, as his biographer James Day remarks, "more and more the mainspring" yet he disclaimed being the life-blood of the Festival; as Joyce heard him say "After me, the music must go on."

By 1938 Joyce had become the conductor of the Dorking Oriana Choir, at the request of Elaine Gritton, daughter of John W Gritton, twin of Eric, and aunt of Belinda and Robin, Surrey musicians all. This choir competed successfully in the Festival for twenty-five years, appearing at the Dorking Halls, which were built in 1931, as a new location for the Festival.

When Vaughan Williams was selecting voices for his own Dorking Bach Choir, Joyce recalled how excited and proud she felt to be chosen, not only for the Choir but also to sing the solo "It is Finished" in the St John Passion, which she did on many occasions, as letters testify.

She welcomed the opportunity to learn as she sang under Vaughan Williams' baton. Not required for the solo until the second half in the version given, (Vaughan Williams expressing his regret that she would not be heard in the first half as well) she sat in the choir, listened, and noted how Vaughan Williams handled his choirs and orchestras.

She recalled how Vaughan Williams felt that it was allowable for him to adapt Bach's score for what musical forces were available, and his aversion to the harpsichord. "If Bach had heard a grand piano" he said, "he would have used it", so he created, in the St Matthew Passion, a piano continuo, to be played, superbly, by Eric Gritton.

With her musical acuity and intelligence, Joyce noticed that whenever RVW conducted Bach there was something new brought out, "something special for the violas, or a lovely run for the cellos". She remembered him saying that one could never know Bach fully, for at every performance there was something new to be learnt. She found this to remain true and passed on her own discoveries to her singers and instrumentalists.

Joyce said that Vaughan Williams always got what he wanted from his musicians, adding, "My own style of conducting is different, but I often think about him when I conduct. I find I have to interpret things the way he did, it would be impossible not to." She considered herself very lucky to have met "this great musician - a genius", and to have learnt from him.

There can be no doubt that Vaughan Williams, by his contributions in composition, performance and nurturing of traditional music, strengthened and fortified English music's well-being at home and its reputation world-wide, yet, as the 1931 preface so clearly revealed, he valued and considered essential a groundswell of musical activity from which greater talents would spring. He applauded those who "trudge through rain and snow to some ghastly parish room", and he quotes Professor Trevelyan who believed similarly, of literature, that the "despised island patois is destined to burst forth into a sudden blaze."

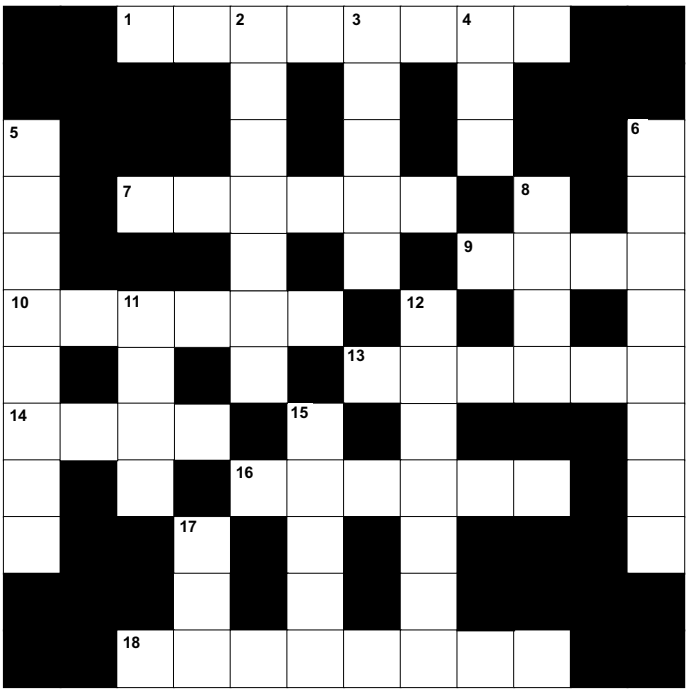
By his personal participation and leadership in amateur music-making Vaughan Williams fostered that destiny and valued those who worked with him towards the same goal. Although in more recent years rehearsal rooms have improved, and travel made easier for most, the need for professionally trained musicians to inspire and develop the skills of their amateur choristers and instrumentalists still demands a steadfast devotion to the task and a generous sharing of musical skills and insights. Joyce Hooper typified this hard-working and generous spirit and in a letter as early as 1944 Vaughan Williams thanks her for taking a Leith Hill rehearsal for him and commends the way she did it.

Joyce Hooper received a number of letters from Vaughan Williams about local musical matters over the years 1938-1958. In 1998 Joyce entrusted these to me and refused to take them back so that a decision as to their eventual placement had to be made. They were offered to Hugh Cobbe, Head of Music Collections, who accepted them for the archives of the British Library. This placement was approved not only by Joyce's close local associates and friends but most importantly by Ursula Vaughan Williams herself who gave gracious support. A lucky chance also enabled me to discuss the proposed placement with Roy Douglas, now aged over ninety, who also approved and was also most helpful. Roy Douglas worked very closely with Vaughan Williams and is the author of "Working with RVW" (OUP 1972) and the later "Working with Ralph Vaughan Williams", (British Library, 1988)

Joyce Hooper's musical success over her lifetime was greatly helped, not only by her positive outlook but also by her reliably good health. The Redhill Bach Choir gave their final concert with a performance of Bach's Mass in B minor. Joyce was retiring as conductor and the choir was disbanding. Soon after that Joyce was seen sharing the conducting of a day-long charity opera marathon. "One does get a little tired from conducting four operas in a row," said Joyce, "so I went for a walk on Redhill Common afterwards to get my energies back."

Joyce's funeral service took place on 11th July 2001 at St Matthew's Church, Redhill, where she had so often rehearsed her musicians. The church was full and the singing, from so many musical people, was moving and beautiful. After an unrehearsed rendering of the chorale from "Jesu, priceless treasure" by Bach, conducted by Jonathon Butcher, the Revd Nicky Tredennick, the presiding minister, made the heart-felt remark, "Joyce would have been proud of us." With Angela Barker playing the organ this exceptional company started the service with, what else but, "Come down, O love divine" to Vaughan Williams' own tune, named after his birthplace, Down Ampney. The same hymn was sung at Vaughan Williams' funeral at Westminster Abbey on 19th September 1958.

RVW Crossword No.9 by Michael Gainsford



Across:

1. Magician in *The Poisoned Kiss* (8)
7. Cradle Song set by RVW in 1928 (6)
9. Unaccompanied singer, in *Twilight People* (4)
10. *Fantasia* was based on *Why fameth in spite*? By this composer (6)
13. Seemingly fleshy companion to the Crane in the *Miraculous Harvest* of 1920. (6)
14. Just this much land in folk song noted by RVW in Coombe Bisset (4)
16. He wrote the words used in item 3 of *Hodie* (6)
18. 'Hero' of *Sir John in Love* (8)

Down:

2. Le *******, French folk song arranged in 1952 (7)
3. The eagle who gave the first performance of the D flat *Romance*, in 1954 (5)
4. Visited by RVW in 1954 (1, 1, 1)
5. The constable's sister in *Hugh the Drover* (4, 4)
6. Disturbed loony pal who fought with Pilgrim in Act 1 Scene 2 of *Pilgrim's Progress* (8)
8. Direction to RVW's birthplace (4)
11. *Alauda Aventis* climbing (4)
12. Double trio became this in 1938 (7)
15. Rich man looks as if he plunges into the water in RVW's favourite folk song (5)
17. Behold this itself? (3)

Some Future Performances

The RVW Society's website, www.rvwsociety.com carries full details of future performances. The following concerts are noteworthy:

Songs of Dorset including RVW's Four Barnes Songs, on 10th May 2002 at Holbourne Museum, Bath. Tickets £7.00

Mole Valley Literature Festival 10-16 June 2002, features a talk on Ralph Vaughan Williams by biographer Simon Heffer at 8pm on 13th June at Grand Hall, Dorking Halls. The talk will be accompanied by a choir. For more details please contact Charlotte Gardiner on 01308 879188.

Next Edition:

June 2002

RVW and Distinguished Conductors (Part 1)

Answers on Page 6

Call for Papers

The October 2002 edition of the Journal will focus on the Songs of Travel

The deadline for contributions is 20th August, 2002

Where possible could contributors supply their article on disk, or email along with a printed copy. This makes the production of the Journal much easier, and reduces the number of errors, as it saves the re-typing of contributions.