



Sue Fletcher

Issue 22

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It was with great sadness that we heard in July of the sudden death of Sue Fletcher. Sue was one of the stalwarts of the Museum and of this newsletter. She was one of the first volunteers when the Museum was set up as an independent trust, and I'm sure that her research into the various aspects of Gustav Holst's life, much of which has been printed here, has been of great interest to, and appreciated by, our readers.

Laura writes: I was extremely surprised that, when I joined the Museum in April 2008, Sue remembered me as a volunteer from 2001. Seven years had passed but she was still able to recall where I was living at the time and what I was leaving Cheltenham to do. This anecdote shows what an incredibly thoughtful and meticulous person Sue was - always with her eye on the detail. Such qualities came in extremely useful at the Museum in her role as volunteer. Sue took great care, pride and above all demonstrated sensitivity and intellectual rigour in all her research undertakings. In my first exhibition, *New Acquisitions*, and sadly Sue's last, she uncovered all the elusive mysteries I could not solve; such was the depth of her Holst knowledge and enquiring mind. Because of her love of exhibition research and also due to the fact that the subject matter was of such great personal interest to her, we will be dedicating our next exhibition, on the Lediard/Whatleys, to her memory. Naturally I will have her notes close to hand.

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**The Museum will
be closed from
14 December to
19 January**

Chairman's Note

For this note I have turned to the Visitors' Book for inspiration. It illustrates why we need to nurture and maintain the commitment and enthusiasm of all those involved with the Museum.

I happened to be on duty one afternoon in the summer, when a partially-sighted young man and his companion went round the Museum. We later sat in the music room whilst I tried to answer his very searching questions about Holst, his house and his music. Before they left, I asked his carer to sign our Visitors Book - this is what she wrote: - "As a social enabler for my blind student Louis, I found this museum very appealing and very tactile for him. He could explore things in a tactile manner and the lighting was very useful. The museum was very good in the fact that the history was fully explained. Should be more places like this in Cheltenham!!"

This, together with one or two other quotations, listed below, is why we must all strive to ensure

the future of the Holst Birthplace Museum.

"Thanks for keeping Holst alive."

"A treasure for the city to cherish."

"Lovely to have been here and make a connection this way with one of the world's finest composers. Beautiful exhibition, beautiful music! Thanks very much."

My final words are, as always, about the Museum's life blood - our volunteers. Inevitably, we have lost two or three over recent weeks, but it is most encouraging that several more have joined us, bringing our numbers nearer to the magic target of 50. They share with us their knowledge, talent, experience and enthusiasm and are most welcome. Rebecca Butt, Judith Compton, Roger Graham, Ann Henderson, Alex Hersoc, Thelma Martin, Dinesh Patel, Martin Perks, Sylvia Strange, and Simon Wright.

Marjorie Imlah

Lucy Broadwood (1858-1929)

As well as the 50th anniversary of Vaughan Williams's death, this year marked the 150th of the birth of his friend, and Holst's, Lucy Broadwood. She was the daughter of Henry Fowler Broadwood, head of the firm whose pianos were played by the likes of Beethoven and Chopin. Their country home nestled in the hills of Surrey, near those of the Wedgwoods and Vaughan Williamses.

The personal and business papers of the Broadwoods are housed in the Surrey History Centre at Woking. They include Lucy's fascinating diaries from October 1882 onwards, meticulously recording her activities and invariably ending with a note on the weather. She describes national celebrations, bomb damage, visits to art galleries and exhibitions, plays and especially musical events, either as participant or audience member.

Lucy's uncle the Rev. John Broadwood was a pioneer collector of folk songs and published *Old English Folk Songs* in 1847. In due course she, too, was to make her mark in that direction, and helped to found the Folk Song Society. She introduced Vaughan Williams to folk song, which he began collecting himself, and he in turn aroused Holst's interest although, apart from tunes he heard in Algeria, Gustav concerned himself with arranging them and drawing inspiration from their modal idiom.

Lucy had a nice singing voice and helped in the revival of the music of Purcell, the Elizabethan composers and Bach in amateur performance, assisting RVW to get the Leith Hill Festivals off the ground and performing for Holst (see the 1905 Passmore Edwards Settlement programme at the HBM). She edited dramatic music for the Purcell Society and translated Bach cantata texts. Not entirely at home in modern idioms, she nonetheless advised RVW on vocal aspects of the *Sea Symphony*, and played *The Hymn of Jesus* through on the piano to the authority George Mead two months before the first performance; she found it 'very modern, but full of beautiful things, & daring discords justified'. Holst's early *Wind Quintet*, recently published in Urtext by Raymond Head, is in her archive.

In 1918, shortly after the death of Sir Cecil Spring Rice, she received from her friend Lady Farrer a typewritten copy of his last poem, 'I vow to thee, my country'. An entry for 6th October 1919 reveals that she passed the poem on to RVW, who almost certainly duly passed it on to Holst – and the rest, as they say, is history. (My article on this discovery is in this October's *Hymn Society Bulletin* - see the Society's website at www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk)

Alan Gibbs

Sue Fletcher (*continued*)

(Continued from page 1)

Amelia Marriette recalls that Sue was very kind to her personally, and took a very active interest in the Holst Collection - keen to help with the cataloguing and keen to undertake the task with great care, always paying particular attention to the meticulous detail that such work requires. In this she was always supported by Chris and the time that they spent together on the collection at the Museum is the time that she thinks of with the greatest fondness.

Heather Moore-Scott writes: Sue and I would chat sometimes at the desk handover at lunchtime, and it was always a pleasure — I loved her sense of humour, and never once heard her complain about her health or decreasing mobility. Her knowledge was superb, and her views always worth hearing; they could be surprisingly fierce at times for such a gentle lady, yet she was always fair in her criticisms.

We also talked about her twin grandchildren - but only when I enquired about them (no boring grandmother, Sue!) I can't remember how I

learned that a baby was expected, but then it turned out to be twins, and after that I had great pleasure in learning of their progress, the activities she did with them, her very great pride and delight in them, that they were musical and developing a good sense of humour rather like Sue's own.

Sue was a VERY rare and special lady. I miss her.

Marjorie Imlah writes: I join with all those who pay tribute to Sue Fletcher's scholarship and intellect but also offer my admiration for her cheerful courage and fortitude in the face of many years of poor health and pain - I never once heard her complain, even when her outings were in a wheelchair.

STOP PRESS

The Museum has been given a grant of £5,000 under the Borough Council's Community Pride funding to give the outside of the Museum a facelift (as published in the *Echo* on 1st November). We have undertaken to match the funding.

Homage to Holst Exhibition

Sat in my office during the wet summer reading through a clutch of letters from the Holst Archive, I began to uncover the strands of the story of the 1927 Holst Festival. Terse exchanges, warm commitments of help, lengthy descriptions of train timetables between Birmingham and Cheltenham, all made the concert emerge vividly from the page. These items are now on view at the Museum in the current exhibition, *Homage to Holst*, programmed to coincide with the *Homage to Holst* concert at Cheltenham Town Hall in November (see below).

The Holst Birthplace Museum is fortunate to have so much rich material on the 1927 Festival, indeed much more than could be included in the final exhibition. Did the quantity of the material make it easier or more difficult to mount the show? In some ways it was harder; I was continually finding something to fascinate, usually after I had decided to cull.

Letters form the majority of the material in the exhibition: from the scrap scribbled in haste by Holst when he called on Lewis Hann, Director of the Festival, to the frustrated typed communications from A.H. Shepherd, General Secretary of the City of Birmingham Orchestra to Hann about Sir Ivor Atkins. It is evident that Sir Ivor, who was choirmaster and organist for Worcester Cathedral, was a real threat to the success of the Festival. Atkins initially refused to release City of Birmingham Orchestra members

for the Festival because they had been booked for a concert to celebrate him on the same day.

Star items in the exhibition include a letter from Vaughan Williams, who writes to express his regret at not being able to attend the event. He writes that Holst is 'one of the greatest composers of modern Europe.'

Cheltenham can have little doubt about how Gustav Holst felt about the Holst Festival as he wrote to Cheltenham's then Mayor to thank him and the people of Cheltenham. In a letter dated 31st March 1927 Holst writes: 'If other towns honoured their native artists as Cheltenham has done, our national attitude towards art would be very different.' This letter belonged to the family of Councillor Diggory Seacome, because his grandfather, R. Owen Seacome, was Town Clerk at the time of the Holst Festival. This important item is now part of the Holst Birthplace Museum collection. Agreeing to lend it to the exhibition, Diggory Seacome then generously donated it to the Museum on the evening of the exhibition opening. It is a particularly significant letter, important both to the history of Cheltenham and Gustav Holst.

Laura Kinnear

The *Homage to Holst* exhibition continues until 14th February 2009.

Homage to Holst Concert

Friends, volunteers, trustees, the 'great and good' of Cheltenham, and many members of the public all gathered at Cheltenham Town Hall on 2nd November for the *Homage to Holst* concert, organised in emulation of the 1927 concerts presently documented in the new exhibition at the Museum.

Martyn Brabbins, President of the Friends, conducted the Salomon Orchestra, ladies of the Cheltenham Bach Choir and Julian Lloyd Webber in a varied programme. In the first half, we had Cecil Coles's overture *The Comedy of Errors*, then Holst's *Invocation* for cello and orchestra, and finally George Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow*. The Coles work was completely new to me, and was evidently extremely competent for a young man of 23 or so. What did we lose when both he and Butterworth were killed in the war?

And then, after the interval, we had (of course) *The Planets*. Martyn conjured a marvellous

performance from his players – I don't ever recall hearing such a steely, ruthless *Mars*, and the chorus at the very end of *Neptune* faded away magically, just as Holst must have intended.

All of the profits from the evening are going to the Museum. We would like to thank the performers for giving their services free of charge; the sponsors of the event, most notably Lloyds TSB Private Banking; and all of those Friends and volunteers who helped on the day.

Richard Smith

T-shirts for sale

If you were at the *Homage to Holst* concert, you may have noticed the fetching green HBM t-shirts being worn by many of the volunteers. If you would like to have one, they are now on sale at the Museum, in a range of sizes, for £10 each.

The Friends' Column

Imogen Holst CD

Friends' Concert

Plans are now under way for a second Friends' concert; the enthusiasm surrounding last year's event has encouraged us to repeat the idea, again keeping in mind the model and objectives which would have been familiar to Gustav Holst. We expect the concert to take place on 21st March at Pates School and to follow much the same lines as last year, that is an afternoon singing workshop followed by an evening concert. Those musicians who would like to perform in the evening concert are invited to contact Brian Carvell (tel. 231475), while singers for the workshop should contact Sue Adlard (tel. 579334). Once again John Wright has kindly agreed to run the singing workshop.

Support to the Museum

The Friends continue to support the Museum in many ways and in particular financially; this year we have voted to give the Museum a donation of £3,000 from our funds towards essential running costs, and we have contributed to the costs of the *Homage to Holst* concert by paying for the hiring of the orchestral music. Other donations are in the pipeline.

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 the 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
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'Hello Christine. The CD has arrived! It sounds wonderful. A positive triumph....'. The email from a satisfied listener appeared on 5th August 2008, marking the successful conclusion of a project which had started in April 2007 – a CD of Imo's string chamber music to coincide with the publication of 'Imogen Holst – A Life In Music'.

At first, three of the six works were still in manuscript, and had to be painstakingly transcribed into Sibelius software for emailing to the six players of Court Lane Music, led by Simon and Thomas Hewitt Jones. The music was rehearsed, then recorded over three days before the editing process began, jump-started by a request from *Woman's Hour* on Radio 4 for some excerpts for a programme on Imo.

Meanwhile lecture-recitals given by Christopher Tinker and Court Lane Music went ahead in Cheltenham, Swansea, London and Aldeburgh, and the design process continued, with print files and emails chasing team members around the UK and indeed the globe. Checking of edits, credits, and copyright, decisions about layout, font and colour, sleeve notes, a website, a licence to broadcast and a licence for copyright protection, worldwide distribution and iTunes – the list was endless.

But finally – an email stating 'Imo is in production' – and then the CD was delivered. The result? A recording of superlative quality, available at the Museum or online at www.imogenholst.com.

Christine Tinker

Events

There is just one more event left this year - the annual Victorian Family Christmas Day - to be held on Saturday, the 13th of December from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Though centred on children, there will be something for all the family to enjoy, including a Christmas trail, some appropriate music, and demonstrations of traditional Christmas family activities. The Museum will be dressed in Christmas finery evoking the elaborate preparations of our Victorian ancestors. Children will be admitted free with a paying adult, so why not bring all the family?

We are now looking forward to next year's events, and we are of course always interested in new ideas. If there is someone or something you think would be of interest, please get in touch with the Museum. The Events Calendar will be sent out with the February newsletter, so we would like to hear from you as soon as possible.