

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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The editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors, nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views

Novissima Verba. RECENT RECORDINGS include Jennifer Bate playing the Organ Sonata no.1, on WEA K53566 [Gramophone 6/79]; and Great British Mezzo-sopranos & Contraltos on HMV HLM 7145. Included are: Gerontius, "My work is done...", "It is because..." sung by Kathleen Ferrier, and Sea Pictures, "Sabbath Morning at Sea" sung by Leila Megane.

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol. 1, no. 3

Finding a subject for an editorial, not already covered on some other page, is not always easy. Is it worth telling you of the very large number of Elgar recordings to be found in the record shops of Toronto this summer? (More than in many London stores!) Or the two Elgar recordings - one of the Piano Quintet and one of the Serenade for Strings - which had previously escaped our notice? (Both will be reviewed in our pages at a later date, and it is good to know of two more foreign recordings.)

While I was wondering what to mention on this occasion a letter from a member gave me the answer. The letter referred to a film of Elgar conducting, and the great rarity of such moments captured on film. It seems to me that here is a subject for some research, or indeed simple searching, which has previously been neglected. Apart from two fragments taken at Three Choirs and Malvern Festivals, and the well-known Pathé film of the opening of the Abbey Road studios, no ciné-films of Elgar seem to be known. Now, it is highly unlikely that Elgar was not filmed on a number of occasions. From the beginning of this century film-cameramen were remarkably busy filming all kinds of events, some of them of purely local interest. In many towns a local cinema would show its own local newsreel taken by a photographer in the area. Nationally there were a number of newsreels for distribution throughout the country. Elgar was a well-known figure and it is unlikely that he could have escaped the camera, even if he did not welcome the attention. Amateurs too, mostly from the late 20's and early 30's onwards, were active and events such as the Three Choirs would surely have attracted some of them. Elgar would have been a particularly important person to "shoot."

Now, the casualty rate for ciné-film is high - early films were shot on nitrate stock which is particularly prone to decay, but it is surprising how much film does survive. The point of this article is to ask members if they know of any films surviving which might contain shots of Elgar and his contemporaries. Whether professional or amateur, it does not matter. It may be that there are films laying around in cupboards, taken at some long-forgotten event, and that the significance of these films has not been realised by the owners. The Society would be glad to hear from anyone who has, or knows of, such material, with a view to its preservation.

RONALD TAYLOR
Editor

News Items

THE ANNOUNCEMENT that EMI had sold half its record interests to the Paramount organisation caused some concern, but we understand from EMI that all is as before! Good news for the future too - a new record of Elgar's Songs, with orchestra, sung by Robert Tear, with the CBSO under Vernon Handley. In 1980 the exciting news is the first commercial recording of The Light of Life, with Charles Groves conducting.

SCOTLAND NOW HAS A NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA. The first concerts were in August at Falkirk, Aberdeen and Dundee. Their conductor is Nicholas Braithwaite, son of Warwick Braithwaite who was a pioneer Elgarian. We wish the young orchestra a happy and successful future.

LEEDS PARISH CHURCH CHOIR have just made a record for Abbey Records, of Choral Music by Elgar and Liszt. The unusual item on the record is the setting of Psalm 48 (Great is the Lord). This is rarely heard, and has never been recorded before. A review will appear in the January issue.

ELGAR WAS NOT THE FIRST CHOICE TO COMPOSE MUSIC FOR "The Starlight Express". This surprising information came to light when the editor visited Toronto recently. Plans for production were afoot as early as March 1914, and Clive Carey, singer and composer, was approached, with Violet Pearn's full approval. Has this information been available before this?

THE PHOTOGRAPH OF ELGAR CONDUCTING AT WOKING which appeared in the Newsletter for Sept. 1978, has been further identified. It shows Elgar conducting a programme of his own works at the Woking Festival of British Composers, in the Great Hall, Woking, 21st March, 1920.

MEDICI QUARTET This young and very promising quartet have taken the Elgar String Quartet into their repertoire. They are playing it twice in November (see Dates for your Diary), and again in February. They recently gave the work in Belgium, and a further performance is scheduled for Weilberg, near Frankfurt in West Germany in June 1980. The Medici was formed in 1971, and all its members - Paul Robertson, Paul Silverthorne, David Matthews and Anthony Lewis were students under Sydney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music. Their London debut was in 1973, their first recording in 1977.

VINCENT WAITE'S BOOK "Malvern Country" is now available in paperback, at £3.95. The Birthplace has copies available, plus postage please.

The September 1977 issue of the Newsletter carried an editorial in which questions were put to the membership about the future aims of the Society "now that it can be argued that so far as Great Britain is concerned the need for 'missionary' work is over." The questions put included the following: "Do members see our future as a musical appreciation society? a forum for Elgar studies? or should we carry the message further afield to Europe and beyond? There are obvious practical difficulties here, but where should we go?" At this time the idea of carrying the message further afield did indeed seem very impracticable, but a number of members began to consider the idea in more depth. Then in 1978, our member, Ian Lace wrote to the Committee offering to undertake a piece of research based on the issue of letters of enquiry to selected musical organisations. First to establish what interest there was in Elgar's music abroad, and in time to discover what practical steps, if any, could be taken by the Society to encourage and nurture such interest.

The Committee considered this offer, and in December 1978 set up a sub-committee consisting of Geoffrey Hodgkins, (Chairman), Ian Lace, and Trevor Fenemore-Jones to consider the matter in detail. The International Sub-committee, as it came to be known, recommended that for a modest outlay very useful contacts could be made abroad. The go-ahead was given by the main Committee in March 1979 and the main issue of enquiry letters abroad will take place very shortly. These will go to selected addresses in Germany, France and Italy and will be in the language of the recipient country. Each letter will be accompanied by a list of Elgar's principal works and a brief biography of the composer, also in the foreign language. In addition to the issue of these letters abroad, a number of formal and informal enquiries are being made in this country.

It will, of course, take a considerable time fully to evaluate the response, whatever it may be, to these enquiries. As opportunity arises, however, it is intended to keep the membership informed of material progress in these pages and at Annual General Meetings. In the meantime, members may like to be reassured that while in some countries, such as France, current interest seems to remain at a low level, there is no doubt that interest in Germany is growing. The Dream of Gerontius was performed in St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin, with the Berlin Philharmonic under Roland Bader in January, and a performance of The Kingdom is to follow. Moreover, current demand for Elgar scores in Germany has prompted Novello's to arrange for their Elgar catalogue, including Michael Kennedy's distinguished introductory essay, to be published in German for the first time.

FOUNDATION and BIRTHPLACE NEWS

Elgar Foundation Appeal. The Appeal has now reached £81,000, but nearly £30,000 of this is in 7-year Covenants not available for some years. Increased costs over the last three years, especially in land and housing, have made our original target of £100,000 out of date. It is now clear that to achieve all the objects of the Appeal, including the endowment fund for future maintenance, £150,000 will be required.

With the completion of the most essential structural repairs, the most urgent need now is the provision of alternative accommodation for the Curator, and the conversion of the whole of the Birthplace-Cottage to a Museum. At today's prices this will absorb virtually all the cash at present available, leaving a far too narrow margin for maintenance. With the existing area open to the public we have almost reached the limit of the number of visitors who can be received, and the Birthplace, instead of being 'self-supporting', has to be substantially subsidised each year. Additional finance is therefore essential, since the longer this project has to be postponed the greater the ultimate cost will be.

Special efforts to raise the money are accordingly being planned, and details of one of these are given on page¹⁸ under ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL 1980.

The Curator, Jack McKenzie, writes: Pride of place this time must go to the visit of Prince Charles on May 26th. During his trip to the Malvern Festival, the Prince was scheduled to stay with us for twenty minutes, but, instead stayed for forty-five! Needless to say, we were delighted by his interest in the Birthplace, and, despite poor weather, we managed to take some lovely photographs of the occasion. Elgarians who would like to see these should ask us for them when they next come to the Birthplace.

Our other visitors have included the family of Paul Grafton (Elgar's great-nephew) from Yorkshire, plus a working visit from James Loughran, who came to study the Manuscript Score of the Second Symphony. During the Malvern Festival we were also delighted to welcome such distinguished musicians as Norman del Mar, the Austrian conductor Walter Weller (who took away some Elgar tapes which he wishes to study), the violinist Pinchas Zukerman, as well as his accompanist Marc Neikrug. From the Shaw side of the Festival came members of the Birmingham Repertory Company. There is no doubt that the Festival is providing the Birthplace with a wonderful chance to entertain artists who have already declared their devotion to Elgar.

On June 2nd we held our annual Elgar Tea-Party and, this year, we had two birthday cakes, one of which was cut by Mrs. Philip Leicester and the other by that staunch Elgarian, Norman Painting ("Philip Archer" of the long-running radio serial).

CONTINUE ON p. 9

EDWARD ELGAR

by Sir Arthur Bliss

[The following article appeared first in "Berrow's Journal", published in Worcester, June 1957. It reports the talk which the Master of the Queen's Musick gave at the historic Assembly Room of Worcester Guildhall, on the occasion of the centenary of Sir Edward Elgar's birth. The date was Wednesday, June 5th, 1957, and we give full acknowledgement to "Berrow's Journal" in printing this talk.]

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen - I am greatly privileged on this centenary occasion to pay tribute to Elgar in the city with which his name will ever be associated, and in the room in which he was made a Freeman fifty-one years ago. I find that the Mayor of that year, seconded by the High Sheriff, moved that this honour should be conferred on him 'In recognition of the eminent position which he, a citizen of the Faithful City, has attained in the Musical World.'

You must pardon me if in opening my tribute to Elgar, I first recall some personal recollections - It is not only that I am proud of them, but also I feel they may make my inadequate words more convincing.

In the early years of this century when I was a boy at school, my father during the summer holidays used to take a house in the country for my mother and myself, and as luck would have it, he fixed on Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire as the preferred counties. One of the peaks of those lovely summer holidays was a visit to the Three Choirs Festival. Under Sinclair, Brewer and Atkins, I heard much great music played at these annual festivals, but none made a greater impression on me than The Dream of Gerontius. I got to know the music of this master work very well, for, with great daring a performance was organised at Rugby when I was a boy at school there, and not only did I sing in the rehearsals, but, at the performance, filled in (on the piano) several parts for which we did not have the necessary players.

Like all young admirers of an older man's power, I determined to meet the composer face to face. It was not easy; Lady Elgar quite rightly protected him from those who wanted to waste his time. But sincere and sheer persistence often gets its own reward, and, through the kindness of a mutual friend, I was invited one day (during the First World War) to tea at Severn House, Hampstead, where Elgar was then living. I remember the day very well: the long tramp up Netherhall Gardens, asking a passer-by the way, being told 'if it was that music fellow I was looking for, it was the big house at the top, on the right, 'my almost surreptitious entry, and hearing, as I stood in the long corridor, a phrase on the piano being played over and over again. I remember the kindness of Lady Elgar, and her efforts to put me at my ease, and her daughter's too. Mrs. Elgar Blake

was good enough to tell me recently that she remembered me distinctly as the 'slim young man in uniform.' I cannot remember anything that Elgar said on that occasion. I was overwhelmed by the fact that this was the composer of The Dream of Gerontius, of the Violin Concerto of which I had heard the first performance, and of the Second Symphony of which again I had heard the first performance.

When I returned to France, Elgar wrote me several letters, and one of my most precious possessions is a miniature score of Cockaigne which he sent me, and which - in its now brilliant binding - retains the mud marks of the trenches.

In later years, I was present at the first performance in the Queen's Hall of the Cello Concerto, and, in the intimate surroundings of his Hampstead music room, I heard the first run-through of the Violin Sonata with W. H. Reed playing the solo part, Elgar at the piano, while I sat alongside turning over for him.

Three main impressions come to my mind as I think of Elgar's music. 1. His mastery of the sound that he wants. His orchestral scores are wonderful examples of consummate craftsmanship. No wonder orchestral players, whether string, woodwind, brass or percussion, delight to play them. Each is given passages to play which seem to be a personal compliment to the player. There are innumerable touches of colour that give variety and vitality. I have recently been recording the five Pomp and Circumstance Marches. Now, a March is a comparatively humble form of music, but a detailed study of these five, very different, Marches gives a remarkable insight into what Elgar can do in the manipulation of sound. His instrumentation is (as Donald Francis Tovey once wrote) 'astoundingly subtle, uncannily efficient, and utterly original.'

This brings me to my second impression. 2. His originality. Musical phrases of Elgar's are very much his own. They are like personal gestures, so much so that, as you know, we have had to coin the word 'Elgarian' to describe them. The conviction that a very marked individual is speaking to us is all the more pronounced when we remember that his vocabulary was the one generally in use in the Europe of his day. He made use of the same technical procedures as Brahms and Wagner, and yet, what he says is his own.

To achieve this, indicates, I believe, greater strength of personality than if (as many composers do today) he had invented a consciously new and esoteric style. What it is that Elgar is expressing in his music can, perhaps, only be suggested - in words - by a poet. Cecil Day Lewis, the poet, told me the other day that, springing from his admiration of the music, he wanted to write an 'Ode' to Elgar. I asked him what moods Elgar evoked in

him, and he said, that Elgar's strongest magic was to call up vividly the landscape of the countryside that lies just about us here; as Constable immortalised Suffolk, so has Elgar immortalised those counties that border on Wales, enshrining their great beauty, and, because of the evanescence of beauty, tingeing this expression with a certain sadness.

For my part, I find in Elgar's work something as rare in today's music as unselfconscious originality, and that is: a delight in the inexhaustible vitality of Nature and Life. He may have written at the head of his Second Symphony: 'Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight.' But this is surely regret that he could not grasp more of the beauty of life he apprehended in everything around him. His music abounds in vitality, and is continually leaping forward, moving swiftly like a mountain torrent, or like the Severn when the tidal wave sweeps up it. It is characteristic that he should choose Falstaff (that mountain of zest) rather than the melancholy Dane as a subject for musical portraiture.

Perhaps Elgar's inmost thoughts are revealed to his friends at the end of the slow movement of the First Symphony, which we are to hear tonight. Perhaps the Autumnal sadness of the Cello Concerto evokes for Cecil Day Lewis, and other poets, Elgar's early love for his countryside. For me, the predominant effect of Elgar's music is an enhancement of life. That is why I give thanks for the appearance in England of this great composer; that is why I rejoice to celebrate his genius during this week, and that is why I believe that, after fine performances of his music, we emerge better, stronger and more sensitive human beings.

BIRTHPLACE NEWS continued....

It is a pleasure to record the gift of commemorative porcelain busts of Shaw and Elgar from Messrs. Boehms of Malvern. The busts are no. 2 of 100 signed copies made by these craftsmen, and Elgarians may order their own copies through the Birthplace, which will thereby receive the profits; the price is £157, and there is a four-month delivery delay.

The garden is under constant care, and we were happy to receive for it an Apostle Tree, given by Worcester Council. As well as that, we have planted an Arbutus, to match the position of such a tree on a garden plan made by Carice Elgar Blake. These additions can be readily appreciated by all our visitors, and members will be glad to hear that, despite a falling-off during June (the petrol crisis?), our numbers to the end of July stand at 3436. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of school-parties, which augers well for future Elgarians, and also a spate of American visitors. Has there been a revival of interest in Elgar on the other side of the Atlantic?

Please note: the Birthplace would greatly appreciate any Three Choirs programmes, from Elgar's death to the present day.

SOME ELGAR RECOLLECTIONS as remembered

by Edgar Day

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(Edgar Day was assistant organist of Worcester Cathedral from 1912-1962, with the exception of war service in the 1914-1918 war.)

I first met Elgar during the '14 - '18 war. I was in hospital at Epsom, and came to a performance at Worcester of his For the Fallen, which he had just written. I met him afterwards at Sir Ivor Atkins' house, when he was very friendly, and it was wonderful for me in my convalescent state, to meet a great man like that. I had, of course, seen him before this, but never spoken to him.

I next met him at Worcester Guildhall during a Three Choirs Festival. In those days the Mayor always gave a tea party for the Choir. Sir Edward had written to Sir Ivor suggesting the Choir should make me a presentation. I saw the letter - I can remember what it said '...I think it would be a thing pleasurable to the Worcester branch of the choir if some kind of presentation be made to Edgar Day. If this suggestion appeals to you - to save time if it does, I enclose cheque, I think no one can be more worthy of a testimonial than Day to whom we all owe so much.'

The presentation took place at the tea, and Sir Edward made the presentation himself. I was terrified because, sitting round the table I was at, were Vaughan Williams, Sir Ivor, Dr. Sumsion and Sir Percy Hull. I had to make an impromptu speech, and suddenly thought of an early memory, so I said "I should like Sir Edward to know that, as a small boy, I was taken to Gloucester Cathedral to hear The Apostles. I'm afraid I slept peacefully through most of it. When it came to the part about the 30 pieces of silver being thrown down in the Temple, I woke up to hear the glockenspiel making the tinkling sound. Since then I have changed my opinion of The Apostles, and have never slept through it again."

At the 1929 Festival, the choir and orchestra performed my Service in B flat, which I conducted. I was terrified about the whole thing, as I had never done any orchestration before and I was wondering how it was going to sound. Anyhow it went very well. On the Monday morning I met Sir Edward in the nave, and he said 'You had a good time yesterday afternoon, didn't you?' I said 'Yes, Sir Edward, they sang it very well.' 'Yes,' he said, 'it came off. It sounded well, and that is the chief test of orchestration. If it sounds well, there can't be much wrong with it. By the way, who scored it for you?' I said 'I scored it myself. I studied the score.

of Gerontius quite a lot before doing it. I learnt quite a lot from seeing how you did it,' which rather amused him. I prized that, because he wouldn't have said that unless he meant it. He was not that type of man.

Sir Ivor and I went to supper at Marl Bank one Sunday night, and Elgar said 'I want you to hear the drums in Falstaff. They have just made a new recording of it. HMV have presented me with a copy of it, and a new gramophone.' It was one of the new electric recordings and sounded most impressive. He was delighted with it, and was always playing it to visitors. Then we had supper, with his two dogs sitting one on each side of him. After that, we all got down to a crossword puzzle, at which he was brilliant. We all contributed a bit but he did most; he loved doing them.

I was just coming out of the Cathedral one morning when I met Sir Edward outside the Edgar Tower. He was looking around and pointing to the top house in Severn Street (now an antique shop). He said 'You know we lived in that house for a short time, many years ago.' Then he saw the wall plate saying Edgar Street. 'Oh,' he said, 'I see you have a street named after you, which is more than I have.' [Edgar Day still lives in Edgar Street.]

At a Gloucester Three Choirs, one morning I was standing outside a house in the little cloister where I was staying, reading a newspaper. I heard a voice behind me saying 'Good Morning.' It was Sir Edward. 'Any news?' 'Well, there's nothing about the Festival.' 'Oh, Damn the Festival,' he said, 'What won the 4.30?'

The Three Choirs orchestra used to have three days of rehearsal at the RCM, by invitation of Sir Hugh Allen who also gave a lunch to the principals. At this lunch they were all telling stories, with Billy Reed in fine form. The conversation turned to discussing some celebration (which was about to take place) of William Harvey, the 'circulation-of-the-blood' man. Could there be some musical celebration? 'Oh,' said Sir Edward, 'there should be no difficulty about that. There's plenty of bloody music in circulation.'

I was once asked by a Ladies Guild to give a talk on Elgar's life and works. This I agreed to do, but didn't want Sir Edward (who was then at Marl Bank) to know anything about it. However, I was horrified to see an almost verbatim report in the local paper. The following week I had a letter from Sir Edward which read:

'My Dear Edgar Day,

I see in Berrow's Journal you have been saying pleasant things, and I ask you to accept my thanks for the generous way you referred to one of the 'unwanted children' of English music.

Best wishes now and always, Edward Elgar.'

It would seem that this feeling of being slighted in his early days, remained with him all his life.

I saw Sir Edward for the last time at South Bank Nursing Home in Worcester. One morning Mrs. Elgar Blake called on me, and said 'Sir Edward has been asking about you, and would like to see you.' I said 'I'll go at once - this afternoon.' He greeted me cordially, and we talked about various things. I was then Music Master at the King's School. I told him we were doing selections from Mendelssohn's St. Paul at the end-of-term concert. 'Oh,' he said, 'how lovely. Mendelssohn uses the serpent in the overture, and it has that lovely air "Jerusalem - thou that killest the prophets".'

He then told the story of the nameless Precentor of Worcester, who used to take choir practice on Saturday mornings. They were doing a new anthem, and the men were making a pretty good hash of it. He stopped them, and said: 'Gentlemen, there's something wrong somewhere!'

I saw Elgar just before Christmas. He died the next February 23rd - Handel's birthday.

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[We are greatly indebted to the Revd. I. M. Hulburt for recording the conversations with Edgar Day, on which these memories are based.]
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ELGAR and the THREE CHOIRS ORGANISTS
by Philip L. Scowcroft

Elgar owed much to those people associated with performing his music, and it is heartwarming to realise how many of them were personal friends. One thinks of W. H. Reed, just one of hundreds of his orchestral players; of Hans Richter, Landon Ronald, Henry Wood, Adrian Boult, Hamilton Harty, Frederic Cowen, Percy Pitt, and John Barbirolli among conductors; of instrumentalists such as Beatrice Harrison, Fanny Davies, Harriet Cohen, Lionel Tertis, Leon Goossens, Albert Sammons, and Yehudi Menuhin; and of singers like Muriel Foster, Agnes Nicholls, Gervase Elwes, John Coates, and Edward Lloyd. There is, however, one special group of performer/friends whose achievements and relationships with Sir Edward are worth recalling briefly: the Three Choirs' Organists from around 1890 onwards.

Hugh Blair (1864-1932) was Organist of Worcester Cathedral for only two years, 1895 to 1897, though he had acted in that capacity since 1889, and conducted the 1893 and 1896 Festivals. (His predecessor and teacher William Done conducted Elgar's Sevillana in the 1880's, and was on the committee

which programmed Froissart in 1890.) Despite Blair's brief tenure of office, he played a significant role in Elgar's career in the 1890's. The latter helped him with the orchestration of his Advent Cantata, and, in return, Blair virtually "commissioned" and prepared for performance The Black Knight (1893), Elgar's first really major work, (Blair was the dedicatee of this, and the later Cantique), and he also gave the premiere of another major early composition, the Organ Sonata, Op. 28, in 1895. Blair left Worcester in 1897 for a post in London; in 1899 he revived Sursum Corda there, as a result of which Novello considered publishing the work. In 1910, we hear of Sir Edward inviting Blair's opinion of the Second Symphony; and, as late as 1912-1915, one finds Blair making Organ-arrangements of the March from Crown of India, Carissima and Carillon, perhaps earning a little to relieve his reduced circumstances. Even later he was wont to visit Severn House and play billiards.

His successor at Worcester, Ivor Atkins (1869-1953), previously a pupil and assistant to George Sinclair at Truro, Assistant at Hereford, and Organist of Ludlow Parish Church, showed, in his first Festival (1899), inexperience in handling large choral and orchestral forces, but he quickly established an enviable reputation in subsequent Festivals, introducing many important works, orchestral as well as choral. He revived the Three Choirs after the Great War, and received a Knighthood for it (which doubtless owed something to Elgar's influence). His compositions included the Hymn of Faith (1905) orchestrated by Elgar (who also chose the words), and other Festival works, church music and songs. The Hymn of Faith was performed when the Freedom of Worcester (the idea of which came from Atkins) was conferred on Elgar. Atkins also arranged Sir Edward's Second Organ Sonata, Op. 87a, from parts of the Severn Suite in 1933, adding a cadenza of his own. He also collaborated with him in an edition of Bach's St. Matthew Passion. His other transcriptions include the second of the Dream Children (1912), while a by-product of the Bach collaboration was Elgar's arrangement for Brass of two Chorales, performed at the 1911 Worcester Festival. Atkins' close relationship and correspondence with the composer, marked by the dedication to him of the Third Pomp and Circumstance March, has been recounted by his son, and need not be elaborated here. He remained organist until 1950 - a remarkable 53-year span.

Turning to Gloucester, Charles Lee Williams (1853-1935) was Assistant at Winchester, and Organist of Llandaff, before becoming Cathedral Organist in 1882. Before his retirement through ill health in 1897, he conducted five Three Choirs Festivals, and he retained his interest in them thereafter as Steward, Committee Member and, latterly, Chairman of the Executive, at Gloucester. His choral compositions Bethany, Gethsemane, Harvest Song, and Festival Hymn were all produced at the Festivals. Elgar benefited from his kindness and interest, being entertained at Williams' home during Gloucester Festivals (on one occasion he enrolled Elgar as a temporary member of the Gloucester County Club). Williams contributed, along with

his successor, Brewer, to the fund for Elgar's Mus.Doc. robes, and suggested amendments to Gerontius in June 1900. In return, the composer conducted Williams' Twilight at the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society on 17 January 1901, and dedicated the first Wand of Youth suite to him.

Arthur Herbert Brewer (1865-1928) had held a variety of organists' posts in Gloucester, Oxford, Bristol and Coventry, and taught at Tonbridge School for four years, before going to Gloucester Cathedral. He was an enterprising and busy man - Elgar occasionally had to curb his enthusiasm for introducing so much modern music to the Three Choirs programmes, and his educational Organ Recitals for schoolchildren were an innovation in their day. He conducted the Gloucester Orchestral Society, and was a well-respected composer. Emmaus (1901) and The Holy Innocents (1904) were produced at the Three Choirs: Emmaus indeed was saved from being withdrawn from performance (Brewer had run out of time) by Elgar offering to orchestrate it; he wrote to Jaeger that he had "taken much joy in doing it", and that he could "not accept anything for a friendly act." Brewer, in return, made Organ Arrangements of Elgar works, such as the 'Prelude and Angel's Farewell' from The Dream of Gerontius, and Chanson de Matin, and he commissioned the resplendently Elgarian orchestration of Bach's Fantasy in C minor for the 1922 Festival (his first after the Great War). His knighthood came in 1926, Sir Edward almost certainly putting in a word on his behalf. Basil Maine felt that Elgar's co-operation with Brewer was especially close.

Herbert Sumsion (b.1899) Brewer's successor - a distinguished one as executant and composer of church music - from 1928 until he left Gloucester in 1967, knew Elgar as Organist for less than six years, but his sympathy for Sir Edward's music is well-illustrated by his notable HMV recording of the Organ Sonata.

Hereford Cathedral Organist, George Robertson Sinclair (1863-1917) - G.R.S. of the Enigma Variations) held the post from 1889 until his death, having previously been at Truro Cathedral where he was appointed Organist when aged only 17. He conducted two Elgar first-performances, Go, Song of Mine at the 1909 Festival, and the Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra in 1911, with the Herefordshire Orchestral Society (which he regularly conducted, along with the Birmingham Festival Choral Society, and various Herefordshire Choirs). Elgar dedicated to him his Te Deum and Benedictus of 1897, sung at Hereford Three Choirs that year, and wrote the charming Christmas Greeting especially for his cathedral choir in 1907. Back in 1895, Elgar had written a cadenza for an Organ Concerto by C.H. Lloyd which Sinclair was performing. Though an undistinguished composer, G. R. S., (like Blair, Atkins, and Brewer) tried his hand at arranging Elgar for the organ: there was talk of his transcribing parts of Caractacus as early as January, 1899. The composer asked Jaeger to have Sinclair's transcription of Enigma (played by him at Tenbury, his old college, in September, 1899) published by Novello; bits of The Apostles and The Kingdom were similarly treated, while Pomp and

Circumstance no. 4 which was dedicated to Sinclair, retains the majesty of the original. More important perhaps, his bulldog Dan inspired not only G. R. S.'s Variation, but also other Elgar themes inscribed in Sinclair's visitors' book, which later appeared in Gerontius, In the South, The Crown of India and For the Fallen.

Sinclair's successor, Percy Clarke Hull (1878-1968), lived all his life in Hereford, and was 22 years Assistant Organist before his appointment as Organist in 1918, on his return from internment in Germany. Elgar spoke up for him, both in this, and over Hull's honorary degree in 1921, offering to help with expenses as he himself in his day had been helped; he quietly encouraged the younger man, who, from his first Festival in 1921, showed himself a resourceful builder of programmes and an excellent choir-trainer and conductor. Hull achieved knighthood in 1947, three years before his retirement; his frequent performances of Sir Edward's music were rewarded by the dedications of the Serenade, Op. 73, no. 2, and Pomp and Circumstance no. 5.

Elgar's relationships with all these excellent musicians seem to have been serene (despite Sinclair's Irish temperament), and, in terms of his compositions, modestly fruitful; they brought out the best in Sir Edward's personality. Their various Arrangements of his music may be seen as grateful recompense for the services Elgar rendered to them (not the least of which was the conducting his own works at the Festivals, thus relieving them of some of the burden), and was a useful means of propagating that music in the days before Hi-Fi and VHF. It was due very much to them that Elgar's music found an abiding home at the Three Choirs, even in the years when it was not too often played elsewhere.

ELGAR'S MUSIC IN PRINT. There was a glaring omission in the list published in the January issue. The Severn Suite is still available, published by R. Smith & Co. PO Box 210, Watford, Herts. Tel:34146. Short score 60p. Full score £4.50. Set of parts £4, extra parts 40p. There is good news from Novello: a second Organ Album has just appeared at £1.55, containing Nimrod, Triumphal March from Caractacus, Funeral March from Grania & Diarmid, and Prelude & Angel's Farewell from Gerontius. To follow: a further collection of Part-Songs; a piano album containing some previously unpublished works, including Griffinesque; and last, but not least, the Concert Allegro is due for April, 1980. Perhaps it really will appear this time.

RECORDS RE-ISSUED include Symphony no. 2 (Hallé/Sir John Barbirolli): EMI SXLP 30287. [Gramophone 6/79; Records & Recording 7/79]
Elgar Songs (Brian Rayner Cook (baritone) with Roger Vignoles (piano)): RCA GL/GK 25205. [Gramophone, and Records & Recording 6/79]

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sept. 2	<u>Piano Quintet</u> Music Group of London.	Wigmore Hall, London
Sept. 22	<u>Cockaigne</u> RPO, Atherton	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
Sept. 23	<u>Enigma Variations</u> Guildford PO, Handley	Civic Hall, Guildford (Details from R. A. Forrow, Guildford 75274)
Sept. 25	<u>Enigma Variations</u> LPO, Solti	Royal Festival Hall
Sept. 30	<u>The Starlight Express - Incidental Music</u> Rutland Sinfonia, Collett	Uppingham Sch. Hall Rutland. (Details from Uppingham 3330)
Oct. 3	<u>Cello Concerto</u> Lynn Harrell, LSO, Abbado	Royal Festival Hall
Oct. 4	<u>Enigma Variations</u> CBSO, Hunt	Birmingham Town Hall
Oct. 7	<u>Introduction and Allegro</u> RPO, Menuhin	Royal Festival Hall
Oct. 17	<u>Cockaigne; Violin Concerto; Enigma Variations</u> Nigel Kennedy, Wren Orch, Snell	Royal Festival Hall
Oct. 19	<u>Introduction and Allegro</u> ECO, Rattle	Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank
Oct. 20	<u>Serenade for Strings-Last movt.</u> Arthur Davison Children's Concert.	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
Oct. 28	<u>Piano Quintet</u> Barry Collett, Rutland Sinfonia Ensemble	Uppingham Community College
Nov. 8	<u>String Quartet</u> Medici Quartet	Purcell Room, South Bank
Nov. 13	ditto	Royal Pavilion, Brighton

Nov. 5	<u>Viol in Sonata</u> Yehudi & Hephzibah Menuhin	Royal Festival Hall
Nov. 17	<u>The Kingdom</u> CBSO, Worcester Fest. Chor., Hunt with Elizabeth Harwood, Anne Collins, Kenneth Bowen, David Thomas	Worcester Cathedral
Nov. 18	<u>Piano Quintet</u> Clara Taylor, Hanson Quartet	Purcell Room, South Bank
Nov. 20	<u>Sea Pictures</u> Janet Baker, RPO, Maazel	Royal Festival Hall *Royal Concert
Nov. 28	<u>Introduction and Allegro</u> Hallé, Handford	Civic Hall, Wolverhampton
	<u>Enigma Variations</u> RPO, Snell	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
Nov. 29	<u>In the South; Cello Concerto; Falstaff</u> Julian Lloyd Webber, LPO, Solti	Royal Festival Hall
Dec. 1	Prelude to <u>The Kingdom</u> Philharmonia, Davis	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
Dec. 4	<u>Cockaigne</u> Philharmonia, Davis	Royal Festival Hall
Dec. 8	Repeat of Festival Hall concert of Nov. 29	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
	<u>The Music Makers; Sea Pictures</u> Diana Walkley, St. Edmundsbury Bach Choir & Orch., Oxley	Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral at 7.30 p. m.
Dec. 9	<u>The Kingdom</u> Soloists, Philharmonia Chorus & Orch., Davis	Royal Festival Hall
Dec. 18	<u>Cello Concerto</u> Julian Lloyd Webber, CBSO, Handley	Cheltenham Town Hall
1980 Feb. 20	<u>String Quartet</u> Medici Quartet	Wigmore Hall, London
	<u>Serenade for Strings; Introduction & Allegro.</u> Monteverdi Orch.	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank

ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL

Perhaps the greatest choral festival of Elgar's music ever held is now being planned by Summer 1980. The ELGAR FOUNDATION has already done much towards raising the £100,000 originally estimated as required to maintain and ensure the future of the Birthplace, but with the increasing costs of the last three years, it is now clear that £150,000 will be needed to carry out the full objects of the Appeal. (For the current position see p.6). To raise the additional money now urgently needed, the Foundation inform us that a number of events are being organised for 1980, of which the most ambitious is the above Festival. The programme is as follows:

- JUNE 12th, 1980 The Dream of Gerontius Royal Albert Hall, with City of Birmingham Symphony Orch. & Chorus, with Dame Janet Baker, Kenneth Bowen, Michael Rippon. Conductor: Norman del Mar.
- JUNE 16th, 1980 The Apostles Royal Albert Hall, with Royal Philharmonic Orch. & Worcester Festival Choral Society, with Linda Esther Gray, Anne Collins, Neil Jenkins, John Noble, John Tomlinson, David Thomas. Conductor: Donald Hunt.
- JULY 11th, 1980 The Kingdom Royal Festival Hall. With Royal Philharmonic Orch. & Croydon Philharmonic Society, with Sheila Armstrong, Alfreda Hodgson, Robert Tear, Michael Rippon, Conductor: James Gaddarn.
- JULY 15th, 1980 Programme to include The Light of Life, and The Spirit of England Royal Albert Hall, with Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society. Conductor: Sir Charles Groves. Artists to be announced later.

The Foundation is greatly indebted to the Croydon Philharmonic Society, who, after their highly successful performance of The Kingdom on May 19th, are now organising this repeat performance in the Royal Festival Hall in aid of the Foundation's Appeal.

This is a bold undertaking to help to raise the necessary funds for the Birthplace, and we believe that every Elgar enthusiast will wish to support this venture. Further details, including ticket prices, availability, etc. will be announced in our January issue, but the Foundation needs active support NOW! It is not enough just to go and enjoy the music - we must publicise the concerts at every opportunity, and see that every performance is sold out. With the calibre of artists already announced we can be sure of an artistic success, but it is essential that it is also a great financial success. This is the opportunity for all Elgarians to rally in London and support a remarkably courageous venture. The Elgar Foundation, which supports the Birthplace, needs donations and sponsors, but, more than that, on this occasion it needs enthusiastic support. So plan your holidays in London next year!

Record Reviews

ENIGMA VARIATIONS; POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE MARCHES, 1, 2, 4.

Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orch. /Neville Marriner.

Philips 9500 424

I have never been one of those who believe that only English musicians can interpret Elgar properly. I am sure that Elgar would have been equally astonished by this notion; it was, after all, foreign musicians who were first alive to his genius, and it is most gratifying today that so many top international conductors are performing, and illuminating, his music for the present generation of listeners. It would be splendid to have available the major Elgar scores played by the great European and American orchestras, and it is happening slowly, as evidenced by a glance at the available recordings of the Enigma Variations, for example. Here is another version, with an English conductor, but played by one of the major European orchestra, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. Although a fine performance it does not compete with the best available. The first half of the work, I feel, seems rather cool and matter-of-fact. I have certainly heard the Theme, and first few Variations played with more affection. There is some fine playing, however, particularly from the wood wind in Variation 3 (RBT). Variation 5 (RPA) is delightful, with rich string playing and again excellent woodwind, and hereafter the performance catches fire. 'Nimrod' is kept moving, which I like; the cellos are lovely in Variation 12 (BGN), and the 'ship's engines' drums are clearly audible in Variation 13. The finale is splendid, although I would have liked to have heard more of the organ, as in Zubin Mehta's version on Decca. The recording is clear, but without the last ounce of impact and immediacy. The three Pomp and Circumstance Marches are excellent. It is so good to hear them at a spacious enough tempo to allow for clear articulation, instead of being gabbled through at the fastest possible pace. The excellence of the Marches brings my final disappointment - namely that all five were not included; the two missing ones are probably the least known anyway. Side one breaks before the Enigma finale, which is surely not necessary nowadays; that work complete on one side would have left more room for the other two Marches, so this is rather short measure for a full-price record.

I have enjoyed Marriner's previous Elgar discs more than this one, and although I feel that nobody would be seriously disappointed by this version of Enigma, I would still prefer to turn to the versions by Mehta (Los Angeles Philharmonic Orch. on Decca), Barenboim (LPO, on CBS), Solti (Chicago SO, on Decca), and Colin Davis (LSO, on Philips.)

B. C.

ENIGMA VARIATIONS.

Scottish National Orch. /Gibson.

RCA RL 25206

This is the latest of Gibson's fine Elgar series for RCA, with the

Scottish National Orchestra, and I enjoyed it a good deal more than Marriner's performance. The Theme and Variation One are immediately more compelling and warm-hearted, and the performance as a whole gave me great satisfaction. Particularly noteworthy were a fiery and impetuous WMB, a splendidly lithe Troyte, a noble, moving Nimrod, and an excellent Finale, with the organ duly prominent. Throughout Gibson affectionately caresses the many felicitous details of orchestration, and there is much delicacy and charm in the quieter sections. The recording is brighter and more vivid than Philips gave to Marriner. I find it strange that nowhere does the sleeve-note list the subjects of the Variations, for although the work stands up perfectly well as a piece of music I feel that newcomers in particular would welcome details of the individual variations.

This may also be the correct place to note that Pierre Monteux's loving, and lovable, performance of the Enigma Variations, with the LSO, has been reissued. (Decca SPA 536), coupled with Arthur Bliss conducting the Five Pomp and Circumstance Marches. B. C.

FALSTAFF; COCKAIGNE

London Philharmonic Orch./Vernon Handley

Classics for Pleasure CFP 40313

Many London members will have vivid memories of Vernon Handley's fascinating talk on Falstaff which he gave to the branch a few years ago. Clearly, he had a real enthusiasm and admiration for the work, stressing above all the symphonic nature of the music. Here now is a chance to hear his ideas put into practice, in a performance recorded in St. Augustine's Church, Kilburn, for Classics for Pleasure, in September 1978.

For this review I have made close comparisons with two other records of the work made by the LPO, both of which were first issued in 1974: Sir Adrian Boult on HMV (ASD 2970) and, my own favourite, Daniel Barenboim on CBS (76284) * Barenboim's reading is strongly characterised, with flexible tempi, conveying a real sense of enjoyment and enthusiasm for the work. Boult's is quite different: emotionally cool and understated, the accent being on the symphonic rather than pictorial character of the music. Technically, the HMV record is very fine. The orchestral sound is rich, but perhaps slightly larger than life. As in so many of his Elgar records Barenboim is not served well by the CBS engineers. The sound is flat and rather hard, the strings having a rather steely quality. The new CFP recording has much more depth, with a very natural bloom, and yet even in the loudest passages each strand of the orchestral colour is distinguishable. It never degenerates into mere noise. I have found it one of the most pleasing new records that I have heard for some time. In this work, in which Elgar's skill in scoring for a large orchestra is at its height, a good-quality recording is essential.

Handley obtains beautiful playing from the LPO. Rhythms are incisive and

clear, with some delightful pointing of phrases, particularly from the strings. The brass sound is splendid, and as in Barenboim's record there is a real sense of joie de vivre. I thought the bassoon solo (representing the drunken Falstaff, at 62) rather too polite, but this is in keeping with Handley's very musical reading. The first Interlude is superb. The violin soloist captures every nuance, his touch of portamento in keeping with the period, and his rapport with the orchestra impressive. The scherzo section (depicting Falstaff's scarecrow army) makes a good contrast. The basic tempo is on the slow side, but there is a tremendous swagger. The overall structure of the work is well delineated, and, when the big climax in the finale arrives after superb preparation, there is a feeling that this is the point to which the piece has been heading. Barenboim also does this section well, making an effective accelerando out of the climax. Handley treats the final pages sensitively, without perhaps finding the Mahlerian pathos which distinguishes Barenboim's reading.

The stop-watch is not often a reliable guide to performances. At 36½ mins., Handley's record is the slowest of any, and yet so precise are rhythms, it never sounds it. Boult at 35 mins. appears much slower, and makes Elgar's 1931 recording sound very fast at 33¼ mins. In both Barenboim's, 35¼ mins, and Handley's records, the work spills over on to the second side, with a break at 114. I would be hard-pressed to choose between Barenboim and Handley, but, for many collectors, the superior sound-quality and bargain-price will tip the scales in favour of this new issue.

Space precludes a detailed discussion of the rest of the record, a vivid performance of Cockaigne. This again benefits from the recording venue - not least when the organ appears - and makes an attractive fill-up.

J. G. K.

*Barenboim's recording deleted as from 1. 8. 79

FALSTAFF. [with Enigma Variations - see above]

Scottish National Orch. /Gibson.

RCA RL 25206

Another new recording has just arrived, and there is space only for a brief comment. Recorded in the City Hall, Glasgow, during the same month as Handley's record, it makes an interesting comparison. Falstaff is accommodated complete on one side, and with the Variations on the reverse there is over an hour's music, compensating somewhat for the price being around three times that of the CFP disc. Although there are undoubted advantages in having no side break, it does seem here to have been to the detriment of the recorded sound. On its own it seems adequate enough, but compared with Handley's disc the RCA sound is rather veiled, the orchestra set back and less well defined. Certainly the CFP disc is much clearer and makes greater impact. The performance too seems more than adequate but perhaps without any real distinction. Falstaff emerges a rather lighter-weight character - not nearly so ripe and colourful. The opening section, faster than under Handley, is not

Continued on p. 31.

BRANCH REPORTS

NORTH WEST

Secretary: Malcolm H. Key,
10 Eversley Park, Oxton,
Birkenhead, Merseyside.
Tel: 051 652 6388

Apr. 7th. CALEB JARVIS - Memoirs of a Music Maker. Our Chairman, Dr. Jarvis, commenced this year's programme with a fascinating talk about his connection with, and love of, Elgar's music.

He started, appropriately, with a recorded extract from The Music Makers, going on to say that, in the early days, it was Salut d'Amour that first stirred his interest in the composer. As a music examiner his particular interest emerged with the Enigma Variations. Visits to Malvern, Broadheath, and the other 'sacred places' fanned the flame, and back at Liverpool at the old Philharmonic Hall he heard Polonia, the Polish Relief Fund prelude. His first experience of playing Elgar was the Violin Concerto and the Sonata, accompanying J. E. Matthews of the first desk of the 'Phil.' Undoubtedly the event for our speaker was seeing Elgar conduct Gerontius at Hereford in 1933. At the same time he formed the Liverpool Amateur Symphony Orchestra from out-of-work professionals. A choir was assembled and The Music Makers performed. In the 1940's he became organist at the Liverpool Philharmonic and met Malcolm Sargent, who encouraged him to join the Welsh Choral Union, and to introduce The Apostles and The Kingdom to Liverpool at a time when they were very much out of favour.

One of his greatest memories was of Sargent recording Gerontius, in the presence of Mrs. Elgar Blake, with Hedde Nash as Gerontius. He then played an extract from the reissued recording.

Dr. Jarvis introduced Doreen Brown, a former pupil whom he had encouraged to take up singing, She sang Like to the Damask Rose, The Shepherd's Song, Where Corals Lie, and Pleading, to Dr. Jarvis' accompaniment.

May 5th. IAN PARROTT - Elgar's Enigma Solved. It was a great pleasure for us to hear Professor Parrott, who proceeded, in his customary explosive manner, to strip the Enigma of all its mystery layer by layer.

With some tantalising illustrations on the piano, he presented a remarkable string of clues ranging from "bark"; "bache"; "Dan", the unsinkable bulldog, to St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians (13:12). After making ingenious use of these, it was inevitable that Quinquagesima Sunday, 1899, would fall on the 12th February, and, needless to say, Carice could confirm that Sir Edward had attended service at St. Joseph's on that day. It all added up to "the other Johnny" being none other than the great Johann S. Bach himself.

An incredible performance, leaving the audience in little doubt that if this were not the way of the Enigma it was plausible enough to convince Elgar himself that it should have been.

June 2nd. Happy Birthday, Sir Edward! To celebrate Elgar's 122nd birthday, we held an informal members' evening. Varied items included a personal solution to the Enigma; a reading of C. Day Lewis's poem Elgar; the opening of For the Fallen played as a piano duet; a tape of a talk given on the radio by Mary Beatrice Alder, who studied the violin under Elgar, recalling her impressions of the composer in the 1890's; the Nursery Suite, and a comparison of the acoustical and electrical recordings made by Elgar of the Cello Concerto.

Afterwards we adjourned for refreshments, the centrepiece being a magnificent birthday cake decorated with the theme of the Enigma, made by Linda Carrington. Our thanks to her and Pearl Duffy for providing refreshments (and a bust of Elgar!) and to all who contributed to a lighthearted evening.

June 30th. Outing to Broadheath and Craeg-Lea. Twelve members met at Holt Heath before proceeding to Broadheath, where Jack McKenzie showed us round with his usual enthusiasm (the Birthplace is not normally open in the mornings - this was by special arrangement with the Curator). We had the privilege of presenting an early piano score of Carillon to Mr. McKenzie for preservation at the Birthplace. After a picnic lunch on the Malvern Hills, we went to Elgar's grave, where we actually met the man who dug the grave! He is still active in his profession and remembers the service vividly. Inside St. Wulstan's Church we were interested to find the original version of the hymn tune Drake's Broughton, quoted in the Nursery Suite.

Then on to 'Craeg-Lea'. Unfortunately the owner, James Walkley, was out working, but his wife Diana gave us a guided tour, a beautiful cream tea, and entertained us appropriately with two songs from Sea Pictures, composed in the house: "In Haven" and "Where Corals Lie." We returned to Holt Heath for dinner, via Birchwood, and then home after a most rewarding day.

YORKSHIRE

Secretary: Dennis Clark, 227 Tinshill
Road, Leeds LS16 7BU
Tel: 0532 - 671533

Having survived our first four meetings and reached the summer break, we feel able to draw one or two conclusions from our experience so far. One is that while we have a just-adequate membership, of whose continued interest we seem assured, any increase in our numbers will only come from continued publicity, and some of the members thus gained may not be already dedicated Elgarians. We shall welcome all. The wider aims of the Society are not forgotten, but the priority is to achieve the safety of a larger member-

ship. A regular attendance of thirty would be comforting, and all we expect initially is that they like Elgar's music and can enjoy social meetings in an 'Elgarian' atmosphere. Speakers should feel no need to avoid 'popular' Elgar music nor the more obvious choices of Elgar subject.

On April 23rd David Wood gave us a well-illustrated talk on King Olaf, using taped excerpts, and leaving members looking forward to a complete recorded performance. On May 21st, another of our own members, Geoff. Briggs, spoke on the 'Brinkwells Period', when Elgar rejoiced at the end of the Great War, then grieved at his wife's death. Music played included the Cello Concerto and the Piano Quintet.

June 11th saw our first AGM, when the election of a full committee was achieved with remarkably little coercion. We have separate Secretary and Treasurer, plus five other able committee members. The rest of the meeting was given over to informal discussion on our future, and it was gratifying to find almost every member contributing ideas and views.

We now look forward to our 1979/80 season, and Branch members will receive the new printed programme in late August. Our first meeting, on Sept. 24th, will be an informal occasion to welcome new members. We shall hear music, but we shall also eat, drink and talk. On Oct. 1st our good friends Jack and Vivienne McKenzie visit us to play music and tell us about the joys (and trials) of managing the Birthplace.

We have, altogether, twelve meetings planned for 1979/80 and cannot detail them all here, but members should note particularly Dec. 17th - Christmas Social (more music, food and drink!). Also very special are March 3rd when we have a visit from Michael Kennedy, broadcaster and, of course, Elgar biographer - and on March 31st Mr. Wulstan Atkins will give us his 'Reminiscences of Elgar.'

EAST MIDLANDS

Branch members will be aware of the suspension of the Branch and its activities at the last Branch Annual General Meeting. The Society's Committee is determined to resolve the current difficulties, and those living in the area will have already received a letter in this respect. Once the views of local members have been considered the Committee will then be in a position to decide what action is necessary.

Andrew Neill
Hon. Secretary

WEST MIDLANDS

Secretary: Alan Boon, Old School
House, Martley, Worcester.
Tel: 088 66 419

May 5th. Some 90 guests came to the Abbey School, Malvern Wells, to hear Carol Holt (piano) and Jane Page (violin) perform the Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor, Op. 82, followed by Barbara Yates (contralto) in the song cycle Sea Pictures, Op. 37, again with Carol Holt.

After a somewhat tentative approach to the first movement, the artistes gained in confidence, so much so that by the end of the broad and soothing final movement the audience acclaimed both performers. Most people present wondered how Sea Pictures would sound without the familiar orchestral accompaniment. We need not have worried. Barbara Yates' rich contralto voice, and Carol Holt's highly accomplished piano gave us all a new and highly enjoyable experience.

The committee were very grateful to Carol Holt for arranging the music for the evening; to her fellow artists for giving their services; to Mr. & Mrs. S. Noble, Mr. & Mrs. F. Greatwich and other friends for being responsible for the refreshments that followed, and finally to Mr. Pollard, Headmaster of Abbey School, who provided the perfect setting for a most pleasant evening.

June 3rd. A large congregation at Evensong in Worcester Cathedral followed the Choir to the Elgar memorial window, where Michael Trott, West Midlands Branch chairman, laid a wreath on behalf of the Society. The Choir, under the direction of Dr. Hunt, sang "As Torrents in Summer." Most appropriately, the sung service was Sunison in G, whilst the anthem was "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" from the prologue to The Apostles. The Society is grateful to the Cathedral Choir and to Dr. Hunt for arranging this annual event and for including, as always, a generous amount of Elgar's music. It is likely that 1980's wreath-laying ceremony will be on June 8th as the Cathedral will be celebrating its 13th centenary, and June 1st will not be available.

Forthcoming West Midlands meeting. All members and friends please note meeting on Saturday, Sept. 22nd, at St. George's R. C. Church, Worcester, at 7.30 p. m. when Geoffrey Hodgkins will give an illustrated talk on 'Elgar's Religious Character.' There may be surprise guests!

LONDON

Secretary: E. W. A. Jackson, 'Killiegray,'
7 Batchworth Lane, Northwood,
Middx. HA6 3AU. Tel: 65 22010

Three well-attended and extremely valuable meetings concluded the current season, prior to the AGM.

April 2nd. MICHAEL HURD - The Challenge of Biography. After the unfortunate misunderstanding over dates last year, it was a particular pleasure to welcome this distinguished biographer and musician. Although he did not use recordings he had brought, and confined himself entirely to his lecture, Mr. Hurd spoke eloquently on his subject. We knew that he had already published two important 'first' biographies of Rutland Boughton and Ivor Gurney, in addition to his splendid short biography of Elgar. Thus he possesses personal qualifications for discussing an art which obviously has many problems and pitfalls. Space only permits a summary. The primary aim of a biographer is to tell the truth and to shape a book so that the subject is presented fairly and accurately in a logical sequence. But this is not always compatible with truth - what is Truth? Thus biographies must always be read with caution. Considerable preliminary work involves careful reading of letters, documents, newspapers, and perhaps obtaining personal reminiscences when the passage of time may have clouded memory. Details of background, customs and leisure pursuits are necessary and, in the case of a composer, careful study of his works. But all sources of information must be treated with caution before the assembly of relevant material can begin. The dangers facing a biographer were stressed - family considerations, his own reactions to his subject, libel, ownership of copyright, plus the inevitable typing errors. We are most grateful to Mr. Hurd for giving us an insight in to this important field of literature, and for highlighting some of the many problems.

May 14th. GEOFFREY HODGKINS - Elgar's Religious Character. By any standards this was a really first-class lecture. In fact one may safely venture the opinion that it was at least equal to anything we have had hitherto. By no means an easy subject, Mr. Hodgkins quickly made it clear that he had thoroughly prepared his brief, as was evident by the increasing number of references and quotations he introduced. His intensely interesting narrative was skilfully bound together by appropriate music illustrations which he had put on tape beforehand.

It is impossible here to make any detailed appraisal of this outstanding lecture. Although it seemed that a quart had somehow been compressed into the proverbial pint measure, nevertheless an astonishing degree of clarity was achieved. It was a model of presentation. As we believe the fruits of such detailed research should be available to Elgarians in general, we are arranging with Geoffrey Hodgkins to print his lecture as a booklet. We hope that this will be available later in the year, and an announcement will be made in the next issue of the Journal.

June 4th. Professor IVOR KEYS - Elgar and the big Orchestra. How fortunate we were to have another visit from Professor Keys after an interval of several years. His subject gave ample scope for him to develop the theme of orchestration in general, so he chose three pillars on which to base his argument - Mozart, Richard Strauss and Elgar. Perhaps inevitably he began

with Mozart's G minor Symphony no. 40 which, incidentally, had a profound influence on Elgar over 100 years later. Other illustrations were from Mozart's Piano Concerto K. 482, Ein Heldenleben (Strauss) and Elgar's Froissart, Falstaff, and Gerontius.

Detailed analysis of this completely absorbing lecture is not possible here. In almost peripatetic fashion Professor Keys held his audience enthralled, underlining points with excerpts from recordings and extensive use of the piano. No wonder his students crowd his lectures! He is indeed a worthy successor to Elgar in the Peyton Chair of Music in the University of Birmingham, and we are most grateful to him for coming specially to our meeting.

June 18th. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. This was attended by some 24 members, several having apologised for absence. With the Chairman, Douglas Guest, C. V. O., presiding, it followed the usual pattern. After comments from the Chairman, who referred to the continuing expansion of the branch, and a report on the year's activities by the Hon. Secretary, the audited Accounts and Balance Sheet were presented by the Hon. Treasurer and un-animously adopted.

Reference was made to the great loss sustained by the branch last November through the untimely death of Douglas Pudney. An appraisal of his considerable contribution to our affairs has already appeared in the Journal, when it was reported that Mrs. Pudney had been invited to accept Honorary Membership of the branch as a small tribute to his memory. She had been pleased to accept, and this was later confirmed by the meeting.

Both the Chairman, and the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer, E. W. A. Jackson, were re-elected to their respective offices and were thanked for their continuing work for the branch. When thanking members for their renewal of confidence, each of them then announced his intention to retire at the next AGM in 1980. Robert Tucker retired from the Committee by rotation, and was thanked for his considerable help during the past three years. He has been replaced by Mr. M. S. Sced. The remaining committee members were re-elected en bloc. Eric Stanley, C. A. was re-elected Hon. Auditor and was warmly thanked by the Chairman for his invaluable help, and for providing copies of the Accounts for distribution. After the programme for next season had been announced, the Chairman closed the meeting and members then adjourned for wine and cheese at the invitation of the Committee.

SOUTH WEST

Secretary: Ian Cartwright, Herschel House,
61 North Street, Nailsea, Bristol
BS19 2BS. Tel: 02755 2621

The remaining three meetings of our initial programme which were not covered in the May Journal were all deemed by those attending to be a great success. Attendance has not been as high as we hoped, but many members had commit-

ments arranged before the Branch was formed. However, numbers have not fallen below 20, and now that we are planning well ahead on a regular day the 'Elgar Day' should be more prominent in member's diaries.

Apr. 23rd. The Kingdom. Armed with a pile of scores and some helpful literature, David Johnstone, a Branch committee-member and lecturer with the Extra-Mural Dept. of Bristol University, helped us to gain a greater understanding of this great work. He dealt principally with the themes connecting The Kingdom with The Apostles, and those which were composed as new material for The Kingdom. The main source for examples was the rich and beautiful 'Prelude,' but this did not exclude a generous measure of other excerpts. The evening prepared us for the performance on May 5th in Bath Abbey, when the Bath Choral Society were conducted by our Branch Chairman, Clifford Harker. At that performance, which the Society's Hon. Secretary attended, Branch members formed a team to distribute Society leaflets and answer any questions. Members may be interested to know that another performance of The Kingdom took place on that date, at Yeovil.

May 23rd. The presence of Alan Webb, one of our Vice-Presidents, ensured a most interesting and stimulating evening. He told of his evening with Elgar, and played for us some of the same music which he heard on that occasion. We are grateful that Mr. Webb committed to paper the events of the evening so long ago, as it is no exaggeration to say that the evening came alive for each person present and we all returned home exhilarated by what we had heard, just as our speaker had done at the time of the original encounter.

June 23rd. The Elgar Soirée proved to be a most successful and enjoyable venture, with catering for 70 people required. The musical programme was expertly arranged by Derek Johnstone, and included his son playing the Romance for Bassoon, part-songs performed by the Nova Singers, and Mr. Johnstone himself in two piano pieces. Excellent food was provided, largely by members and their wives, and arranged by committee members Ron Bleach and Jock Marche, to whom, with Derek Johnstone, many thanks are due for a fine evening's entertainment.

Having established ourselves in our first season, and put ourselves on the local musical map, we approach our 1979/80 season with a membership of 40. We hope to increase this steadily. Our new programme follows, and we hope that those members living locally who have not yet committed themselves to branch membership will find this an interesting and exciting year in prospect. As far as possible all meetings will be on the fourth Saturday in each month, at the Music Room, The Folk House, 40 Park Street, Bristol at 7.30 p.m.

Sept. 22nd. Elgar & the Hereford Heritage - Martin Passande.

Oct. 27th. The Pre-Gerontius Choral Works - John Knowles.

Nov. 24th. The Sound of (Elgar's) Music - Christopher Kent.

Jan. 26th, 1980. Elgar's Houses and their Music - Jack McKenzie.

Feb. 23rd. Elgar - the Man, the Music - Michael Kennedy. A Day School

organised in conjunction with the University of Bristol Extra-Mural Dept. To be held in the University Music Department at about 10.15 a.m. A charge of £1.50 will be payable. Contact the Branch Secretary for further details. Further details of Branch programmes will follow in the January Journal, meanwhile visitors from other branches are welcome at our meetings.

EAST ANGLIA

Secretary: Barry Marsh, 'Homelea'
Whitwell Road, Reepham, Norfolk
Tel: 060526 613

Our first AGM, on Apr. 20th, proved to be one of the shortest on record - only 45 minutes - in order to accomodate our guest speaker, Geoffrey Hodgkins, in the second half of the evening. Alan Childs summarised the Branch year by expressing his satisfaction that a happy, informal atmosphere had been created, and that the future of the branch was assured through the support of a small, but loyal group of people. On May 18th three members presented recordings of an Elgar work of their choice; there was a chorus singer's point of view (the member had taken part in the Boult recordings of the oratorios, and his comments were enough for an entire future talk), a listener's (Falstaff), and a solo singer's (Gerontius). After all the guest speakers in our season, it was good to see how much untapped talent there is locally.

A small but appreciative audience gathered at Norwich Assembly House on June 15th to hear Elaine Padmore, Head of BBC Opera. She played her 1972 award-winning tape of music by Elgar's contemporaries, and also gave us a 'behind the scenes' look at the making of such studio operas as Delius' The Magic Fountain, and Boughton's The Immortal Hour. We felt particularly honoured that Miss Padmore, as a personal favour to one of our members, felt able to lay aside her phenomenally busy schedule, and address the branch. With no audience 'feedback' after a performance, she found it most useful to discuss music with 'the average listener.'

June 30th saw our long-awaited Concert of English String Music, but we were disappointed that William Alwyn could not attend. However, the St. Thomas Academy orchestra tackled his Concerto Grosso no. 2 with enthusiasm. Other works included Holst's St. Paul's Suite, works by Finzi and Vaughan Williams, and Elgar items Sospiri, and Five Dances from The Spanish Lady. An ambitious programme, excellently played, but poorly attended. After weeks of planning we had hope to equal our attendance of 400 at last year's Elgar concert, but audiences, as always, are very unpredictable. So despite local grants we ended our season with a loss. But - we bounced back! On July 21st we organised a Strawberry Tea, with a produce stall, a raffle, and a music quiz. Result, £43 back in to funds! Since, the day before, some of us had also travelled to Kings Lynn to hear a marvellous performance of the Second Symphony (Philharmonia, under Andrew Davis) we considered it a fitting end to our first year.

Letters

From GEOFFREY HODGKINS

The May issue of the JOURNAL contained yet another ingenious solution to the 'Enigma,' with much weight being given to the curious phrase 'a dark saying.' Surely there is nothing sinister here? Elgar's use of inverted commas suggests a quotation; indeed it comes from the definition of the word 'enigma' to be found in Webster's Dictionary, which itself quotes Johnson: "A dark saying, in which some known thing is concealed under obscure language; an obscure question; a riddle. A question, saying or painting, containing a hidden meaning, which is proposed to be guessed." However, in Elgar's case he said it was to be left un-guessed, and I do feel that we should be careful not to give too much meaning to words or statements which were in all probability used in complete innocence. It is very tempting to twist things to fit one's own particular theory, and unfortunately this has often happened; it is all too easy to do. One could find further 'evidence' to support Mr. van Houten's nautical suggestion of Rule Britannia by saying that the letters of 'Dorabella' can be arranged to give "All a-bored." (Perhaps this anagram may appeal to those Elgarians weary of such things.)

From IAN CARTWRIGHT

Whilst endorsing your comments in the May issue concerning the unoriginality of the 1979 Three Choirs Festival ("Must it always be Gerontius?"), I feel that we cannot escape from the financial facts of current musical life. With soloists' fees as they are, a work with three principals, as opposed to four (or the six required for The Apostles) makes Gerontius a relatively more attractive proposition, especially since the box office receipts are likely to be greater than from works requiring more expenditure - a double bonus for the organisers.

Add to this the fact that Novello's have increased the cost of hiring orchestral parts by a massive amount over the last five or six years, and the size of Elgar's orchestras considered in the context of much increased Musician's Union rates, it is then hardly surprising that promoters stick to "the safe bet". A recent performance of The Kingdom by a local Society, with virtually a capacity audience, has almost crippled the Society financially, and for their performance of The Apostles on May 23rd next year (please put that date in your diaries) the Bristol Cathedral Special Choir are going to the unprecedented length, for them, of having to hold fund-raising events. They know that even for an amateur society using professional soloists and orchestra, they are going to make a substantial loss on putting on the work, even if they sell every available seat. If the Elgar Society wants a purpose or raison d'etre

it need look no further than this very real need to work for the continuance of Elgar's great, but expensive, choral works. You comment on the infrequent performance of The Apostles in the May issue. I think the future remedy lies at our door, for any choral society that puts on that work is doing itself a financial disservice, and very few groups will be prepared to do this.

Rather than being dissatisfied when people fail to take unnecessary risks, it seems to me that we must, as Elgar enthusiasts, work ourselves to encourage by positive assistance the performance - at appropriate standards - of the works we wish to hear. Alternatively, we must accept either non-performance, or second-rate performance with orchestra and soloists unable to attain to Elgar's demanding standards.

RECORD REVIEWS [continued]

nearly so rhythmically precise or so clearly articulated. The two Interludes are nicely pointed, and The Ride to London makes a vivid and lively contrast.

Although there is much to enjoy in this record (perhaps rather more overall than this review has suggested), in the ultimate I still prefer both Barenboim and Handley's accounts of Falstaff.

J. G. K.

CONCERTO in B minor for VIOLIN & ORCHESTRA

Albert Sammons, New Queen's Hall Orch. /Wood[Recorded 1929]
World Records SH 288

This sees a welcome return to the catalogue of a record which quite frankly should never have been out of it. In many respects - conducting, orchestral playing, clarity and balance of recording - it compares unfavourably with its 'rival', the HMV Elgar-Menuhin version of 1932 (still available on HLM 7107). Nevertheless it is worth a place in every Elgar-lover's collection, not just because of its historical interest, but because of the playing of Sammons, surely the most committed playing of this Concerto. In every note he plays you feel the deep devotion and affection of Sammons for the work. More detailed criticism of the record can be found elsewhere; I can only suggest that if you do not possess it already, go out and buy it at once before the price goes up!

G. H.

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BOOKS WANTED Edward Speyer's "My Life & Friends" 1937 is needed by Michael Trott, 1 Shuthonger Manor, Tewkesbury, Glos.

J. D. Chamier's book "Percy Pitt of Covent Garden & the BBC " 1938 is needed by the Editor of the Journal. Offers of either of the above will be greatly appreciated.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY
[President: Sir Adrian Boult, C.H.]

The Annual Subscription to the Society is £2. Applications for membership should be address to the Hon. Secretary, Andrew Neill, 11 Limburg Road, London, S.W.11. Existing members should renew their subscriptions, due on January 1st, to the Hon. Treasurer, John Knowles, 11 The Chase, Watford, Herts, WD1 7JQ.

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS These are additional to the Society's annual subscription at the following rates:

LONDON	£3 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to E. W. A. Jackson, Killiegray, 7 Batchworth Lane, Northwood, Middx HA6 3AU.
WEST MIDLANDS	£1 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Alan Boon, Old School House, Martley, Worcester.
EAST MIDLANDS	£1 per annum. Enquiries should be directed to the Elgar Society Hon. Secretary.
NORTH WEST	£2 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Malcolm Key, 10 Eversleigh Park, Oxtou, Birkenhead, Merseyside.
EAST ANGLIA	£1 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Bernard Ward, 96 Welsford Road, Norwich, Norfolk.
SOUTH WEST	£2 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Ian Cartwright, Herschel House, 61 North Street, Nailsea, Bristol BS19 2 BS
YORKSHIRE	£2 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Dennis Clark, 227 Tinshill Road, Leeds LS16 7BU

NEW MEMBERS are always welcome, and the Society will advise you if you live in a branch area. All members receive the JOURNAL, at present published in January, May, and September.

ELGAR SOCIETY NEWSLETTER. A limited number of copies of nos. 4 and 9 of the first series remain, at 15p. plus 9p post for each issue. An index to nos. 1 to 10 will be sent gratis. No. 1 of the New Series is out of print, but a few photo-copies have been made which can be supplied for £1, plus 9p. postage.

Numbers 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 (May 1977 to Sept. 1978) of the New Series are available, at 60p. plus 9p. post for each issue.