



Holst Comes Home

The weekend forecast was chill. Snow, it seemed, was on the way. This was not good news. So the best we could do was cross our fingers that it wouldn't actually be raining (or snowing) on the morning itself. However, as it turned out, on 4th April 2008, the day of the unveiling of the statue of Gustav Holst, Cheltenham was charmed, and the weather was quite perfect. The sun shone, the sky was blue; obviously we have friends in high places! The statue is sited in the centre of the fountain in Imperial Gardens, a prime location, and was the result of an initiative of the Cheltenham Civic Society. A legacy of £45,000, left to the Society by Miss Elizabeth Hamond, provided the money for the statue itself, with the remainder coming from Jenny Ogle's sterling fundraising efforts and £5000 provided by the Borough Council. The bronze statue was sculpted by Anthony Stones and cast at the Pangolin foundry; it stands in the centre of the Gustav Holst memorial fountain on an octagonal plinth depicting the planets.

The event itself took place in front of a crowd of over 200 people. The scene was set by John Henry, Chairman of the Civic Society, who (*continued on p2*)

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Introducing Laura

It is a great pleasure to welcome Laura Kinnear as the new part-time Museum Manager working Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Laura, daughter of Roger Davis of Lavender Fields Books in Charlton Kings, has an outstanding academic record starting at Balcarras School and GLOSCAT, followed by a BA in Classical Studies at London University and culminating in an MA in Museology at the University of East Anglia.

Her first introduction to the HBM was in the summer of 2001 as a volunteer under the curatorship of Joanna Archibald - she remembers being on duty when 9/11 happened in New York.

On her return from East Anglia, Laura quickly became part of the County museum network, working at the Gloucester Folk Museum on a number of education and exhibition projects and spending time as a voluntary documentation assistant at Gloucester City Museum. Since 2006 she has been an exhibition assistant and freelance education assistant at CAGM and currently continues to work there for a day a week in their documentation section. She has also found time to help at the County Archives and at Stroud.

Laura is married to Andy, manager of the sand-casting department of the Pangolin Foundry in Stroud - where Anthony Stone's wonderful statue of Holst was cast! In her rare moments of leisure she enjoys writing and has already had two stories published.

I am convinced that Laura's academic record and hands-on knowledge of local museums make her the ideal person to give the HBM the enthusiastic and professional leadership it deserves, but I also pay public tribute to the loyal, talented and committed team of volunteers who have ensured that despite eight months without professional management, the Holst Museum has not merely survived but positively flourished.

The Music Day, arranged by the Friends of the HBM, under the chairmanship of Brian Carvell and held at Pate's School, has been an exciting innovation and a great success. It was in keeping with Holst's own views and enthusiasm for the sheer joy of making music - and the recent decision to repeat the event next year is an exciting one.

Marjorie Imlah

An Addition to the Archives

A package arrived recently from Mr David O'Neale of Norfolk, enclosing what he referred to as "goodies"; and indeed it contained some very interesting additions to the Holst archives. The main item is a printed score (1st edition) of Holst's Choral Symphony, Op 41, 1925, which Holst wrote while recuperating from a near nervous breakdown in 1924. His doctor had prescribed a period of rest and solitude, and he spent the time in Thaxted, Essex, being looked after by an ex-soldier who acted very efficiently as "cook, valet and guardian" (to quote Imogen Holst), as he regained his strength and spirits. This volume bears an inscription in Holst's handwriting, "Mrs Adami from her grateful guest Gustav Holst Dec. 1925." So who was Mrs Adami? In his biography of Holst, Michael Short tells us that in the autumn of 1925, shortly after the first performance of the Choral Symphony in Leeds, the composer gave a series of lectures at Liverpool University. The Vice-Chancellor at the time was Dr Adami; this is an unusual name, so it seems safe to assume that Mrs Adami was the Vice-Chancellor's wife, that Holst was given hospitality by the couple on his visits and the gift of the score was his recognition of that kindness. It is not known how the copy came to be in the Goldsmiths Music Library (University of London), from where Mr O'Neale acquired it in the 1970s in return for a new copy of the work.

Other items in the package relate to Thaxted, where, with the encouragement of the then Vicar, the Rev. Conrad Noel, Holst initiated the Whitsun Festivals. There are leaflets about the town and its history, which show that Holst's connection with the place is still remembered and valued. There is an extract from *A Detective in Essex* by Donald Maxwell, describing Thaxted Church in the 1930s, and an audio tape of music connected with Thaxted – church bells, folk songs, morris dances, schoolchildren singing *My Soul there is a Country* – with an accompanying leaflet. On a more academic level there is also a copy of Mr O'Neale's M. Mus. thesis (1980), entitled *An Analytic Study of Gustav Holst's Egdon Heath*, a valued contribution to Holst scholarship.

Another item, an article by Imogen Holst for the Thaxted Bulletin, 1974, outlines Holst's connection with the town in more detail and is full of interest, telling of Holst's contribution to and continuing influence on the music of the Church, along with descriptions by Holst himself from letters to his friend W.G. Whittaker.

We are most grateful to Mr O'Neale for this collection and to the Friends of the Museum for their generosity in paying for it.

Suzanne Fletcher

Holst Comes Home (*continued*)

acknowledged all the various contributors to the project, in particular Jenny and Douglas Ogle. Cheltenham's MP, Martin Horwood, remembered being taught about Holst at school; the first LP he bought had been of *The Planets*. The Mayor, Councillor John Rawson, spoke of the regard felt by the people of the town for Cheltenham's most famous son. The statue was unveiled by Mark Elder, conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, who mentioned the importance of Holst as a composer of music for school children to play and sing at a time when little existed. He was a great innovator, and explorer, together with Ralph Vaughan Williams, of England's folksong heritage, and although *The Planets* may be his best known work his musical canon consists of much more.

The event was appropriately enhanced by music. Pupils from Pate's Grammar School, where Holst once studied, played a fanfare composed by Holst scholar Raymond Head, which included an adumbration of the maestoso theme from Jupiter. Ceremonies concluded with *This have I done for my true love*, sung by the Cheltenham Bach Choir. In all, it was a magnificent occasion, and a

suitable and long overdue honour for Gustav Holst, whose benevolent figure now stands, arms raised, in benediction over his fellow Cheltonians.

In the afternoon, we were delighted that Mark Elder and his wife were able to find time to visit the Holst Birthplace Museum, where Keith James gave them an in depth tour of the premises. Mark seemed genuinely fascinated by the Museum, and several times had to be dragged away from poring over some piece of information.

Alison Hall

Thank you...

We are delighted to announce that the Museum now has a photocopier, thanks to a generous donation. The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, has a link to Gustav Holst through her mother, who was a pupil of Holst at St Paul's Girls School. The acquisition of this useful bit of equipment will save us both time and money and is extremely welcome.

Events

The amazingly talented Waterhouse family has again invited us to enjoy an afternoon's concert and delicious tea at the Music Barn on Cleeve Hill. We will hear all of the resident instruments, including two Steinway pianos, a two-manual organ, a harpsichord, a pedal piano and a fortepiano, as well as strings played by all four members of the family.

Celia and Lucy, Bill and Elisabeth's two daughters, will play Vivaldi's *A Minor Concerto* and will be joined by clarinet, horn and bassoon for Schubert's *Octet*. Graham Waterhouse will play his own compositions on the rarely heard pedal piano.

Bill Waterhouse was not only a virtuoso bassoon player and scholar, but he was a great friend of the Holst Birthplace Museum, and we are delighted to be able to invite you to this concert in his memory. Tickets are available at the Museum and are £15 (Friends £12) to include both concert and tea. We should be grateful for the inclusion of a self-addressed envelope.

We are looking forward to the 5th of June at 7.30 when the fine pianist David Owen Norris will play Holst's piano in the Museum. His selection of repertoire will show the piano to its best advantage and reflect the sounds that Holst himself would have heard.

Our thanks go to Peter Newham, who has been looking after the piano for a number of years, ensuring that it will be at optimum condition for the event.

Tickets are £15 (£12 for Friends) include refreshments and are available at the Museum.

There are two corrections to the printed Events Leaflet which came with your last newsletter. The Parry Ensemble who are appearing at Siddington will now be playing on Sunday, the 3rd of August, rather than on the previous day; and we are happy to announce that the lecture on *Finzi and the Concerto*, scheduled to be held in the Museum on the 16th of October, will now be held in the beautiful surroundings of Rendcomb School.

Ernest Cossart

Neil Williams was first attracted to Holst and his music whilst studying for a degree in Music, but his interest was then diverted to the figure of Emil von Holst, Gustav's younger brother. Neil was intrigued by this man who shared with Gustav the same early childhood years at their home in 4 Clarence Road, but then disappeared as a young man to a career in acting in America.

Emil von Holst was born in 1876, and like Gustav suffered the tragic loss of his mother when he was only 6 years old. It was in some ways a rather dysfunctional family life for Gustav and Emil in the following years but while their father, Adolf, encouraged the young Gustav in his musical studies, Emil was denied the same affectionate support, as his father disapproved intensely of Emil's burning ambition to become an actor. Eventually, after a spell at Dean Close, Emil ran away to London and found work with a wine merchant. It was a chance meeting with a client that gave Emil the idea to change his name to Ernest Cossart, this being the very same name as his customer. Ernest's stage debut came at the age of 18. There followed five years in South Africa, military service in the first World War, marriage and the birth of his daughter Valerie, in the same year as Imogen Holst was born. Ernest's early stage work may have been unnoteworthy but it was the foundation for a remarkable film career.

Ernest's film debut came in 1935 with 'The Scoundrel', playing alongside the young Noel Coward. There followed a remarkable run of films where Ernest shared the top billing (never lower than eighth) with many Hollywood greats such as Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Humphrey Bogart, Rita Hayworth, Claudette Colbert, Marlene Dietrich and Ronald Reagan no less! We were treated to extracts from a selection of these films, clearly illustrating the skill and versatility of Ernest as an actor of the highest calibre. We could sense also the humanity of Ernest who could bring to life so many varied characters from all walks of life and so many facets of human emotion. We watched too his poignant final exit from the screen in the film 'John Loves Mary' - Ernest's last film appearance in 1942, with co-star Ronald Reagan.

Neil's enthusiasm for his subject was infectious and we all came away with an appreciation for Emil/Ernest's life and career running parallel to his brother's better documented life. His talk brought to life the personal story behind the photo in the Museum of Gustav, Emil and Imogen clearly enjoying a joke together as Emil acts out the role of conductor in front of his brother and niece. Neil's research will eventually be the basis for a book on the life of Emil. It will be a story certainly worth reading!

Liz Auster

The Friends' Page

Friends' Music Day, 15 March

Walk in the Footsteps of Holst

Looking back on what was a most enjoyable evening, one is struck by the rich variety of the music on offer despite the obvious concentration on Holst and his contemporaries. What was particularly memorable was the dedication, skill and enthusiasm of all the performers. There were quite beautiful and musical sounds from the viola of Jo Phillips and the cellos of Mel Sadie and Diana Statham, spirited string playing from Wendy Ritson's ensemble and from Pate's String Group, which tackled difficult music with relish, and accomplished accompaniment at the piano from Brian Carvell, and from Warwick Cole and John Wright, both of whom also conducted with practised hands. Above all I think that the audience would have been aware of the presence as performers of many of the Friends of the Holst Birthplace Museum, among them the contralto Nicola Carvell and the soprano Helen Wright, both of whom are always a joy to hear, and the indefatigable Sue Adlard, who not only took a large part in the organisation of the event but also appeared as a singer and a violinist, as well as co-ordinating the catering. Wow!

John Wilson

The Music Day was held with the object of making music in a way that Holst would totally have agreed with (and of raising funds for the Museum!). The performance included instrumental works and songs by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Brahms. A choir, conducted by John Wright, sang folk songs by Holst and Vaughan Williams as well as *Sweet Day* by Bliss.

In the afternoon preceding the concert John Wright, conductor of Charlton Kings Choral Society, held a workshop. The choir consisted of singers from a number of local choral societies, some from as far afield as Worcester, and also from the Friends of the Museum. The choir learned from scratch the songs they would be singing in the evening.

Special thanks are due to Brian Carvell and Sue Adlard for organising the event and to John Wright for leading the workshop and conducting the choir, and, last but not least, to Marjorie, Gina, Carol and their helpers for providing the musicians and singers with a delicious tea and for serving drinks and snacks during the interval.

Sylvia Ward

Gustav Holst loved to walk the Cotswold countryside. A stroll to Oxford, some 40 miles, was his idea of a pleasant way to spend his time.

So the Cheltenham Circular Challenge on Sunday 22nd June is very much in this tradition. The full course is the marathon distance of 26 miles 385 yards, which is divided into 6 mile sections... always through spectacular countryside, with a good selection of difficulties.

This charity event has become a regular fixture in the Cheltenham summer, and has raised many thousands of pounds for charity. Full information is available at the Museum, but all you have to do is to contact the website www.thechallenge.org.uk to obtain an entry form – select your section – pay your entry fee – drum up some sponsors – and walk on the day, hoping for fine weather.

We hope that many people will come forward to make 2008 an even better year for the Holst Museum than 2007, when we raised £1500.

Tony Checksfield

Not a Friend yet?....

If you are not already a Friend please do consider joining. Not only would you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum but also would enjoy many other benefits including: Free admission to Museum, price reductions at Events run by both the Trust and the Friends, discounts at 3 local restaurants and 'two for one' admission rates at both the Elgar Birthplace and Handel House Museums.

Membership Rates are:

Single £15, Joint £20, Family £25, Corporate £50, Single Life £250, Joint Life £350.

For further details and application forms, contact the Membership Secretary, Sue Adlard (tel 01242 579334, email holstfriends@dsl.com)



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