

Journal of the
RVW
 Society

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EDITOR

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 (see address below)*

A Celebration for
Ursula

At a memorable evening on Tuesday 2 March 2004 a packed Recital Hall of the Royal College of Music celebrated both Ursula Vaughan Williams's 93rd birthday and the launch of two new books. Each of the new books featured Ursula – *There was a time* drawing photographs of RVW from her collection and *The Complete Poems* now including a new short story, *Fall of Leaf*.

Long association

Dame Janet Ritterman, Principal of the RCM, spoke of Ralph Vaughan Williams's long association with the College, a relationship that has continued through Ursula. She said that the RCM was thrilled to be hosting the launch ceremony for the RVW Society's new books and she explained that all the performers were students, or past students, of the College. Stephen Connock then described the new books to the audience, who included many representatives of the press. To Ursula's delight he then led the assembled soloists in a superb rendition of *Happy Birthday to Ursula!*

Poetry and Music

The concert interspersed Ursula's poetry with Ralph's music. Many of the spoken texts were about Ralph – such as *Tired* and excerpts from *The Dictated Theme*. Jennifer Johnston (pictured overleaf) then sang the poignant *Four Last Songs*. The concert concluded with *On Wenlock Edge* before a last poem of Ursula's *O Western Wind*.



This was our world's end day, dear love,
 An end of time but not of tears,
 The end of touch, the silenced word,
 The first day of our separate years.
 When will time end for me, dear love,
 Or end for both in darkest night,
 Or shall I find, in that unknown
 Your hand is mine, and mine your own?

O Western Wind

For they of joy and pleasure to you sing

The enjoyment of the performers was matched by the pleasure of the audience. Michael Kennedy concluded by thanking the soloists for their superb literary and musical skills. He recalled Ralph and Ursula together – a happy union that inspired the composer to much heart-felt music, including the under-rated *Four Last Songs*. He presented Ursula with a magnificent bouquet of flowers and wished her continuing good health and happiness.

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For the photo album . . .

Pictures from the Royal College of Music



Ursula with Dame Janet Ritterman



Ursula with Jennifer Johnstone (mezzo soprano)



Hugh Cobbe, Ken Blakeley and Ursula



Molly Hornstein, Joyce Kennedy and Eva Hornstein



Michael Kennedy with Sir Roger Norrington



Stephen Connock, Ursula and Lord Armstrong

'A Production of The Archers'

The films of Powell and Pressburger- an overview.

by Rolf Jordan

In their respective fifty year cinema careers, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger worked on almost one hundred films, yet their enduring reputation will forever rest on just one fifth of that output: the extraordinarily rich and varied years of their collaboration during the 1940's and 1950's.

They first met in 1938, in the London Films offices of the movie mogul Alexander Korda when *The Spy in Black*, his star vehicle for Conrad Veidt had reached a production crisis: no-one could adapt the source novel to Korda's satisfaction. With Powell already installed as director, Pressburger was asked to provide a new outline. Korda liked it, and so ultimately did the audiences.

Imrie Pressburger was born in 1902 in Miskolc in Hungary. He grew up on the rural estate where his father was land manager, surrounded by traditional cultivation and craftsmanship. Hungary was divided after WW1, and that part of the country was allocated to Romania - the Hungarian language was banned, so Pressburger decided to complete his education in any language but Romanian, and so ended up in Stuttgart, Germany. Whilst there, after changing his name to Emmerisch, he resourcefully started his own quartet to some success (he played violin). When money ran out following the death of his father, he was forced to return to Hungary, only to face Romanian military service. He effectively deserted, returning to Germany as an exile. Now settled in Berlin, his passion for films and writing stories led him into the film company UFA, and his first script, *Abschied*, in 1930. The rise of anti-Semitism left him choosing exile once more, at first in France, but poverty and predictions of Nazi invasion drove him to England by 1935. He now became Emeric Pressburger, picked up English with the help of a pocket dictionary and a British Museum Library pass, gradually returning to film through help from fellow exiles working in the industry.



Michael Powell was born in 1905 in Canterbury, Kent. His youth was spent on his parents' farm, which was mainly given over to hops. He was educated at the King's School, Canterbury, and later Dulwich College, London. After finding no inspiration in his first job as a bank clerk, his father found him work in Nice (the Powells owned a hotel on the French Riviera), at the film studio of Rex Ingram. His first task was to do little more than sweep the floor. The studio sank after failing to make the transition to 'talkies', and Powell moved back to England, into a film industry that was desperately churning out 'quota quickies'. These existed thanks to the Cinematographic Act of 1927, which obliged British distributors and exhibitors to present a minimum of twenty per cent of

domestic films in a markedly overseas-dominated industry. Powell's European apprenticeship helped lift his films (his first directing credit being the short *Two Crowded Hours* in 1931) above the level of the stogy dross turned out elsewhere. The peak of his early achievement came in 1938 with the legendary *Edge of the World*. Partly resembling documentary, it's a tale about the breaking up of a Scottish island community which combines rugged fatalism and a dazzling range of experimental techniques. Assimilating silent film expressionism with a distinctly mystical eye for landscape, the visionary end result is a triumph of sheer hard work.

In 1940, after the topical success of *The Spy in Black*, the Powell and Pressburger team was engaged on the next Veidt vehicle *Contraband*. Cinema, just as it did in WW1, was proving to be a useful propaganda tool. A Ministry of Information memo was circulated, suggesting new film themes under the headings 'What Britain is fighting for', 'How Britain fights' and 'The need for sacrifice if the fight is to be won'. In fact, Powell had already worked on a propaganda quickie for Korda, *The Lion has Wings*. Production had started on the same day war was declared and within six weeks it was in the cinemas.

The USA needed encouragement into the war, so the MOI actually financed a research trip to Canada for Powell and Pressburger to expand an idea they had put forward; the sole example of the British government directly financing a feature film. Pressburger wrote his outline on the boat home, and narrowly escaped deportation on disembarkation (he was not made a British citizen until 1946).

The screenplay was called *49th Parallel* ('the only undefended frontier in the world'), and an impressive cast was assembled for location filming. The story tells of the desperate escape of a stranded party of Germans from Hudson Bay to neutral America when their U-Boat is destroyed.

The fugitives, led by fervent Nazi Lt. Hirth (Eric Portman), first attack a nearby trading post, where one of the occupants, trapper Johnnie (Lawrence Olivier), looks likely to be the hero of the film until he's shot trying to call for help on the radio.

When the party comes across a Hutterite settlement, it's not long before Hirth is delivering an idealistic rant to the community, urging them, as Germans, to unite with them. This is passionately countered by their leader Peter (Anton Walbrook, a Viennese exile, clearly drawing from the well of his own experience as much as Pressburger). His voice breaking in contempt he tells them: '...our Germany is dead'.

The next morning, when one of the Germans decides to stay with the colony, Hirth sentences him to death. Not only are the lead characters in this film German, but the vast majority we meet are good ones: an unusual approach hardly typical of the propaganda exemplified by *The Lion has Wings*.

When the last remaining fugitives encounter their first Englishman (Leslie Howard) he's hardly a tough guy: he's fly-fishing and listening to Vaughan Williams on the radio. At his camp he delights in showing them his Picasso and Matisse paintings. Much to his dismay, they aren't impressed, so steal his revolver and tie him up - but he only gets angry when they burn his books and destroy the paintings - his earlier assertion that 'things may come and things may go but art goes on forever' somewhat compromised.

Hirth, now alone after a botched escape from the camp, hides on a freight train bound for the US border, where he meets a fellow stowaway, AWOL

soldier Andy Brock (Raymond Massey, who Powell described as ‘having the eyes of a prophet’). When the train arrives Brock insists the Customs officers send the train back again. He reasons that as they are both technically freight they should be on the manifest - and naturally they aren’t. The look of silent glee on Brock’s face as Hirth rattles the gate in frustration, and the imminent promise of Nazi-bashing is a satisfyingly up-beat (or beat-up) ending, no doubt adding to the film’s massive success at home and abroad. It still works as stirring and intelligent entertainment, and Pressburger won the only Oscar of his career for it.

Powell and Pressburger formed their own production company ‘The Archers’ in 1941, basing their logo on a traditional archery target - or perhaps an RAF roundel. The origin of the name is obscure: Powell thought it came from his admiration for one of the archers he was watching during the making of *The Thief of Bagdad* in 1940, and Pressburger thought it may have had something to do with his star sign of Sagittarius. The Archers came to include not only Powell and Pressburger but also their technicians and actors, whom Powell always referred to as ‘artists’. Their first production was ‘...one of our aircraft is missing’, assisted by no less than the Air Ministry, the RAF and the Dutch government-in-exile. It tells the story of the escape of a British aircrew through the occupied Netherlands; essentially *49th Parallel* in reverse - Eric Portman plays the good guy this time. A second Dutch assisted film *The Silver Fleet* (1943) was given to the Archers, but Powell and Pressburger’s role was minimal (as it also would be in 1947 with *The End of the River*), and given over to production duties only.

The Evening Standard’s character of ‘Colonel Blimp’, created by cartoonist Low in 1934, was a strange and controversial subject for a 1943 propaganda piece: the crusty old buffer was originally created to provide a satire on the mentality of Britain’s aging military leadership (we now poke fun at the House of Lords in much the same way). Winston Churchill, no less, became disturbed when he heard about the Archers production *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, and tried to interfere officially wherever possible - even to the extent of telling off Anton Walbrook in the interval of a play he was appearing in. The film’s mysterious intentions and complexity of intention deserves describing in detail:

Major-General Wynne Candy (Roger Livesey) - who resembles the cartoon Colonel - is captured by young officers in a surprise attack ‘just like Pearl Harbour’ whilst relaxing in a Turkish bath hours before the official start of an allied army exercise. He’s naturally outraged at this underhand tactic and takes a swipe at the arresting officer; they both tumble into the plunge pool, and when Candy emerges he is forty years younger and at the start of his army career during the Boer War.

Sent to Germany to counter propaganda (ironically enough), he fluffs the mission by accidentally insulting the entire German army during an argument in a tea room, and as a result is challenged to a duel. The focus on the rule-book protocol of the duel makes an exciting build-up, but just as it starts, the camera pans up through the roof and into the snow outside. This is an extreme case of the Archers new experimentations with narrative form, jettisoning unnecessary parts of the plot so that we don’t lose sight of the underlying ‘what makes a blimp?’ story. It is actually the duellist’s adherence to the rule book that is more important than the duel itself.

The initial outcome is a superficial injury - but a deeper wound comes out of the growing friendship with his convalescing duelling partner, Theo (Anton Walbrook). Candy’s friend and visitor (Deborah Kerr) decides to marry the German, and though he appears to accept gallantly, Candy spends the rest of his life regretting losing the woman he loved.

The passage of time in Candy’s life is shown by his trophy wall filling up with an appalling array of animals from various parts of the Empire to the sound of gunshots, until ultimately the camera rests on a helmet marked ‘Hun’: it is now WW1. When the armistice is declared, Candy tells his servant that ‘...clean fighting [and] honest soldiering have won.’

He meets a nurse (played by Kerr again) and marries her. Candy finds Theo in a prisoner of war camp. Humiliated, he initially refuses to speak,

but soon comes round when he realises that Germany is bound to rise again, helped by the complacency of Candy and his order. But Candy tells his wife that he won’t change until ‘the floods come’.



Time moves on again. Candy’s wife dies, and the trophy room heads start to mount up again: and now it’s the modern day: another war, and a return to the start of the film. Candy is now a full-blown blimp with an army driver (Kerr once again) and Theo is now a refugee. His wife has died too, and his sons are lost to him - they have become Nazis. He tells an internment board, in a moving speech, why he has come to England: homesickness. As in any other Powell and Pressburger film, the most eloquent words in the script are reserved for the outsider (and note how many characters in Archers films are outsiders); no wonder Pressburger considered this the favourite of all his films. Theo tells Candy, who has been put out to graze after his defeat in the Turkish baths, that ‘this is not a gentleman’s war...if you lose there won’t be a return match...’

Candy’s house is bombed out, and is used as a reservoir. Watching a leaf float on the surface, he remembers his dead wife’s voice: ‘you said you’d stay how you are till the floods come’. He turns to his vanquishers, the ‘new army’, who are passing in procession and cheerfully salutes. This is the ‘death’ of the title.

When Churchill attended a private screening (during an air raid) his silence was deafening, and despite some resolute attempts to tinker with overseas distribution, he even attended the gala premier. The Archers, with their potentially subversive epic, had actually fulfilled one of the MOI’s propaganda directives: ‘the need for sacrifice if the fight is to be won’. In the end, the worst enemy proved to be the distribution editors, who shortened the three hour running time, particularly in the USA. The film, helped by its notoriety (‘see the film they tried to ban!’), was a hit.



Their next film, released in 1944, had an even greater narrative opacity, but primarily it was intended to show the USA ‘what Britain is fighting for’. *A Canterbury Tale* may have started life as *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which, despite almost certain financial backing from the Methodist J. Arthur Rank, was considered unfilmable by Pressburger. Powell brought

up the idea of the Pilgrim's Way in Kent, and the story evolved from there, with a nod to Chaucer in the title. Though superficially the film may appear to be Powell's homage to the place he grew up, Pressburger claimed the film to be almost entirely his own, despite being denied access to location filming on account of being an 'enemy alien'.

Three train passengers disembark in timber-framed Chillingbourne, Kent, in the depths of the wartime blackout. It may be the eve of D-day, but it's as if we've stepped back in time again. When there's a scuffle in the darkness, Alison, one of the travellers (Shelia Sim – now Lady Attenborough), has something poured onto her hair. It turns out to be the latest assault by 'The Glue-man', and the travellers (the others two are both sergeants, one American, one English) decide to solve the unpleasant mystery themselves. It doesn't take them or the audience long; because the Archers are hiding the real theme of the film behind incidental detail again: Thomas Colpeper, the local squire, (Eric Portman), is caught almost red (or glue) handed.

The tale is told against a backdrop of evocative names and traditional stories, all set within a Palmeresque landscape of abundance. Despite his sinister air, the characters come to like Colpeper: he's as much part of the landscape as the cathedral they can see from the hill above Chillingbourne. At a lantern slide show, something he runs for troops in the area, he tells them they are modern pilgrims '... on your way to secure blessings for the future'.

Alison, shop girl turned land girl, is already attached to the area, as her boyfriend (who has been killed in action) brought her there for 'thirteen perfect days'. She tells Colpeper that 'if there's such a thing as a soul, he must be here somewhere'.

The American, Bob (real-life Sergeant John Sweet in his only acting role), who got off at the wrong station due to his perpetual bewilderment with English customs, is anxious to hear from his sweetheart because she's stopped writing to him. However, he's back in his element when he finds a wheelwright's shop which uses the same traditional crafts he's used to back home in Oregon. The old wheelwright complains of 'capitalists' and they take great pleasure in agreeing in their joint philosophy that 'You can't hurry an elm'!

The English sergeant, Peter (Dennis Price), is in the area for a military exercise. Despite his lofty air and status as a Royal Academy trained organist, he confesses to Colpeper that his civilian job is playing a movie theatre organ - not an art the Archers would consider inferior.

The film's enigmatic theme is one of transience; within the typically witty script a desperate sadness only hinted at: the three 'detectives', Colpeper, and entire armies are only 'passing through'.



The Glue-man is unmasked on the final train journey to Canterbury, and Peter declares his intentions to report him to the police. But Colpeper seems unconcerned 'There are higher courts than the local bench of magistrates' he says, as the Canterbury Cathedral moves into view from the carriage window.

The end of the film is a sequence of epiphanic blessings: Peter gets to

play Bach on the cathedral organ; Bob's army buddy passes on a batch of letters from his sweetheart that had gone astray; Alison hears that her boyfriend is alive.

Though considered one of their most fascinating and revered films now, it was the first real flop the Archers had. The obscure plot was more than the average audience (and indeed critic) could take.

Toning the experimental narrative down, they made up for their perceived self-indulgence with their next film. It was a huge hit: in 1945 domestic cinema attendance had reached a peak of thirty million tickets sales *in one single week*.

The Archers production *I Know Where I'm Going* remains one of the best loved romantic films in cinema history. In the tale of go-getter Joan (Wendy Hiller) chasing after the head of Consolidated Chemical Industries, some of the anti-capitalistic/materialistic grumblings of *A Canterbury Tale* return, but it's essentially a simple tale dreamt up by Pressburger in a matter of days after an inspirational location scout in the highlands and islands of Scotland. It shares much of the elemental beauty of *Edge of the World*, (including the use of the title folksong, here arranged by Robert Farnon), with the famous ceilidh scene at the heart of the film having a remarkably naturalistic gravity which entirely transcends the surrounding storyline. It's as much Powell's romance with Scotland that finds expression here as that of the film's main protagonists.

The Archers next film was released in 1946 as the first Royal Command Performance, and is the one that Powell claimed to be his personal favourite. *A Matter of Life and Death* was inspired by the true story of a tail gunner who fell 18,000 feet without a parachute and survived. Archers films always have marvellous openings, and this is the best of them all: a panorama of deep space. 'Big, isn't it?' says the jocular narrator, pointing out various passing stars and a supernova caused by someone 'messing about' with the uranium atom: a constant theme throughout the film is that natural law cannot be broken. We look down on Earth in the midst of WW2, and are put onboard a battered bomber in the middle of a 'ruddy pea souper' in the English Channel. Peter Carter (David Niven) is the only soul onboard; the rest of the crew have bailed out and he's lost his parachute. Quoting Raleigh and Marvell to June (Kim Hunter), a radio operator he's made contact with, he jumps to certain death.

Meanwhile, fellow airman Bob (Robert Coote) is waiting in the aircrew section of heaven. It transpires the heavenly bureaucrats have missed Peter. Conductor 71 (Marius Goring), a Frenchman who blames the error on the English climate, is sent to get him back. But now though, things are complicated: Peter has fallen in love with June and has no intention of leaving. Concerned by Peter's tale of meeting the Conductor, June seeks help from Dr Reeves (Roger Livesey). When we meet Reeves he's watching the village through a camera obscura, benignly informing his audience (Powell's spaniels, regular cameo artists!) of the goings on in the village, much like the narrator at the start, seeing 'clearly, and all at once like a poet'.

The Conductor announces a trial in heaven; Rivers diagnoses a brain injury that needs an urgent operation. Peter's trial is set in motion as the anaesthetic takes hold. The Judge's conclusion is both an atomic-age warning and a blessing for humanity: 'Nothing is stronger than the law of the universe, and on earth nothing is stronger than love.'

Black Narcissus, released in 1947 is an adaptation of Rumer Godden's book, and is a complete departure from all of their previous films - the war has vanished. Powell, Pressburger and Godden herself felt unsatisfied with the final result, but nevertheless it's a true classic, in which sensual, earthy (and earthbound, despite the vocation of the main characters) passions are aroused.

A group of nuns from Calcutta are asked by the local General (Esmond Knight) to form a mission in the remote Mopu Palace, high in the Himalayas. A group of brothers had previously tried and failed and it soon becomes apparent why. Mopu palace is a former harem, filled with exotic decorations and murals, and some exotic locals too. There is an

unmovable Holy Man, the young General (Sabu) keen to learn all about English culture and wafting the heady scent of the title ('Bought at the Army and Navy Stores in Oxford Street') about, and last but not least the land agent Mr Dean (David Farrar) flashing his hairy chest about.

The leader, Sister Clodagh (Deborah Kerr), is driven to daydream about her life in Ireland, Sister Philippa (Flora Robson) grows flowers instead of vegetables, and Sister Ruth (Kathleen Byron) goes wild for Mr Dean ('If you're not sleeping properly there must be a reason...').

The entire film (save a few scenes of lush vegetation shot in Sussex) was created in the studio, a remarkable feat. The constant wind and sense of vast distances creates a satisfying contrast to the sensual torments the nuns have to put up with. There is also remarkable use of colour courtesy of cinematographer and Technicolor expert Jack Cardiff (who got an Oscar): the flaming red of Sister Clodagh's hair (Powell loved redheads!) in her first daydream comes as a shock, as does the transformation of Sister Ruth into a woman about town. She taunts Sister Clodagh in a scene of eerie eroticism – simply by applying lipstick- before running off to Mr Dean.

If *Black Narcissus* was suitable balm for post-war audiences, *The Red Shoes* went a degree further. The story (based on Hans Christian Anderson) is about life imitating art, or more precisely about life as art: a young dancer, Vicky Page (Moira Shearer), and composer Julian Craster (Marius Goring) are recruited by the Ballets Lermontov. They create a new ballet – about a pair of shoes that dances the wearer to death – which echoes the relationship they have with Lermontov (Anton Walbrook at once exquisitely languid and demented), who practically steals Vicky's soul with his ruthless assertion that 'the dancer who relies upon the comforts of human love will never be a great dancer'.

In a mischievous piece of casting, Esmond Knight plays the company's conductor. Knight was almost entirely blind - during the war his gun turret on the 'Prince of Wales' had suffered a direct hit during the pursuit of the Bismark.

The Red Shoes is realistic in its portrayal of the workings of a ballet company - in fact, one had to be created for the film (Brian Easdale won an Oscar for his compelling score), and also in representing the intensely closed off world of an artist's mind (or in this case the entire company) during the creative process. As the curtain rises, however, on the first performance, reality falls away, and an unprecedented fifteen minute ballet sequence follows. The stage widens out into huge sets (designed by Hein Heckroth) which become gradually more fantastic, trick photography is employed, and abstraction soon becomes total. We are now right inside the minds of the three main characters: it's a truly stunning piece of cinema.

The Small Back Room, 1949, saw a return to monochrome, and more sexual tension between Kathleen Byron and David Farrar (as a troubled bomb disposal expert). It was the kind of anti-hero fare which would become familiar to audiences throughout the next decade.

Powell and Pressburger sold the Archers name to Korda's London Films in 1950, it made good business sense: there would be money for American co-productions. Samuel Goldwyn and David Selznick backed *The Elusive Pimpernel* and *Gone to Earth* respectively. Sadly though, Powell and Pressburger's films were immediately subject to American interference, and both productions (1950) saw court action resulting in re-shoots and severe editing before their American backers were satisfied.

Of the two, *Gone to Earth* has now happily been restored to Powell and Pressburger's cut. Based on Mary Webb's novel, it was filmed in darkest Shropshire. The photography of the English countryside has rarely been surpassed, all windblown trees and brooding skies, in surrealistic contrast to Heckroth's weird, cluttered Disneyesque interior sets.

The film is saved from the melodrama of the novel by its strangeness and knowingly fatalistic images. Hazel Woodus (Jennifer Jones) is scampering barefoot around the hills looking for her pet fox, terrified by noises of a phantom hunt. She has much the same wildness as her

menagerie of animals and barmy old father (Esmond Knight) who plays the harp, keeps bees and makes coffins. After winning the affections of a tame preacher with her beautiful singing voice, she marries him (the fox goes to the altar with her), but runs off with the caddish local squire (David Farrar), who has pursued her as obsessively as any hunter. Inevitably, when she flees from the scandal to catch her escaped fox again, they get mixed up with the local hunt – a virtual duplication of the opening sequence - and she falls down a seemingly bottomless mineshaft with horrible crash. The film ends abruptly with the call of 'gone to earth' echoing over cloudscape.

During the recording sessions for the ballet of *The Red Shoes*, Sir Thomas Beecham had suggested Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* for a film project. Despite Korda's dislike of the idea it went ahead, almost as *The Red Shoes 2*, with the same cast and crew. It was practically a return to silent movie making - shot to an existing recording and entirely studio-bound. It is scarcely seen today, yet is considered an artistic triumph and was a reasonable success in the Festival of Britain year, 1951.

Oh... Rosalinda!! continued the musical theme in 1955, being a version of Strauss' operetta *Die Fledermaus* set in the same four-power Vienna as *The Third Man*, but it was a box office failure, and also remains submerged.

The final Powell and Pressburger pictures of their main collaborative period were a return to WW2. Though 1956's *The Battle of the River Plate* did good business, it is hardly the stuff of *49th Parallel*. Likewise, *Ill Met by Moonlight*, 1957, seems to suffer from the fact it was made without a real war to comment on. The Archers had had their day.

There was no great fall out, just a gradual drifting apart. Though they remained active in the film industry, both men's careers took an inexplicable nosedive with few interesting results. Powell's fate was sealed in 1960 after the release and subsequently disastrous notoriety of his 'serial killer' film *Peeping Tom* (now considered a classic), made just months before *Psycho*. Despite having more humour and less violence than Hitchcock's film it made the critics uncomfortable, bringing back memories of the unsavoury Glueman. Powell retreated to television (where a production of *Bluebeard's Castle* proved to be a late masterwork) and briefly worked in Australia.

Pressburger wrote a pair of novels, scripted an Australian comedy for Powell *They're a Weird Mob* and (as Richard Imrie) wrote the screenplay for the entertaining WW2 adventure *Operation Crossbow*. There was a bizarre final collaboration between Powell and Pressburger in 1972, a feature for the Children's Film Foundation called *The Boy Who Turned Yellow*. Happily enough, children loved it.

Fortunately, by the time of their deaths (Pressburger died in 1988 in Suffolk, and Powell died in Gloucestershire in 1990), restoration of their films by the BBC and the British Film Institute had brought new audiences, and their careers saw an early re-evaluation. Gradually, the films are finding new life on DVD, academics are writing ever more convoluted essays on the origins of the Archers ideas, and public interest remains high.

What is it that makes their films so popular? Perhaps there is no reason other than that which Pressburger made his watchword: magic. These films should not be merely written about, they should be seen.

With many thanks and 'what ho!' to Steve Crook for rooting out my embarrassing errors.

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www.powell-pressburger.org (an excellent, detailed resource, with a lively international discussion group)

All photographs from private collections.

Ralph Vaughan Williams and the Women's Institute

by Lorna Gibson

Miss Tennant congratulates the Composer



For some members of the Women's Institute, Vaughan Williams will perhaps be best remembered for his cantata

for female voices, *Folk Songs of the Four Seasons*, which was commissioned for the National Federation of Women's Institute's first Singing Festival in 1950. The Festival was based on a three-tiered system of competition that had begun with County Festivals which were followed by Area Festivals, and culminated with the final event being held in London for the winners. *Folk Songs* was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall on 15 June 1950, performed by a choir of nearly three thousand members of the Women's Institute, and accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Sir Adrian Boult. Not only was the premiere of *Folk Songs* the National Federation's first national musical event, but it was also the first time that the organisation had commissioned a work for a specific occasion.

It was Dame Frances Farrer, primarily in her capacity as General Secretary of the National Federation but also as daughter of the Dowager Lady Farrer (and a fellow student of Vaughan Williams during his time at the Royal College of Music), who appears to have secured negotiations with the composer for a commission.¹ Links between the Farrer family and the composer had been forged over many years, and it is likely that Vaughan Williams knew the Farrer family before his student years, as Ursula Vaughan Williams recalled in her biography that he played

chamber music in their home when he was a schoolboy.² The firm friendship that developed between these two families was based on their love of music and their involvement with the annual Leith Hill Music Festival held in Dorking.³

Vaughan Williams's music, and in particular his arrangements of folk songs, had featured strongly in the National Federation's song books and song lists that were published by the National Federation prior to the 1950 Music Festival. The first *Women's Institute Song Book* (1925) includes two of Vaughan Williams's folksong arrangements: "Farmyard Song" and "The Jolly Plough Boy." Although there is only one arrangement in the *Second Song Book* (1926), there are ten songs by Vaughan Williams in the National Federation song list published in 1938. Furthermore, his choral works were also promoted in the recommended music section in *Home and Country* prior to the commission: for example, in December 1945, "Thanksgiving for Victory" and an arrangement of "Greensleeves" were recommended as being suitable for Women's Institute choirs.⁴

Apart from the fee of fifty guineas and the work being dedicated to the National Federation, it is difficult to gauge the exact nature of the contract with Vaughan Williams and whether any specific requests were made either before or during the commission. It appears, however, that Vaughan Williams was given a free rein during the commission. An entry in the minutes for a meeting on 2 December 1948 reveals that members of the Singing Festival Sub-Committee felt very wary about interfering with the composer's decisions: "A request from Wales for the inclusion of a Welsh Folk Song in the Suite was received but it was agreed to inform Wales that apart from the fact that the Suite was now complete we could not in any way dictate to Dr Vaughan Williams on his choice of songs."⁵ Furthermore, it appears that even the National Federation's Executive Committee was unwilling to question Vaughan Williams's monopoly even though it required turning a blind eye to references to Christianity in "May Song", "The Unquiet Grave", "In Bethlehem City" and "God Bless the Master" which contravened the non-sectarian ruling of the National Federation's Constitution.

Although *Folk Songs* includes a large proportion of songs that are sung in unison with a descant semi-chorus, such as "To the Ploughboy" and "May Song", Vaughan Williams maximised the different types of vocal combinations with two-part songs such as "The Lark in the Morning", three-part songs that include "Early in the Spring", and the four-part "Summer is a-coming in". In addition, he included songs for unaccompanied voices such as "The Sheep Shearing" for two voices (which is perhaps the most difficult of the songs), and "Early in the Spring", "The Unquiet Grave" and "In Bethlehem City" for three unaccompanied voices. His predominant use of simple homophonic

writing and syllabic setting, interspersed with short contrapuntal sections, regular rhythms, and avoidance of harsh intervals, indicates that Vaughan Williams recognised that Women's Institute choirs not only included members with varying abilities, but that musicianship within the organisation went beyond a simple cantus firmus setting with orchestral accompaniment.

The Festival began and concluded with massed singing, opening with Parry's *Jerusalem* and ending with *Land of our Fathers* which was sung in Welsh. The first half of the Music Festival programme, which comprised of the premiere of *Folk Songs* and Vaughan Williams's *Greensleeves Fantasia*, was broadcast live on the "Woman's Hour" programme and introduced by Olive Shapley.⁶ The second half of the concert consisted of predominantly orchestral music: Leslie Ashgate's arrangement of Purcell's *Trumpet Tune and Air*, Butterworth's *Idyll Banks of Green Willow*, Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*, and Arnold Foster's arrangement of Vaughan Williams' 'Prelude on the Welsh Hymn Tune *Rhosymedre*'.

The majority of the Royal Albert Hall was packed with Women's Institute members making up the winning choirs, with remaining seats allocated to the runner-up choirs, accompanists and conductors of participating choirs, and a proportion of tickets for sale in the counties (depending on the number of their entries at the final event.)⁷ The grand tier boxes were reserved for special visitors who included members of the National Federation's Executive Committee and Music Sub-Committees, forty County Organisers and members of the press. Christopher Le Fleming and Miss Ibberson of the Rural Music Schools Association were also present.⁸ In addition to inviting the late Queen Mother, who herself was a member of the Sandringham Women's Institute,⁹ Vaughan Williams, members of Oxford University Press, and Mr Michael Mulliner and Mrs Phyllis Thorfold (who had been involved with the Preparatory Conductor's Conference) were also sent special invitations to the premiere.¹⁰

Reviews of the premiere of *Folk Songs* tended to focus on Vaughan Williams's music rather than on the performance of the Women's Institute choir. In particular, critics were united in admiration for Vaughan Williams's ability to compose a work for all female voices and create variety where there was apparently little to be had. An unsigned music critic for *The Times* wrote: "in a word, the greatest ingenuity has been employed to avoid the total monotony of unrelieved female voices."¹¹ Similarly, the *News Chronicle* reported: "The composer's part has been the arranging of these songs to obtain the greatest possible effect from the voices of women only. This he has done to perfection and has decorated the songs with an orchestral accompaniment of the utmost tact and charm."¹² Few critics went beyond referring to the "remarkable achievement" of having three thousand voices packed into the Royal Albert Hall and marvelling at the National Federation's organisational efficiency.¹³ The *Times* reported: "there must have been a great deal of staff work which reduced the number of participating choirs to a fractional representation of the total number of Institutes." It concluded: "The result was astonishing for its accuracy, homogeneity of tone, and what adjudicators miscall 'diction', confidence of attack, and precision of ensemble."¹⁴ *The News Chronicle* similarly praised the overall quality of the Women's Institute's performance and described it as "admirable."¹⁵

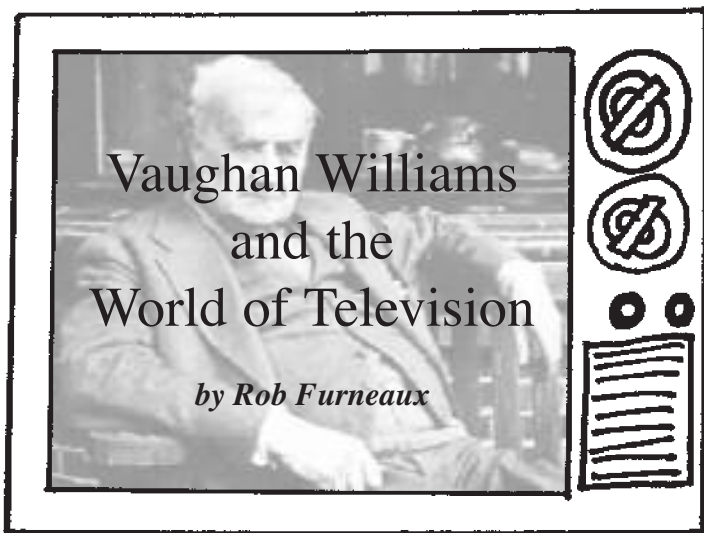
Any plans to repeat the performance of *Folk Songs* in 1951 were initially rejected not only on the grounds of finance, but also because the National Federation felt that music would start to dominate Women's Institutes' activities. However, entries in the "News in the Institutes" section of *Home and Country* reveal that performances of *Folk Songs* continued to take place in the Institutes after its premiere: Miss W.M. Comber wrote that there was to be a performance of *Folk Songs* by Cheshire singers at the 1950 Autumn Council Meeting in Wimslow, Mrs Hughes reported that Hertfordshire Federation were organising a concert and the first half of the programme consisted of *Folk Songs*, and Bishop Cleebe W.I. in Gloucestershire are referred to as performing *Folk Songs* at the Cheltenham Festival Concert.¹⁶

For Vaughan Williams, the commission was not only a chance to compose a new folk song work, but also provided an opportunity to foster his involvement with amateur groups. For members of the Women's Institute, it provided an opportunity for the organisation to unite in music beyond the singing of *Jerusalem* and work towards a common goal that culminated in a display of their musical achievement. Within the history of music in the organisation, *Folk Songs* represents the pinnacle of the Women's Institutes' involvement with the folk song tradition (since the early 1920s) in its commissioning from one of England's most important composers of folk songs of the twentieth century, and sparked a newly gained confidence in the Women's Institutes' abilities, both musical and organisational.

Lorna Gibson is currently completing her PhD in Music at Royal Holloway, University of London, the title of which is "Beyond Jerusalem: Music in the Women's Institute, 1919-1969."

NOTES

- 1 Dame Francis Farrer was the daughter of the Lord and Lady Farrer. She was General Secretary of the N.F.W.I. from 1929-59.
- 2 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *A Biography of R.V.W.* London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 74.
- 3 Margaret Vaughan Williams and Frances Farrer both held the position of secretary of the Leith Hill Music Festival.
- 4 Elsie Rigg, "New Music for W.I. Choirs." *Home and Country* vol. 27 no. 12 (December 1945): p. 187.
- 5 A meeting of the Singing Festival Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on 2 December 1948 from the file labelled JCBB2 previously held at N.F.W.I. archives (now kept at the Women's Library).
- 6 Script of the radio broadcast of "Woman's Hour: No. 33" on 15 June 1950 from the B.B.C. Script Archives, Caversham Park.
- 7 A meeting of the Singing Festival Ad Hoc Committee on 1 November 1949 from JCBB2.
- 8 A meeting of the Music and Dancing Sub-Committee on 6 March 1950 from an unlabelled Music and Drama Minute Book held at the N.F.W.I. archives.
- 9 Queen Mary was the first member of royalty to be a member of the Women's Institute. A meeting of the Singing Festival Ad Hoc Committee on 1 November 1949 from JCBB2.
- 10 A meeting of the Singing Festival Ad Hoc Committee on 27 February 1950 from JCBB2. The Preparatory Conference was held on 18 July 1949 at the Wigmore Hall for County representatives who had been appointed by their own County Music Committees. The aim was to ensure that choral leaders within the Institutes were approaching *Folk Songs* correctly during the months of preparations.
- 11 *The Times*. Friday 16 June 1950, p. 719.
- 12 S.G. "W.I. choirs in new cantata." *News Chronicle*. Friday 16 June 1950, p. 3.
- 13 *The Times*. Friday 16 June 1950, p. 719.
- 14 *Idem*
- 15 S.G. "W.I. choirs in new cantata." *News Chronicle*. Friday 16 June 1950, p. 3.
- 16 Miss W.M. Comber, "News in the Institutes – Cheshire Federation." *Home and Country* vol. 32 no. 6. North-western Counties Supplement. (June 1950): p. 154, Mrs Hughes, "News in the Institutes – Hertfordshire Federation." *Home and Country* vol. 32 no. 8 (August 1950): p. 210, and "News in the Institutes." *Home and Country* vol. 32 no. 8 (December 1950): p. 326.



There's no doubt that the world of television has expanded greatly over the last twenty years or so. Numbers of programmes produced have doubled and redoubled, and with them the requirement to find suitable music to introduce the credits at the beginning and end of each production. Naturally enough programme makers have very often used quality music to provide a suitable atmosphere for their productions – and of course quality music is classical music.

Programme makers tend to steer clear of 'The Great' classics when making programmes and more often search for something original and rarely heard; this is where Vaughan Williams comes in. How many times, I wonder, have you heard the heavenly tones of *The Lark Ascending* drift across the airwaves accompanying pictures of English meadows or rural riverside scenes? Or have been surprised to hear the *Tallis Variations* as views of a great English Cathedral are shown. A recent case in point was the excellent series about the First World War where VW's seventh was used extensively to reinforce harrowing images of the trenches.

This is all well and good, but how many times – and here's the rub – do you see the name of the composer credited at the close of the programme? Well, rarely. In the case of programmes produced with original music the name of the composer is diligently displayed, but in nearly every other case nothing is mentioned. I'm not saying that every snippet of music on every programme should be credited, but where extensive excerpts are used, particularly in the opening and closing titles, credit should surely be given. If there is no mention of a composer the listener will usually – and infuriatingly – be unable to find out where the music originated. A phone call to the television station will as likely as not be met with a shrug and replies such as: We don't know what the music was, or: You can write to the producer, but I haven't got his address to hand.

A particularly blatant case that I encountered recently was a programme produced by Carlton Television about the Tamar Valley. The soundtrack of this production was practically 'wall to wall' Vaughan Williams. The half-hour production used *The Wasps Overture* for its introduction and conclusion, and nearly all of the rest of the programme was accompanied by the *Oboe Concerto*, and *The Norfolk Rhapsody*. When the programme concluded I was considerably dismayed to find that there was no credit to VW whose music, after all, was a large element of its appeal.

In high dudgeon I wrote to Carlton asking why they hadn't bothered to credit VW, and mentioned that in a programme produced by the same company some time before the name of the car driver was in the credits in preference to the composer! I concluded by writing:

'So, please consider my words. Composers spend many hours in the production of masterpieces such as *The Wasps Overture*

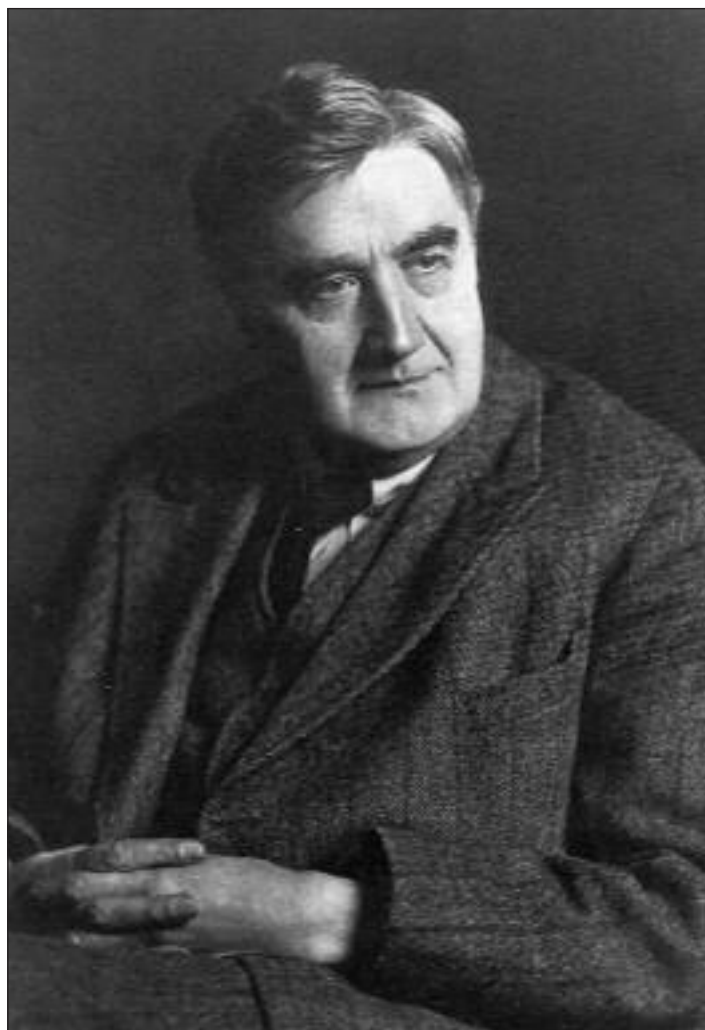
for others to enjoy; the very least you can do is credit them in programmes which rely so heavily upon their work for their success.'

I got a terse response saying that: 'On screen space and time prevents music credits being listed' followed by the obligatory 'Your comments have been noted' and 'Thank you again for your interest.'

I must admit that this pitiable response made by blood boil, and I wrote back saying:

'Thank you for your recent letter. In it you state that 'On screen space and time prevents music credits being listed'. This statement is clearly ridiculous. When original music has specifically been written for a particular programme, space is miraculously – found for it; so why can't other music (like that I mentioned in my previous letter) be credited? It's a great pity that TV companies such as yours disregard great works of art by placing them into their programmes without the credit they obviously deserve, and you ought to be ashamed of your pathetic excuses.'

Predictably, I received no response from Carlton concerning my letter. So, might I suggest that the next time you hear a piece of Vaughan Williams played prominently within a Television programme you instantly put pen to paper and complain that no credit was given. And who knows, if enough of us kick up enough of a fuss, VW and others like him might at least receive due credit for their exquisite music, and members of the general public might at last find an accessible pathway into classical music via television credits.



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS SOCIETY



Tenth Annual General Meeting



A Special Celebration

To mark the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the RVW Society, this year's AGM will include a celebrity concert, as well as a keynote address from Michael Kennedy.

The venue will be the Royal College of Music (Recital Hall) London on Sunday 10 October 2004, commencing at 2.30 pm.

Refreshments will be provided before and after the event.

Stephen Varcoe (baritone) and Julius Drake (piano) will perform the following programme:

Three songs from *The House of Life*:

Heart's Haven
Silent Noon
Love-Sight

Three English folk songs:

Bushes and Briars
The Captain's apprentice
On board a '98

Songs of Travel

Given the special nature of this event, admittance will be by ticket priced at £10 for RVW Society members, including wine and refreshments.

Tickets are available until 30 September 2004 from:

Mrs Cynthia Cooper, 4 Springfield Road, Aldeburgh IP15 5JG Suffolk

Cheques to be made payable to The RVW Society.

All members are urged to attend this celebration of our tenth anniversary

A date for your diary?

In a new venture for us, Lewis Foreman will be speaking on 'Englishness in Music' to members of the RVW and Elgar Societies on Tuesday 9th November 2004 in the Barns Centre, Thame (Oxfordshire), at 8.00 pm (doors open 7.30 pm). There will be no charge for entry and refreshments will be provided.

I have often felt that many members would welcome such a development. Now Jonathan Pearson, one of our regional Chairmen, has carried out an extensive questionnaire exercise in the area broadly covered by the Thames Valley to seek members' opinions there, and the results are encouraging. (see page 20)

We have therefore been talking to our opposite numbers in the Thames Valley branch of the Elgar Society and have decided to learn from their experience by participating in this joint venture, for which we hope to attract an audience of around 40.

As the date approaches we will be arranging to contact members within, say, 40 miles of Thame to let them know more details and to gain an advance idea of how many will come. The October Journal will also carry an advertisement, and the event will be outlined during the AGM at the Royal College of Music in London on 10th October.

David Betts
Membership Secretary

The English Music Festival

- The Spirit of England

It all commenced with my father singing Vaughan Williams' poignant setting of *Linden Lea* to me in my infancy. Even at that tender age, something of its pure "Englishness" struck a deep chord in my soul. Then, when I discovered Holst's *St. Paul's Suite* several years later, and subsequently attended that magnificent school itself, the quest began in earnest, and a whole new world unfolded before my entranced ears.

Anyone who is familiar with Quilter's miniature masterpieces of songs, with Vaughan Williams' *Oxford Elegy*, Holst's *Cotswold Symphony*, or Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality* will understand what I am on about. There is a quality that makes English music of the early twentieth century absolutely unique; utterly individual, and distinctive in its sound from the music of any other nation. There is a lyricism, a romanticism, a soulfulness about English music that the music of foreign contemporaries fails to capture. The way in which our music relates to our landscape; its pastorality, its inextricable relationship with English literature – especially such writers as Hardy, Keats and Wordsworth – again adds an exclusive element. English music has a streak of the melancholy running through its veins – see *Egdon Heath*, *The Curlew*, or *Curlew River* – but despite this wistful and disconsolate pensive air, there is a ray of hope, a deep spirituality that will inevitably shine through. Nostalgia, poetry, evocation, lushness, expressiveness, vividness – all these are essential elements to be found in this simply, but exquisitely, crafted music. And in a society where music has, perhaps inevitably, become nationalised – not just in orchestral logistics but also in sounds, repertoires and performers – this uniqueness is to be preserved, and cherished to the highest degree.

Vaughan Williams is one of those lucky few of British composers who gains at least some of the recognition he deserves. His music thankfully graces our concert venues on a fairly regular basis (though, of course still not often enough!), and he has reached foreign shores as an "international" composer. Yet we cannot be complacent – gems of his composition are still even now coming to light (*Willow Wood*), and not all of his works are yet recorded, although the RVW Society has worked wonders on these scores by committing the remaining pieces to record, not least the exquisite *Poisoned Kiss*. But if only other British composers had fared so well!

The fact that identical repertoires are being performed by the same orchestras world over means that a small nucleus of works has developed that are recognised as "acceptable". Consequently, no concert manager would be in trouble if a programme of Brahms, Tchaikovsky or Dvorak did not sell, but his job would be on the line if he had attempted a concert of York Bowen, Armstrong Gibbs and Ernest Farrar. The consequences of this are obvious – and debilitating. British composers have no place in this clique of favoured composers, and English music is simply not fashionable. Worse still, it is seen as politically incorrect. Whether this is a result of the ever-increasing tide of multiculturalism, and the fact that anything "English" suffers, one can only speculate. But certainly there is a hesitation to promote anything English, as if it is seen as antagonistic to other cultures.

We are all familiar with how other countries traditionally despise England for her "lack of musicality" – for example, the German music researcher Carl Engel announced in an 1866 study about national music: "Englishmen are the only culture (people) without their own music". Approximately 40 years later Oscar A. H. Schmitz in 1904 published a book concerning English society problems with the sub-title "Das land ohne musik" ("The Land without Music") to characterise the British musical nation. A point to be made is that if Stravinsky or Bartok quotes a folk tune, people rave about it, whereas if an English composer does the

same, the piece is dismissed out of hand as being rustic or primitive.

Perhaps in this cosmopolitan atmosphere, England, instead of treasuring and re-discovering her gems, has blindly followed the short-sighted opinions of her critics. Consider the fact that in ten years of *Promenade* concerts from 1992 to 2001 more time has been allocated by the British Broadcasting Corporation to the music of Kurt Weill than to the music of Stanford, Parry, Delius, Walton, Bax, Moeran, Purcell and Holst *put together*. Even works of the major British composers have been neglected; both the *Apostles* and *The Kingdom* by Elgar only received their premieres at the Proms as recently as 4 or 5 years ago. Many consider Delius' opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* to be the first great English opera of the modern era yet it has not been performed at either the Royal Opera House or the 'English' National Opera for more than 50 years! Although a large amount of the corpus is now being preserved in CD format, it is largely thanks to the smaller recording companies such as Chandos, Hyperion and Naxos. Furthermore, the only professional recording of Delius' opera *Koanga*, which followed live performances in 1972 conducted by Groves, was deleted a few years later and has only just (in 2003) been reissued on CD. Thus, no professional recording was available for thirty years! A similarly dire fate has also befallen the symphonies of Frederick Cliffe. His first symphony is an undoubted masterpiece yet only received its first public performance for nearly ninety years in 2000 – again, readers may be pleased to hear that it has at very long last been issued on CD (Sterling label). Other major British composers have fared even worse. Holst's *The Coming of Christ* is incidental music to a mystery play with words by John Masefield. It was written on the request of the then Dean for performance at Canterbury Cathedral and has not even been recorded.

There is most certainly a disparity between the high sales and chart listings of English music CDs and the lack of performances. In fact, the high record sales demonstrate a great interest, and demand, in English music; a demand which is not being satisfied in the concert hall. It appears that a number of orchestras prefer to put on a heavily-sponsored concert of inaccessible and contemporary composers such as Ligeti and disregard the resulting paltry audience rather than a concert of accessible English music that would surely be more to an audience's taste but would not, for some reason, attract sponsorship.

As these sad facts came to light, and yet on the other hand, I became more intimately involved in the rich and hauntingly beautiful sound-world of English music, I was filled with a burning desire to rectify the situation and to put English music back on the map. The English Music Festival (EMF) (whose catch-phrase is The Spirit of England, after Elgar's work) was thus born. This annual festival, devoted solely to the music of British composers, has the two main aims of digging out the forgotten treasures and thus promoting the unjustly neglected music of English composers and of putting on outstanding performances of all the music it undertakes. It will bring to live audiences pieces that should be in the repertoire, but that are never, or rarely, performed or recorded, concentrating mainly on that most fruitful period of English composition (early - mid twentieth century), whilst also ensuring performances of earlier works, going back to mediaeval and renaissance music. The EMF will work closely with the national composer societies, helping to raise their profiles, whilst also creating strong links with other British products, such as British wineries, breweries and British foods, as well as traditional arts and crafts, all of which would be on sale throughout the duration of the Festival. The Festival will take place over five days during the October half term, commencing in 2005, and the beautiful Abbey in the Oxfordshire village of Dorchester-on-Thames has been identified as the perfect rural setting for the festival.

Since the launch of the English Music Festival Company in October 2002, the EMF has progressed rapidly. We have already provisionally booked venues, artists and orchestras (including the RPO, the Orchestra of St John's, the Holst and Finzi Singers and top conductors and soloists), are well on our way towards charitable status, and have full business plans, financial forecasts and programmes for the first couple of years, as well as sponsorship and publicity ideas and brochures that are soon to be fully realized. I am backed by an advisory committee, including, amongst others, Peter Ainsworth MP, Ursula Vaughan Williams, Paul Spicer, Stephen Layton, Raphael Terroni (Chairman, BMS), Martin Lee-Browne, Dr Jeremy Dibble, Peter Savidge and Hilary Davan Wetton. Henry Kelly, Lady Bliss, Paul Guinery, Michael Kennedy, Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, Felix Aprahamian and Simon Jenkins comprise the Vice-Presidents of the EMF.

That the festival will succeed, if up and running, cannot possibly be questioned, given the record ticket sales at the all-British Gloucester Three Choirs, and the record companies' figures of English music sales – besides, English music nutters will travel the ends of the earth to hear their adored composer's works (I should know – I'm, one of them!)! Help is still needed, however, and I would be delighted to hear from, or meet,

any fellow member of the RVW Society interested in this project, and have copies of all the papers and documents available at request. Any aid you can offer, whether in the administrative side of the festival, enrolling as a steward / helper for the duration of the festival, or – more urgently – by providing introductions to potential sponsors, would be most gratefully received. Any ideas or suggestions regarding sponsorship, or indeed any donations, are more than welcome. I hope that you will find the kindness in your heart, and the confidence in our cornucopia of a musical heritage to make the time to help me do justice to some of the finest composers in the world, and to make the most exciting project in our country's musical scene really happen.

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Vaughan Williams

– the Greatest Briton?

by Rob Furneaux

You may recall that last year the BBC embarked upon a search to find the greatest Briton of all times. The results of the top one hundred candidates were a mixed bag to say the least. Personalities such as Michael Crawford and Boy George managed somehow to find their way onto the list. Musicians from the pop world were well represented: the likes of Bono, Paul McCartney and Freddie Mercury made a strong showing. Indeed, John Lennon made it into the hallowed top ten.

So what of the world of classical music? Not much to show I'm afraid. Conductors: Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Colin Davis – not one. Musicians: Nigel Kennedy, Julian Bream, Jacqueline Du Pre – no. And what of the composers: Sir Arthur Sullivan, William Walton, Benjamin Britten – sorry.

But there was a little hope: Elgar managed to make it into the mid-fifties. So, what of our beloved Vaughan Williams? He didn't even manage to clamber into 99th spot.

Having read into the nominations process, I was surprised to find that in order to gain a place in the lower section of the rankings (ie 60-100) a given candidate only needed to gain around 200-300 votes on the BBC's telephone hot line. I wonder how many Vaughan Williams got? Not a lot I suspect. Did you vote for Vaughan Williams? It would appear that the Elgar Society made quite an effort to boost their man up the charts, putting him into a respectable position in the middle of the 100. So next time (if there is one) when the BBC puts out a call for nominations in their top 100 Britons, members should ensure they vote en masse and by doing so give the great man a respectable showing. By all accounts six or seven hundred votes would have put VW well ahead of the broadcaster John Peel! (he came in at 43).

If any solace is to be gained from this poor state of affairs, us classical buffs can at least take a little comfort in the knowledge that the world of British art with the likes of Turner, Constable and Reynolds, didn't put in a showing at all in the top one hundred. Oh, and if you're wondering, when it came to the final voting night I put in my penny worth for Brunel.

It also struck me that it would be an interesting exercise if members were to nominate whom they considered to be their top ten composers (providing that VW came in on top of course) and then justify their choice. After a little thought my top ten would probably read something like this (although I admit that my tastes are far from conventional).

- 1) Mr VW of Dorking (of course)
- 2) Sibelius (even though he's not much in vogue these days)
- 3) Sam Barber (totally brilliant Violin Concerto, Essays, Adagio)
- 4) Rachmaninov (all round classy composer, with much emotion)
- 5) Shostakovitch (good for blowing the cobwebs away)
- 6) Rimsky-Korsakov (strangely neglected, superb orchestration)
- 7) Elgar (plods a bit, but Symphony 2 and Cello con are very good)
- 8) Respigi (underrated. Have you heard *Sinfonia Drammatica*?)
- 9) Nielsen (especially Symphonies 3, 4 and 5)
- 10) Delius (evocative and idyllic)

An interview with Elliott Schwartz

Elliott Schwartz is a Professor of Music at Bowdoin College in the U.S. In 1964 he published a trail-blazing book on RVW's symphonies. Last January he was in Oxford and Rikky Rooksby conducted this interview with him about his work on VW forty years ago.

RR: What was the first VW music you heard?

ES: I was about 19 or 20 years old, an undergraduate in the mid-1950s at Columbia. It was the 4th or the 6th symphony. Virtually all of my experience with VW's music was instrumental rather than choral. Primarily it was the symphonies. About the same time I was given as a birthday present the recording of the two-*Piano Concerto*, which I found amazing – I was very struck by that. That's where it began. I was at a stage in my own composing where I was hungry for a fresh way of using triads. I was aware that traditional tonal functional harmony would lead me only so far.

From what I heard of other 20th century composers I knew they had realised this also. Traditional harmony was operating at 'full speed' only in the world of popular and folk music. In art music people had been searching for alternatives for a century. The approach that appealed to me the most involved non-functional use of triads. This is why VW became a great source of pleasure. I had discovered something similar in some French composers, like Satie ...

RR: Which is interesting given VW's French influences ...

ES: Exactly. In the mid-1950s I was uninterested in free atonality or serialism, though I had heard those styles. Rather than tritones, seconds, sevenths or ninths, it was major and minor chords that interested my ear. But I wanted to find fresh ways of using them. As a result I developed a liking for American composers such as Samuel Barber and Vincent Persichetti (whom I met years earlier). Some fellow Columbia students were smitten with the Paul Creston *Symphony 2* [available on Naxos] and we listened to it again and again. I wound up studying with Creston – during my graduate-school years - because of that.

RR: The VW book grew out of your doctoral thesis.

ES: Yes, which itself had grown out of my fascination with the music.

RR: Was there a sense that VW was an eccentric research topic for an American student at that time?

ES: I wasn't aware of that; I was probably too naive to realise that the subject was not very fashionable. That only dawned on me later. Most of the source material consisted of writings by British authors. It never occurred to me that the absence of US books on VW might be due to a stylistic prejudice. I thought it was just a national thing.

RR: What was your view of VW's symphonic cycle and its standing?

ES: Very impressive. I was convinced that VW's cycle was a major contribution to the symphonic repertoire. By the late 50s, when I began writing my thesis, I had also become attached to various "modernisms" (mostly in the area of chance and improvisation). But it didn't seem to me, either then or now, that there's a contradiction between being drawn to VW and also being interested in people like John Cage. It wasn't an either/or.

It seemed to me that the tonal forms such as the 20th century symphony, concerto and quartet were doing very well in the hands of composers whose music was tonal - with a few exceptions (like the Carter quartets) – composers whose resources were strongly nationalistic in using folk music or deriving a style based on it. VW was like Sibelius, Bartok or Prokofiev in that regard. On the other side of the ledger there was a strong international *avante garde* movement which had erased those concerns and substituted something else. And I thought both movements were equally wonderful.

RR: What were your favourites of the symphonies?

ES: It's easier to say which was my least favourite ... I think the *Pastoral*.

RR: That's ironic given what you were saying about triads ...

ES: (laughs) Yes, it is. Oh yeah. Very, very true. With the *Pastoral* it was because it has the least surface variety, surface contrast. I also probably fell victim to the curse of the programme notes of the time, which tended to portray it as a contemplative, meditative, work rather than, as we now know, a war work. For another least-favourite, I'd say the *Antartica*.

RR: Is that because you felt it was too episodic?

ES: Well, more programmatic than it needed to be. I love the 8th but it's not one of my top ones because it's too slight. The *London* is also a bit lower on the list, perhaps because it's more programmatic than it needs to be, and I think the later ones overshadowed it. But it's still a powerful piece. I think my favourites are *A Sea Symphony*, 4, 5 and 6.

RR: Do you have a view on 9?

ES: Very enigmatic piece. When VW died in 1958 (at the time the newly-completed 9th was being recorded) I was just beginning my thesis. It's funny, but when you said '9' I jumped, as if I'd forgotten there even was a 9. I don't think of it ... It's the one symphony where a particular melodic line doesn't immediately come to my mind. Is that other people's experience? Or yours?

RR: I tend to remember 9 not for melodic lines but overall orchestral textures and effects ...

ES: I remember the saxophones ...

RR: Things like the super-imposing of F triads on Em and E in movements 1 and 4. I think it's a symphony where VW has reconfigured his musical language and in so doing made a step forward as an artist. It is a summation of what he had done, but a step into a new territory. Which for some one to do at that age was a fantastic achievement. ...

ES: At that age, oh yes.

RR: On another matter, the lyrical strand of VW, expressed strongly in 5, is the element of his work most liable to be undervalued by music criticism because the values of that criticism have been dominated by an outlook that puts a premium on conflict and much less on beauty in music. Hence the tendency in those circles to grudgingly admit that 4 and 6 have merit.

ES: Yes, that's true. They're tough, 4 and 6, hard, steely, confrontational. But there are "conflicts" in the 5th as well. In my book I tried to make the point that - given the diatonic modal language which dominates 5 - those moments where half-steps are used, are, within that context, moments of great drama. What interests me most about the 5th symphony is not the melodies but the modality. The use of a modal language to generate a new approach to functional harmony. I found that very attractive. And the ambiguous way of laying out the music ...

RR: The C against D in the opening ...

ES: Yes, the C against D, and the suggestion of G as well. I found that wonderful.

RR: Have you changed your mind about VW's music?

ES: In general, no. I still think he's a major figure. When I wrote the thesis/book I wasn't as deeply into Sibelius as I am now (I teach the Sibelius symphonies 2, 3, 4 and 5 a lot), and I now see VW in that context. In addition, I have a greater sense of VW's influence on various American composers, such as Schuman, Mennin, Hanson and Barber.

RR: Barber's fine *Toccata Festiva* has some very VW ideas in it.

ES: Yes ... and I now see a very strong British connection. In the '50s I knew little or nothing of Elgar's music. I think now Elgar is wonderful – beats Strauss hands down! (laughs). And I knew equally little of Britten, Delius or Walton then. But those are contexts within which I can now view VW.

Some Thoughts on the Norfolk Rhapsodies

by Linda Hayward.

Quite early in my discovery of Vaughan Williams' music I fell in love with the first *Norfolk Rhapsody*. I found that he had, in fact, written three rhapsodies, which were based on folk tunes collected in that county. I longed to hear the second and third, but the composer had withdrawn them. Imagine my delight, then, when the recording of the second rhapsody came into being, and was released with my favourite symphony – the *Pastoral*.

When I first heard the second *Norfolk Rhapsody* I recognised the first theme as being the folk song which Vaughan Williams used as the 3rd movement in the *Six Studies in English Folksong* originally written for cello and piano but also available for violin, viola or clarinet. I warmed to it immediately, for it seemed to be an old friend in a different guise. I noticed that the opening arpeggio was played on the cello and that the clarinet, supported by the bassoon and the horn took up the tune. In this way there was a link between the two pieces by use of instrumentation. Michael Kennedy's notes to the CD told me about the folk tunes, and his catalogue of Vaughan Williams' music told me that RVW had originally thought of making the rhapsodies into a *Norfolk Symphony*. In my imagination I wondered what this proposed 'symphony' would have sounded like....

I listened to both rhapsodies in chronological order, so that the first rhapsody acted as the first movement of the 'symphony' and the second rhapsody as the second movement. Then, as an experiment, I reversed the order, but felt that this did not really work. Without the knowledge of what the third rhapsody sounded like it was not possible to know if it would have made an appropriate third movement.

On further investigation I found that the first rhapsody had its first performance on 23rd August 1906 at the Queens Hall, when Henry Wood conducted it. RVW revised it, however, and this version was played at Bournemouth on 21st May 1914, with the composer conducting. The second and third rhapsodies had their first performances in 1907, in Cardiff, played by the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the composer.

I wondered what the critics of the early part of the 20th Century thought of the pieces.

According to the newspaper report of the first performances of rhapsodies 2 and 3 at the Cardiff festival in 1907 they were very well received. The *Western Mail*, dated 28th September 1907 states "The two rhapsodies produced tonight are the second and third of a series of three constructed around folk tunes heard by the composer during a visit to Norfolk, a couple of years ago." It goes on to say "All the tunes possess strongly marked rhythmic qualities associated with rustic tunes and it would be difficult to find any with more buoyant flavour than those used by Dr Vaughan Williams as a basis of his rhapsodies. He has not only scored them quite cleverly, but succeeded in welding them together and developing his themes in a generally effective and musicianly manner." It concludes that "Cheer after cheer greeted the composer at the close." They were a "triumph", so why were they withdrawn, I wondered.

The famous *Norfolk Rhapsody No.1*, which was revised by RVW exactly 90 years ago, was also well received at Bournemouth in 1914. The *Bournemouth Daily Echo* dated 22nd May 1914 reported that "The audience also heard something absolutely new in the first performance of

the revised edition of Dr Vaughan Williams' *Norfolk Rhapsody* for which the composer was enthusiastically received."

Gustav Holst writing to Vaughan Williams in a letter, says "Your best – your most original and beautiful style or 'atmosphere' is an indescribable sort of feeling as if one was listening to very lovely lyrical poetry. I may be wrong but I think this (what I call to myself the real RVW) is more original than you think."

I think that the first rhapsody meets that criterion in the way Vaughan Williams uses his orchestral forces. In my opinion it is "very lovely lyrical poetry". Presumably RVW thought so too, because he let the revised version be published.

Comparing the two is not easy. One is more familiar with the first than the second. The second rhapsody is in its original version and we do not know what changes would have been made if there had been a revised version. No doubt, Vaughan Williams intended to do it, but other work and events got in the way. Quite a bit of work was being composed around this time, including *The Sea Symphony*, *On Wenlock Edge*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, and *A London Symphony* among others. As well as the first performance of the new edition of *Norfolk Rhapsody No.1* in May of 1914, the second symphony had received its first performance in March; Vaughan Williams could be said to be a composer whose career was taking off. However, the cataclysmic event, which was just around the corner, was the First World War. He joined up at the earliest opportunity, and his career was on hold for the next four years.

When he returned in February 1919, everything had changed. The world was not the same and neither was he. He did revise some pre-war work, notably *Hugh the Drover*, *The Lark Ascending* and *A London Symphony*, and was working on *A Pastoral Symphony*. Perhaps the reason for abandoning the idea of the *Norfolk Symphony* was that the rhapsodies were from a different age than the one that existed after the war. The new work of the third symphony, which incubated in 1916, was of more importance, and the revision of the second, now dedicated to Butterworth, was claiming attention. Perhaps the second and third rhapsodies just didn't seem worth the effort of revision, or maybe they sounded too innocent and youthful, when youth and innocence had disappeared.

And yet, I feel that if they had been worked on, the second and third rhapsodies could have been part of a beautiful and wonderful 'lyrical symphony'. As it is, we will never know why RVW did not continue with his proposed *Norfolk Symphony* but we can enjoy what is available to us, which gives us a glimpse of what might have been.

Sources; Michael Kennedy CD notes 2002. *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams by Michael Kennedy [2nd edition]*. *Catalogue of the works of Ralph Vaughan Williams by Michael Kennedy*. *Heirs and Rebels* edited by Imogen Holst and Ursula Vaughan Williams. *Western Mail* 1907. *Bournemouth Daily Echo* 1914.

RVW and the early 20th Century

by E J Hysom

In mid 1940 G M Trevelyan wrote to Vaughan Williams about the death of their friend of undergraduate days, Maurice Amos:

“We had great days together in our youth, in the age of gold, didn’t we? Now he escapes the iron age which we must shoulder”.

Well, just what was golden about their youth? Transport for one thing.

TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATIONS. A major breakthrough occurred in railway travel when steel rails replaced iron ones. Heavier engines could be used; this resulted in longer trains and higher speeds. By 1881 London to Birmingham took three hours, an average speed of 43mph. By 1895 London to Crewe was done at 47mph. Night mails permitted fast communications by letter. VW’s friend G E Moore could post a letter in Cambridge after 10 pm and it would be with his parents at Exeter – about 260 miles away – the following morning: and if that wasn’t fast enough there was always the telegraph.

Vaughan Williams was a good customer of the railways – he had to be when he was giving two series of lectures in the Lent term of 1903. The ones at Gloucester involved more than 100 miles trip each way, plus the distances to the railway stations – he must have been travelling for about six hours. Brentwood however was no problem. It is only about 20 miles E N E of Liverpool Street rail terminus – and that is about four miles from Barton Street where RVW was living at the time. But all this is to anticipate

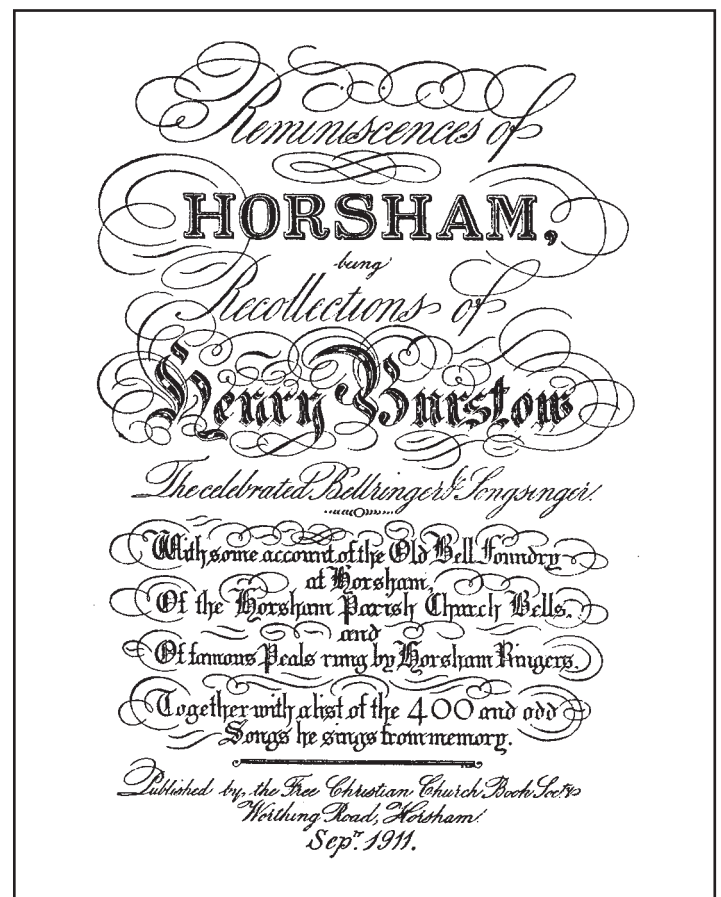
For those who are not familiar with southern England I thought the following might be of help. If one sets off from central London in a south south westerly direction after 20 miles is the town of Dorking, where RVW lived for many years. Less than two miles N E of Dorking is Box Hill where from 1868 lived the poet George Meredith. About five miles S W of Dorking is Leith Hill Place, home of RVW from 1875 onwards. In 1881 George Meredith was struck by what he called “The curse of verse”. For two months poetry invaded him stopping progress on ‘Diana of the Crossways’ prose which was profitable – poetry wasn’t: but this intermission from prose writing gave the world *The Lark Ascending*. It is a romantic thought that a lark which may have charmed the young Ralph could easily have been a close relative of one which inspired Meredith to write his poem – the two places being less than seven miles apart! Be that as it may, if, from Leith Hill Place, we travel five miles in a south-easterly direction we come to Lyne House, just a mile short of Ruser. Two miles S W of Lyne House is another small village – Kingsfold. Lyne House is the home of the Broadwoods and it was where Lucy Broadwood lived until 1893, by which time she was about 35 years of age. If we travel four miles due south of Lyne House we come to the outskirts of Horsham, the town where Henry Burstow lived for all his long life.

HENRY BURSTOW (1826 – 1916) Bootmaker, bellringer and songsinger.

Henry Burstow made his living by bootmaking, but this wasn’t richly rewarded: it just covered living expenses – annual income around £40. For extras he would sing at public functions and bell ring at the villages surrounding Horsham. After a day sitting at his bench he enjoyed the exercise; he always returned home, however late it was: perhaps he didn’t want to stay at the vicarage – and to give the vicar a chance to convert him from his atheism. His parents were worried that he might get ‘knocked on the head’ but by 1893 he had slept every night at Horsham, excepting one week only. By the late 1900’s he was well past bootmaking, and his voice was giving out; what was he to do for an income? It was before national pensions were introduced. Fortunately a saddle maker who was a good friend of his took down his recollections and turned them into a book *Reminiscences of Horsham*. 500 copies were

sold by subscription, then a further 400 copies. It was reprinted by Norwood Editions, USA, in 1975. As regards Henry Burstow’s memory it is best to let him speak for himself:

“Very soon after I was born I began to develop a faculty with which I may say, without boasting, I was endowed in an extraordinary degree. I inherited a tenacious memory, to which from babyhood upwards I committed particulars of numerous events and incidents, tales, and songs: once my observations, mental or visual, were made and committed to memory, nothing has been able to dispossess me of them. The mental pictures I drew of the tales and songs taught me by my father, even before I was as high as the table, and the words of all the songs he taught me (those starred in the list at the end of this book), as well as the whole four hundred and odd songs there named, all these I have in my mind and on my tongue today. This faculty has been especially useful to me in my career as a change bell-ringer, an occupation that imposes a severe tax upon the memory, and I am much in hopes that its usefulness in recording the following particulars of Horsham in my younger days may be appreciated by my fellow townsmen”.



Of his meetings with Lucy Broadwood and RVW he further adds:

“In 1892-3 I lent my list of songs to Miss Lucy E Broadwood (later Hon. Secretary and Editor to the Folk Song Society), and sang to her a large number of them, which she noted. Miss Broadwood left her old home, “Lyne”, near Horsham, in 1893, and some eleven years later suggested to Dr Vaughan Williams, a country neighbour, that he should come to see me. I sang to him such songs as he asked for, all of which he took down; some of them he recorded by his phonograph. This was the first time I had seen or heard one of these marvellous machines, and I was amazed beyond expression to hear my own songs thus repeated in my own voice. Many of these songs have been printed in the journal of the Folk Song

Society, Part 4 of Vol. I, containing the largest number under one cover”.

Horsham, and especially the Folk Song Society (afterwards FSS), owe much to William Albery for this act of friendship.

THE BROADWOODS.

In the Dictionary of National Biography there is an article on John Broadwood (1732 – 1812), piano manufacturer and co-founder of the Broadwood Instrument Co. Biographical notes were supplied by a Miss Broadwood – probably Lucy E Broadwood (1858 – 1929), who did so much for folk song in general and the FSS in particular. She lived at Lyne House until 1893 – in which year she copied out Henry Burstow’s list of 420 songs, as noted above. No. 1 on that list is *Boney’s Farewell to Paris* – and the very first song to be published by the FSS in Vol. 1 No. 1 was *Napoleon’s Farewell to Paris*. The subscript says: “This song was taken down by Miss Broadwood and myself from a gamekeeper at Lyne, Sussex in 1893; the words were afterwards completed from a ballad - sheet – J A F M (J A Fuller Maitland)”. Fifty years before Lucy’s uncle, the Rev John Broadwood, squire of Lyne, published his collection of sixteen songs. They went under the snappy title of “Old English Songs as now sung by the peasantry of the weald of Surrey and Sussex, and collected by one who has learnt them by hearing them sung every Christmas from early childhood by the country people who go about to the neighbouring houses, singing, or ‘wassailing’, as it is called, at that season. The airs are set to music exactly as they are now sung, to rescue them from oblivion, and to afford a specimen of genuine old English Melody, and the words are given in their original rough state with an occasional slight alteration to render the sense intelligible. Harmonised for the collector, in 1843, by G A Dusart, organist to the Chapel of Ease at Worthing. London, Published for the Collector by Balls & Co., 408 Oxford Street, for private circulation (folio, pp.32)”

Little more need be said: ... to rescue them from oblivion ... Already, in 1843, the Rev Broadwood could see the problem; but to afford a specimen ... this would not do for RVW and Cecil Sharp – they wanted to record every last one of them! Of the intervening period until the formation of the FSS, some 55 years later, several persons were collecting, often quite extensively. Frank Kidson was one; he collected in the northern counties and wrote a short history of English folk song. ‘English Folk Song and Dance. Frank Kidson & Mary Neal. C U P 1915.’ Quoting from this: Most persons were under the impression that ... the songs sung by rustics and other persons ... were merely remembrances from printed sources, and that practically little, or nothing, existed purely traditionally. Frank Kidson and his co-workers soon thought otherwise. “Miss Broadwood, then living at Lyne in Sussex, found an unworked mine of great richness among the country people of her district. ... a chance suggestion caused the Rev Sabine Baring-Gould to turn his attention to the collecting of the song current in Devonshire and Cornwall. Mr Baring-Gould absolutely revelled in this work, and his wild journeys over Dartmoor, with periods of settling down for a time at village inns, brought him in a plentiful harvest of charming songs and delightful melody.

In this task he was associated with the Rev H Fleetwood Sheppard and Mr F W Bussell. The work of these collectors saw publication in *Songs of the West*, the first part of which was issued about 1889 and the fourth and last part in 1891.

A small part of Miss Broadwood’s work was incorporated in *English Country Songs*, which she edited in collaboration with Mr J A Fuller Maitland in 1893. The great popularity of this work is justified by its excellence.

But what of Vaughan Williams in 1893? He was already up at Cambridge, and one year short of his Mus.B degree. 1894 and he was part of a reading party at Skye, and, as Ursula Vaughan Williams tells us “ ... it was there he heard a Gaelic preacher at an open-air service. Not understanding the language, he listened to his voice and noted how emotional excitement, and having to speak so that the words would carry, changed speech rhythm into song. He remembered the melodic formula into which the sermon grew ... and recognised it when he started his work on folk song, and found it common to the opening of many English

and Scottish songs.’

Easter 1895 found RVW and his reading party friends at Seatoller in the Lake District – this time joined by Maurice Amos (1872 – 1940). It was an absolutely splendid time. The fact that three of them – Ralph Wedgwood, G M Trevelyan and G E Moore were Apostles seemed to have caused no difficulties, in fact it may have acted as a cement at the 1896 Penzance meeting, which seems to have been a bit of a disaster. But that’s another story ...

In the autumn of 1895 VW was back at the Royal College of Music in London and it was there that he first met Gustav Holst: they were to have a profound effect on each others’ work. Also in 1895 VW found employment as a church organist: this was in south London. It appeared he had no wish to go back to Leith Hill Place. He needed more qualifications. The FRCO came in 1898 and the Doctor of Music, Cantab. in 1899.

VW had married Adeline Fisher in October 1897 – a few days before his 25th birthday. The Rev W J Spooner officiated. He was related to Mrs Edith Tait, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury – as was Mrs Kate Lee (nee Spooner), first Hon. Secretary of the Folk Song Society, Mrs Lee was married at 17, trained as a singer, had a short professional career in the 1890s, and collected folk songs in Sussex. This was daunting for a lady on her own. She would ask likely singers if they knew any folk songs and, on being told no, would say "Do you know *The Farmers Boy*?" Most people knew it, and it broke the ice.

The Folk Song Society. The society was up and running by mid-1898, with 110 founder members: RVW was not one of them. Perhaps he was put off by the fact that two of the vice-presidents were Parry and Stanford, his teachers from the RCM, that he had only recently left. There were 14 members of the committee including Lucy Broadwood, Frank Kidson, J A Fuller Maitland and Mrs Lee.

In the first number of the J.FSS is a paper by Mrs Kate Lee ‘Some Experiences of a Folk Song Collector.’ It reads well, even today. It was read to the Society 2 February 1899. In summing the meeting up Sir Alexander Mackenzie ‘called attention to Mrs Kate Lee’s eminent services. She had been heard to remark lately that the work was getting too much for her; but he thought if they pressed her, she would continue to do for them what she had already done well.’ That proved to be a mistake. Maybe she already suspected something but she fell ill – hoped to get back her strength, but it didn’t happen. The FSS fell into deep eclipse. Out of respect for the person who had ‘virtually created the Society’ she wasn’t asked to step down until it was almost too late. Lucy Broadwood took over as Hon. Sec. – and soon Cecil Sharp and Dr Vaughan Williams were on the Committee: both were by that time collecting. From then on the FSS didn’t look back.

In the very early 1900’s VW busied himself with teaching; writing for *The Vocalist* and setting his favourite poets, including Wm Barnes’s *Linden Lea* – a long running best seller.

He was also much into setting recent poets – D G Rossetti and R L Stevenson spring to mind. His works would get first performances at Broadwood concerts. However, in 1902, he made a setting of Shakespeare’s *Orpheus with his Lute*, which was dedicated to Miss Lucy Broadwood. In her biography of RVW Ursula Vaughan Williams has published a chronology of his life and times. It is worth expanding that with information derived from Michael Kennedy’s major work, Tony Kendall and the late Frank Dineen, (see bibliography), plus, of course, the JFSS. One then begins to see just how busy VW was. What with teaching, lecturing, attending first performances of his works, dashing off to see ailing relatives – it’s surprising he found time to compose; much less pursue folk songs!

Lucy Broadwood seems to have been some sort of a mentor to VW: she encouraged his latent interest in them. The fact that many of them were in the modes probably helped. He went to a voice coach to help with his delivery – and she supplied examples from her expanding collection, which she sung at the first series of lectures held at Bournemouth in late

1902. The last of the six lectures was given on 14 December 1902. A month later, on 19 January 1903, he commenced a repeat of the series at Gloucester, and on Wednesday 21 January commenced the Brentwood course! The latter was not set up until about mid-December and the fact that classes did not always occur on the Wednesday suggests that they had to fit in with RVW's existing diary. For example the week commencing

Monday 9th March 1903. Scheduled lecture at Gloucester.

Tuesday 10 March. First performance *Silent Noon*: words by D G Rossetti.

Thursday 12 March. First performance *Willow Wood*: words by D G Rossetti.

The concerts where the above were performed were held at St James's Hall, London. They were Broadwood concerts. Friday 13th RVW at Brentwood. At this lecture a daughter of the vicar of Ingrave, situated about 2 1/2 miles south of Brentwood, gave VW a fragment of a song that she remembered from 36 years earlier. At the last lecture she – that is Georgiana Heatley – gave to VW songs that she had collected from a housemaid at the Vicarage and her mother. But perhaps it was not the words that VW was primarily looking for but the tunes.

Cecil Sharp had his personal eureka moment on 22 August 1903 when he heard *Seeds of Love* whilst in the garden at the vicarage of Hambridge in Somerset. He had not found an unrecorded folk song for two examples of it had been taken down by members of the FSS in 1900, and Lucy Broadwood had taken it down from Henry Burstow in 1893! It seems that it may have been sung as early as the late 17th C. It was not on Henry Burstow's list of 420 songs, which suggests it was too commonly sung to be worth recording. But it was what set Cecil Sharp off on his life's work. Dr Maud Karpeles, in her book *Cecil Sharp* London 1967 remarks: "Incidentally, it may be mentioned that for the first seven years, until he gave up his other professional work, he could devote only holidays and occasional weekends to collecting. And, of course, all expenses had to come out of his own pocket." Something similar could be said of VW. In a letter to Lord Kennet (1940), VW said "I am now making a good income from my compositions ... But I did not achieve this till I was about 40 ... So except for the fact that I was born with a very small silver spoon in my mouth I could not financially afford to devote my whole time to composition ... I supplemented my income by playing the organ (very badly) and teaching and lecturing." So the time available to VW for composition was somewhat limited, and some of his compositions needed to be published and to yield an income. This did not leave much time for folk song collecting. It is not altogether surprising that Cecil Sharp, supported by VW, hoped that the County Councils would take up

folk song recording: it was soon obvious that they wouldn't – or at least not soon enough, so Cecil Sharp and RVW took it up at every possible opportunity.

Soon, May 1904, Cecil Sharp was on the committee of the FSS, and a month later RVW joined him. It was at this meeting – the AGM – that the Chairman, Sir Hubert Parry, introduced Miss Lucy Broadwood formally as Hon. Secretary. The Society rapidly came out of eclipse and from then on never looked back. More than twenty years later in *An Appreciation of Lucy Broadwood*, RVW, then President of the FSS was to say "When the Folk-Song Society was founded in 1899 Lucy Broadwood threw herself whole-heartedly into its work, and in 1904 became de jure what she had been for some years de facto – both honorary secretary of the Society and editor-in-chief of the Journal." Speaking of his hearing *Bushes and Briars*, VW, in a lecture in 1912 said "I was invited to a tea party given to the old people of a village in Essex only twenty miles from London. After tea we asked if any of them knew any of the old songs whereupon an old man, a shepherd, began to sing a song which set all my thoughts about folksong at rest." This historical compression which RVW uses was doubtless brought about by lack of time to explain what actually happened, i.e. that Mr Potiphar had refused to sing in the vicarage grounds but suggested that VW called at his cottage the following morning. Likewise in his "reminiscences" Henry Burstow is doubtless using "historical compression" when in less than 150 words he tells us of his meeting with Lucy Broadwood, 1892-3, when he sang her a large number of songs, which she noted, and some eleven years later (she) suggested to Dr Vaughan Williams, a country neighbour, that he should come to see me. I sang to him such songs as he asked for, all of which he took down; some of them he recorded by his phonograph. This was the first time I had seen or heard one of these marvellous machines and I was amazed beyond expression to hear my own songs thus repeated in my own voice." So when exactly was that? Michael Kennedy lists three meetings: 7 December 1903; 22 December 1904; and November 1905. The first was at Leith Hill Place, and the other two at Horsham. Why should VW suggest Leith Hill Place when he lived at Westminster – and why should he drag a 79-year-old man the twelve miles from Horsham? I think the answer must be that at Leith Hill Place was a suitable room available in which to make recordings. It may be that the phonograph belonged to a Wedgwood relative who operated it. I think too much has been made of VW's unhandiness. I suspect he was a natural left-hander who was forced to be a right hander. (I should know!).

I've recently seen on the TV a demonstration of a phonograph being used – it looks even easier than a wind-up gramophone. I spoke to Dr S P Martland about this, i.e. would RVW have found it difficult to use, and he thought not. (See below). It seems that phonographs were being used on the continent for folk song collection in the mid 1890's.

Cost of Phonographs

Edison in the USA was an early pioneer. In 1890 they were expensive, but by 1900 the price had come crashing down. In 1902 Edison brought out the Eagle model. An eagle = \$10, and that's what it cost. In those days \$5 approx. equalled £1. In England, around 1900, and what with Customs and middlemen's profits, the prices of phonographs were from 2gns to about 8gns for a de luxe model: most of them would record. And the wax cylinders? Ten to the pound. It seems that VW could probably have afforded one had he so wished.

Early Use of Phonographs

In England Percy Grainger was using an Edison-Bell Standard model in early 1906. He was much attached to it, other collectors never used them. But Grainger would wind down the speed control on playback so that he could get every slight phrase and nuance. The first mention of RVW using a Phonograph occurs 2 May 1907 at Horsham when Mr & Mrs Verrall sang three songs including *Basket of Eggs*. VW had noted (phonograph). The next item is dated 2 and 4 May (Rusper – when Mr Penfold, landlord of the Plough Inn sang three songs, including *The Turtle Dove* (phonograph). Also listed is: Mr Miles in the Plough; Henry Martin. Notation and phonograph. Rusper, as I've mentioned above, is only about 1 1/2 miles from Lyne. Some idea of the size of Lyne can be obtained from a remark by Henry Burstow. He describes a severe hailstorm when between 8 and 9 pm on Sunday the 7th July 1839

hailstones as big as walnuts fell. “Every skylight in the town, and all the glass in the gardens of the large houses in the neighbourhood was smashed to atoms.” He lists several large houses; Tanbridge lost £60’s worth, but topping the list is Lyne at £500! Perhaps, through the good offices of Lucy Broadwood he borrowed a phonograph from Lyne House for these May 1907 recordings, but I think it more likely that he had his own. There is a final clue to this.

Tarry Trowsers

In Michael Kennedy’s list there are only two mentions of this song. The second is 3 & 4 September 1907 (Hadleigh). Singer Mr Jake Willis. Song: The broadstriped trowsers (*Tarry Trowsers*) but firstly:- 25 April 1904 (Ingrave) *Tarry Trowsers*. The singer Mrs Humphreys of Ingrave, aged 72. Tony Kendall in 1995 brought out a CD called *A Bicycle Ride with Vaughan Williams*/Stormforce Arts. STF006CD. The final track is a wax cylinder of *Tarry Trowsers* sung by a woman. Under the credits is Wax cylinders courtesy of Ursula Vaughan Williams/English Folk Dance and Song Society. Could this have been Mrs Humphreys? I think so. And the 25 April 1904? Why not? Those supposed early records could have been not for the benefit of posterity but partly for Adeline who was away attending to family commitments.



*Yours Faithfully
Henry Burstow*

Concluding Thoughts.

This preliminary study grew from some thoughts generated by reading Michael Kennedy’s remarks about Henry Burstow and RVW meeting at Leith Hill Place, Monday 7 December 1903. That meeting must have been planned, perhaps before the Ingrave old peoples’ tea party.

I think that by November 1903 VW had decided that he must put some serious time into investigating folk song. As we know his personal eureka moment came on the 4th December when Mr Potiphar started to sing ... in the Aeolian mode! We recall how fond of the modes VW was – how whilst still at the RCM he had produced a modal waltz for Stanford.

When Lucy Broadwood died she left her phonograph and wax cylinders to the FSS. In those days such things were most robustly made – they would last for ages; no built in redundancy there. It might have been the one he used when he was recording at the Plough Inn, Rusper, early May 1907 – or even the one he used to record Henry Burstow. Could he have afforded one? Well he was shortly to subsidise *The English Hymnal* by over £200, so I expect he could have afforded the £7 that Percy Grainger would have paid for his Edison Standard model. Vaughan Williams did not join the FSS immediately; perhaps he waited till the dilettante group were no longer in power – till the likes of Frank Kidson; Lucy Broadwood; J A Fuller Maitland – the collectors, who did not wish to “gentrify” the songs, were running the show.

In his Preface to the batch of songs he sent to the FSS – dated 25 March 1906 Vaughan Williams acknowledged his heartiest thanks to the singers ... He especially mention(ed) Mr H Burstow, of Horsham, Mrs Humphreys, Mr Potiphar, shepherd, and Mr Broomfield, woodman, all three of Ingrave ... Is there something significant in this order? Also in this Preface RVW writes “I could imagine a much less profitable way of spending a long winter evening that in the parlour of a country inn taking ones turn at the mug of “four-ale” – (surely the most innocuous of all beverages), in the rare company of minds imbued with that fine sense which comes from advancing years and a life-long communion with nature...” Cheers to that!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have only recently discovered modern folk song: quite a few of the songs collected about 100 years ago are still being sung. It’s a pleasure to go to local inns to hear them. In particular I must mention our friends Clive and Mel Morris who introduced us to this pastime; to Bryan Causton, who gave me a copy of Tony Kendall’s CD, mentioned above, and to Alan and Lynda Collins, for many years EFDSS members. Thanks also to Dr David Dewhirst, former Librarian of the Institute of Astronomy and a senior Fellow of Corpus Christi College Cambridge, who put me in touch with Dr S P Martland. His Ph.D. was concerning early recording devices. I have included some of his comments in the above article – but all errors are, of course, mine.

E J Hysom

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Music You Might Like

by Jeffrey Davis

**Patrick Hadley: *The Trees so High* (with Philip Sainton *The Island*)
David Wilson-Johnson, Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus
Chandos CD CHAN 9181.**



Patrick Hadley (1899-1973) was a friend of Vaughan Williams (the photo of Hadley in the CD booklet was taken by Ursula Vaughan Williams and he also features on page 111 in the “Friends and family” section of the wonderful new collection of Vaughan Williams photographs *There was a time...*).

Hadley was born in Cambridge and was badly injured in World War One (part of his leg had to be amputated) but he remained a keen swimmer and loved walking in the countryside (something of the wonder of nature comes across in *The Trees so High*). After the war, Hadley studied composition with Vaughan Williams at the RCM.

The Trees so High (1931) is Patrick Hadley’s masterpiece. Described as a *Symphonic Ballad in A minor* it is a beautiful work, shot through with a most poignant and profoundly sweet melancholy. The lyrical idiom is close to that of Vaughan Williams but it is, in my opinion, more subjective in feeling than much of RVW’s music (like Sibelius, Vaughan Williams’s scores, for all their profundity and beauty have a curious impersonal quality to them, which is, I suppose, part of their appeal).

Having said this, the spiritual idiom of *The Trees so High* is not far removed from *On Wenlock Edge* or *An Oxford Elegy*.

The work is unusual in that three purely orchestral movements are followed by a choral one featuring a baritone soloist (the excellent David Wilson-Johnson). The first movement begins with a darkly moving, melancholy yearning theme which eventually rises to a massive and

profoundly moving climax which leads into the lovely theme of the melancholy second movement.

The informative booklet notes by Bernard Benoiel refer to the “Hardyesque” aspects of this movement (and having watched *The Mayor of Casterbridge* on TV last night, I know what he means!)

The mood of gentle melancholy carries over into the third movement but the heart of the work is to be found in the choral finale which moves from melancholy to tragedy. It begins with a dissonant spectral introduction (reminding me of part of Waxman’s score for the film *Rebecca*) and there follows another truly massive climax which sinks back into the haunting folk song, introducing the baritone soloist for the first time, on the transience of love and youthful death (Hadley’s experience of World War One in which his older brother was killed may be at work here).

Benoiel refers to a “Houseman-like sensibility” and this is what ties *The Trees so High* with the works of Vaughan Williams mentioned above.

I suspect that many readers will know this work already but, if not, I do urge you to listen to it. At the risk of repeating myself, it is a work of haunting beauty that is not to be missed.

I first came across it on a Lyrita LP (LPO Boult SRCS 106, sadly never transferred to CD), many years ago when I took it out of the High Street Kensington lending library (where I made many of my youthful classical music discoveries) and I had remembered it ever since. I was thus delighted when Chandos recorded it ten years ago in a magnificent performance under Matthias Bamert.

What makes this issue doubly appealing is the coupling *The Island* by Philip Sainton (1891-1967), an extremely enjoyable seascape tone-poem full of haunting and memorable themes (it starts off with a wonderful fanfare, ushering in the ebb and flow of the tides.) Sainton’s best known work is probably his fine film score for Huston’s *Moby Dick* (1956), certainly a “Music you might like” recommendation for admirers of *A Sea Symphony* (Marco Polo CD 8.225050).

I must say that I had never heard of Philip Sainton before buying the Hadley disc but my enjoyment of *The Island* made me investigate his other music. I would urge you to listen to his *Symphonic Elegy Nadir* (premiered with great success by Sir John Barbirolli in 1949), I think that this is Sainton’s masterpiece (of the few works I have heard), it was inspired by the tragic experience of witnessing the death of a child during a wartime bombing raid on Bristol. It contains music of savage despair (like the Vaughan Williams *Fourth Symphony*) but, towards the end, the despair turns into defiance in a wonderful passage where the Beethoven’s Fifth, (*V for Victory*) motto theme is hammered out by the timpani in a fist-shaking conclusion.

This fine disc (Chandos CHAN 9539) also contains more music by Patrick Hadley, including the charming tone poem *One Morning in Spring* composed for the seventieth birthday of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Crossword Solutions:

ACROSS:

1. Apollyon, 3. Cat, 4. Halle, 5. Rota, 8. Garter, 10. Lynn, 12. Mute, 13. Sancta, 15. Neap, 16. Hadow, 18. Dec, 19. Watchful.

DOWN:

1. Amaryllus, 2. Low, 3. Call, 4. Hate, 6. Agnus, 7. Liverpool, 9. Roman, 11. Snow, 14. Lake, 17. Hic.

RVW SOCIETY QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE DESIRABILITY OF LOCAL MEETINGS



The RVW Society has been in existence now for almost ten years (more about that in the next few months!) and in that time it has grown from a dedicated band of 20-odd enthusiasts to a flourishing society of well over 600 members. The AGM has traditionally been the time when we have organised talks and/or concerts, walks and visits to places associated with RVW and his world. But as membership has increased, so have the requests that we should extend our

society-oriented activities throughout the year and hold them in places that small groups of members can get to and from conveniently in an afternoon or evening.

These requests have not fallen on deaf ears. The subject has come up regularly at committee meetings, but initially it was felt we should concentrate on building up the membership and focussing our limited resources on the core activities of publishing the journal and encouraging or organising big projects such as Richard Hickox's Bournemouth/Barbican symphony cycle in 1995 and the splendid Vision of Albion season of the opera music in London and Cambridge in the autumn of 1997. In addition, there have been highly successful symposia at Charterhouse and twice at the British Library, the latest in collaboration with the Elgar Society in the spring of 2003.

It was after informal conversations with members of the Thames Valley region of the Elgar Society in 2002 that we began to research the possibility of introducing local meetings for our own members. The Thames Valley region, like others in the Elgar Society, has a well-established tradition of meeting locally several times a year and we have been able to benefit greatly from talking to them about their experience. As a result, Stephen Connock announced at our AGM in October 2003, that we are finalising arrangements to hold a joint meeting with the Elgar Society in Thame at which Lewis Foreman has agreed to speak on 'Englishness in Music'. Full details will be circulated to members in due course.

However, this is just the beginning, and from here we would like to hold our own RVW meetings, if that is what members want. To get a feel for this move into what is, for us, uncharted territory, we are determined and committed to do our utmost to "get it right". Early in 2003, with this in mind, we decided to poll a sample of members (polling everyone would have been too expensive) as a first step. We looked at the area where we had the biggest concentration of members and sent out a questionnaire to those living in (broadly) the southeast of England, in order to gauge potential support for this exciting new departure. I must stress, of course, that we are equally interested in the opinions of those living elsewhere, but our poll was designed simply to get the maximum return most economically.

For the benefit of all our members, I am pleased now to announce the results of this survey.

234 questionnaires were despatched (with reply-paid envelopes) to members in London, Middlesex, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. So far, 133 replies have been received – an encouraging response rate of 56.8% - not bad, I think, as these exercises go.

Members were invited to vote on the following activities:

- Meeting other members informally at a local concert
- Society-run recitals/concerts
- Illustrated talks

- Meetings hosted by members in their own home (or other informal venue)
- Quiz Nights
- Specifically, the proposed joint meeting with the Thames Valley branch of the Elgar Society
- A similar kind of joint meeting with the Elgar or other society in their own area

They were also asked what maximum distance they would be prepared to travel, and space was given for general comments and ideas they might have.

Of the 133 replies, an overwhelming majority (106 or 79.7%) indicated they would be interested in some kind of regional activity. The greatest interest was shown in Illustrated Talks (84.9% of positive replies), closely followed by Society-run concerts (82.1%) and informal get-togethers at local concerts (76.4%). Not far behind were joint meetings of the Elgar Thames Valley type (70.8%) and home meetings (69.8%).

The average distance people were prepared to travel was 28 miles.

Suggestions were wide-ranging—meeting at concerts, listening to recorded music, holding discussions or talks, visiting places associated with RVW. Not a few would like to have some meetings during the day rather than the evening, to make travelling on public transport easier. Some members would like the Society to hold its own concerts, but many stressed they would be prepared to travel further to hear good professionals than they would to hear amateurs. (I have heard many accomplished amateurs, but I understand their fears!) Quiz Nights evoked some passion. Just under a quarter of those who replied supported them, but one or two respondents were of the 'over my dead body' opinion. However, on the positive side, we were delighted to receive some very specific offers of facilities and venues which have been duly noted for consideration.

Let it not be supposed that our members are focussed only on music. The words 'drinks' and (dare I repeat it?) 'booze' cropped up with encouraging regularity. 'Card-carrying', 'obsessive' and 'anorak' also featured.

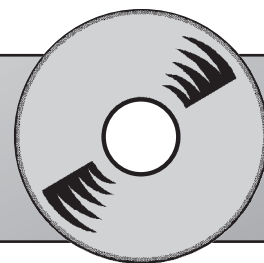
It has to be said, of course, that not everyone wants local meetings. Some are content with reading the Journal. Some are hampered by babies or arthritis, or have a conflict of interest with classic vehicles. Many lead busy working lives and feel they haven't much time to spare. Others, some now retired, say their physical or financial means can sadly no longer match their still burning enthusiasm, but nevertheless wish us well. One or two say they would be prepared to drive 40 miles or more to a meeting . . . if only they had a car.

Reading your comments has been a great pleasure and has shown very clearly that our membership reflects all shades of opinion as to what a society like ours should be—from the academic, who would like to meet to discuss harmony and chord structure, to those who just love the music but don't know (or care) why. Long may we welcome and encourage both camps, not to mention those in between. This was certainly the intention of our founders and I would like to reassure the member who was worried that meetings might be pervaded by an aura of musical snobbery, and who had a nasty experience in Southampton, that such an attitude would have been anathema to VW and it has no place in this society.

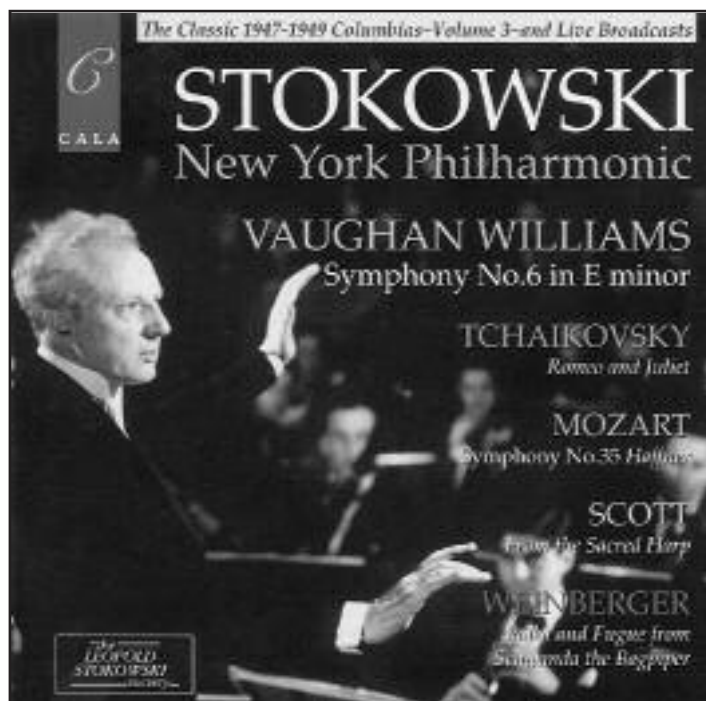
Finally, if you received a questionnaire and haven't yet replied, it's not too late. Also, if you don't live in the Home Counties (and that is a lot of you!) your thoughts, ideas and criticisms are very welcome and will be considered very seriously. Please keep them coming and watch this space!

Jonathan Pearson
Regional Chairman – South East England

CD Reviews



Vaughan Williams, *Symphony 6* in E minor (first recording)
Tchaikovsky, *Fantasy Overture, Romeo and Juliet*
Mozart, *Symphony 35* in D, "Haffner"
Thomas Jefferson Scott, *From the Sacred Harp*
Weinberger, *Polka and Fugue* from "Schwanda the Bagpiper"
New York Philharmonic/Leopold Stokowski
CALA CACD0537



RVW Society members are a cultured and open-minded lot who will listen attentively to the "other" items on this disc even as they make no attempt to hide the real reason for buying it. The Mozart is superlatively well played by massed strings but it is also hard-driven and relentless. This seems not to matter in the first movement but by the finale the listener is seriously beginning to tire. There are surprisingly few Romantic agglutinations, however, and then only really in the slow movement, though there are no repeats except in the third movement minuet and trio. Overall this is straightforward Mozart playing, but we do it differently now and I for one am not sorry. I'm no expert in the music of Weinberger but I could name at least one conductor of the period – who had also worked in New York, curiously enough: answers on a postcard, please – who might have found more grace and charm here, and certainly would have done in the Mozart. Scott's *From the Sacred Harp* is based on two traditional American hymn tunes, a free orchestral rhapsody of the kind that Vaughan Williams would have appreciated and perhaps even admired. Stokowski turns in a convincing performance. Whilst I can't imagine wanting to listen to any of these three live performances for pleasure very often, the Tchaikovsky is another matter. A studio recording in excellent sound for the period, this is a reading of genuine stature and your reaction to it will largely depend, I think, on how you feel about Stokowski's decision to substitute his own quiet and undeniably effective ending for the *fortissimo* chords the composer actually wrote.

The studio recording of the Sixth Symphony was made on November 21 1949, beating Boult and the London Symphony Orchestra by two days.

The composer revised the scherzo in 1950, modifying certain aspects of the scoring – sharp ears and close attention to the score would be necessary in order to hear these changes – as well as adding a completely new theme at several points, which is, of course, much easier to spot. It is therefore the original version of the scherzo which is featured here.

This performance has appeared before, on Sony. I haven't been able to hear that transfer, but the sound on this Cala disc is good, not quite so successful as the Tchaikovsky unfortunately, but certainly more than adequate to allow us to appreciate the importance of the performance.

Stokowski takes the symphony at a terrific pace, the whole work dispatched in slightly less than half an hour, but there is a feeling of urgency which comes with this, a sense of discovery which is white hot and burning. The playing is quite magnificent, and the orchestra members, who must surely have been bemused by much of this music, seem totally convinced and at one with the conductor. Stokowski seems to see the first movement as primarily an expression of anger. The off-beat accents are savagely brought out, for example, yet the first time the *cantabile* melody appears, with its obsessive returns to the note E, it sounds more expressive than we are used to now, the *portamenti* so typical of the period playing style contributing to this. The harp is very forward when the melody returns, and there is little feeling of impending doom, making less sense of the passage overall. The second movement is perhaps the least successful of the four. Stokowski takes less than seven minutes over it, whereas Andrew Davis took almost nine in 1990 and Boult in 1953 more than ten! This is a huge difference, and the famous three-note rhythmic figure loses something of its relentless menace at this speed, sometimes even sounding jaunty, and the climax of the movement suffers. But the central section, where the rhythmic fragment is absent, has rarely in my experience sounded so threatening. The scherzo is totally successful, and only the period recording prevents it from overwhelming us. The saxophone player is masterly. The famous last movement again seems fast, but Stokowski is scrupulous in respecting the ubiquitous *senza crescendo* indications. The sound of the strings has perhaps too much sheen to it in the big, *divisi* chords, and especially, just before the close, where the section principals play their rising figure in quavers with more vibrato than a conductor would ask for nowadays.

Stokowski had conducted this symphony in concert three weeks before the recording and although there had already been performances in America one wonders what the New York audience made of it. The composer was fortunate to have so convincing an advocate for such a strange and enigmatic new work, yet when we listen to Boult just two days later the extra authority is undeniable. This is not only a question of tempo, and in any case it can be argued that Stokowski is closer to the composer's intentions, at least as marked in the score. But Boult is more successful at evoking the disembodied nothingness which is at the heart of this music, as well we might expect if only because the composer was present at the sessions. The sound of this performance in its latest incarnation on the Dutton label is even finer than the Stokowski, and you get not one but both versions of the scherzo.

Stokowski's is a magnificent and commanding performance of the *Sixth Symphony* in its own right, and all members should acquire and study it. It is also a fascinating historical document in that it gives us a glimpse of Vaughan Williams's interpretation at several thousand miles from the composer and his direct influence.

William Hedley

Concert Reviews



Wigmore Hall Concert on 21st February 2004

“Those Blue Remembered Hills”. One of a series of British music concerts given by The Nash Ensemble.

Delius: First Cuckoo and Summer Night. These well known pieces were in an arrangement by David Matthews. Very enjoyable, somewhat crisper than the dreamlike style often favoured.

Elgar: Serenade in E minor for strings. Nicely performed at a fairly brisk pace.

Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending. Marianne Thorsen was the soloist in a beautifully paced rendering of everybody’s favourite RVW composition. I particularly admired her tone and control of dynamics in the very quiet passages – more difficult at a live performance than when recording. The important woodwind and horn parts came through with clarity and balance.

Holst: Savitri

The principal work was a rare performance of Gustav Holst’s *Savitri* chamber opera. There are just three characters, Savitri, Satyavan her husband and Death. Death comes to take Satyavan but eventually Savitri persuades, indeed tricks, Death to restore him to life. Holst wrote the libretto himself, basing it on an episode in the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. Although voices are often unaccompanied it is scored for a small ensemble with a wordless chorus in the background.

The soloists, Jean Rigby (Savitri), John Ainsley (Satyavan) and Roderick Williams (Death), were all in fine voice and I must commend Roderick Williams for his wonderfully clear diction. It is rare to hear every word, even from famous singers.

Savitri (1908) falls into Holst’s *Rig Veda* period – after the Wagner influenced *Mystic Trumpeter* (1904) and before *The Planets* (1914) or the *Hymn of Jesus* (1917). At times there are clear pre-echoes of *Neptune*. In her book Imogen Holst regards *Savitri* as one of her Father’s finest works and extols his simplicity and austere economy although she still objects to what she describes as lapses into imitative romanticism. She contrasts it with “early horrors” such as the (never performed) opera *Sita* full of “Wagnerian bawling”.

For me this was a great opportunity to hear *Savitri* for the first time but I must admit to mixed feelings about the work itself. I found the texture of the music rather thin and lacking in identifiable structure or sense of progression except towards the end when Savitri sings in a more lyrical vein. Presumably that is the part which Imogen dislikes! The harmony is subtle and vaguely polytonal, certainly no signs of Wagnerian chromaticism. I hope I shall be able to hear *Savitri* again – and oh for a chance to hear *Sita*!

D.G.Arundale.

The 5th and the ‘Flying Dutchman’!

**The London Philharmonic Orchestra, David Porcelijn,
Royal Festival Hall, London - 23rd April 2004**

A note in the programme announced that conductor Vernon Handley was indisposed due to a serious leg injury. His award-winning recording of the *5th Symphony* with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic is for me the catalogue version and I had particularly wanted to experience a live performance to see how it compared.

The stand-in was Dutch conductor David Porcelijn, who has been enjoying a successful career in the antipodean reaches, with appointments as conductor of orchestras in Adelaide, Sydney and Tasmania, as well as establishing a broad operatic repertoire in Europe.

The Overture, which was supposed to be audience requested – between Elgar’s Italy-inspired *In the South* and Bax’s Cornish seascape *Tintagel*, – was ‘introduced’ by Maestro Porcelijn who confessed to never having heard Bax’s *Overture* but promising to obtain the CD to listen to!

Luckily, an energetic performance of the Elgar showpiece restored our spirits, with its explosive opening and the LPO brass and base strings on good form and making their presence felt.

This was followed by the less well-known *Oboe Concerto* by Richard Strauss, played by Professor of Oboe, David Theodore. Although difficult to make an impact with an oboe concerto, Strauss’s colourful and individual turns of phrase offered more interest than perhaps would have been expected from this vehicle.

Any worries I had about the Vaughan Williams Symphony were quickly dispelled from the outset and it is heartening to think that this one must have travelled with Maestro Porcelijn throughout Europe and the wider world.

Those first seamless passages and horn-call, a self-confessed homage to Sibelius, are underpinned by the drone of base strings as if from a ship’s engine and it is apparent that we are on a spiritual journey. The strings of the LPO glided effortlessly in the fluid writing of the *Preludio* and danced through the *Scherzo* with weightless effect.

The *Romanza* is the emotional heart of the work and I never tire of listening to Handley’s recording here with the Liverpool players - listen to the opening strings for example and you can be transported into the world of the *Tallis Fantasia*. In this live performance, the strings of the LPO seemed to relish playing the wonderfully full and unflinching phrasing and the polyphonic dialogue between instruments was brought to the fore.

Even if your view is not coloured by quotes from Bunyan’s ‘The Pilgrim’s Progress’ (from which you may recognise themes), it is apparent that there is a dialogue going on here. From the opening bars, it is as if a gate has been opened only to be closed again leaving us somehow frustrated at the end of what is some of VW’s most sublime music.

To the objective listener it is impossible not to wonder whether this, (and the emotionally charged *3rd Symphony*), is perhaps the closest VW came to writing a Requiem, and in the final movement Porcelijn succeeded in bringing the whole orchestra together to ring out in bells of jubilation.

After the sheer joyousness in the climax of the *Passacaglia*, we’re returned to the theme and horn-call of the first movement, followed by the final coda so reminiscent of the eloquent epilogues that are such a feature of VW’s writing.

In the *5th Symphony*, VW is fortunate that most conductors refrain from over-sentimentalising (which can sometimes be a criticism of Elgar performances), letting the music speak for itself, as was the case here.

Although it didn’t top Handley’s recording for me, which has a magical warmth about it, it was a wonderful evening of superb string playing enjoyed by a packed audience.

We are promised a performance of the *Sea Symphony* at the RFH on 13th November with the LSO, so let’s wish Vernon Handley a speedy recovery for this one.

Karen-Lisa Fletcher
London, April 2004



Book Reviews

Barbirolli – Conductor Laureate
The Authorised Biography
Michael Kennedy

Published by the Barbirolli Society



Michael Kennedy's life of Sir John Barbirolli was first published in 1971, and I remember only too well how my "A"-level studies were neglected for the couple of days it took to read it then. I was brought up in Wigan, an hour or so from Manchester, and an enlightened teacher or two saw to it that the musical ones amongst us got to our fair share of concerts. So I was in the audience on October 23 1969 when Barbirolli suffered a black-out, the result of advancing heart disease. Whether my attention was totally held by Mahler's *Second Symphony* I don't know, but I was alert enough to spot that something was wrong, the conductor apparently lost, the playing suddenly dangerously tentative. But the moment passed and things recovered. "Too much whisky" was one proffered explanation afterwards, not so enlightened as all that, perhaps.

Lorenzo Barbirolli, the conductor's father, was Venetian, and a fine enough violinist to play in the orchestra at La Scala. He came to England in 1892, where he was joined by Louise, whom he had met in Paris. They married, and Giovanni Battista, their second child, was born in 1899, "...a true Cockney, well within the sound of Bow bells." He died in

London in 1970, and his ashes are buried in Kensal Green cemetery, "...whence Chesterton's Englishmen go to paradise." His life, dedicated to music, is beautifully chronicled in this book.

Kennedy deals with the life in chronological order. Student days at the Royal Academy of Music and early experience conducting opera at Covent Garden are succinctly dealt with. His success afterwards with the Scottish Orchestra lead to his appointment to succeed Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic, a development which, to say the least, surprised most of the English musical scene. The New York period is a particularly interesting part of the book. In spite of some hostile press reaction, Barbirolli was a huge success both with the players – they sent a telegram to Scotland saying simply "Thanks for Barbirolli" – and the New York public. But he was happy to return home in 1943, taking on the Halle Orchestra in Manchester. He inherited a group of players so diminished that his first task was to organise auditions, and even if the standard of some of the players never really approached what he deserved he nonetheless remained devoted to them for the rest of his life. What tends to be forgotten, however, is the extent to which he conducted elsewhere, particularly in the United States, including a five-year stint as conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra and, towards the end of his life, gruelling tours both in America and in Europe.

Listeners who know Barbirolli only from his recordings will probably think of him as a specialist in the romantic and late romantic repertoire, particularly Mahler and twentieth-century English music, and perhaps not much else. Kennedy puts us right on this, providing many details of programmes given throughout his career. Not only do we find much classical repertoire – I myself remember a spirited Mozart *Symphony 29* in the Free Trade Hall – but also an important commitment to contemporary works. He promoted many such pieces in his New York years, not all of which have survived, and many by American composers. He championed Britten's early works, notably the *Violin Concerto* of which he conducted the first performance, yet the only reference to Tippett in the book is when Barbirolli abandoned preparations for a performance of his *Second Symphony* as "not worth the effort involved." It's also true that there was a particular kind of music he described as "Three farts and a raspberry, orchestrated". It was perhaps such a work being rehearsed one day when Bax and John Ireland were listening. Ireland turned to his friend and said "You know, Arnold, there's no room in this world for a couple of romantic old sods like us."

Kennedy writes with great insight on what are the purely musical aspects of his study. He is excellent on the conductor's methods of preparation and rehearsal, and his sober and reasoned refutation of those who consider Barbirolli's New York years to have been a failure is a masterly example of his understated judgment. But what makes the book so compulsively readable is the way in which his subject comes to life in these pages. Not too surprising, perhaps, as they were close friends for many years and the affection is there for all to see, but an achievement all the same. He is helped by the fact that Barbirolli was a compulsive correspondent, and quotations from his letters are used throughout the book.

The letters are fascinating, but if we limit ourselves to them we receive an incomplete picture of the man. There are many examples of what seems like vanity. Barbirolli did not resist the opportunity to relate how well he was received, especially by orchestral players, and examples such as the following abound: "The Brahms [*Piano Concerto No. 2*] went splendidly but only after I gave Mr Schnabel the best 'ticking off' he has ever had in his life in front of the orchestra at rehearsal yesterday. Naturally like all would-be bullies he subsided immediately and tonight

I conducted the work as a symphony with piano obbligato which is as it should be.” (Interestingly, in the same concert, he had conducted the *Tallis Fantasia*, and in previous concerts, the *Enigma Variations* and Vaughan Williams’ *Pastoral Symphony*. This in New York in 1939.) What is less obvious from the letters is the darker side of Barbirolli’s personality. It is easier to open your heart to others when things are going well, and it is left to Kennedy patiently to explain the long periods of self-doubt, depression and, for any normal person, near-crippling periods of insomnia.

Barbirolli – “Glorious John” – was of course an important conductor of Vaughan Williams and Society members will want to read this book. They will take enormous pleasure from it. The book is well produced in large-format paperback, and passages which were edited out of the original issue are restored. A particular feature is the extensive collection of photographs, many of which come from Lady Barbirolli’s collection and are appearing here for the first time. The Barbirolli Society have done us a great service.

Reading this book inevitably sends one back to the records. Elgar’s *Introduction and Allegro* in the famous 1962 recording is a classic of the gramophone. It is not the only way of giving this music, but it is unique to Barbirolli, truly *con amore*. The same may be said of his reading of Vaughan Williams’ *Tallis Fantasia* from the same sessions, and his *Fifth Symphony* from the same year is fine enough to make us regret how little Vaughan Williams he actually recorded. His Brahms symphonies are wonderful, conducting of total conviction, as are the accompaniments he so lovingly provided for Barenboim in the two piano concertos. His recordings with Janet Baker also testify to his immense skills as an accompanist, as do, of course, those of the Elgar *Cello Concerto* with Jacqueline du Pre and – perhaps even more so – Andre Navarra. Another regret is that his return to opera in later life did not produce more recordings. We have to be content with the wonderful Roman *Butterfly*, though we can also share his evident love of *Otello* and the Verdi Requiem as well as his moments of indulgence. Thanks to The Barbirolli Society more of his early work is now appearing on CD, reminding us of the immense vitality of his conducting as well as the breadth of repertoire at this stage in his career. Performances from this era are appearing on Naxos too, and some wonderful live recordings feature in the BBC Legends, Dutton and Testament catalogues. There are so many examples, and we all have our favourites, but for this listener at least the most characteristic, unmistakable qualities of this most lovable of conductors are to be found in his reading of Strauss’s valedictory masterpiece *Metamorphosen*. The work, for strings only, is played with quite astonishing passion and conviction, and his way with the *minor* third in the final chord is a typical and deeply moving example of his sense of the dramatic as well as the care he would take to bring out those details he thought important.

William Hedley

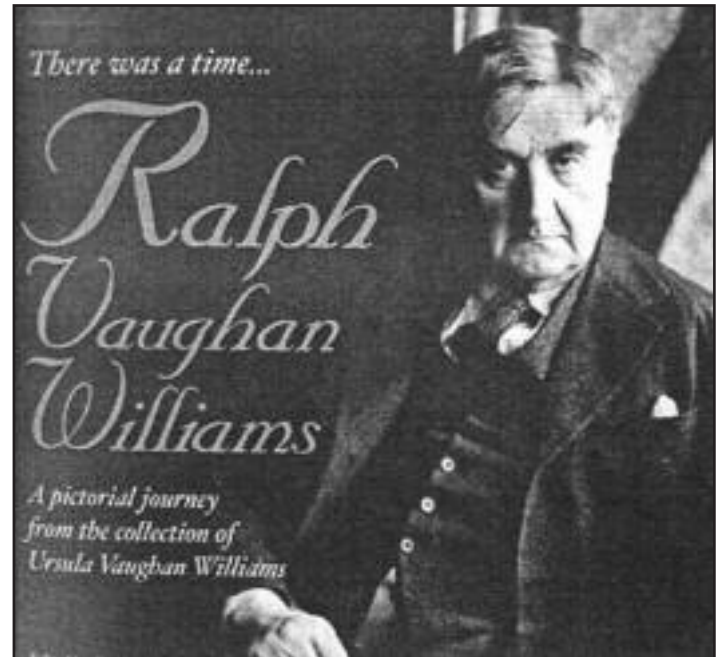
The Barbirolli Society have kindly offered a special price to RVW members of £17.00, plus £3 postage per book (UK) and £5.00 postage in Europe. Please write to Paul Brooks, 11 Cranbrook Drive, Kennington, Oxford OX1 5RR with a cheque payable to The Barbirolli Society.

Stephen Connock, Ursula Vaughan Williams and Robin Wells (eds), *There was a time: Ralph Vaughan Williams. A pictorial journey from the collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams* (Albion Music Ltd 2003) 152pp, hb, £25. (£20 members)

I thought it might be helpful to place this welcome new book in bibliographical context. One of the Society’s most important recent publications, *There was a time* is, in fact, the third such hardback picture-biography of VW. It is preceded by *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A pictorial biography* (OUP 1971) which was edited by John Lunn and Ursula Vaughan Williams, and Jerrold Moore’s larger *Vaughan Williams: A life in photographs* (OUP 1992). A more recent paperback pictorial biography of the composer is Paul Holmes’ *Vaughan Williams* in the ‘Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers’ series (Omnibus Press 1997),

though here the emphasis is more on the text than the pictures, which are secondary if plentiful.

In her ‘Introduction’ to the 1971 book, Ursula Vaughan Williams wrote, ‘A composer’s life is his music, but he is also a human being belonging to a particular place and time. His art may transcend his circumstances, but the roots from which he has grown and his place in life nourish and shape that art ... Pictures can bring these circumstances to life more vividly than anything.’ Like its predecessor, the new book illustrates the truth of this observation. In that ‘Introduction’ Mrs Vaughan Williams also made the point that with someone who was well-known in his later years it is important that VW should also ‘be remembered as a musical child, as a student, and as a young man struggling to make his way in his profession.’



The editors, familiar names to readers of the *Journal*, explain in their ‘Introduction’ that the photographs are selected from the collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams, and that the majority have been previously unpublished. They conclude by writing that this book is ‘a glimpse into the world of one of England’s greatest composers, a glimpse which we trust readers will find both illuminating and stimulating’, and it can be said the book fulfils this task.

There was a time begins with a list of illustrations grouped according to the chapter headings of ‘Early Life (1872-1909)’, ‘War and its aftermath’ (1910-1929), ‘Achievements and Recognition (1930-1950)’, ‘Uncle Ralph (1951-1958)’, ‘Homes and Places’, and ‘Friends and Family’. There is an eight-page chronology of the composer’s life based on the display established in the church at Down Ampney. This has been laid out in a visually oriented ‘time-line’ fashion with small versions of pictures reproduced later in the book full-size. Originally prepared by Tad Kasa for the Society’s website, this is more detailed than that found in the 1971 book.

True to the editorial’s promise, members who own most books about the composer will enjoy turning the pages and seeing for the first time unfamiliar images. There are evocative photographs of RVW as a boy and youth, of his sister Meggie and other family members. There are several new pictures of his first wife Adeline, including sketches from 1880 (when she was 10) and 1908, and we are invited to consider a resemblance to her cousin Virginia Woolf. To the neutral observer of RVW’s recorded life Adeline remains something of a shadowy figure. In the photograph of her with RVW taken in 1897 (page 15) she seems already much older than her years, though she was only two years his senior.

I enjoyed seeing the one or two reproductions of the covers of some of VW’s earlier published music – the typography and lay-out of which are

evocative of their time. The book presents a handful of new photographs of VW in Army Medical Corps uniform from 1915. It is revealing to compare the photograph on page 33 of RVW in 1926 with the terrible 1919 portrait (page 40 of the 1971 book) where RVW looks simply blasted by the appalling experience of the First World War. By 1926 the outer mark of this experience is fading, though it is still visible in his face. By 1930 (page 38) he exhibits some recovered warmth.

In some cases it seems astonishing that anyone was on hand to capture such fugitive moments – for example, that of RVW singing the *Mass in G Minor* in the garden of the Bishop's Palace, Chichester, or listening to a rehearsal of *Hugh The Drover* in 1937. Of course, any of the images that show him involved with the practicalities of music-making are splendid. But simpler photographs such as those on pages 68-69 taken at Dorking in 1951 really communicate something of his character. By contrast, the picture on page 55, with Jean Stewart, could almost be that of another Carthusian, Robert Graves, with one of his muses.

It is pleasing to see photographic evidence of some of the honours and recognition which RVW deservedly won in his final years, as well as the informal pictures. For sheer historical force few pictures in the book match that of RVW shaking the hand of Churchill at a ceremony in Bristol in 1951. But in a more domestic moment, there is a priceless picture on page 86 of RVW loading an LP onto a vintage 1950s record player. (Has anyone made an inventory of his records? Could Mrs Vaughan Williams shed any light on RVW's favourite LPs and listening habits?). As for the picture on page 72, am I alone in wondering why 'The White Gates' was allowed to be demolished, given its significance to the history of English music?

Generally, the photographs are well laid out in a manner which is easy on the eye. I have some reservations about the design of *There was a time*.

These minor points are the unconventional reversal of title page and publishing data (was this a collation error?); the small top header on the chapter title pages, which seems redundant; and the fact that some of the images have not reproduced clearly (see Parry and Villiers on 14, Whitman on 23, RVW in 1935 on 31). In a few cases the difficulty may have arisen because the original image could only be taken from a newspaper. With regard to the long-term archiving of images, sound recordings and films of Vaughan Williams, digital techniques can be used to repair and clean up old photographs for posterity to enjoy. This could be used on the photos of RVW in 1875 (7) and 1880 (9), to name two. It would be good to establish a central archive for this type of material, perhaps at the Dorking Library with Graham Muncy.

There was a time stimulates other thoughts. It seems clear to me that a new biography of RVW will be needed soon, in part to incorporate with the life our ever-increasing awareness of the sophistication of the music, as demonstrated by many recent musicological essays. Both this new book and the 1971 collection share a little of the same sepia-toned presentation, as much figurative as literal. It is interesting that RVW is more often represented in the public domain by photographs that show him in his old age, taken in the 1940s and 1950s, than when young. I remember how startling it seemed to me when Belart issued their box-set of Boult's 1950s recordings with the composer pictured there as a youngish man. The reproduction of such images have implications for the way his music is perceived, especially by younger generations. A time is coming when RVW must be presented in new ways, not so time-bound; ways that will win new listeners for a range of music which is as vital, as timeless, and as beautiful as ever.

Rikky Rooksby

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New Editor for the Journal



The Trustees are delighted to announce that William Hedley has become the new Editor of the Journal. He will take over from Stephen Connock for the February 2005 edition.

William Hedley was born in Wigan in 1952. He studied music at King's College, London and composition with Stephen Dodgson at the Royal College of Music. He taught music for over fifteen years in secondary schools in the London area, and since 1989 has been teaching and conducting choirs in Southwest France where he now lives.

He can't remember exactly when he caught the Vaughan Williams bug, but knows that Sir Adrian Boult was responsible, conducting the *London Symphony* on a Decca Ace of Clubs LP.

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Letters

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

A Shiver in the Wigmore Hall

'Those Blue Remembered Hills' - a short season of British music from the first half of the 20th century. Ireland, Bax, Butterworth, Warlock, Quilter etc. But for the evening of 21st February 'for one night only' a programme of Delius, Elgar, RVW and Holst.

The first thing one must come to terms with in the striking auditorium is the famous arts and crafts cupola. The Genius of Harmony embraces the sound and radiates a spiritual connection. Frank Lynn Jenkins designed The Soul of Music; it is in perfect accord with the Renaissance style building of 1901. And if the knees are a bit cramped, and the odd spring causes a wince, well, perhaps it's worth it.

However, small auditoria such as the Wigmore call for careful balancing of instruments, and sadly the Delius works illustrated this problem. The issue of the horn in these pieces was a pity because otherwise the arrangement by David Matthews of *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring/Summer Night on the River* for chamber orchestra worked quite well.

But what a heightening of sensation in the Elgar *Serenade*. Good in most surroundings the strings took on a lustrous bloom in the very same acoustics which had caused the problem minutes earlier. The Vaughan Williams *Lark Ascending* which followed was guaranteed to bring an audible silence, and so it was.

But the one act opera by Holst *Savitri* was a rare treat indeed. Disembodied voices, and a chilling invocation of Death created by Roderick Williams - the audience was hushed and silent, hanging onto every word in this grossly disturbing episode from the Mahabharata:

Savitri! Savitri! I am Death.
I am the law that no man breaketh,
I am he who leadeth men onward,
I am the road that each must travel,
I am the gate that opens for all.
I am the Summoner, whom all obey,
Whose word may not be moved,
Whose path may not be turned,
I draw nigh to fulfil my work.
I come for thy husband:
For him the gate doth open.

I have seen Roderick Williams before and his singing is quite extemporary and once again, as he often does at curtain call, he beamed his pleasure at having done something he so obviously enjoys. And believe me, after the spiritual and sombre *Savitri* it was exactly the antidote the stunned audience required! (See review on page 22)

Bob Rush
London

Letter to Nicholas Kenyon on BBC Promenade Concerts 2003

"As yet another complete set of Bax *Symphonies* arrives in the record shops, this time performed by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, I feel that I can no longer repress expressing my disappointment that none of the seven were performed at the Promenade Concerts during the 2003 season. Although Bax is by no means one of my favourite composers, I would have thought that it would have been reasonable to have programmed at least a couple of these impressive British symphonies, especially as they seem to be best sellers among the record collecting

public at the present time. Since first hearing the dark and tempestuous *Second Symphony* many years ago it has always been my ambition to be present at a performance of this work. The R.A.H. could have used its temporary organ on this occasion, and so that would really not have been a problem. I imagine that the Bax *No. 2* would go well with the Saint Saens *No. 3* bearing in mind the forces required, so perhaps there may yet be a chance to enjoy a live performance before I reach my dotage.

Two of my main musical interests are the works of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, and the Promenade Concerts as well as Radio Three always do Elgar proud. I don't think that it can be denied that Elgar's two string concerti are not only the greatest in that genre that this country has produced, but that they stand among the top four or five written for the violin and the 'cello. On the other hand Vaughan Williams leaves Elgar trailing when we consider the symphonic genre. When travelling abroad, especially in Australia and North America, I have discovered that the Vaughan Williams cycle is regarded in these places as equal to that of Sibelius and Shostakovich in stature. In our domestic record catalogues the number of recordings of the complete cycle of nine is similar to those of Bruckner and Mahler, while Dvorak, and Schubert, who also wrote nine, are left trailing by some distance. Why then are we limited to one, just one, VW symphony each Prom season while Elgar's somewhat Germanic symphonies, albeit with an English accent, are performed far more often?

But both Bax and Vaughan Williams did rather better than poor old Dvorak at the Proms last season. There was not a single note of the Czech master to be heard in the whole series. Many of us have got to know a lot more Dvorak during recent times, and are now familiar with his earlier symphonies and the *Piano Concerto* as well. Let's hope that poor old Antonin gets a better deal next summer, but please not that old *New World* yet again. And why not Zemlinsky's enjoyable *Second Symphony* as well?"

John Tebbit

Proms 2003. Nicholas Kenyon's reply

"Thank you for your letter of 24 January regarding the music feature at the Proms last year, and I am sorry not to have replied before now.

We considered the music of Arnold Bax alongside many other anniversaries which fell in 2003 and featured his music in two high profile and popular Proms: the Royal Prom on 30 July and the Great British Film Music Prom on 16 August. We felt that this marked the anniversary appropriately.

I have noted your comments regarding the music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Dvorak and would like to thank you for all your programme suggestions which I was grateful to receive and will bear in mind.

Thank you again for writing. We announce the 2004 season at the end of April and I hope you will find something to your liking and will join us in the summer."

Nicholas Kenyon

Proms 2004 : "Something to your liking"

There is barely a note of Vaughan Williams' music at this year's BBC Proms.

In any other country, surely the major symphonist would be automatically included in a good few concerts, particularly as they are funded by the tax payer.

The Society must use all its influence to ensure that RVW is never humiliated by the BBC like this again.

Robin Barber

Very very angry

Photo of RVW



Please find enclosed a picture of RVW. I found this photograph in an antique shop in Porthcawl, South Wales, last weekend, and you have a colour photocopy of it. It was in an ancient frame that fell to pieces as I got it home. The photo has been mounted on card (I assume for framing) and says 'Studio Hugo' Cheltenham, on the back. The signature on the front card looks to have been written with a fountain pen in ink, but whether it was written by RVW I

do not know. I was hoping the picture could be reproduced in the journal as I hope a society member could throw some light on when and where the picture was taken.

Congratulations, by the way, in the way you have helped the society to prosper during the last ten years. I have been a member since the beginning and the society has exceeded my hopes and expectations in its professionalism and achievements.

Keith Douglas

(If any member knows where and when this picture was taken, please contact the Editor)

Elmer Bernstein

I have noticed a phrase in the final moments of *Riders to the Sea* which put me in mind of a similar phrase in Elmer Bernstein's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* soundtrack. I wonder if anyone else has noticed this or, indeed, if there are any known links between the composers. I know Bernstein to be very fond of Bernard Hermann who was, I believe, in his turn a great fan of RVW.

James Baker
Brentwood

Understanding RVW's music

I have recently completed my PhD thesis titled 'Harmony, Tonality and Structure in Vaughan Williams's Music'. These details are also posted on the internet at <http://www.geocities.com/davidmanning2004>. I am happy to provide further information about my research or a copy of any sections to any members who are particularly interested as detailed on my website.

In broad terms the question I address is how can the elements that comprise Vaughan Williams's music be understood? This study interprets selected extracts and works, in order to understand how the musical materials relate to or resist one another, motivated by a commitment to close reading and theoretical engagement. Existing literature on the composer is considered in Chapter One. In the next chapter, common-practice tonality and Schenkerian analysis provide a benchmark against which to examine the interaction of modal pitch resources and tonal centrality. This provides a context for a detailed analysis of tonal and modal procedures in *The Lark Ascending*. It is proposed that modal alterations can be understood as a defining element of 'modalised tonality.'

Characteristic harmonic progressions are investigated in Chapter Three, prompting the concept of a 'Complete Modal Scale' which is an underpinning element of modalised tonality. Contrasting perspectives from Neo-Riemannian theory and a recent study of chromatic

transformations by David Kopp are introduced. Those progressions which highlight equal division of the octave can feature particularly strong voice leading progressions, while the tonal centre is challenged. At other times the tonic retains its referential function, and is even affirmed by 'characteristic' progressions.

Challenges to the stability of tonal centres feature during the works analysed in Chapter Four. The undermining of tonal stability, juxtaposition as a tonal strategy, and tonal resistance, are considered in a range of choral and orchestral works. The chapter ends with analysis of two related extracts: the final movement of the Sixth Symphony and Cloud-Capp'd Towers from *Three Shakespeare Songs*, where semitonal relations resist tonal stability.

Sonata deformation theory and rotational form, developed by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, are introduced in Chapter Five, informing a study of structure in the symphonies. Although these theoretical concepts have been developed with reference to the music of Mahler, Sibelius and Strauss, similar structural procedures are found in the symphonies of Vaughan Williams. In addition two new categories of sonata deformation are proposed. The concluding chapter highlights some points of contact between my analytical findings and broader contextual issues of the composer's relationship with the symphonic tradition on the one hand, and modernism on the other.

Music analysts generally have not turned their attention to this composer's music, although there are some recent notable exceptions which I discuss in my thesis. My study is offered with an awareness of historical and critical approaches and the hope that analytical perspectives will complement these and enrich our understanding of Vaughan Williams's music.

David Manning

RVW Trail

My wife and I visited Ingrave, Essex on the 25th April 2004, exactly 100 years after Dr Vaughan Williams had been there collecting songs from Mrs Humphries. (1) One of them was *Tarry Trowsers*: I have speculated on VW making a wax cylinder recording of this song on that occasion. (See pages 15-18)

After taking photographs of what had been Mrs Humphries' home we found our way to Charles Potiphar's cottage. The description on page 36 of *Ralph's People* (2) and map between pps. 54/55 was very helpful.

Almost as soon as we arrived the present owner emerged and spotting Frank Dineen's book in Jean's hand said "You must be members of the RVW Society." He had been given a copy by another Society member. He was not only happy for me to take photographs of the outside but welcomed us to see the rooms where Vaughan Williams would have taken down his first folksongs. This was a delight indeed! We were most grateful to Mr Zealey for this courtesy.

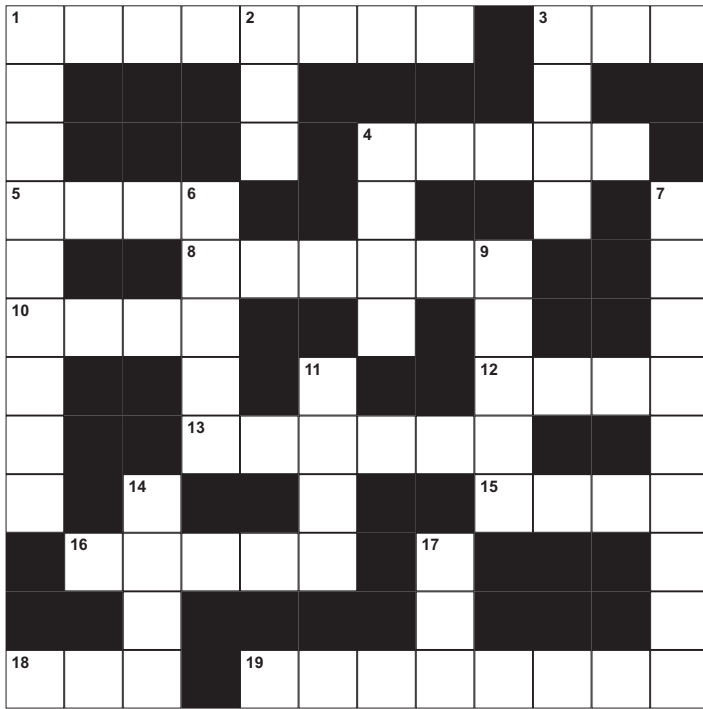
The rest of the afternoon was spent visiting several of the places on the 'RVW Trail' but the highlight of that day was undoubtedly being invited inside what had been Charles Potiphar's cottage.

E J Hysom

References:

1. *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. Revised Edition Oxford 1982 p. 266
2. *Ralph's People. The Ingrave Secret*. By Frank Dineen. Albion Music Ltd. 2001

RVW Crossword No. 16 by Michael Gainsford



Answers on Page 19

Next Edition: October 2004

Anniversary Edition

Testimonials on 'What RVW means to me' to be submitted by 10 August 2004

Across

1. Devilish being from *Pilgrim's Progress* (8)
3. *Foxy* although sounding canine was actually something completely different (3)
4. Orchestra giving first performance of *Dona Nobis Pacem* in 1938 (5)
5. Does Nino the Italian composer do it in turn? (4)
8. The inn in *Sir John in Love* (6)
10. Once Bishop's, now King's, and site of RVW's folk song collecting in 1905 (4)
12. Quiteten the musical instrument (4)
13. The Holy part of the City (1923-5) (6)
15. Could the tide flowing in the *English Folk Songs* have been this? (4)
16. Sir Henry (1859-1937), eminent musicologist and minor composer (5)
18. Home of the *Jolly Miller* (3)
19. His song, from *Pilgrim's Progress* was also published separately (8)

Down

1. Son of the Empress in *The Poisoned Kiss* (9)
2. *** down in the *Broom* (Sussex Folk Song, 1912) (3)
3. *The fourth of the Five Mystical Songs* (4)
4. **** Good, who appears at Vanity Fair in *Pilgrim's Progress* (4)
6. Lamb appearing in *Mass in G minor* (5)
7. Where the revised version of *Willow Wood* was first performed, in 1909 (9)
9. From the capital city of 5 across (5)
11. This is in the street in a RVW carol (4)
14. There was one in the mountains in the 1941 film (4)
17. This Latin comes easily when tipsy! (3)

Editor's Note. Owing to circumstances outside of the Editor's control, the article on the 49th Parallel by Richard Young will be held over until the October edition.

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Call for Papers

The February 2005 edition (edited by William Hedley) will be on RVW and Glorious John

The deadline for contributions is 10 December 2004

Where possible could contributors supply their article on disk, 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.