



Holst Birthplace Museum Newsletter



Chairman's Note

In order to achieve the aims of the new three-year plan outlined in the Special Issue, the Trustees are now setting up key appointments and committees. The responsibilities of the Membership Committee will naturally include regular communications with all members and the recruitment of new members. Other committees will take on specific responsibilities such as Museum Events, the maintenance of the exterior and interior of our building, the development and preservation of our Holst archive, together with fundraising, marketing and publicity. The rest of this note concentrates on our most valuable asset, people, but future Newsletters will record information and progress as the Trust takes on its responsibilities under the new Articles.

I am delighted to inform all our Trust members that Martyn Brabbins, formerly President of the Friends, has graciously accepted an invitation to be President of the Trust itself. He says he is honoured to be offered this rôle as he feels a real affinity with Holst and his music - we are honoured by his acceptance.

Keith Woodman has been appointed the Honorary Secretary of the Holst Birthplace Trust with immediate effect. He joined relatively recently as a volunteer but brought with him a sound knowledge of financial and business management, experience of working with the voluntary sector, a serious commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of Gloucestershire and a 'passion for many forms of music, particularly English music'.

Pam Savell has agreed to be co-opted, also with immediate effect, to the Trust with the specific role of Chairman of the Membership Committee. She, too, will be a great asset as a teacher, an active musician, a committed volunteer and above all, someone with committee experience, most recently with the former Friends of the HBM.

The importance of the role the volunteers play in the successful day to day life of the Museum is reflected in the formal appointment of a Volunteer Co-ordinator - Jenny Jones. She has already made a significant contribution, with Laura, to volunteer policy, training and routine procedures.

We welcome the following volunteers, who have joined the team within the last six months: Louise Wilkinson, Simon Walters, Tony Walliman, Peter Sen, Katherine Stanley and Suk-a-Snapes.

Finally a name synonymous with the Museum and volunteers is Keith James, who recently had major surgery and a three week stay in hospital. He is slowly regaining his strength and very much appreciates all the good wishes he and Josie have received. Cards and calls are most welcome but he is not quite ready to take on the world, at least until we re-open on 2nd February and prepare to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Holst Museum.

Marjorie Imlah

Issue 26

November 2009

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**The Museum will
be closed from
13th December to
1st February**

The Trustees wish to place on record their thanks to Willans for their professional advice and guidance over the recently revised Articles and Bye-Laws and copyright matters.

Holst in Chichester Weekend

Chichester Cathedral organised an enjoyable weekend of events on the occasion of Gustav Holst's birthday in September to commemorate the 75th anniversary of his death. The weekend of concerts and talks culminated with the unveiling of a new memorial stone (carved by Alec Peever – there is a photo on the Museum website). Catriona and I went down for the weekend to represent the Museum; we were warmly welcomed by the Dean and given VIP seats near the front of the audience – very welcome since all of the events appeared to be full!

I most enjoyed the first of the two concerts, which was a free Friday lunchtime concert given by the choir and orchestra of St Paul's Girls' School, and introduced by Patricia Routledge. Their programme included, inter alia, two movements from the *St Paul's Suite*, the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, and *I vow to thee, my country*.

On the next day, Saturday, Raymond Head's lecture on 'Gustav Holst: A man of our time' focussed on Holst's connections with Chichester and Bishop Bell (who described Holst as 'a prince of friends'), and his influence on contemporary composers such as John Tavener and Jonathan Harvey. Raymond concluded his talk with a CD of the rarely heard *Fugal Overture*.

Then in the evening, the Royal Marines Band and the Cathedral Choir performed works by Holst and his contemporaries Parry, Elgar, Stanford and Vaughan Williams.

Richard Smith

We were unfortunately unable to stay for the unveiling of the new memorial stone on the Sunday afternoon, but Michael Short, who was there, writes:

When Holst died in 1934 his widow Isobel

Sara Salvidge

The Museum welcomes Sara Salvidge as the new Education and Events Assistant. Sara will be developing the Education programme, including creating a Holst loans box for schools and helping with events and activities. Sara will also be responsible for facilitating the Victorian Domestic sessions. The post has been funded by a grant from the Grace Fry Charitable Trust. Sara also works at Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, and previously worked at Gloucester Folk Museum.

arranged for his ashes to be buried in Chichester Cathedral because of the Whitsun Festivals which Holst had directed there and his friendship with the Bishop, George Bell. A simple inscription marked the spot, but recently the Cathedral authorities decided that something more elaborate was needed. They therefore commissioned a new gravestone, bearing a quotation from Holst's own translation from the Greek of the Apocryphal Acts of St John which he had made for *The Hymn of Jesus*: "The Heavenly Spheres Make Music for Us". The new stone was unveiled on Sunday 27th September as part of a special Evensong service that included music by Holst and other English composers, after which the congregation moved to the North Transept where the ceremony took place and the choir sang Holst's *Nunc Dimittis*. The new stone will be inserted into the floor paving, just below the memorial to Thomas Weelkes, who was Holst's favourite Tudor composer.

New Acquisition

The Museum has acquired a unique drawing of Gustav Holst by the artist Sir William Rothenstein (1872-1945). Rothenstein was born in Bradford but eventually settled near Stroud. He became known for his portrait drawings of famous individuals, and was also an official war artist during both WWI and WWII. The Holst drawing is in pencil and signed and dated 'W.R. 1921'. The drawing was reproduced in Rothenstein's 1923 book, *Twenty Four Portraits*. The drawing complements a print of a later portrait of Holst by Rothenstein, which is currently on display in the Museum. However the most intriguing thing about the drawing is an upside down study of an unidentified woman, just below the drawing of Holst. The sketch of the woman would have been hidden by the mount. At this stage it is not clear who the woman is; she does not look like Holst's daughter, Imogen, and she is too young for Holst's wife, Isobel.

The acquisition has only been made possible through generous grants by the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Art Fund, The Trafford Memorial Fund and a private donation. The Holst Birthplace Museum is extremely grateful for all the support it has received for the purchase of this very important drawing. Mention should also be given to the hard work done by former trustee Gina Wilson in successfully approaching funders. Visitors to the Museum will be able to view it in the New Year as part of the re-hang of the stairway.

Events

There remain just two events in this year. Do not miss the Sunday afternoon **Concert of English Songs** on **November 29th at 3pm**. This will provide the perfect antidote to Christmas Shopping! Come and relax in the Pump Room and enjoy the performance of songs by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Bliss by the *English Ayres* Group (soprano, baritone, violin and lute). Your £10 ticket will include tea or coffee in the interval.

To conclude this year of events we will be holding a **Victorian Christmas Activity Day** on **Saturday December 12th** – see below.

Plans are well under way for next year's events. We are already working on our annual Music Day at Pate's school on 20th March (see back page).

In 2010 the Museum will be celebrating 35 years since its opening by Imogen Holst in 1975. In addition we can look forward to a major event in September to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Romantic artist, Theodor von Holst. More details of all these events will follow in the New Year.

Liz Auster

Victorian Family Christmas

The nostalgia of a Victorian Christmas seems to be the ideal aspired to by most families approaching the seasonal festivities these days. Unlike most museums, we are fortunate to be able to open the doors of a Victorian family home complete with period sights, sounds and smells to involve our visitors in the excitement and anticipation of preparing for what was then, a newly indulgent celebration of the season. The fashion conscious Victorians followed the example of the Royal Family whose Christmas festivities were enhanced by Prince Albert, who introduced traditions from his native Germany, most notably that of the Christmas tree.

Victorian families made their own Christmas decorations from natural objects as well as from those found in and around the home and visitors to our annual Victorian Family Christmas, to be held on **Saturday 12th December** will be encouraged to do just that.

Last year's Christmas lanterns made out of jam jars are being brought back by popular demand – so popular last year that even the coffee jar in the kitchen had to be hastily emptied to provide a lantern for an expectant child! Pine cones will be turned into 'Robin Redbreast' tree decorations and children will be able to make cornucopias filled with Christmas treats with the aid of local parent and visitor, Victoria Cambridge who approached the Museum with the design and offer of help after attending a Saturday activity with her own child. Christmas cards to make, are based on an original Victorian pop-up design and the spicy, evocative aroma of Christmas will be provided by a 'Sniff-it-out' game where visitors will guess the contents of seasonal themed calico bags. There will be a Christmas trail around the Museum, and a Lucky Dip. After lunch there will be an informal musical interlude of Christmas music, performed

in unique style by Dinesh and friends on sitar, violin and mandolin in the Regency Room.

Add to all of this, the welcoming warmth and crackle of the fire in the kitchen range embodying the nostalgia we crave, the smell of the odd wisp of escaping smoke and the whole day should prove to be irresistible to children and adults alike. Usual ticket prices apply with children admitted free with a paying adult.

Activities will take place between 10.30 and 12.30, and between 1.30 and 3.30. The Christmas music will be performed from 1.30 to 2.30.

Sara Salvidge

New Website

A brand new website has been developed for the Museum by the web designer Dinesh Patel. Many of you will have met Dinesh as a volunteer, either on reception or at one of the sitar performances he has given at the Museum. Discussions about the new website have been ongoing for several months, so it is very exciting to have the new version up and running. The new design has a rather more 'modern' feel than our previous one, and has the capacity to showcase film clips. It also has more sections than the old website, for example there is a 'News' element, where information about all our latest projects can be highlighted (and which also carries copies of this newsletter), and also one devoted to 'Learning', where our work with children and young people can be previewed. I am sure that you will agree this is a fantastic new development for the Museum, and we welcome all of your comments.

Laura Kinnear

Delius and Ivor Gurney Societies

In our August issue, we announced that we now have a reciprocal arrangement with the Delius Society whereby we are offering each other's members a reduced subscription of 50% for the first year of membership. This initiative follows on from the talk given by Lionel Carley and Michael Green of the Delius Society at our AGM. The Delius Society publishes a substantial Journal twice a year and two shorter Newsletters; details of the Society can be found on its website at www.delius.org.

The Delius Society will publicise our Society's activities in their Journal and we will include their events in our Newsletter. If you would like to take up the offer of membership, please contact the Society's Vice-Chairman, Michael Green, email Michael.green620@tesco.net, tel. 01299 400883.

Forthcoming Delius Society meetings include:

Tuesday 19th January 2010 at 7.15pm

New Cavendish Club, 44 Great Cumberland Place, London (London Branch meeting):

Alan Gout provides an illustrated talk on Delius's harmony and how it developed.

Thursday 11th February 2010 at 7.15pm

Norwegian Embassy, 25 Belgrave Square, London: Joint meeting with the Grieg Society.

Wednesday 10th March 2010 at 6.30pm

Steinway Hall, 44 Marylebone Lane, London: Viola and Piano Recital: Martin Outram (viola), Julian Rolton (piano). Programme to include a new arrangement of Delius's Cello Sonata.

Ivor Gurney Society

We also now have a similar reciprocal membership arrangement with the Ivor Gurney Society, so our members can join their society for half price during the first year. Their current membership rates are £14 individual, £18 joint. The secretary is Rolf Jordan and his email address is: vanframboos@hotmail.com.

Become a Member

If you are not already a member of the Trust, please do consider joining. Not only would you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum, but you would also enjoy many other benefits.

Annual Membership rates are:

Single £15, Joint £20, Family £25, Corporate £50, Benefactor £60, Joint Benefactor £100, Corporate Benefactor £300.

For further details and application forms, please contact Catriona Smith:

tel: 01242 578172

email: catriona@randc.me.uk

If you would like to become a Volunteer at the Museum, and thus a Volunteer Member, please contact the Curator, Laura Kinnear, at the Museum (see below for contact details).

Music Day

Our annual Music Day will take place on Saturday 20th March at Pate's Grammar School, with a choral workshop at 2.30pm and a concert at 7.00pm.

For the choral workshop, we shall be preparing some of Elgar's *6 Songs from the Bavarian Highlands* for performance at the evening concert. An early response would be appreciated from interested Members as we shall be inviting non-Members to fill in any shortages from January onwards. Music will be distributed in early February. To join the choir for the workshop and concert, please contact Sue Adlard (tel. 01242 579334, email sueadlard@dsl.pipex.com).

If you are an instrumentalist and would like to perform in the concert (groups will be particularly welcome) please contact Carol Sadie (tel. 01242 577606, email carol.sadie@yahoo.co.uk).



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Court Lane Concert

Don't forget the concert by Court Lane Music on Wednesday 17th February at 8.00 in the Pump Room of music by Imogen Holst, Britten, Colin Matthews and Bridge.

Tickets are available from the Town Hall box office.