

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



MAY

1981

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NOTICE FROM THE TREASURER: In view of the high cost of postage, I am not now sending out receipts for subscriptions received, unless specifically requested. In such cases an SAE would be appreciated.

John Knowles.

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

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RADIO TIMES

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

THE PRINCE OF WALES IS TO UNVEIL THE STATUE OF
SIR EDWARD ELGAR IN WORCESTER ON JUNE 2nd.

Elgarians everywhere will be delighted that the Prince has consented to perform the ceremony, and in addition members of the Elgar Society will learn with great pleasure that the Society's wreath, which is laid each year by the Elgar window in Worcester Cathedral, is to be laid this year by Prince Charles. The Prince will also be present at the special Royal Concert in the Cathedral on the same day.

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol.2, no. 2

In our thirtieth year Elgar 'happenings' seem to be all around us. At least as far as the Society is concerned we are extremely active, and it is difficult to know quite where to start. The unveiling of the long-overdue Elgar statue is mentioned on other pages, as is the 30th Anniversary Dinner in Malvern. However, we hope for a maximum turn-out on both occasions, though the first is, of course, a more public occasion. In the more private atmosphere of the Abbey Hotel in Malvern we hope to cement old friendships, and perhaps make new ones. Michael Kennedy, a great propagandist for Elgar, will be our chief guest and we welcome him with particular pleasure. If you have not yet advised the Secretary of your attendance please do so without delay, as last-minute attenders cannot, regrettably, be accommodated.

Earlier in the year, through the good offices of our Chairman, Michael Pope, we had a cocktail party at the Savile Club, to coincide with the actual date of the founding of the Society. A very pleasant evening, and the only regret was that so few members were able to get to London on that particular evening. We were welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Pope in the Ballroom, and it was interesting to recall that Elgar must have walked up those stairs on many occasions when he was a member of the Club.

As reported on another page three important new recordings are about to be issued of Elgar songs. The Society has been involved in part in the production of the Meridian Record of Elgar's Choral Music, as we have provided the insert leaflet of words to accompany the record. As the works have not been recorded previously it was felt particularly important to provide words on this occasion for the works in question would not always be readily available in printed form. We hope that members will support this venture, and also purchase their records through the Society as it means that we shall benefit financially. Also may I remind you that the Society's record is still available, "Elgar's Interpreters on Record", at the special members' price of £3.50.

The Society continues to grow, and we understand that more libraries in North America have taken out subscriptions to the Journal. In-so-far as this means that the life and works of Elgar are being put before a wider public this can only be something which gives us cause for satisfaction.

RONALD TAYLOR

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and DINNER 1981

As advised in the January "Journal" the A.G.M. will take place at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, May 30th, 1981, in York Hall, Malvern Girl's College, Malvern, Worcs. Tea will be provided.

Tickets are still available for the Dinner which is to be held in The Beacon Room, of the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern, at 8 p.m. The guest of honour will be Michael Kennedy. Dress will be black tie or lounge suits. Members wishing to attend should send £7 per person to the Secretary as soon as possible including a s.a.e. *PRIOR NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ATTEND IS ESSENTIAL.*

A.H.A. Neill.

11 Limburg Road,
London, S.W.11.

ALSO ON MAY 30th AT THE MALVERN MUSEUM (over Abbey gateway), an ELGAR EXHIBITION, open after the AGM and before the dinner. The exhibition has been arranged by the West Midlands Branch.

ELGAR STATUE UNVEILING by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales
on Tuesday, June 2nd, 1981 WORCESTER

The provisional time-table for this outstanding day is as follows:

4.0p.m. Evensong(including Elgar music)
4.45p.m. Tea(probably in Old Palace) 5.45p.m. Doors open for Cathedral Concert(details in Concert Diary). 6.30p.m. Audience to be seated.

7.0p.m. Prince Charles lays the Society's wreath
at the Elgar Window.

7.05p.m. Concert commences. 8.40p.m. Concert ends.

9.0p.m. Unveiling ceremony begins

Organised by the Elgar Statue Appeal Fund in Worcester. Congratulations!

Three important new record releases.....

EVENING SCENE. Choral Music by Elgar, sung by the Philharmonic Chamber Choir, conducted by David Temple.

Almost entirely hitherto unrecorded examples of Elgar's sacred and secular choral music. Containing *O Happy Eyes, Love, To Her Beneath whose Stedfast Star, Weary Wind of the West, Evening Scene, Windlass Song, Death on the Hills, Serenade op.73, Credo in E minor, Lo, Christ the Lord is Born, O Mightiest of the Mighty, How Calmly the Evening, Good Morrow.*

Meridian Records E77040

FROM THE BAVARIAN HIGHLANDS, and other Part Songs.(including *O Happy Eyes, Love, My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land, Spanish Serenade, The Snow, Fly Singing Bird Fly, The Prince of Sleep*)

Donald Hunt Singers, Keith Swallow(piano), Jeremy Ballard & Paul Smith(violins). Recorded in the Chapter House of Worcester Cathedral

Abbey Records ABY 821

CHURCH MUSIC. *Great is the Lord; They are at Rest; Go, Song of Mine; Ave verum corpus; Ave Maria; Ave Maris stella; Fear Not, O Land; O Harken Thou; Angelus; I sing the Birth; O Salutaris Hostia; Give unto the Lord.*

Worcester Cathedral Choir, conducted by Donald Hunt

Abbey Records ABY 822

Special Offer

Members have the opportunity of buying the two new Abbey Records(Part Songs : Church Music) at the special price of £4.49 each, which is £1 less than the recommended retail price. Copies will be posted, free of charge, when they are ready.

Copies of the Meridian Record are also available to members at the special price of £3.50 (rrp £4.35), inclusive of postage.

Please send your orders to THE TREASURER on the order form enclosed in the Journal. If you do not have one, why not order a copy of the Society's record at the same time? (Elgar's Interpreters on Record)

(Copies of all these records will be available at the London meeting in May)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Overseas Members' Questionnaire

Nearly 50% of our overseas members kindly responded to a special questionnaire asking about the level of awareness of Elgar's music in their countries; how often his music, and which works, are performed in concerts or broadcasts, and how easily available are books and records. Replies came from Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, all over Europe, and from the U.S.A. and Canada.

In France and Italy Elgar is virtually unknown although the French Broadcasting Authorities are beginning to take note of British music. There are occasional performances in Germany. Performances are growing more numerous in the U.S.A. and Canada. There is strong interest in Holland (see below). Full results of the survey from Ian Lace.

Projected Overseas Branch in the Netherlands

Dutch member, Mr.E.N.A. Hoogendijk is currently building up what we hope will be the Society's first overseas branch. Mr.Hoogendijk is planning to hold the inaugural meeting in late April or early May.

Correspondence Circle

Initially set up for American and Canadian members, a correspondence circle is now an additional facility for overseas members (U.K. members too if they wish) enabling them to exchange news and views with fellow enthusiasts. To join the circle please write in the first instance to:

Ian Lace, Secretary, International Sub-committee, 20 Quarry Hill, Haywards Heath, Sussex. RH16 1NQ.

AN ELGAR PILGRIMAGE.....Organised by the University of Aston in Birmingham. 17th/19th July 1981.

Based on the University of Aston this Pilgrimage will be conducted by Dr.Jerrold Northrop Moore, and on the final day the Amici Quartet will play for you at Weston Park, Shropshire, with a candle-lit supper in the State Dining Room. The Pilgrimage will include a tour of those places in Worcester particularly associated with Elgar, and a visit to the Birthplace. Full details may be obtained from The Conference Officer, University of Aston in Birmingham, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET.

Closing date for applications is May 30th, so HURRY! Telephone queries may be made to Mrs.J. Moyle (Worcester - 0905 620848) Principal of Heart of England Country Tours.

Shaw and Elgar
Malvern Festival
17-30 May 1981

The fifth revived MALVERN FESTIVAL will once again feature a variety of drama and musical events. Full details are given in the brochure which is available now from Festival Box Office, Malvern Festival Theatre, Malvern, Worcs.

The orchestras this year include the Halle & the Philhar-

monia, the first conducted by James Loughran, the latter by Vernon Handley and Raymond Leppard. In the Halle concert Sarah Walker will sing the solo part in The Music Makers, and in the first Philharmonia concert Handley will conduct the Froissart Overture and the Cello Concerto (Yo Yo Ma as soloist). The second concert under Raymond Leppard will include the Enigma Variations. On 20th May at Malvern Priory a particularly interesting concert will be given by Sir Clifford Curzon and the Medici String Quartet. They will play the Elgar and Dvorak Piano Quintets. This promises to be a most attractive festival and of course the drama side - plays by Shaw and Galsworthy - will be as finely produced as ever.

The 254th Three Choirs Festival is taking place in Worcester from 22nd August to the 29th. The festival conductor is Donald Hunt, assisted by Roy Massey and John Sanders. The guest conductors include Sir Charles Groves and Gunther Herbig.

Of particular interest to Elgarians is the performance of The Apostles, on August 23rd. The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Festival Chorus will be joined by Elizabeth Harwood, Anne Collins, Kenneth Bowen, John Noble, David Thomas, and Christopher Keyte.

On August 26th the Violin Concerto will be played by Barry Griffiths, with the RPO under Sir Charles Groves. On the 29th a chamber concert will include the Piano Quintet, played by the Nash Ensemble.

A lecture on the morning of August 24th will be well patronised when Michael Kennedy will speak on "Elgar of Worcester" in the Swan Theatre.

BROCHURE AVAILABLE FROM: S.Driver White, 5 Deansway, Worcester WR1 2JG

Worcester
**THREE
 CHOIRS**
festival

The Elgar Society --- the Early Years

by Frank Greatwich.

[The author was Hon.Secretary of the Society 1970-72, and Vice-Chairman 1972-75.]

With the return to Malvern for the forthcoming annual general meeting, and a dinner to celebrate the Society's thirtieth year of existence, the Editor of the JOURNAL - as he indicated in the last issue - has deemed it appropriate to publish, for the benefit of members not aware of it, something of the Society's early history.

Our chairman for many years until his retirement in 1976, Bertie Shaw, and I have been putting our heads together looking at what records there are, in the way of minute books, newspaper cuttings, news letters (the pioneering precursors of the present excellent JOURNAL) and published pamphlets, to remind us of events of the early 1950's when the Society was founded and took its first tentative steps.

To set the scene one must recall the Malvern of the pre-Second World War years when the town established, over a decade, a world-wide reputation for its annual drama festival. George Bernard Shaw, at the height of his fame, bestrode the event as its patron saint, and wrote a number of plays specially for it. J.B.Priestley was almost as closely associated with the festival, and to the gatherings of other foremost figures in the world of literature and the stage Elgar, in the last few years of his life, added his commanding presence from the world of music.

Music was never as important a part of the Malvern Festival as it was to become in the later festivals such as Edinburgh, but when, after the interruption of the war, efforts to revive the drama festival failed, Elgar's past association with the event prompted the idea of an Elgar Festival, which was duly held in 1947 under the direction of another Worcestershire composer, Julius Harrison.

The Liverpool Symphony Orchestra (under four conductors - Basil Cameron, Clarence Raybould, Harold Gray, and Julius Harrison) played *Froissart*, *Enigma Variations* and the *A flat Symphony*; Astra Desmond, Parry Jones and Henry Cummings sang in *The Dream of Gerontius* (in Malvern Priory); and Thomas Matthews played the *Violin Concerto* and Anthony Pini the *Cello Concerto*. Of the performance of *The Dream* a certain "A.T.S.", writing the notices for the local newspapers (which he has done for more than half a century) commented: "With many recollections of past performances in other places I have no hesitation in saying that this was easily the grandest reading of the work I have heard since the composer's death in 1934."

There were the usual accompaniments of a successful festival in

the way of talks and social events, but financially the result was not such as to inspire the organisers to begin immediately planning a festival for the following year. In fact, it was not until 1950 that the impetus was regained, largely due to a group of Elgar enthusiasts, including a number from what is now the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment, of whom Spencer Noble was one of the foremost. He still continues to give great service to the Society through the West Midlands branch.

It was at this time that Bertie Shaw and I became closely associated with the two following festivals, in 1950 and 1951, out of which the Elgar Society was to emerge. No doubt we were a little critical of the inertia of Elgar Festivals Ltd., the company which came into being to sponsor the 1947 festival, and before we knew it the traditional British formula for solving such problems had been applied - that is to say the critics were promptly saddled with the job! Bertie Shaw was already chairman of the Festival Committee and he and I and Dorothy Bell (later to be the first secretary of the Elgar Society) were elected directors of the company, Bertie as Chairman.

Putting on an Elgar Festival was no daunting problem in a place like Malvern, with a good deal of know-how from long experience with festivals. Paying for it was another matter, in times when most of the 1,000 seats available had to be sold at 7s 6d and 5s, and the Arts Council could run to a grant of only £100. The solution was a guarantee fund, the newspapers with which I was associated putting up £250 towards the £1,000 target, which we reached without difficulty.

The festival was musically a great success and one writer, posing the rhetorical question of what had given most pleasure, said the ready answer was "the chance to hear a number of Elgar works recreated in his own country by his foremost living exponent." He was alluding to Sir Adrian Boult conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in the *Enigma Variations*, *Falstaff*, the *Cello Concerto*, *In the South* and *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*. And it was Sir Adrian who gave the idea of founding an Elgar Society, which had been simmering in some of our minds, a decisive push forward. The writer referred to above, the late Hugh Ottaway, had concluded a notice: "What of the future? The Malvern Elgar Festival, as an annual or biennial event, has a definite place in English musical life. All who are sensitive to the pull of places will know the benefit of studying a man's work in his own country. This is particularly valuable in Elgar's case, for his music is tinged with so many local references and associations. He transcended his native heath, becoming our first great composer since the age of Purcell, but he remained at heart the 'gentleman of Worcestershire'. The formation of an Elgar Society will be a great step forward. One envisages such a body not only as a means of securing a regular festival, but also as a patron of Elgar research. A really active society could do much to promote that positive revaluation of the composer's works which is undoubtedly due".

The "positive revaluation" was still some way off, but we like to

think that the festivals and the Society had something to do with it when it did come about. What the 1950 festival did was to bring to a focal point our thoughts on founding an Elgar Society. We were given much encouragement by Sir Adrian and soon after the festival in September a provisional committee was appointed to draft a constitution for submission to a general meeting to bring the Society into existence. This meeting was held on January 29, 1951. The recommendation of the provisional committee was discussed and (say the minutes) "after discussion it was proposed by Mr.A.T.Shaw, seconded by Mr.F.B. Greatwich, that this Society should be formed to honour the memory of Sir Edward Elgar", and a further motion, by Mrs.Shaw, seconded by Mrs. Gertrude Mitchell (a director of Elgar Festivals Ltd) named it "The Elgar Society".

The provisional committee consisted of Mr.John Tompkins(chairman), Mrs.Cartland(mother of Barbara Cartland, the novelist), Mrs.A.T.Shaw, Miss Joyce King (editor of the *Malvern Gazette*), Mr.Spencer Noble, Mr. Wyndham Croome, Mr. Durham Holl (Priory organist), with Mr.Reg.Marsh (who was secretary of Elgar Festivals Ltd) as secretary. They did their work so well that their recommendations went through practically unaltered. The categories of membership and subscriptions make interesting reading now: (a) Adult membership 5s.; Junior membership (under 18) 1s.; (c) Family membership 10s 6d.; (d) Life membership £5 5s.; Corporate membership 10s 6d. The newspaper account of this meeting records that Sir Adrian Boulton was elected President and Mr. John Tompkins the Society's first chairman. With prophetic words he said that "While the Society's home for the moment is in Malvern it is hoped that the Society will develop on a national basis".

The first committee consisted of the provisional committee with the addition of Miss V.Cooke, Miss K.Pearn, Dr.R.A.Smith, Mr.(now Sir) David Willcocks, Bertie Shaw and myself. The Society was seen in those early days as having the primary duty of keeping the Elgar Festivals in Malvern alive, in a supporting role to Elgar Festivals Ltd. and the Festival Committee, and it was at first thought advisable for these organisations to be kept separate and distinct. But this hardly proved practicable, with so many of us wearing different hats at various meetings, so that when, after a year, John Tompkins had to withdraw for business reasons, the direction of all three bodies passed to Bertie Shaw as chairman and he remained chairman of the Elgar Society for the next quarter of a century.

One of his first duties was to tell members that even after another guarantee of £1,000 - raised like that of the previous year - had been taken into account a deficit of £500 still remained on the 1951 Festival, and that no further festival could be contemplated until that debt was discharged. Eventually this was achieved, mainly through the efforts of the Society, but lack of sponsorship, and the meagre returns which were available even from full houses at seat prices ruling at that time, precluded any further festivals in the foreseeable future.

The Society's ties with Malvern, despite the lack of a festival connection, remained close over the following years, and most meetings were held there. Some members today, when the Society has many branches and demonstrably a national outlook, may wonder at the continued regional slant of the Society for the first fifteen or twenty years of its existence, but it was natural that the keenest interest should be displayed by the people of the area of Elgar's birth and upbringing who were steadfast in their appreciation of his music - possibly, let us admit, out of local pride - before the days of its later widespread popularity.

In the 1950's the Society was able to maintain its aims only in a modest way, but from the time of the celebration of the centenary of Elgar's birth in 1857 there was an infusion of new members (68 in 1958). Stanley and Winifred Lambert took over the secretaryship in 1959 and for the next eleven years served the Society in that capacity with great zeal and efficiency. They capitalised on the increasing interest in Elgar's music, issued the first news-letters and collaborated closely with Alan Webb when during the five years he was curator of the Birthplace, he directed many visitors into membership of the Society.

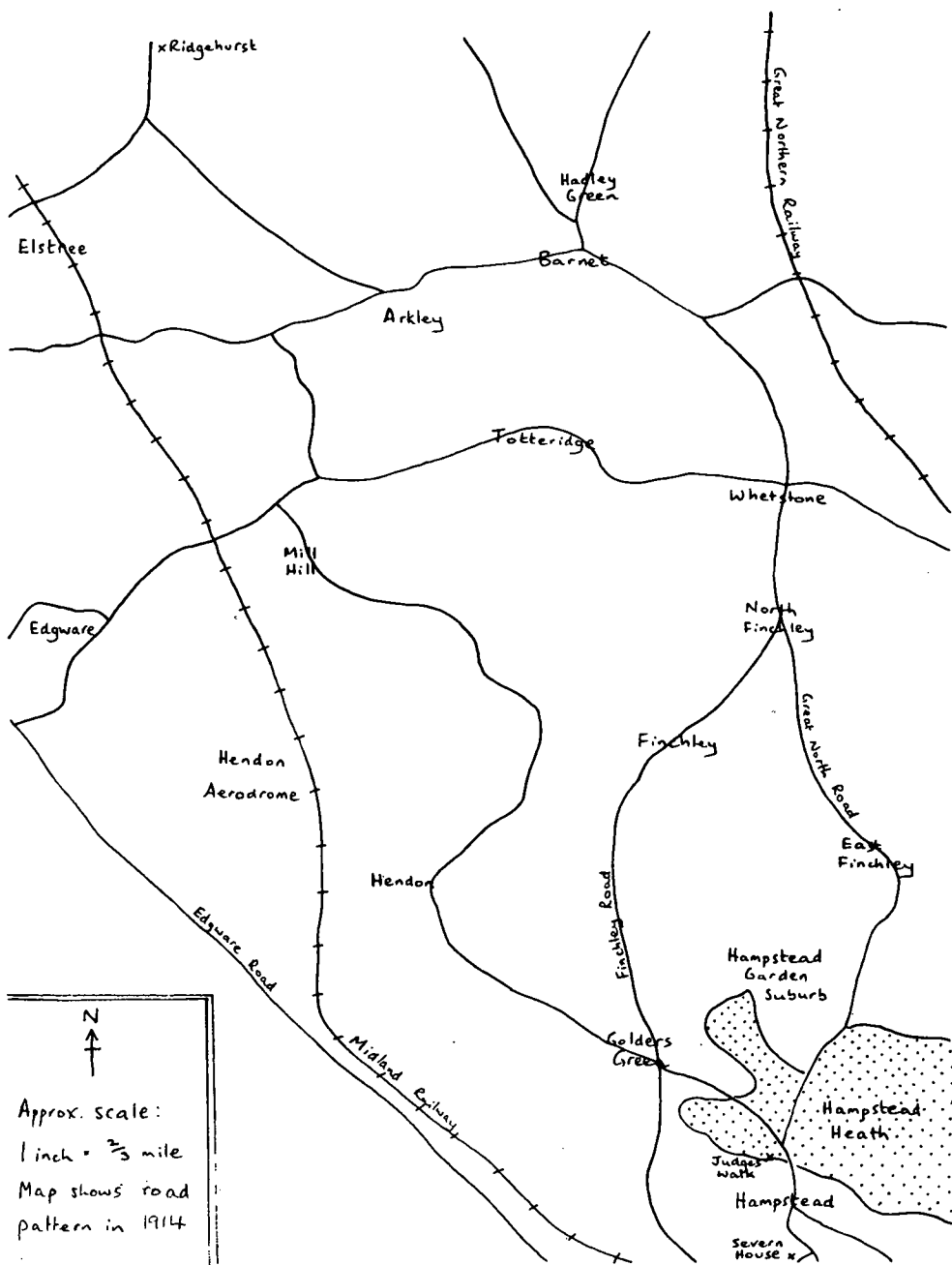
Alan Webb also became the Society's secretary for recorded music and was a valuable link with EMI in the years when the new recordings began to flow and more people became acquainted with Elgar's works.

Sixty or seventy members a year were joining the Society in the late 1960's and I note that just short of a hundred members attended the Birthday celebration in 1968. With the Society's fortunes showing an upturn I took over the secretaryship from Mr. and Mrs. Lambert in 1970. Despite a number of outside distractions the Society was ready for expansion, as was proved soon afterwards when we launched out with a new policy of stimulating interest in many areas of the country through autonomous branches, beginning with the London branch.

But now, I think, I have arrived at a point when I have already exceeded my brief to write something about the early history of the Society, and I must therefore bring this article to a close.

ROYAL VISIT TO WORCESTER - JUNE 1981

To commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales on 2nd and 3rd June two special covers are to be issued by the Worcester Stamp Centre. These will commemorate the unveiling of the statue of Elgar, as well as the visit to Worcester College for the Blind on the following day. These souvenirs of a special occasion will be issued in two forms, full details can be obtained from the Centre, 40 Broad Street, Worcester. Telephone: 29500.



"A COUNTRY LIFE I FIND ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL"

ELGAR IN NORTH LONDON 1912-1914

by Geoffrey Hodgkins

PART ONE

"My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full of it and you simply take as much as you require."

The familiarity of this quote by Elgar (here given in full), to R.J. Buckley, his first biographer, should not blind us to its essential truth. In Elgar's case, musical composition, i.e., the actual creation of original musical ideas, was inextricably linked to the countryside, the open air, nature. By the time it came to be written down the musical idea had been developed and refined. On two occasions when he was questioned about his methods of composition Elgar was careful to emphasize the difference between invention and recording.

"I suppose that the public imagines the composer rising early and sitting over his music paper the whole day long. That is nowhere near the truth, as a matter of fact. In my own case, an idea comes to me, perhaps when walking. On return I write it down. Weeks or months after I may take it up and write out the movement of which it has become the germ" (*Music Student*, August 1916).

"How and when do I do my music? I can tell you very easily. I come into my study at nine o'clock in the morning and I work till a quarter to one. I don't do any inventing then, for that comes anywhere and everywhere. It may be when I am walking, golfing, or cycling... A country life I find absolutely essential to me, and here [Craig Lea] the conditions are exactly what I require. As you see...I get a wonderful view of the surrounding country. I can see across Worcestershire, to Edgehill, the Cathedral of Worcester, the Abbeys of Pershore and Tewkesbury, and even the smoke from around Birmingham. It is delightfully quiet..." (*Strand Magazine*, April 1904).

When Elgar was a boy he used to study a new score by taking it out into the fields "for a long day out of doors", he said. "That was what I always did". An early attempt at composition took place by the banks of the Severn, where he tried to write down what the reeds were saying. There are several occasions when we are told that he actually composed out of doors. Billy Reed said that "a great deal of *The Apostles* took shape in his mind" at Longdon Marsh. At Llangranog, while on holiday, he heard the singing which inspired the 'Welsh' theme in the *Introduction and Allegro* while he was "on the cliff, between blue sea and blue sky, thinking out my theme". At Forli he had a tent on the lawn outside, which is where Buckley first interviewed him.

Elgar's houses invariably had good views. That from 'Craeg Lea' has already been described. From 'Forli' there was a superb view of North Hill in the Malvern range. At 'Plas Gwyn' in Hereford Elgar could look from his study across the Wye Valley to the imposing Dinedor Hill. The British Camp was visible from 'Birchwood'. 'Brinkwells', he told Frank Schuster, was "divine: simple thatched cottage & a studio with wonderful view". Composition was often undertaken at the houses of friends; some of these were in secluded spots with agreeable surroundings, especially Schuster's house at Bray, 'The Hut', which led down to the river Thames, and Edgar Speyer's house 'Ridgehurst' at Shenley in Hertfordshire, which commands a pleasant view from the grounds. The Elgars actually left 'Craeg Lea' "on account of the building which will spoil our heavenly view", as Elgar told Jaeger.

This preamble is a necessary prelude to a consideration of Elgar's state of mind as he moved into 'Severn House', Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead, on New Year's Day, 1912. He had recently been awarded the O.M., the first musician to be so honoured, and was generally acknowledged to be the finest English composer since Purcell. His works were now played all over the world, and he moved in the highest social circles. Now he was living in a palatial house in a fashionable part of London; this entailed attending various social functions and also entertaining on a lavish scale. To Alice Elgar, this signalled a return to her former status which she had relinquished on marrying Edward. To him, still insecure and nervous despite his fame, it was anathema, yet he accepted it for her sake. The house was large and roomy, and it stood in its own grounds. Elgar was initially delighted; he wrote "The house is divine: so quiet, quieter than Hereford even, where we heard trains". But he was still expected to produce music, and this was made doubly difficult by the social demands of living in London, and his removal from the source of his inspiration - the west country landscape. 'Severn House' was in the middle of a built-up area, and there were no views available from house or grounds. Elgar made no secret of the fact that he hated London in that he could find no inspiration to compose there. Nine years earlier, in an interview, he had said: "This London is too noisy for me, one cannot formulate any peaceful thoughts and can work even less. I work little in the town anyway". He was soon homesick. When Dora Powell first visited 'Severn House', she remarked that Elgar must be in clover, to which he replied: "I don't know about the clover, I've left that behind in Hereford". Two letters written about this time confirm this view: "I long for a sight of my own country", he wrote to Canon Gorton in March, and to Frances Colvin in August: "My labour will soon be over and then for the country lanes and the wind sighing in the reeds by Severn side again".

Elgar's 'labour' in 1912 produced three new works, yet it would be wrong to suppose that his flame was burning as brightly as ever. The *Crown of India* produced at the Coliseum in March, was written quickly from old sketches: the psalm setting *Great is the Lord* was written in August 1910, according to W.H. Reed: *The Music Makers* had been in his mind for a decade or so, and much of it had been sketched at Mord-

iford Bridge near Hereford, one of Elgar's favourite fishing spots. O'Shaughnessy's poem, dealing with the loneliness of the creative artist, was calculated to appeal to Elgar at this particular time. At the end of the work is written "Judges Walk, N.W." Judges' Walk is a tree-lined path on the western edge of Hampstead Heath near to Jack Straw's Castle. Here it was that Elgar came, to try and recapture the atmosphere of a country life; although partly surrounded by houses, he was able to draw inspiration from the semi-rural aspect. He later called this place "my spiritual home for many years". Lady Elgar's diaries for these years often contain the entry: "E. to Heath".

Judges' Walk is still somewhat secluded and difficult to find. From there one can look north-westwards across open country towards Mill Hill and Edgware. It is significant that Elgar chose this view, rather than the more spectacular one from nearby Whitestone Pond, which gives a fine panorama of central London. The two contrasting views were commented on by the American writer, Charles Alvin Gillig, in his *London Guide* of 1899:

There are no prettier suburbs in the environs of London than those found along the range of hills encircling it to the North, from whose summits on a clear day two prospects may be had, so widely differing in character that the presence of one would seem to preclude the propinquity of the other. Looking to the North, one sees a panorama of pastoral landscape, with here and there bits of forest and clustering villages, so exquisitely beautiful, so serene and complete, so full of repose, that he would scarcely suspect that, at the opposite point of the compass, lay the homes, the shops, the factories, the paraphernalia of commerce, the magnificent architecture of church and state, the luxury of wealth, the squalor of poverty, the highest and lowest conditions of life - all the concomitants of a city of nearly six million people".

Hampstead had been contiguous with London for some fifty years, but the village's position on the Northern Heights meant that further northward expansion of the capital had been prevented by transport difficulties. Main line railways and arterial roads had skirted the Heights to the west and east, leaving the region to the north largely unspoilt and undeveloped (see map). Rapid building had taken place from 1907 onwards, due to the extension of the Northern underground line to Golders Green and, in the same year, the beginning of Hampstead Garden Suburb. The population of Golders Green rose from 9,700 in 1907 to 23,800 by the outbreak of war. This last event interrupted the building programme, and as Hugh Prince remarked, "London paused to survey the last corner of open country it possessed before throwing miles of red brick and concrete over rural Middlesex". So, in 1912 Hampstead Heath, which had once stood on the edge of open country to the north, was now effectively enclosed; the real countryside lay beyond. It was perhaps inevitable that Elgar would venture out in that direction eventually, but it began at the instigation of Alice Elgar, as ever sensitive to the needs of her husband.

TO BE CONTINUED

Dates for your Diary

May 9	Cello Concerto <i>Julian Lloyd Webber/Lincoln SO</i>	Lincoln Cathedral
May 16	Overture in D minor(Handel-Elgar) <i>Croydon SO/Davison</i>	Fairfield Hall,Croydon
	Crown of India Suite, and Crown of India March <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Uppingham School Hall. Rutland. 7.30 p.m.
May 24	Violin Concerto <i>Salvatore Accardo/RPO/Groves</i>	Royal Festival Hall
May 26	In the South <i>Philharmonia/Muti</i>	Royal Festival Hall
May 27	Serenade for Strings <i>Addison Chamber Orch/Macnamara</i>	St.John's, Smith Square London, SW 1
June 2	ROYAL ELGAR CONCERT: *** Pomp & Circ.no.4;Sea Pictures; The Severn Suite;The Music Makers. <i>Sandra Browne/CBSO & Worcester Fest.</i> <i>Chorus & Cathedral Choir/Hunt</i>	Worcester Cathedral 7 p.m. Tickets from Music 47, 47 Friar St. Worcester. £7,£3.50, & Unreserved £2
June 11	The Music Makers <i>Alfreda Hodgson/London Choral Soc. &</i> <i>Philharmonia/Rattle</i>	Royal Festival Hall
June 26	Enigma Variations <i>Philharmonia/Handley</i>	Royal Festival Hall
July 10	Serenade for Strings <i>Academy of London/Stamp</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
July 11	Part Songs; Banner of St.George	The Athenaeum.Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. 7.30 p.m.
July 12	Introduction & Allegro <i>Pupils of the Yehudi Menuhin School/</i> <i>Norris</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall
July 24	Dream of Gerontius <i>John Shirley-Quirk/Janet Baker/</i> <i>Robt.Tear/Worcester Festival</i> <i>Chorus/Philharmonia/Handley.</i> <u><i>Part of the Kings Lynn Festival</i></u>	St.Nicholas's Chapel, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. 7.30 p.m.

*** See more details on page 4.

ELGAR IN HONG KONG AND AUSTRALIA

by Harry Danks

An invitation to join the viola section of the Halle Orchestra for a concert tour of Hong Kong and Australia was difficult to refuse, the prospect of fine weather combined with good music was irresistible.

The tour consisted of two weeks in Hong Kong, followed by a further two and a half weeks in Australia. The music of Elgar figured prominently in the planning of the concerts which reflected the good taste of the Hallé and its conductor James Loughran.

The large party of 110 left Heathrow on a cold dismal January 23rd. Many hours later the Jumbo Jet skimmed over the harbour of Hong Kong to land in beautiful weather. The city was holding its annual Arts Festival, and the Hallé were committed for eight concerts in the City Hall, with two more in neighbouring Tsuen Wan City Hall. Both concert halls are modern, excellently planned and a delight to play in.

Audiences in Hong Kong inevitably include a large proportion of Chinese, a delightful and well-mannered people who received Elgar's music with tremendous enthusiasm. During the eight concerts the following were performed: *Enigma Variations*, *Introduction and Allegro for String quartet and String orchestra*, *Overture In the South*, *Violin Concerto*, *Symphony no. 1*. The reaction by the audience to the orchestra and the music of Elgar is something the Hallé will treasure and remember for long to come. The soloist in the *Violin Concerto* was the young English violinist Nigel Kennedy. He performed the concerto four times during the course of the tour. He brought to the work a freshness of interpretation that was a joy to this writer who has taken part in many performances over the years, including the finest of them all, Albert Sammons. In conversation Nigel Kennedy freely admitted a debt of gratitude to Sammons for the unique recording of the concerto, and it was fairly obvious that the young soloist had listened to it many times. Elgarians can rest assured for future performances and fine interpretations of this glorious work while Nigel Kennedy is around. The *Symphony no. 1* was equally well received, with intense concentration and rapturous applause at the conclusion of each performance. To call it remarkable is an understatement - perhaps the remark of a member of the audience in Perth following the best performance of the tour puts it all in perspective when he said: "Only an English orchestra could possibly play Elgar like that."

After the Hong Kong concerts and splendid hospitality the Hallé embarked on another long flight to Australia, to the eastern side of the country and the city of Sydney. Elgar, of course, is no stranger to Australia, but again perhaps an English orchestra's reading of the *Symphony no. 1*, in Sydney Town Hall, was something special because it was received with thundering applause, a real standing ovation.

The following day the orchestra flew to Melbourne, and the *Symphony* was greeted by at least six curtain calls until the conductor offered an encore. What does one offer an enthusiastic audience after a superb performance of an Elgar symphony? James Loughran, with his experience, knows one or two short pieces to fit such an occasion, and a Beecham arrangement of a Handel hornpipe lasting two minutes satisfied the Melbourne audience.

Another concert was given the following day in Melbourne and Nigel Kennedy played the concerto again to a capacity audience. A short flight to Adelaide the following day, and again the *Violin Concerto* was given in front of an elegant audience in the delightful new Festival Centre. Plenty of space, and sensible and artistic architects has resulted in a lovely city with a most attractive arts building complex. The concert hall is beautiful and practical, and they have fabulous weather to enhance it all.

A long flight to Perth followed the Adelaide concerts and again we enjoyed a city of sun and miles of sandy beaches, and audiences that had bought out each concert weeks before the arrival of the Hallé. Perth was holding a Festival of Arts, and the Hallé gave three concerts in a fine modern concert hall. Nigel Kennedy again played the concerto, with slightly different nuances and varied emotions, but all beautifully portrayed. For the second concert the *Symphony no.1* was presented, and for many of us this was the finest performance of the tour - the audience reception was overwhelming.

Throughout the tour, from January 23rd until February 24th, the fine Hallé orchestra upheld, indeed advanced, its international reputation, and certainly introduced Elgar to many young people while at the same time renewing associations for some of the older concert-goers.

HARRY DANKS is one of the country's leading viola players, and was for many years principal viola player with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He has always been a strong advocate of Elgar's music.

WITH APOLOGIES. It was obviously tempting providence when we criticised errors in other books in the January issue of the Journal. The gremlins struck, and a number of misprints occurred in our pages. Among the more important errors was the reference to the Beauvoir Room at the Abbey Hotel, Malvern. This should have read BEACON Room. We regret too the reference to Alexander Gardens, Ventnor. We relied on the Isle of Wight Mercury, but they were wrong. It was no.3 ALEXANDRA Gardens where Elgar spent part of his honeymoon. We also sincerely regret the spelling mistake in the caption to the portrait of Dr. Caleb Jarvis.

Book Review

Providence and Art. a study of Elgar's Religious Beliefs. by Geoffrey Hodgkins. (*Published by the London Branch of the Elgar Society, and available at £1 post free from M.Sanderson, 18 Lyncroft Mansions, Lyncroft Gardens, London, NW6 1JX*)

Any study of the beliefs of another, whether he be a famous musician or the man in the street, starts under a handicap. Let me pose a question; which one of us has taken the trouble to write down his or her own beliefs for the enlightenment of relatives and friends? Indeed, it would be a matter of surprise to find that this information had been written down at all.

The author is quite right in saying that the young Elgar was "a thoughtful, bookish boy, a bit of a loner", and this is an aspect of Elgar's character that was to remain with him all his life. The 'loner' does not generally unburden his deepest thoughts to all and sundry but, occasionally, he lets slip some pertinent observation to a close friend, and we are fortunate that a number of Elgar's friends have remembered what he said and, here and there, preserved what he wrote.

To survey the source material about Elgar in the hope of discovering those beliefs has been a considerable task, and we must be grateful to Geoffrey Hodgkins for collating this on our behalf, making it possible for us to appreciate within the covers of one small publication information widely scattered throughout the literature.

Elgar was not the first composer, nor the last, to discover that a composer's life is a struggle against all kinds of adversity and, in view of his moods of black depression, it is small wonder that at times he considered Fate had forsaken him. In this he was not alone, for Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, Bruckner, Busoni and Scriabin, to name but a few, exhibited this trait.

We are entitled to ask two questions - without his Roman Catholic upbringing would Elgar have been capable of writing *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom*, or the *Dream of Gerontius*; and did his faith help him come to terms with his own personal circumstances? Geoffrey Hodgkins' work will help you with guidelines and perspective but in the final analysis you will, yourself, have to seek the truth and attempt to discover the answer.

D.R.C.

TWELVE GOOD MEN AND TRUE, by H.Colin Davis. BBC, £2.25.

A paper-back of a series of broadcast talks in which the author chooses an ideal celestial jury who might look on him favourably on his Day of Judgment. Elgar is one of the twelve "a warmly compassionate" guardian angel.

Record Reviews

MUSIC FROM HOLBROOK

The organ of the Royal Hospital School, played by Frank Davies and Peter Crompton, Including Elgar: Organ Sonata in G, Op.28, played by Davies.

Issued by Michael Woodward, 47 Barrack Lane, Harwich.

MW 919

This interesting record is the first I have heard in a series issued by Michael Woodward. So far all are organ recordings and the profits from this record will be donated to the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust. The actual location of the recording is hardly historic as yet, but still of great interest. The Royal Hospital School was rebuilt on its present site at Holbrook, nr.Ipswich, in the 1930s and the chapel was equipped with a fine large late-romantic organ in 1934, built by the firm of Hill, Norman and Beard. It has recently been thoroughly restored. The organist on the Elgar side is the current Director of Music at the school. The rest is devoted to a recital of music ranging from Gigout and Vierne to Flor Peeters, played by the young school organist, Peter Crompton.

Frank Davies is a brave man to place himself in direct competition with the young lions of the organ world who have recorded this sonata in recent years. Straight away it must be said that this performance cannot be compared with its rivals for sheer technical virtuosity. Frank Davies's tempi are all on the slow side, but in compensation he adopts great flexibility of phrasing which extracts the maximum romantic warmth from the music. In the May 1980 issue of the JOURNAL I reviewed a recording of the sonata by Nicholas Kynaston on the German 'Mitra' label. It is a dashing, highly exciting performance, although perhaps a little too fast at times. Kynaston plays the second movement (marked Allegretto) at a stunning 160 quavers to the minute which makes it sound rather perfunctory. At the other extreme Davies's leisurely 60 per minute fails to establish sufficient contrast of tempo with the movements on either side - Elgar, incidentally, gives no metronome markings. Davies is at his best in the third movement. It is marked 'Andante espressivo'. He and Kynaston choose almost identical tempi, but Davies allows himself the flexibility to permit the lovely tune more space to breathe. On an organ record the sound is so much a partnership between the instrument, its location and the recording technique that it is always difficult to know how faithfully the 'live' sound has been captured. On this record the organ sound lacks brightness and immediacy and I have heard better clarity of the internal parts. The sound of the pedal organ lacks weight and resonance. Of course the acoustics of the comparatively modern chapel does not enhance the sound of the organ in the way we hear on recordings made in a large cathedral.

Nevertheless the record has given me pleasure for the slightly diff-

erent light thrown upon the work. On the other side Peter Crompton plays his varied recital with great technical accomplishment. Here the sound quality seems brighter and more forward - but this may be an illusion created by the greater impact of the playing. The master tapes have been processed and the discs pressed by Nimbus, to their usual impeccable standard.

G.H.L.

STARLIGHT EXPRESS SUITE

KING ARTHUR SUITE (Arr. Alan Barlow)

Cynthia Glover(soprano), John Lawrenson(baritone),
Bournemouth Sinfonietta/George Hurst.

Chandos Records CBR 1001
(formerly Polydor 2382 224)

When this record first appeared Andrew Neill gave it a qualified welcome (Newsletter, January 1974). At that time the main comparison was with Elgar's own recordings of the extracts from *The Starlight Express*, reissued on Pearl GEM 111. Since then, of course, we have had Vernon Handley's complete recording, enthusiastically reviewed(also by Andrew Neill) in the May 1976 Newsletter. Despite this it is good to be able to welcome this older version back into the catalogue at its new cheaper price. Although I agree with some of A.N.'s reservations about the performances, they are never less than competent, if rarely inspired, and they are a perfectly acceptable way of acquiring generous extracts from *Starlight Express* for anyone not wishing to invest in the HMV box. The main drawbacks in the performance are the wooden and unvarying singing of John Lawrenson and George Hurst's lack of a light touch when required. On the other hand Cynthia Glover, with her great experience in musical comedy, is able to project Laugher's songs convincingly with only an occasional lapse into archness.

Even those who already possess the Handley set might consider buying this reissue for the *King Arthur* side. It is the only recording of Alan Barlow's suite extracted from Elgar's incidental music written for Lawrence Binyon's play *Arthur*, staged in 1923. The music is somewhat insubstantial, but it has given me great pleasure over the years that the original issue has been in my collection. The recorded sound on both sides is excellent; the solo singers are well balanced with the orchestra which is wide-spread but is captured with excellent clarity of detail. The percussion parts in *King Arthur* are perfectly caught and balanced - if anything they now sound crisper than on the original release, helped, no doubt, by pressings of outstanding quality. The Polydor issue had a fine sleeve note by Percy Young. This is now replaced by a longer and more detailed one by Malcolm Walker. It is a pity that the part played by Alan Barlow in rescuing the *Arthur* music and assembling the suite is not credited on the sleeve or label.

Full marks to Chandos for restoring to circulation an important Elgar recording.

G.H.L.

The Light of Life (Lux Christi)

Margaret Marshall, Helen Watts, Robin Leggate, John Shirley-Quirk, Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orch./Sir Charles Groves. HMV ASD 3952
(also on cassette)

Another major gap in the Elgar discography is filled. The story of the healing of the blind man by Jesus is taken from St. John's gospel, the biblical text being filled out by lines written by the compiler of the libretto, Edward Capel-Cure, a former Worcester curate. As with all the early choral works, the subject has an autobiographical ring for Elgar. Surely the position of the outcast, who even when he had seen the light was shunned by the authorities, mirrored Elgar's own experience in his search for recognition in the 1890's. Certainly it drew from him some of the finest music he wrote prior to the *Variations*.

I must admit that I **had** some misgivings when I heard that EMI had asked Charles Groves to conduct this premiere recording, especially in view of the turgid performance of the Meditation he recorded in 1971 (HMV ASD 2672) which lasts nearly 7½ minutes compared with Elgar's own electric recording at just over 4½. He still conducts the Meditation slowly, but at just less than 6 minutes, quite a bit faster than a decade ago. Although I prefer a rather swifter basic pulse, Groves moulds it well and it must be admitted that it sets the mood well, giving a keen sense of anticipation for what is to follow. Alas, the marvellous opening chorus "Seek him" tended to confirm my worst fears. The tempo is slow, the direction wooden and four-square. Happily with the warm singing of Helen Watts in the next section, the performance comes to life. Margaret Marshall gives a sympathetic performance as the Mother of the Blind Man, rising to a splendid climax at the words "Lighten, O lighten mine eyes, O Lord."

As in all the early works, it is the power of the orchestral writing that is so striking on first hearing. The orchestral introduction to the chorus "Light out of darkness" is thrilling, the horn calls surely anticipating the opening of the *Second Symphony*. The passage after the man has acknowledged Christ, headed "and he worshipped him" is rapt and glowing like many pages of the *Cello Concerto*. But it is not only the orchestral parts that show Elgar's genius. The eight-part setting of "And the eyes of the blind shall see" is most effective and is beautifully sung here by the Liverpool Choir.

Robin Leggate is a clear-voiced Blind Man but does, I feel, tend to undercharacterise the part, his bland phrasing suggesting that he has not fully identified himself with the part or the music. His triumphant cry of "now I see" really is far too cool. John Shirley-Quirk however gives a splendidly authoritative performance as Jesus, notably in the beautiful "I am the good shepherd" section towards the end of the work. This is followed by the final chorus "Light of the World". Those who only know this as a church anthem with organ accompaniment will be surprised by the power of the orchestral writing. Groves is again rather ponderous here, finding grandeur at the expense of excitement.

The recording, made in Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall after the performance given in London as part of the Foundation's Festival last summer, is full and rich and reproduces cleanly in spite of very long sides totalling nearly 66 minutes. Whilst this record may not be perfect in every detail, there is much to enjoy and moreover since we are unlikely to get another, I urge you to buy it to discover this marvellous music. Who knows, if sales are good, EMI may go on to record *King Olaf* with Vernon Handley.

J.G.K.

ELGAR'S INTERPRETERS ON RECORD.

Elgar Society ELG 001
mono

For those interested in the history of the gramophone record there is a vast treasure trove of historic 78 rpm recordings which demand to be reissued on to LP, employing the most sympathetic transfer techniques of our time to capture the special artistic qualities of bygone performers. The Elgar Society, therefore, is to be congratulated on its first venture into the reissue market not only on the admirable content of the record but also for using the technical facilities of EMI's Abbey Road Studios to effect the splendid transfers. (Many of the originals are rare and to collect single 78s would cost the enthusiast a very considerable sum.) Furthermore, the sleeve for this LP reissue gives dates of recording and venues (where known) in addition to original disc numbers and John Knowles has contributed a most useful and informative sleeve-note about the performers.

Of the 16 recordings over two-thirds emanate from the acoustic period but don't let that deter you for one's ears quickly respond to the sound. The opening track - the *Crown of India* March - is the only known version of the piece and the interest in this little known recording whets the appetite. The succeeding vocal items give an excellent impression of English oratorio style in the first decades of this century, especially the virile tone and superb clarity of diction of both John Coates and Tudor Davies, the latter displaying a heroic declamation and fervour in the slightly truncated extract from *King Olaf* - no wonder this was a record in the composer's own collection. Songs by soprano Rosina Buckman (*Pleading*), contralto Louise Kirkby Lunn (*Like to the Damask Rose*), and baritone George Baker (*The Pipes of Pan*) illustrate the sensitivity and sincerity of their music making. Sadly, however, Andrew Black's version of the "Sword Song" from *Caractacus* is terrible and cannot be compared in any way to Peter Dawson's classic disc.

The orchestral items contain one particularly fascinating recording: the last section of *In the South* (fig.51 to the end) played by the Symphony Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala, Milan conducted by Carlo Sabajno. How on earth did this recording come to be made? The Columbia 78 of Percy Pitt conducting the *Empire March* of 1924 is very rare in its original form and is a valuable reminder of a much respected British musician. The choice of *Sospiri* is significant in that this remains Sir Adrian Boult's only version of this piece and the reason for its inclusion is to be applauded.

Continued on p.30

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Branch Reports.....

North West. March 14. Adrian Jarvis, son of our late chairman, is an historian and dealt with the subject of Elgar and the Edwardian era. He started by saying that apart from a few years in the early thirties, Elgar was unpopular from about 1925 to 1965. Much of this was to do with the age Elgar lived in, especially the time of his greatest successes. Constant Lambert summed up the feeling of his generation towards the music of Elgar, and hence the Edwardian age, when he said in 1934 that it was 'smug, self-assured and full of autocratic benevolence'. Mr. Jarvis played the *Serenade Mauresque* as an example of what Lambert may have been referring to.

But was the Edwardian age really like that? In other words, can a man's music be slotted into an historical pigeon hole, merely summing up the customs and attitudes of a particular age? Mr. Jarvis proceeded to show us that the Edwardian age was far from being smug and self-assured. For instance, Britain was not supreme on the high seas - America owned the White Star Liners with British shipping living off the fat of industry, and Germany becoming a serious naval challenger. There was even a popular disturbance in Hyde Park in 1908 over the building of battleships.

Elgar, too, was aware that not all was rosy. In his *Coronation Ode* of 1902, with Elgar's music "in full regalia", we have the warning "Britain ask of thyself, and let all thy sons be strong". Why was this? Because Britain had shown herself vulnerable by taking three years to put down a farmers' rebellion in South Africa. In fact, many great changes were taking place in Edwardian England, not least the advent of the motor car. Are these changes reflected in Elgar's music? It was certainly untrue to make the First World War the division between Elgar's bravura and

his wistfulness - he was wistful in Variation 13 of the *Enigma Variations*, in the *First Symphony* and the slow movement of the *Violin Concerto*. However, Elgar was not totally by-passed by events - he resigned from the Athenaeum when Ramsay MacDonald was elected, showing his disapproval of Socialism, and he spent Christmas of 1911 with Admiral Sir Charles Beresford and his family, so he was familiar with developments in the navy. Mr. Jarvis concluded by saying that a more suitable self-portrait of Elgar would be the dreamer of *The Music Makers* rather than Variation 14; a man not bound by false optimism, but a true artist who was not writing for a particular generation, a genuine music maker whose popularity has re-emerged because of his musical genius which will stand for all time.

Yorkshire. Despite the excellence of the fare we have enjoyed since resuming in September, it is our autumn weekend in the Malverns which members will remember with most pleasure. The seventeen who went had a marvellous time. We travelled down on the Friday evening in order to have a full Saturday - and what a day it was. Malvern Priory Church was visited first; a colourful sight in harvest festival garb, but we had a packed schedule and we were soon on our way to the Elgar Birth-place.

Jack McKenzie met us at the gate (the one we are asked to 'Boult') and Vivienne got the coffee going. All the exhibits were appreciatively studied and the till rang merrily as we filled gaps in our record collections and bought other mementoes. Penny shook paws with everyone and took a place of honour in group photographs on the sunny lawn. Jack and Vivienne joined us for lunch at the nearby Plough Inn and our sincere thanks are due to both of them for a memorable visit. We spent a little time on the Hills before returning to our hotel for dinner, after which we sped off to Worcester to join West Midlands members at their meeting at the Commandery.

We had beautiful weather on the Sunday morning and after a spell in Priory Park we made for British Camp, calling on the way to see the Elgar grave at St. Wulstan's Church. Those who walked the ridge north from Wynds Point enjoyed a glorious view stretching from Bredon in the east to the Welsh mountains and very few used the coach for the alternative route along Jubilee Drive. Members' good spirits sustained them through an unfortunate Sunday lunch which took so long to serve that paintings adorning the cafe walls were declared by one wit to have been painted by customers between courses. Our weekend ended with a pleasant hour in Worcester Cathedral, followed by a swift drive home. Even our coach driver enjoyed himself. Confessing initially to a nodding acquaintanceship with *Land of Hope and Glory*, he was talking quite knowledgeably about Troyte Griffith by the end...

Our meetings at 'The Willows' have been enjoyed by good attendances. Arthur Darkin's 'Light-hearted look at Elgar' on Sept. 22nd was suitably light-hearted, while Ian Lace, of the London branch, came on Oct. 20th with his very well researched talk on 'Elgar's London', illustrated with musical excerpts and some excellent slides. Derek

Forss' audio-visual presentation including 'The Trees are Singing my Music', with recorded commentary by Michael Kennedy, was everything we had been led to expect, and more. It is as well that our next event was the Christmas Social, and no speaker had to 'follow' Derek. Our visiting speakers will, however, forgive the enthusiasm in this report for our Malvern outing; the event of the year and one which will have cemented many memberships in our still new branch. Since then we have had several well-attended and successful meetings. After the June AGM we shall be planning our 1981/2 season, and working for an increasing branch membership.

West Midlands. Feb.14th. Graham Smith, himself a flautist, gave an orchestral player's-eye view of the *Cello Concerto* and *Second Symphony* (E.E.'s recording). This highly interesting approach made for an absorbing evening.

March 7th. A hurried AGM was followed by a delightful evening's music. Margaret Powell sang the Seven Leides, and Tim Tozer, who sketched the music's history, both accompanied, then played (on an Elgar Bros. piano) *Minuet*, *Sonatina*, *Skizze* and *In Smyrna*. An evening to remember. Miss Monahan complimented the hospitality of her studio with coffee and biscuits. FORTHCOMING EVENTS: May 9th, 7.15p.m. at St. Michael's College, Tenbury. Their famous choir, with Roger Judd at the organ, play and sing Elgar's religious music, with other items from their repertoire. With wine and cheese. Tickets £2. Telephone bookings to Wichenford 527.

June 6th, 3p.m. Live music (songs and wind quintets) at Carol Holt's home, Dunhampstead Manor, Droitwich. June 7th, 3p.m. Tea and birthday cake at the Birthplace.

THREE CHOIRS TEA. Sunday, August 23rd, at 4.30p.m. in the Commandery, Worcester, just a few hundred yards S.E. of the Cathedral. West Midlands Branch Secretary would appreciate advance notice. Charge approx. 50p.

East Midlands. Nov.25th. Michael Kennedy - "Vaughan Williams in the Elgar Era". This talk was presented with all the depth of research and interest that we have come to expect from Michael Kennedy, and was illustrated by recorded excerpts of V.W.'s music. It was fascinating to hear comparisons and influences, the latter traced from the time when, as a young man, V.W. requested lessons in composition from Elgar after being thrilled by his music at the Three Choirs Festival. The fact that Elgar declined to give the lessons did not diminish the younger composer's admiration, and we could clearly see the structural similarities in such works as the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, *Introduction and Allegro*. Space does not permit me to do justice to this excellent talk and I heartily recommend lovers of the music of these two great composers to hear the talk for themselves if the opportunity to do so presents itself.

Jan.27th. Pauline Collett - "Elgar's Houses". Diana McVeagh should have been our speaker on this occasion but she was unable to come because of illness. Pauline Collett was persuaded to step into the

breach at short notice, and she delivered a thoroughly absorbing talk illustrated by slides and photographs. Pauline's researches are to be published in due course, and we were privileged to have a preview of this material. Every house and flat in which Elgar lived was covered. When presented in this way it is surprising how much Elgar moved about, and it is more surprising to realise how few of the places remain today. During the talk we were reminded which works were written in each place, and how, in some cases, the music was influenced by the surroundings. I am sure that Elgarians will eagerly await publication of the book.

Feb.24th. Dr.Percy Young - "The Origins of the Dream of Gerontius, a unique work in the English Experience." Dr. Young began his talk by giving an outline of the religious climate at the time Elgar wrote the work. To be a Catholic at that time was to struggle against a well-established Protestant tradition which barred Catholics from many Public offices. *Gerontius* was an emancipating work. It marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. Furthermore it seemed to break the final barriers; a Catholic work by a Catholic composer, first performed in a secular hall! It was not altogether remarkable that a Catholic should present a work of such stature, considering the state of Church of England music at the time - generally appalling - but the Catholic tradition(in which Elgar was brought up), was connected to the mainstream of European music through, for example, the Masses of Haydn and Mozart. Dr. Young pointed out that Newman's poem is a very lengthy one, but Elgar's selection is masterly. The oratorio differs from others in that it is a theological statement and not a description of events. This was an interesting evening, and Dr. Young provided more intellectual food than could be digested in one sitting!

March 30th. Christopher Kent - "The Second Symphony". Firstly our attention was drawn to the sketches for the symphony which are in folio at the Birthplace. Dr. Kent feels that there is no doubt of Alice Stuart-Wortley's influence in this work, and that although outwardly the symphony is a tribute to Edward VII, inwardly it represents the adoration of a beautiful woman by a sensitive artist. Using the piano to demonstrate Dr. Kent led us through the mosaic of themes which eventually evolved into this wonderful work. There were fragments from sketches rejected for the *Violin Concerto*, sketches intended for a second *Cockaigne Overture*, and much other including thematic material used in *The Music Makers*. Dr.Kent showed clearly how Elgar worked, and illustrated how simple and almost mundane themes could be brought to life by Elgar's brilliant orchestration.

April 2nd. A recital of Elgar's music at Uppingham Community College. This evening of music was arranged by Barry Collett, and it was supported by members of the branch. A selection of Elgar's songs were sung by Judith Robinson(soprano) and Peter Weight(baritone), and these were followed by a first-rate performance of the *Piano Quintet*, with the Rutland Sinfonia Ensemble and Barry Collett(piano). A thrilling musical experience for all of us.

South West. The highlight of recent activities has undoubtedly been the second Elgar Day-School arranged in conjunction with the University of Bristol Extra-Mural Department. The speaker was Vernon Handley who spoke most humorously and interestingly for nearly six hours (with two breaks!) on "Elgar from the Conductor's Point of View". Unfortunately, attendance was down compared with the first Day-School addressed by Michael Kennedy, but those present found Mr. Handley's fluent and informed presentation, with generous musical illustrations, to be a most valuable and memorable occasion. We are grateful to Vernon Handley for giving up the time, not only to do the School, but for all the preparation inevitably involved. Also our thanks to the University for their support and encouragement. We look forward to the next School.

Our January and February meetings were based on individual works - the former on *Dream of Gerontius*, to be performed in November by Bristol Choral Society under Clifford Harker. In February we looked at *Introduction and Allegro* prior to its performance by Bristol Sinfonia in the Colston Hall. The meeting was attended by Sidney Sager who was to conduct the work. The presentation of the work's structure was given by Committee member Derek Johnston, and the meeting arranged in conjunction with the Friends of the Bristol Sinfonia. In March we had a visit from J. Maxwell Hutchinson, who gave us his excellent talk on "Troyte, Friend and Architect", already reported on in the Journal on previous occasions.

Looking forward to the rest of the season, the remaining meetings before the summer break are:

Saturday, June 6th. Dr. Christopher Kent on "The Third Symphony" (N.B. Changed from May 30th to avoid clashing with the Society's Dinner in Malvern, and the AGM)

Saturday, June 27th. Branch AGM, followed by wine and cheese. Both meetings in the Music Room of the Bristol Folk House, 40 Park Street, Bristol at 7.30 p.m. *May I remind members that their 1981 subscriptions should be paid as soon as possible please. Total this year is £6, being £3 for the Society's national subscription, and £3 for the branch.*

London. I give notice that the 10th Annual General Meeting of the Branch will take place in the Read Theatre, Imperial College, London, S.W.7 on Monday, 15th June at 7.30 p.m. Agendas and notices will be sent out in due course, but I should like members to note the date and try to attend and make use of their votes. On this occasion we have not only our annual elections (nominations to the Secretary, please), but also the question of the rate of subscription, as well as the new constitution which will be presented to the meeting for acceptance.

The teething troubles mentioned in the last Journal seem to have cleared up, though the College (in spite of monthly reminders) often forget to put up directional signs for us. It might perhaps be helpful to state here that we meet in the Read Theatre on the 5th level and refreshments are usually in the Horseshoe Bar on the 2nd level; access by the lifts on the right of the entrance foyer. If you require refresh-

ments before a meeting please do make use of this facility (from 6.30 p.m.); the more money the bar takes, the less likely we are to have to find money from our hard-pressed funds for staff wages.

We are always happy to welcome guests and prospective new members, but 'recurring guests' may be taking unfair advantage of our hospitality. The committee has therefore decided to permit one free 'trial' visit, after which, on any future visit, guests will be asked to make a voluntary contribution to Branch funds, and a visitors book will be introduced. Both these institutions will rely on the goodwill of the individual, because of course, with such a large membership, it is virtually impossible for a non-member ever to be identified by sight.

The Treasurer will no doubt reiterate at the AGM that the most effective way of overcoming our financial problems is the recruitment of more members, thus putting less pressure on each individual to raise the income necessary to run the Branch. This can best be achieved by present members introducing their friends.

Since the last issue of the Journal we have had four successful meetings with John Whittle, Martin Grafton (and the unforgettable story of Elgar and the peashooter), Richard McNicol and the ineffable Michael Kennedy (whom we met on the eve of his MBE presentation). To come: Peter Pirie and Geoffrey Brand. Next season's programme is nearly complete and will be announced at the AGM.

East Anglia. At the January AGM the present officers of the committee were re-elected; among the other committee members newly elected was Mr. Tony Morris.

The Norwich Cathedral organist, Michael Nicholas, visited us again on 27th February. In his lecture on the early cantatas, illustrations were skilfully played on the piano, and then backed up by various records and tape extracts. March 13th was our annual party at 60 Park Lane, Norwich; some 30 people including friends from the Norwich Gramophone Society enjoyed a buffet which was ably prepared by various ladies of our branch. A recorded music quiz and a raffle rounded off a very enjoyable evening. A 'home grown' record programme presented by Tony Morris took place on March 27th.

To come - Gareth Lewis talking about 'Elgar's Singers' (April 24th), 'Elgar and Jaeger', a dramatised account of the famous correspondence (May 22nd), 'Elgar's Musical Style' presented by Barry Collett (19th June). We look for as much support as possible in the Summer months, for with 50 members and an average monthly attendance of 15 we are beginning to question 'Where are our members? What do they really get out of the Society or the Branch?' A sentiment which, perhaps, some other branches share at the moment or have done in the past.

One could write much more about this splendid record but the best way to sample its treasures is to get your own copy: the musical and artistic qualities contained therein far outweigh the historic recorded sound. The whole project has been carried through in an exemplary manner. More please!

M.W.

AN EXHIBITION entitled *ELGAR: the HAMPSTEAD SCENE* will be mounted in Burgh House, New End Square, Hampstead, London, N.W.3. from June 3rd to the end of July. During the exhibition the Hampstead Musical Society will give an Elgar Concert. Full details from Christopher Wade, Curator of Burgh House. Dr. Louise Eickhoff advises us that this is an augmented version of the exhibition previously shown in Tewkesbury, Hereford and Gloucester

Miss Anne Marshall wishes to buy a copy of Rosa Burley: Elgar, Record of a Friendship; and also Diana McVeagh: Elgar, his Life and Times. Offers to Miss Marshall, c/o Victoria League Students Hostel, 55 Leinster Square, London, W2 4PU.

Mr. Richard Doubleday, 65 Meadow Park, Bathford, Bath has an almost complete run of Newsletters and Journals from Sept. 1974 to date. He is willing to sell them either as a lot or singly. Offers direct.

Mr. N. Bevan, 44 Arndale, Beechwood, Runcorn, Cheshire, would like to correspond with younger members of the Society. Music and related interests. Letters direct to Mr. Bevan please.

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Letters

From VERONICA BROWN

It occurs to me that contemporary opinions on Elgar and his music must have been expressed by a great many people who are not normally regarded as music critics. For instance, we all know what Elgar thought of Hardy - "all blood and lust"; but what did Hardy think of Elgar?

I should therefore like to appeal for opinions included in old letters and diaries by as wide a variety of celebrities as possible, in the hope of compiling at least an article, if not a booklet... A suitable title would be "Elgar's Other Critics". I should be most grateful for any help at all from fellow-members, if only in tracking down non-members who may have relevant material.

From KENNETH LOVELAND

I did an exhausting weekend for the Lauder Institute at Fife on Elgar, ten lectures, and despite initial suspicion that it wouldn't "go" (from the authorities) the result was the biggest weekend they have ever had with a waiting list when we began. Bigger even than the weekends I have done there on Verdi and Beethoven.

I imagine that the reason there are no branches in Scotland and Wales is the reluctance of people in both places to commit themselves to societies or clubs. I have noticed it here [in Gwent] in other ventures. Elgar is immensely popular here, especially with the orchestral public, but I doubt you could really get people to commit themselves to a society.

From RAYMOND HALL

Thank you for the high standard which you maintain in the Journal, because I can appreciate how difficult it must be to ensure a flow of contributions of a scholarly nature as well as coping with the problems of printing and production. My only (very small) comment would be that I hope it will not become too heavily loaded with Branch Reports. It is good to know that they are flourishing, but - as reading material - they are inevitably repetitious...

Until a year or so ago I was conductor of Durham Choral Society and I thought you might be interested to see a list of the works performed during my time. ** I tried to introduce as much British music as possible and to give Elgar his share - none of his works had been performed previously by the Society and none for a long time in Durham. We would have done more but for the hard economic fact, hitting all amateur choral groups, of the cost of the orchestra. One balks at re-orchestrating, and hesitates to resort to "filling-in". I wonder whether anyone has thought of doing for Elgar what O.U.P. do for Vaughan Williams and producing "alternative" scores for strings and piano, or at least in some form of reduced scoring. Only a poor second-best admittedly, but it would bring the works within the range of choral societies who cannot afford a full orchestra yet would prefer something more than simply an organ accompaniment. Do you know whether anything of this sort has ever been considered?

** Mr. Hall's list is a remarkable one and does him great credit.

The Elgar pieces include Dream of Gerontius (twice), Music Makers (twice), Spirit of England, Sea Pictures, the National Anthem, and Serenade for Strings. All were performed between May 1966 and May 1979.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

(President: Sir Adrian Boult, C.H.)

The ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION to the Society is £3. Applications for membership should be addressed 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 M.Sanderson, 18 Lyncroft Mansions, Lyncroft Gardens, London, NW6 1JX
WEST MIDLANDS	£1 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Alan Boon, The Old School House, Martley, Worces-ter.
EAST MIDLANDS	£2 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Malcolm Smitham, 5 Riddon Drive, Hinckley, Leics
NORTH WEST	£4 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Malcolm Key, 10 Eversleigh Park, Oxton, Birken-head, Merseyside.
EAST ANGLIA	£1 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Bernard Ward, 96 Welsford Road, Norwich, Norfolk
SOUTH WEST	£3 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Ian Cartwright, Herschel House, 61 North Street, Nailsea, Bristol BS19 2BS
YORKSHIRE	£2 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Dennis Clark, 227 Tinshill Road, Leeds, LS16 7BU

The following back numbers of the JOURNAL (formerly NEWSLETTER) are available from the editor: 1977, May & Sept. 70p. each. 1978, Jan., May & Sept. 70p. each. 1979, Jan. £1.10p. Sept. 80p. 1980, Jan., May & Sept. 90p. each. All prices include postage. We regret that other issues are now out of print.

MANY MEMBERS HAVE MADE ENQUIRIES REGARDING BINDING UP THEIR COPIES IN COMPLETE VOLUMES. We have made arrangements with Messrs. Muir and Muir The Bindery, Stoneham Street, Coggeshall, Essex, to bind 6 issues (one volume) in black buckram, gilt lettering, for £9. Those interested should write direct to Muir and Muir, and not to the Journal.