



## Imogen Holst: A Life in Music

**Issue 17**

**Autumn 2007**

Christopher Tinker, along with players from Court Lane Music, will be coming to Cheltenham to talk about the new book and CD produced to honour Imogen Holst in this, her centenary year. The talk, with musical interludes, will take place at St Andrew's Church, Montpellier on Friday, 2 November at 7.30pm.

The book provides a full evaluation of Imogen Holst's life and achievements, both in her own words and through assessments by noted scholars. Entitled *Imogen Holst: A Life in Music*, and edited by Christopher Grogan, the book contains an appreciation of her music by Christopher Tinker, and a first-hand account of the woman herself by her friend Rosamond Strode. The book also contains the first full publication of the diary she kept while working with Benjamin Britten. Copies of the book and CD will be available in the Museum.

Christopher's talk and the players from Court Lane Music promise a delightful and interesting evening. Tickets, to include a glass of wine, are £12 (£10 for Friends of the HBM), and are available from the Museum (01242 524846, 4 Clarence Road, Cheltenham GL52 2AY).

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## Chairman's Note

Amelia's departure from Cheltenham for Torre Abbey has left an almost impossible gap to fill, particularly given the Museum's delicate financial balance. At the time of going to press, no appointment has been made because the trustees are 'making haste slowly' in their preparations to recruit a Museum Manager, with good business and marketing skills and the necessary professional qualifications, compatible with our Museum Accreditation.

Meanwhile, our marvellous team of volunteers continue to meet, greet and welcome visitors to the museum. We, in keeping with all other public venues, had to close for ten days during the July water crisis, but the public are now returning, sometimes in small numbers, but on some days, at the sort of attendance level that really delights our Treasurer! Comments in the Visitors Book reflect the interest and appreciation of people, of all ages, who have enjoyed a slice of Victorian life, the music and life of Holst or, for the last few months (and continuing until December), a fascinating glimpse into the life of his talented daughter, Imogen.

Two new volunteers, Dominique Leonard and Pam Savell, have recently joined us, and are keen to use their teaching experience and love of music to promote the Museum, particularly to the younger visitors. We also welcome three more new volunteers with time and energy to offer; Angela Applegate, Jean Harding and Josephine Dickinson.

We have had a number of distinguished local visitors, many of whom have offered advice and support and one of our valued patrons has made a most generous gift to the museum funds, so despite currently being without a curator, we are upbeat and positive and determined to find a worthy successor to Amelia.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that, as you may have heard, the new statue of Gustav Holst, commissioned by the Civic Society and funded by a bequest from Miss Elizabeth Hamond, is to be sited in Imperial Gardens, and will be unveiled by Mark Elder CBE on Friday 30 November.

Marjorie Imlah

# Imogen's Dream Fulfilled: The Opening of the Holst Birthplace Museum

In the summer of 1974 Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum marked the centenary of Gustav Holst's birth with an exhibition about the composer. One of the visitors was Mrs Garlick, who then lived at 4 Clarence Road. The house had already had a plaque placed by the front door, unveiled by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1949, marking the fact that Holst had been born there. Students of Morley College had given Mr and Mrs Garlick a Visitors' Book for Holst enthusiasts who called at the house to sign. By 1974 Mrs Garlick (presumably now widowed) was thinking of moving to a smaller property, and negotiations were begun to arrange for Cheltenham Borough Council to buy the house in order to furnish it as a Regency property (subsequently the emphasis changed to Victorian furnishings, apart from the drawing room), and accommodate the Holst material held by CAGM.

An appeal was launched in December 1974 by the Mayor of Cheltenham, Councillor D.H.J. Martin-Jones, at which a supporting message was read from Sir Arthur Bliss, congratulating the council on their "prompt and imaginative plan"<sup>1</sup>. Guests were entertained by a recital of Holst choral works given by the Linden Singers, conducted by Ian Humphries and by the founder of the choir, Imogen Holst.

The appeal fund was well supported. A total of £22,000 was needed (roughly what last year's roof repairs cost the Museum!) to buy and restore the property. The borough council gave £10,000 and the rest came from local firms, trusts, individuals and fund-raising events. The necessary work was carried out remarkably quickly under the leadership of David Addison (the Director of the Museum and Art Gallery), Mary Comino (now Greensted and still at CAGM) and Alan Morrall, technical officer.

On October 21 1975 the Holst Birthplace Museum was officially opened by the Duke of Beaufort. Imogen Holst was present, and expressed her delight, saying, "It's something I have had in mind for more than 40 years, but I never dreamt it would actually happen."<sup>2</sup> She had given generously of her father's belongings, including his piano. According to a press report<sup>3</sup> four rooms (not the basement or second floor) were open for visitors from the start and the rest completed later. Mr Addison is reported as saying that the Museum would be "a valuable addition to the cultural life of the town." He hoped it would be an "active museum," with the instruments being

played and small recitals and readings, and this indeed happened for some years; under current conservation policy, however (which both Holst and his daughter would have found incomprehensible), the piano may now be played only by special permission. The rest of the early plans were fulfilled only in part. The basement and second floor areas were completed, but the intention to serve teas "below stairs" was not carried out – it was probably not realistic except on special occasions – and space has not yet been found for an area where students can work. However the basic aim, to present the Museum as a friendly place with no roped off areas was achieved, and it is appreciated by visitors from all over the world (Ecuador, Australia, Japan and Spain were represented in the last few weeks alone). A year after the Museum opened Imogen Holst visited again, this time with her cousin Valerie. She was the daughter of Holst's younger brother Emil, whose career as an actor with the stage name of Ernest Cossart had been spent largely in America where he appeared in many Hollywood films. Valerie (Mrs Graham Livingstone), an actress who appeared on Broadway, was visiting England with her husband and was delighted to see the inside of the house where her father was born<sup>4</sup>.

Sue Fletcher

<sup>1</sup>Gloucestershire Echo, December 7 1974.

<sup>2</sup>Western Daily Press, October 23 1975.

<sup>3</sup>Cheltenham Chronicle. October 24 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Gloucestershire Echo, June 23 1976.

## Driver wanted

Are you a keen driver? Would you like to learn to drive a minibus? Volunteers were driven to their annual outing (a Three Choirs Festival concert at Gloucester Cathedral) by volunteers from the Gloucester Minibus Scheme. We have since been offered the opportunity to have one of our volunteers or Friends trained to drive a minibus and to become part of this scheme. If you think you might be interested, please phone 01242 524846 or email [holstmuseum@btconnect.com](mailto:holstmuseum@btconnect.com).

## Photocopier needed

It would save the Museum both time and money if we were to have our own photocopier. Space is at a premium, but if anyone knows of a redundant *small* photocopier that we could acquire, we would be delighted to hear about it.

## My Week at the Holst Birthplace Museum

Well, where to start? My week at the Holst Birthplace Museum has involved so many different skills and aspects, that I feel slightly lost. I'll say one thing though. Working for a charity is certainly as fulfilling as I had expected. My week began with the incredibly dull health and safety and fire procedure, but it was all uphill from then.

My first, and most time consuming, job was that of sorting the music in preparation for the sale that is fast approaching. This was very relaxing, and I got to look at some very elegant old books of music, and discover things that I didn't know existed, very useful for my musical education. Also I am slightly closer to being able to spell Tchaikovsky (it has an extra s and w in Russian, but no v). This kept me occupied until Thursday morning. However, when I had thought I had finished, and after info about opening up in the morning, I realised there was more in the loft. Anyway after a short interlude, I got this done, and that afternoon I was allowed to work front desk, which was great fun. We even sold a CD.

Friday was spent sorting the key box, a job nearly as large and confusing as the music. I had to reorder, colour code, label and hang them, then redo the list, complete with colour coding. The job was fun, I got to use a Dymo labeller, but I can't help thinking it wouldn't be suitable for someone that was not slightly obsessive compulsive.

Saturday was more based around lots of small jobs, refilling leaflet holders, labelling a missed loo roll holder, creating a complimentary ticket draft, working the desk and doing this report, but it did involve some excellent people, particularly Graham and Shinya so I feel very positively about it. The experience has taught me lots, and I hope the knowledge and experience gained will come in handy in the future.

Jack Fleming

*Jack, aged 14, is a Work Experience Student from Burford School*

## It's not 'The Planets' but...

Gustav Holst wrote the thoroughly enjoyable *Capriccio* in 1932. At this time he was lecturing at Harvard University. He had been asked to write a piece of music for jazz orchestra destined for a radio broadcast. However the work was never performed and lay in the composer's files until Imogen, his daughter, conducted the work in 1968. She took the opportunity of editing and rescoring the piece for a symphony orchestra.

It is an attractive work that balances moods from both sides of the Atlantic. There is certainly an English feel to the gorgeous opening viola solo:

yet the heart of the work nods more to Massachusetts than to Malvern. This central section is extremely witty music that is superbly scored and totally optimistic. There is an excellent march theme followed by an impressive chorale tune. The work concludes with a reprise of the opening tune, but now given with greater breadth and confidence.

*Capriccio*, conducted by Imogen Holst, is available on Lyrita SRCS 223 (on sale at the Museum).

John France

## Holst beginnings

It is a great pleasure to be able to help the work of the Holst Birthplace Museum by becoming a Friend, having returned to Cheltenham, where I grew up, after a gap of over 20 years.

The first time I was ever acquainted with Gustav Holst remains a very clear and vivid one. In 1972 I started at Cheltenham Grammar School aged 11 and after lunch we had Music. For those who recall the 1960s school, the Music Room was contained in an elevated top storey room with a precipitous drop and overhang. Inside this remarkable architectural 'box', and on the facing wall, was an enormous black and white photograph of Gustav Holst, a former Old Patesian.

The Director of Music, John Yarnley (whom many will remember), spent the entire lesson explaining the significance of Holst and why this part of the school was called the Holst Music Room. It was an indelible 35 minutes which included excerpts from *The Planets* (Mars, I think). I am not sure now that the current Pate's Grammar School enjoys a Holst Music Room but if it doesn't, I think it should!

Mark Coote

*Mark is prospective Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Cheltenham.*

# The Friends' Page

## Your Music

Gustav Holst believed that everyone could – and should – make music. With this in mind and with a generous grant from the Cheltenham Arts Council, the Friends are planning a day of music by Friends and friends of Friends. A venue with a piano, refreshments, and an enthusiastic (but not critical) audience are offered to those who wish to take part. The event will take place in the early months of next year, so there is time to prepare a party piece. Exact details will be announced in a future newsletter, but we would like to hear from anyone interested in joining in and in helping out on the day.

## How the Friends have helped

- Contributing to the refurbishment of the Museum (£1,500 in 2005, £1,000 in 2006).
- Buying the British and International Music Yearbook (£25 in 2005).
- Acquiring a copy of *The Messiah* signed by Gustav Holst (£60 in 2005).
- Paying for brown signs to direct people to the Museum (£850 in 2006).
- Sponsoring a concert at the Cheltenham Music Festival (£1,000 in 2006).
- Initiating the 2007 Roof Appeal, and raising about £5,000 of a total of £18,000.
- Donating (by an anonymous Friend) a recording of Vaughan Williams talking about Holst.
- Walking the Cheltenham Circular Challenge (raising about £1,500 in 2007).
- Securing letters to and from Holst along with a copy of Holst's Memorial Service (£125 in 2007).
- Commissioning an Events Notice Board to stand outside the Museum (£40 in 2007).

## Not a Friend yet?....

....You can help the Museum by becoming a member of the Friends - simply fill in the form on this page, arrange your payment and return to the membership secretary.



Registered Charity  
Number 1078599

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holstmuseum@btconnect.com  
www.holstmuseum.org.uk

## APPLICATION FORM

I/we would like to support the Holst Birthplace Museum and apply to join the Friends

Name(s):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Membership options (*please tick your choice*)

	Category	Annual	Life
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	£15	£250
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint	£20	£350
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family	£25	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overseas	£25	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate	£50	£500

I/We enclose a cheque for:

I/We prefer to pay by Standing Order:

To The Manager

plc

Address:

Postcode:

Name(s) of Account Holder(s):

Branch Sort Code:

Account Number:

Please pay to the credit of Friends of the Holst Birthplace Museum's Account (number 11851012) at HSBC Bank, Cheltenham Promenade Branch, 2 Promenade, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 1LS (Sort code 40-17-10) the sum of:  now and thereafter on the same date annually until further notice.

Signature(s)

Date:

## GIFT AID

I wish my payments to the Friends of the Holst Birthplace Museum to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I expect to pay an amount of income tax at least equal to the amount that the charity reclaims on my behalf.

Signature(s):

Date:

Please return this form to the Membership Secretary at the Holst Birthplace Museum, 4 Clarence Road, Cheltenham GL52 2AY