



## Chairman's Note

As Imogen Holst's centenary year draws to a close, there are good signs for the health of the Museum established in memory of her famous father. Despite the summer closures, the half yearly figures are encouragingly positive. In six months we have received donations of approximately £4,500; these, together with some savings in the curator's salary, mean that we have not so far had to touch our reserves.

Further evidence of good health and success is our volunteer rota which now has over 50 names of people prepared to give their time and energy to the Museum. The most recent recruits are Liz Auster, Kirsten McDonagh and Myra Joyce; we are working with Myra to arrange an event in celebration of young Holst's year as organist of St. Laurence, Wyck Rissington.

We plan a shorter than usual winter closure from 15<sup>th</sup> December to carry out some minor cosmetic work, followed by a good spring clean, prior to re-opening on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2008. We will be prepared to open the Museum on Mondays to schools and private groups as part of a strategy to make music and Victorian social history more accessible to children and young students.

We have just interviewed three candidates for the post of Museum Manager but were not prepared to make an appointment and will be re-advertising.

Marjorie Imlah

## Issue 18

### Winter 2007–2008

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**The Museum will  
be closed from  
16 December to  
21 January**

## "The Idea"

The Holst Museum has recently been given a copy of the printed score of one of Holst's early works. *The Idea*, described as a "humorous operetta for children", with words by Holst's friend (and later Imogen's godfather) Fritz Hart, was written in the 1890s, while they were both studying at the Royal College of Music, and was published in Novello's School Music series in 1908. It was dedicated to "Mrs and Miss Newman and the Pupils of St Mary's School, Barnes." Mrs Newman was Holst's Aunt Anna, his mother's sister. Anna seems to have been something of a wild child, and at a young age she married Richard Newman, described variously as a "riding master" and "horse dealer". The marriage proved disastrous and did not last long, leaving Anna to support herself and her infant daughter Mary. By the time Holst was an RCM student, mother and daughter were running the school at Barnes.

his student years; *The Idea* seems to be the only one that was published, and it remained in print for over 50 years. The work is in two acts, lasts about an hour, and concerns a prime minister who had a wonderful Idea to bring happiness to the whole country, but when it is applied the result is chaos. The people rise in revolt, and he has to promise not to have another Idea. Fritz Hart described Holst's music as "something between *Ruddigore* and *Walküre*, with a dash of himself and something of the *Erl King*", but probably the main musical influence is Arthur Sullivan.

The Museum's copy of *The Idea* is signed on the title-page by W.J. Neve, who was for many years Director of Music at Cheltenham Grammar School, where Holst was a pupil over a century ago. This makes it a particularly appropriate addition to our collection and we are most grateful to the donor.

Holst wrote several operettas for the pupils during Suzanne Fletcher

## "The Praise of King Olaf"

SRC (The Specialist Recording Company) have over the last several years been making a name for themselves producing military band recordings of a very high quality. Among their latest releases is a double album (*The Praise of King Olaf*, SRC110) featuring all the existing music originally composed for band by Gustav Holst. The performers are the superb Royal Norwegian Navy Band.

The most interesting item on the CDs is the 10 minute *The Praise of King Olaf*, for voices and military band, written in 1911, which has resided in the British Library in manuscript for almost a century. Also rescued from the British Library is Holst's incomplete version of *A Moorside Suite*, which peters out in the middle of the second movement.

For some years I was intending to make such a compilation and I was very excited to find the manuscripts of *King Olaf* and *A Moorside Suite* in the British Library. *The Praise of King Olaf* was composed for *The Pageant of London*, being a celebration of the history of London staged at Crystal Palace in 1911 in the open air. The event

depicted in this 6-movement work is a great battle in 1014 when King Ethelred attempted to drive the Danes out of London. In his desperation, he sent a message to his friend King Olaf of Norway, who eventually arrived with a fleet and army.

They attacked the Danes who were roosting on London Bridge, but were driven back. Someone then had the idea to attach ropes to the supports of the bridge and the Norsemen rowed furiously downstream, pulling the bridge down and dislodging the Danes. It is said that this is the origin of the song *London Bridge is Falling Down*.

Although by no means among Holst's best music, *King Olaf* is fun and is not too difficult. The vocal parts are mainly for unison voices with a passage that should most logically be sung by a solo tenor or high baritone. As Lewis Foreman intimates in his programme notes, the whole thing must have sounded somewhat strange in the open air.

Mike Purton

*Mike is Managing Director of SRC. "The Praise of King Olaf" is available in the Museum shop.*

## A Visit From Imogen

During the late 60's or early 70's when I was teaching on the music staff of the Ladies' College, an invitation was sent to Imogen Holst to pay us a visit. She was probably in Cheltenham then, helping to establish the Trust for her father's birthplace. She kindly agreed to come and it was arranged for the whole school to miss the last hour of the morning lessons to hear her.

In those days it was a turbulent time for teenagers, who, in every walk of life were delighting in 'kicking over the traces' and rejoicing in the 'freedom' of unruly behaviour. The Ladies' College was no exception, and the music teachers began to have some misgivings about the possibility of a less than polite reception for this celebrated but perhaps old-fashioned lady of the 'sandals and hair-in-a-bun brigade'. Many teachers were keen to come and hear Imogen, so they, and all the prefects, were posted in strategic places around the Princess Hall to ensure a polite reception.

We need not have worried! Suddenly, a radiant figure bounded on to the platform, and, despite her admittedly rather bohemian and old-fashioned appearance, proceeded to hold her large audience spellbound from start to finish. We sang rounds, clapped rhythms, laughed with her, and generally responded to her marvellous energy and

enthusiasm.

It takes a very special person to captivate such a large audience of girls of very mixed musical interest and ability, but Imogen Holst was certainly that person. She was quite irresistible and won all our hearts and admiration on that memorable visit.

Dorothy Eynon

## Imogen's Party

I thought I would add a bit of trivia to Sue Fletcher's piece in the last Newsletter on the opening of the HBM - but something which certainly reflects Imogen's character. The Museum did open remarkably quickly, mainly because it was a huge team effort by the Borough Council and others involved. I remember staff turning up with brass doorknobs and finger plates that were being thrown out of Cheltenham houses. After the opening Imogen organised a party at the Queen's Hotel for everyone involved - the plumbers, electricians etc, as well as the Museum staff. It was a really wonderful gesture which was greatly appreciated.

Mary Greensted

## "The Incantation"

## Holst Statue

For most of us the name of Alan Gibbs (an HBM Friend) is probably best known to us from the books and articles he has written about the music of Gustav Holst. But he is a published composer too. The work which was played on Sunday 30 September at the Pump Room did in fact have material derived from Holst's earliest opera, called *Lansdown Castle or the Sorcerer of Tewkesbury*. It was written when he was only 18 and was performed in Cheltenham in 1892. Holst had great hopes for it, but as time passed and he went to London it was forgotten; but not to Alan who has used themes from it for this new work *Incantation*. A reference to the sorcery aspect of the Holst begins with mysterious, quiet *glissandi*, which conjure up a spell that is soon dispelled by energetic argument that had a Bartokian gritty, vivacity. A central quiet, lyrical, section led back into a return to the insistent energy of the beginning. This dynamic piece was very enthusiastically received by the audience and brilliantly played (on a sweet sounding Amati violin) by the composer's son Robert and the pianist Jonathan Higgins, in a programme which included music by Mozart, Elgar and Brahms. Perhaps one day we will hear the Holst!

Raymond Head

The Gustav Holst statue is now in the process of being cast in bronze at Pangolin Foundry, and construction work is in progress in Imperial Gardens. Since it was decided to place Holst in the somewhat neglected fountain, which the Borough Council conceded was an eyesore badly in need of attention, the statue has developed into a major project, involving the complete refurbishment of the fountain and its setting and including new fountain jets and underwater lighting.

An unforeseen restriction having been imposed on the site works at very short notice, it was decided to postpone the ceremonial handing over until 4<sup>th</sup> April next year when Mark Elder CBE, Musical Director of the Hallé, will unveil the statue. Raymond Head has composed a special fanfare for the occasion to be played by pupils of Pate's Grammar School.

I'd like to thank all of those who have so generously contributed to the funding of the project, and in particular to Elizabeth Hamond, whose bequest covered most of the cost of the statue.

Jenny Ogle

## William Waterhouse

William Waterhouse, who has died aged 76, is remembered by the musical world as an outstanding principal bassoonist with London orchestras and a chamber musician, but we remember him as a generous and staunch supporter of the Museum.

Bill's career began with the Oaks Farm orchestra, where he was encouraged by visiting conductors to learn the bassoon. A scholarship to the RCM followed, interrupted by two years' national service in the RAF central band. He played with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Toscanini, Furtwängler and von Karajan. His career blossomed including stints with the Covent Garden Opera orchestra, the orchestra of Italian-Swiss radio in Lugano and culminating in the first bassoon position in the London Symphony Orchestra. Chamber music work and recordings followed.

A linguist and scholar, as well as a player, Bill was commissioned to write all the bassoon entries for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, and spent 10 years revising Langwill's *Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers*.

Those who attended the concert and tea held at his splendid Music Barn in Sevenhampton will recall a man of immense enthusiasm, talent and warmth. Supporters of the Holst Birthplace Museum were privileged to hear him play the piano and violin, joined in the concert by his wife, Elizabeth, his son Graham and his daughter Celia. It was an unforgettable day, as Bill was an unforgettable man.

Gina Wilson

## Civic Pride

We have been awarded a 'Civic Pride' grant to enable us to repair and repaint the railings outside the Museum. Time and weather have taken their toll and the railings have been looking somewhat the worse for wear for some time now. The Civic Pride initiative by the Borough Council is aimed at making Cheltenham an even better place to live and we are delighted to be able to contribute to this end with the help of the grant. Work on the railings should be completed by the end of the year.

# The Friends' Page

## Holst Friends' Music Event

Plans are now well under way for the Friends' Concert next year. We have been very fortunate in being able to book Pates Grammar School as the venue. The date is fixed for Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March. Several Friends have already volunteered to take part, offering a range of interesting items. However we are still interested in hearing from more of you in order to build a sensible programme. If you are interested, please contact Sue Adlard on 01242 579334 or email holstfriends@dsl.pipex.com.

It is our intention that during the afternoon of 15<sup>th</sup> March we will mount a choral singing workshop. A guest conductor will work with the singers to prepare a few pieces, by Holst and others for performance at the concert in the evening. For this to work we need volunteer singers to join the workshop. If you are a member of any local choir, or indeed just like singing, do sign up for this.

## Friends' AGM

A successful AGM was held this year in the garden room at St. Andrews Church. Your Officers and Committee for the coming year were elected:

Chair: Brian Carvell  
Secretary: Carol Sadie  
Treasurer: Andrew Ellis  
Membership Secretary: Sue Adlard  
Committee members:  
Gina Wilson, Tony Checksfield, Richard Smith

The AGM was followed by a screening of the film "Waters End". This is a locally made film from the Flat Broke Studios of David Reynolds. The sound track is based on Holst's setting of "I love my love".

## 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.



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## 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