



Holst Birthplace Museum Newsletter



Chairman's Note

At the recent AGM we said 'Thank You and Goodbye' to two of our longest serving trustees. Keith Stanley from Malvern, with a passion for chamber music, a skill with figures and a directness of purpose, was a valuable asset to the committee. Gina Wilson wore two hats with ease and grace - as both vice chairman, and as chairman of the events committee. It has been her dynamic energy, professional knowledge and fundraising expertise that has contributed significantly to the improved profile and success of the Museum.

The day that Liz Auster, a near neighbour, walked into the Museum was a good one. She is very musical, has immense charm and is gently persuasive so a worthy successor to Gina to head up the events committee. The trust has been further enriched by the appointment of Jenny Ogle and Dr. Steve Blake, both of whom are well known in Cheltenham.

These are eventful days at the Museum. We worked hard to raise our profile during the Music Festival - with modest success. We were particularly delighted to welcome Patricia Routledge, who maintains a lively interest in the building and those who work in it.

We are also working to update our constitution. The current Memorandum and Articles of the independent Holst Birthplace Trust were written in 1999. Ten years on, they are in need of revision to allow a much wider group of interested people (including, in particular, the Friends) a more democratic role in the affairs of the Trust. We are greatly indebted to our Honorary Legal Adviser, Margaret Austen of Willans, who is currently redrafting the Articles of Association. These will, in due course, be ratified and presented to all interested parties.

Marjorie Imlah

Holst Film from the 1970s

The Museum has recently enjoyed a considerable boost in public interest, thanks to the persistence and investigation of David Bailey of BBC Radio Gloucestershire and Steve Knibbs, reporter on Points West.

David took two boxes of film, hitherto stored in various damp parts of 4 Clarence Road, and managed to create DVD tapes of a film, made over 30 years ago by Demester Films. Imogen was very much involved with the project and appears twice, giving us a rare but graphic insight into her father's life, work and wishes. Other interviews with Edmund Rubbra, Michael Tippett and some of "Gussy's" former pupils at SPGS and JAGS reflect the affection and respect that this

hardworking and modest man inspired.

There has been a fair amount of press interest in these old films, earning the Museum a mention on the Today programme and some BBC News channels on Friday 24th July... and immediately persuading more visitors to cross our threshold.

At the time of going to press we are uncertain about the future of these grainy old films but are delighted that David Bailey's efforts have added another dimension to our precious Holst archive. We also plan to arrange for a viewing of the films, so watch this space - and your email!

Marjorie Imlah

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The Passmore Edwards Settlement

Gustav Holst was musical director at the Passmore Edwards Settlement from September 1904 to June 1907, overlapping the beginning of his 17 fruitful years at Morley College.

Settlements were the brainchild of the Rev Samuel Barnett, vicar of St Jude's, Whitechapel. He first propounded the idea in an address at St John's College, Oxford on 17 November 1883, and put it into practice the next year by founding Toynbee Hall (the Universities Settlement) near St Jude's. 'The poor need more than food' was his mantra, and he joined a growing band who saw in education the way out of poverty, together with a breaking down of social barriers. The Hall comprised premises where Oxford and Cambridge 'men fresh from college or old university men' could live, mix with the underprivileged in their spare time, attend lectures and run clubs and classes for them. He sought to broaden horizons by enlisting art — he and his wife organized a pioneering exhibition which was to lead to the establishment of the Whitechapel Art Gallery — and music — although Henrietta confessed 'neither he nor I were ever quite sure of "God save the Queen" until the other people stood up! Keble College's high-church Oxford House Settlement opened in Bethnal Green slightly earlier the same year, but occupied disused school premises: its own hall, still in business today, opened in 1891. Another settlement opened in Farncombe Street, Bermondsey, also in 1891, but is gone without trace. The movement gained such momentum that by the 1920s international conferences of settlement workers were being held.

In 1890 Mary Ward (Mrs Humphry Ward the novelist) discussed with Barnett a similar project for Bloomsbury, to reflect 'the liberal and spiritual life, without definitions or exclusions'. Her own beliefs were more Unitarian, and Barnett confided to his brother Frank 'I do not think it will go... It has neither the force of a sectarian movement nor the charm of a free movement'. Nonetheless Mary raised enough support to see the University Hall Settlement opened as a men's hall of residence in Gordon Square that year, and found 'a little dingy hall in Marchmont Street' for their clubs and classes. The latter was replaced by a purpose-built centre designed in 1895 in the Art Nouveau style by two of the students. The Duke of Bedford provided the site off Tavistock Square under a 999-year lease 'on most liberal terms' and the Cornish philanthropist John Passmore Edwards, whose generosity facilitated the creation of many a free public library (including that in Whitechapel, with adjacent gallery) donated £14,000 towards the settlement in his name. It is

still to be seen: the large hall has a raked platform and boasts an array of busts of Mary's heroes, such as Jowett, Martineau and her uncle Matthew Arnold. External doors are designated Public Entrance and Platform Entrance. A small hall exists below, used at one time as a gymnasium, and an attractive library in memory of T H Green, whose ideals she espoused. There is a former playroom, originally run at Marchmont Hall by Mary Neal of folk dance fame. The canopy over the west side entrance proclaims, probably in Mary's own words, 'THE IDEA OF A SETTLEMENT', defining it as 'a colony of members of the upper classes formed in a poor neighbourhood with the double purpose of getting to know the local conditions of life from personal observation, and of helping where help is needed'. The eponymous hero of her novel *Robert Elsmere* (1888) had envisaged for his New Brotherhood 'three floors of rooms brightly furnished, well lit and warmed; a large hall for the Sunday lectures, concerts, entertainments, and story-telling; rooms for the boys' club, two rooms for women and girls,... a library and a reading-room,... Naturalist club... and, if possible, a gymnasium'. This was close to the plan as executed, while to the east lay her Invalid Children's School, the first in England. This is now the Chinese Community Centre, while the main building is now an independent conference and exhibition centre, Mary Ward House. But the work, including choirs, orchestras and chamber music, has continued at the Mary Ward Centre in nearby Queen Square since 1982. Like Toynbee Hall and Whitechapel Art Gallery (recently re-opened by Prince William) it is still very much in business. Peter Joseph (nephew of Jane Joseph, one of Holst's best pupils) was playing his 'cello there in the 1980s.

Alan Gibbs

(This article will be concluded in the next issue)

Court Lane Concert

Readers may like to know that Court Lane Music, whose recent CD of Imogen Holst's music was much praised, will be appearing during the coming season of Cheltenham Music Society concerts. Their programme will include three pieces by Imogen Holst - her string trio, duo for violin & cello and *The fall of the leaf* for solo cello - as well as works by Britten, Colin Matthews and Bridge.

Their concert will be on Wednesday 17th February at 8.00 in the Pump Room. Single tickets will be available from the Town Hall box office from 5th September.

Events

There are important changes to the Events Programme for this autumn. We have had to reschedule the talk to be given by David Kaye on August 13th as David has been unwell recently. We look forward very much to welcoming him to the Museum on a date to be arranged in 2010.

This means that the next Event this year will be the Heritage Open Days and Music Sale on September 12th and 13th (see p4). Donations of any items for the sale are eagerly anticipated and will be gratefully received. There will be free admission to the Museum on these two days, so do bring your friends to visit!

Due to a prior booking of All Saints' Church, the Holst Birthday Concert advertised for September 26th sadly cannot take place. The events committee is actively working on an alternative event to take place on Monday September 21st, which we hope will be based around the recent rediscovery of the archived Holst film footage. Volunteers and Friends may also be interested in attending concerts and other events to be held in Chichester Cathedral over the weekend of September 25th - 27th to mark the 75th Anniversary of Holst's death. Details of these events can be found on the Cathedral's website, www.chichestercathedral.org.uk.

On October 22nd, just after the Literature Festival closes, the Holst Museum will be hosting a special evening of music and poetry with Gordon Pullen, a distinguished tenor soloist, and David Barlow, former Chaplain at the Ladies' College. The

programme will include some rarely performed settings by Holst of Hardy poetry, as well as other music by Holst's contemporaries Cyril Scott, Vaughan Williams and Balfour Gardiner. This should be a delightful evening of poetry and song. Space is limited in the Museum so do book early!

I am delighted to announce a new event on October 31st to be held in the Pittville Pump Room. This concert is organized in support of the Museum and is part of a series of three in which all of the Beethoven Violin Sonatas will be performed over one weekend by soloists Krysia Osostowicz and Simon Crawford Phillips. On Friday and Sunday the concerts will take place in Malvern, but on the Saturday evening there will be a performance of the three Op. 30 sonatas in the Pittville Pump Room. Tickets for this concert can be purchased from the Museum at a concessionary price for Friends and Volunteers of £12.

I can now also announce the artists for the concert on Sunday November 29th in the Pittville Pump Room. The English Ayres (soprano, violin and lute) will perform a selection of English folk song from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century in settings by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Bliss. This will be an afternoon concert starting at 3pm, and will include tea in the interval.

Do please continue to support these events and encourage your friends to come along also. There is a lot to enjoy this Autumn!

Liz Auster

Work Experience

The summer term usually sees an influx of work experience students to the Museum, and this year a total of five young people from local Cheltenham schools have spent a week at the Museum. In June we were fortunate to have two very artistic girls, Michelle and Isabelle, from Dean Close and Pate's Grammar respectively. Michelle and Isabelle designed all of the children's craft activities for the summer holidays. Michelle wrote enthusiastically about her time spent at the Museum: 'This is my first year in England, and as English is not my first language, this work experience week was quite a challenge to me. However, it turns out to have been a highlight of this school year. During this week, I have learnt a lot by doing different sorts of work. Both Isabelle and I have helped preparing the summer activities for children. I made templates and examples for the 'Indian Masks' and the 'Cup and Ball Game'. I really enjoyed doing these little art pieces.'

In July we had another week where two students were scheduled: Daniel from Christ College and Lawrence from Brockworth. They had a more active experience, delivering leaflets to shops and businesses and handing out promotional material at Pittville Pump Room for the Music Festival. Lawrence also did a great job cataloguing some of Gustav Holst's scrapbooks.

Then, in the final week of the school term, Beth came for the week from Balcarras. Some of you will know about the music project the Museum has been doing in partnership with Balcarras, so it was great to have ties strengthened further. Beth undertook a range of tasks, from organising craft materials for the summer activities to putting together a portfolio for an 'Arts Award'.

Laura Kinnear

The Friends' Column

Friends' AGM

The Friends Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 5th September at 2.30 pm in the Garden Room at St Andrew's Church, Cheltenham. After the meeting we shall be having a talk from Lionel Carley, who is President of The Delius Society and also Adviser and Archivist for The Delius Trust. All Friends are welcome. Tea will be served.

The Delius Society

The Friends now have a reciprocal Honorary Membership arrangement with the Delius Society. This means that Friends can join the Delius Society for half the normal fee for the first year (their normal annual fee is £23.00). Further information can be found on their website, www.delius.org.uk.

Restoring the Harp

Visitors to the Museum will probably have noticed that the harp in the first floor drawing room is looking somewhat tatty. The Friends are arranging, and paying, for it to be restrung; we may also have something done about the woodwork. There is unfortunately no possibility of restoring it to a playable condition: the instrument is too old and fragile, and the radical reconstruction that would be required would damage its historical integrity.

Distributors Wanted

The Museum regularly distributes publicity material around local businesses and public buildings. This work is done by volunteers, and we could do with some more help. Specifically, we need distributors for Hester's Way, Whaddon, London Road (except Sixways), Prestbury and Painswick.

If you would be able to help, or require any further information on the locations, please contact me (email catriona@randc.me.uk or tel. 01242 578172).

Catriona Smith



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Music Sale

We hope that our annual fundraising Music Sale, to be held on the 12th & 13th September, will benefit both the Museum and its supporters.

It represents a golden opportunity for you and your friends and relations to clear your musical clutter in an excellent cause... and then to fill up your empty space with exciting and affordable new purchases!

Please can you help? All donations of CDs, DVDs, instruments, sheet music and books will be very gratefully received (not LPs, please). Please pass the word to fellow music lovers about this enjoyable way to refresh or expand their collection.

If possible, please deliver items to the Museum during normal opening hours (Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 am to 4.00 pm); or, alternatively, contact the Museum to arrange collection.

We also need people willing to help with running the sale. If you can lend a hand, please contact Liz Auster on 01242 248873.

Music Festival at 65

When, in 1916, Gustav Holst introduced a music festival to Thaxted he brought a feast of music making to brighten the war years. Surely, had he lived longer, he would have approved the decision of the Cheltenham Corporation to launch a music festival while the Second World War was drawing to a close. With its emphasis on promoting the music of living British composers and the careers of young musicians the Cheltenham Music Festival has been held every year since 1945. As part of the celebrations to mark the 65th festival in 2009 Graham Lockwood has written a short history.

Within a hundred or so illustrated pages he explores the ambitions of its successive artistic directors, the challenges of artistic endeavour in the face of financial constraints and changing audience expectations. He describes the changing relationships with the council, the BBC, the Arts Council and the local community as well as daring to contemplate the prospects for the future.

Copies of the book are available from the Museum shop at £10. All proceeds will go to the Museum

Study Day

Raymond Head will be running another Study Day at Farncombe on the 17th October. The subject will be *Re-assessing Elgar, Delius and Holst*.