

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



SEPTEMBER

1987

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Annual General Meeting, Loughborough	3
Article: A 1906 View . . .	7
Choral Music for Triumph & Tragedy	8
Bavarian Highlands to Canadian Coast	9
News Items and Announcements	10
Visits to Cambridge and Settle	13
Concert Diary	19
Book Reviews	20
Record Reviews	22
Branch Reports	27
Letters	30

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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The Elgar Society Journal

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1987

Failure to achieve quorum

It is disappointing when, as occasionally happens, there is a low turn-out for the AGM. On 30th May the meeting at the Loughborough University of Technology was particularly important because of the intention of the General Committee to introduce proposals to amend the Society's constitution. These proposals, designed to facilitate the Society qualifying for registration as a Charity under the Charities Acts, had been brought to members' attention by an insert in the May 1987 Journal, and the committee hoped that as many members as possible would attend. In the event, though the weather was excellent, and though other interesting events had been arranged to follow the conclusion of the formal AGM business - namely the Third A.T. Shaw Memorial Lecture to be given by Professor Ivor Keys, and after this a recital by the Borough Carillonneur on the Loughborough War Memorial Carillon - the necessary quorum (25 members) was not achieved. Those who did attend, many of whom had travelled a good distance, had to ask themselves what was to be done. After an informal discussion, a resolution was carried unanimously by the 21 members present that non-controversial business should be proceeded with.

Lessons

What can be learned from this? One suggestion is that when the AGM date clashes with the last day of the Malvern Festival, as was the case this year, the meeting should be held in the West Midlands area. Next year, as it happens, the two events do not clash, though nowadays it is quite common for more than one Elgar event to occur on the same day. This year, for instance, the Elgar Day School at the Portsmouth Festival also clashed. Generally, the committee will clearly pay more careful attention in future, so far as it is possible to do so in advance, to all the conflicting factors which have to be taken into account when deciding upon the venue for the next AGM. At the same time, members who are able to do so must be urged to attend the AGM, and there exercise their right to discuss and vote on the issues raised, and generally play a part in guiding the affairs of the Society. Hopefully, this year's experience will result in better attendances in future.

Chairman's Address

Michael Pope welcomed all those present, and conveyed a message of good wishes from the President who in March had conducted a very well-received performance of the *First Symphony* in Japan. The Chairman then referred to the EMI recording of *King Oalf*. This completed the task of ensuring that all Elgar's major choral works were available in recorded form. With the recordings now available of *The Banner of St. George and Te Deum & Benedictus*, this represented a real step forward. Without active pressure by the Society neither of the first two items mentioned would have been recorded. Recordings were not enough, however; members should constantly do all they could to encourage the live performance of Elgar's music, particularly works lesser-known, and therefore under-rated, such as *Polonia*.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

The following were elected unanimously for the forthcoming year:

President: Sir Yehudi Menuhin, O.M, K.B.E.

Vice-Presidents: Dr. Herbert Sumsion, C.B.E., Lady Hull, Alan Webb, Dr. Douglas Guest, C.V.O., Prof. Ian Parrott, Sir David Willcocks, C.B.E., M.C., Dr. Percy Young, Diana McVeagh, Vernon Handley, Michael Kennedy, O.B.E., Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore.

The five principal officers were re-elected: their names and offices are listed on another page. Committee members: Bill Kemp, Margaret Elgar, Leslie Mustoe, and Charles Myers. Additional committee members: Robert Tucker and Margaret Benselin.

In accepting office the Chairman said that as this would be his tenth year in office he had decided that 1988 would be the time to make way for another candidate. He felt that there was a need in all organisations such as the Elgar Society for changes from time to time. He had been, and was still, proud to serve the Society, but wished also to be more involved in wider fields. He hoped that in the coming year there would be more progress in the international field, including the possibility of awarding an Elgar Medal for services to Elgar's music world-wide, and at home he hoped for closer relationships with other bodies, in particular the Elgar Foundation.

The Vice-Chairman said that he was sure all members knew how hard, and ably, the Chairman had worked for the Society, and it was a cause for real regret if he had decided not to stand again. On behalf of all members he thanked the Chairman for all the efforts he had made, and was continuing to make, in furthering the Society's affairs.

Proposals for amending the Constitution to facilitate charitable status

The Treasurer introduced the proposals which were summarised in the leaflet issued with the May 1987 Journal. Since then there had been no objections, and the proposals were now put forward with the unanimous support of the General Committee. In answer to members' questions the Vice-Chairman explained that the Committee had considered seeking charitable status over a number of years. When legal advice had originally been taken this had not been favourable. When the membership was smaller it had not been thought that difficulties of administration and change would be outweighed by the financial benefits. However, it had become clear recently, from advice given by the Charity Commissioners, that necessary changes to the constitution would be minimal, as

would any additional administrative work. The current need to continue and facilitate fund-raising activities, in connection with projects such as the *King Olaf* recording, showed that the time was ripe for change. After discussion a motion was carried unanimously that the Society's Constitution should be amended in accordance with the Committee's proposals and that the formal application for charitable status should be proceeded with. Owing to the lack of a quorum at the meeting an Extra-ordinary General Meeting is necessary, and an announcement regarding this appears on another page.

Tributes to the Editor of the Journal

There was a general expression of gratitude to Ronald Taylor on his successful completion of ten years as Editor. In his absence on Elgar duty at the Portsmouth Festival, he was praised for his hard work in consistently producing a publication that was both notable for the quality of its content, and effective in keeping all members in touch with what was going on, including those who were not members of branches.

Retrospect & Prospect

Many other matters were touched on, but the one dominant theme which was referred to many times was the question, already mentioned above, as to the role of the Society now that the aim of recording all the major works has been achieved. The Officers all stressed that while Elgar's music had enjoyed more performances in recent years, his position in English music, and particularly his position in the international field was still not properly appreciated. This applied particularly to non-English-speaking countries. Even in Britain many works had few live performances. There was much to be done, members should not feel complacent, and should continue to do all in their power to encourage and support Elgar concerts and activities.

PROFESSOR IVOR KEYS

on

The Apostles in relation to other settings of the Passion.

The Third A.T. Shaw Memorial Lecture

The subject was doubly apt as the speaker is a leading authority on settings of the Passion in addition to being a successor to Elgar as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, 1968-1986, and a former trustee of the Elgar Birthplace.

Professor Keys stressed the monumental scale, effort and achievement represented by Elgar's work on the words and music of *The Apostles*, and then sought to place this in its context. Noting Elgar's contribution some years later to the project of preparing a sound English version of the St. Matthew Passion, the speaker pointed out how Elgar, like Bach, understood the importance of bringing home to the audience the full power of the story in the vernacular, through the added dimension of great music. A major theme of the lecture was that Bach's example was in Elgar's mind as he tackled his great project, and Prof. Keys provided a number of musical examples, both from recordings and at the piano.

The second main point made was the strength of Elgar's personal religious vision, and also of the willpower and confidence displayed at this stage of his career. Strong links with both *King Olaf* and *The Music Makers* were demonstrated showing that Elgar's creative processes were very far from being haphazard and, again, that the composer's philosophical outlook was consistent over a long period. This was a most interesting, indeed compelling, lecture, and at the end the audience was eager to hear more. We look forward to reading a full text in a future edition of *Elgar Studies*.

At the conclusion a warm vote of thanks to Professor Keys was proposed by the Vice-Chairman of the Society, and seconded by the Chairman of East Midlands Branch, Raymond Monk.

THE LOUGHBOROUGH CARILLON

The last event of the day of the AGM in May took place in Queen's Park, Loughborough, when, by kind permission of the Charnwood Borough Council, Peter K. Shepherd, the Borough Carillonneur, gave a recital of Elgar's music. Included in the six pieces played were *Carillon* and the *Memorial Chimes*. It was, of course, this latter piece which Elgar composed for the inauguration of the instrument in the park's War Memorial tower on 22nd July 1923. The 47 bells of this instrument, the first 'Grand Carillon' in Great Britain, make a truly unique and grand sound, and Elgar's music sounded most effective on it.

After the recital, members climbed the 138 steps of the tower to view the bells and to watch Mr. Shepherd demonstrate the technique of playing the instrument. The apparatus is unusual in that although it looks like a single organ manual, with a pedal board, in fact the pedals merely duplicate the keyboard. The reason for this is that the keys have to be depressed, not with the fingers, but with the edge of the hand, so that normally only one note can be played at a time by each hand. It is therefore necessary to be able to play additional notes with the feet to fill in the harmony, the left hand normally dealing with the bass line. Such is the technique of the carillonneur, as so skilfully exemplified by Mr. Shepherd on this occasion, that music of varying styles can be rendered very convincingly.

Finally, as only thrushes remained singing in the quiet park, members expressed their gratitude to Mr. Shepherd both for his recital and for the most patient and informative way in which he had dealt with the many questions put to him. So ended a memorable day in Loughborough.

(The above reports have been compiled from information supplied by Leslie Mustoe and Trevor Fenemore-Jones.)



NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

An extra-ordinary General Meeting of Members of the Elgar Society has been called for October 12th, 1987 at 7.0 p.m. at the Read Lecture Theatre, Sherfield Building, Imperial College, Imperial Institute Road, London, S.W. 7. This will take place immediately before the London Branch meeting arranged for that evening.

The business of this special meeting is to sanction those matters agreed at the Annual General Meeting held in Loughborough on May 30th, and we hope that members will attend this short, but necessary, meeting in order that the business of the Society may proceed.

A 1906 VIEW OF ELGAR . . .

(The following is taken from an unsigned article in the *EDINBURGH REVIEW* for October 1906. The article had begun with a general survey of English music, it continued . . .)

. . . there stands one remarkable figure whose influence on English music it must be left to the future to decide. Self-taught, self-centred, self-determined, Elgar may claim, more than any other English composer, that he has been 'his own ancestor'. His position is in some ways comparable with that of Berlioz at the beginning of the last century; there is something of the same audacity, of the same wayward brilliance, of the same desire to push musical expression across the verge of articulate speech. Indeed it is no paradox to say that *Gerontius* offers many points of comparison with *Faust*; the demons are different in language but not different in conception; the song of 'Praise to the Holiest' is better written than the 'Easter Hymn', but it is almost as undevotional; the extraordinary skill of orchestration covers in the one case, as in the other, an occasional weakness of idea. And herein is the essential defect of Elgar's music, so far as it has hitherto appeared. Before the highest and noblest conceptions it invariably falters; it can express pain and weariness and impatience and revolt, it can be poignant and bitter and pathetic, and while it moves within this range it is always striking and often exceedingly beautiful. But as yet the large and serene joy of art is closed to it. In *The Apostles* Judas is the central figure; the interest of the whole work gathers round his sneering commentary on the Beatitudes, his temptation, his treachery, his passion or remorse. It is a wonderful piece of characterization but it throws greater things into the background. And the same want of largeness and serenity often appears in the handling of the music; it is all broken up into little anxious 'motives', which are not blended together but laid like tesserae in a mosaic, each with its own colour and its own shape. No work of equal ability has ever displayed so little mellowness of tone.

He is much more successful in his purely orchestral writings. *Cockaigne* is a vigorous and bustling picture of street-life; the *Alassio* overture, though a little hard, is full of sparkle; the *Enigma* variations are, in their kind, a masterpiece. Here his work is more genial, more evenly rounded, more melodious; he gives a greater impression of ease, he

employs to fuller effect his extraordinary power of technical detail. But, if we may hazard a conjecture, we believe that despite his decade of reputation he has not yet found himself. His manner is still somewhat tentative and transitional; it often moves with uncertain step, it often seems to be striving with a thought which it cannot attain. Already he has advanced far beyond the prentice-hand of *King Olaf* and *Caractacus*; it may be that the coming years will bring a deeper insight and a more mature experience.

Of the new generation it is here unfitting to speak; *non res laudanda sed spes est*. Yet we can find reason for confidence in its talent, its earnestness of purpose, and not less in the wide range and variety of its experiments. Some of these we believe to be on the wrong lines, those in particular which are touched with conscious and exotic artifice, but they are all indications of activity, and in the clash of their conflicting counsels the truth will be established. The chief danger, no doubt, is that we come late into the field, that we are beginning where our neighbours have already achieved, and that some of us are still tempted to regard them not only as teachers but as models for our imitation. To do this is to ignore the qualities no less than the limitations of our national character. We have our own language to speak, we have our own message to deliver, we have our own ideals to maintain; our leaders have arisen to point the road, and it is to them that the younger men will most profitably look for direction and guidance. Every great musician has learned something from foreign schools; not one has ever been absorbed by them. The technical equipment of art is of the common interchange of human society; the truth which it depicts is of the native inheritance of the artist.

CHORAL MUSIC FOR TRUMPH AND TRAGEDY

Elgar Society members often take the esoteric viewpoint that there is very little going on regarding performances of Sir Edward's music that they do not know about. It is obvious, however, that the increasing popularity of the genius of the Malvern Hills is producing a crop of outstanding performances that it would be difficult even for Sherlock Holmes to keep track of were he hired by the Society to hunt down and to catalogue Elgarian concerts.

Such a one, albeit a miniature affair, was the all-Elgar concert given on the 2nd May in Bloxham Parish Church, near Banbury, by the Warriner Choral Society and Orchestra. These consisted of small, but finely-marshalled and trained, forces drawn from among pupils and former pupils of the local Warriner School, reinforced by several fine singers and musicians from the North Oxfordshire area.

The pews were packed by music-lovers who listened intently and with increasing enjoyment to a two-hour concert, which began with Elgar's concert arrangement of the National Anthem, a stirring opener in which the 60-strong choir, 50-piece orchestra and four soloists (Hilary Greenhill, soprano; Marjorie Bruce, contralto; Tim Wilson, tenor; and Tim Rowe, bass) gave a taste of the pleasure to come in the two major works, *The Spirit of England*, and the *Coronation Ode*.

Boxham has one of those larger county churches which, with its massive local ironstone walls and six formidable pillars guarding and supporting the nave, resembles a small cathedral. Its excellent acoustics were well suited to Sir Edward's unmistakeable rich orchestration, and the soaring purity of some inspired singing; not up to the Three

Choirs Festival perhaps, but a hugely enthusiastic and delicious rendering of these lesser-known works.

Tears were observed during the final number of *Spirit* ('For the Fallen' . . . They shall not grow old, etc.) while in the *Ode* the soloists followed the jingoistic early 'Britain, Ask of Thyself' (surely a melody and sentiment Elgar later regretted?) with the three truly lovely pieces, 'Hark upon the hallowed air', 'Only let the heart be pure', and 'Peace, gentle peace', leading, under the firm baton of the young David Lock, to the dramatically-scored climax of 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

J. Ballantine

FROM THE BAVARIAN HIGHLANDS TO THE CANADIAN COAST

Easter Sunday, 1987, outside Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco. Birmingham's CBSO Chorus is at the halfway point of its West Coast Tour, four performances of Beethoven 9 behind them (and what with rehearsals, singing that piece six nights in a row is not really recommended when jetlagged!) and four concerts of largely unaccompanied music in different cities, to come. First stop in the Greyhound coaches: California's State Capital, Sacramento.

The programme for these remaining four concerts features composers most of whom had Birmingham connections, including Mendelssohn, Holst, Delius and Grainger, but the most substantial single work is Elgar's *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, Op.27, in its original chorus and piano version. The CBSO Chorus has brought with it sale supplies of its recently-released Conifer recording of the work (along with Holst items) and records, cassettes, and compact-discs are soon being snapped up as people arrive for the concert in the attractive modern Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Sacramento.

Conductor Simon Halsey and the Chorus, with American pianist Marc Shapiro, gave some splendid performances of *The Bavarian Highlands* on the tour - so far as we could ascertain, most if not all of the performances seemed to be local premieres. After Sacramento they had an exhausting drive (8.30 a.m. to 11.00 p.m.!) to Portland, Oregon; then to Seattle in Washington State; and finally across the Canadian border to sing in St. Andrew's Wesleyan Church in downtown Vancouver, B.C.; there were concerts in each city.

The Chorus made many new friends (they were staying with singers from local choral societies) and Elgar made many new friends too. If you want to hear their performance (which was also recorded by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) the record numbers will appear by the review in our next issue.

Beresford King-Smith

NEWS ITEMS

The Sheffield Oratorio Chorus are commencing their next season with a performance of *THE LIGHT OF LIFE*. This seldom-heard oratorio will be performed in Sheffield Cathedral on Saturday, 14th November, 1987 at 7.30 p.m. Also in the programme are Parry's "Blest Pair of Sirens" and Vaughan Williams' "Five Mystical Songs". The Chorus will be accompanied by the South Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, conductor Alan East, and the soloists are: Vivien Pike (sop), Gaynor Keeble (con), Paul Sutton (ten), Alastair Harding (bar). Tickets are £3 (less 10% for parties of ten or more, or 15% for parties of 20 or more) and are available from Mrs. June Graham, 64 Bents Road, Sheffield S11 (tel. 0742 369786). The Chorus is also offering a package deal for £15 for those living at some distance. This includes a ticket for the concert and bed and breakfast for the Saturday night at a chorus-member's house. Anyone wishing to take up this offer should contact the Chorus Secretary, Mrs. Graham, at the address given above *by the 31st October*.

A new, and very important, work by Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore will appear from Oxford University Press in September. Called "Elgar and his Publishers - Letters of a Creative Life" it contains the surviving correspondence with each of Elgar's publishers. Novello's, naturally, take a prominent place in the many letters which Dr. Moore has edited, but there is also much previously unpublished archive material from Boosey & Hawkes, Keith Prowse, and others, Dr. Moore has transcribed and annotated the letters, and provided a linking commentary. The publisher rightly describes this work as "a unique record of the creative life of a great English composer". The price for the two volumes is £55.

On the 25th June last the Royal School of Church Music celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with a service of choral music at the Royal Albert Hall. 850 singers from affiliated choirs in many countries took part, various distinguished musicians also contributed to the concert, and the musical direction was by Lionel Dakers, Director of the Royal School. An edited version of the concert was shown on BBC1 three days later, and a recording has been made for issue by Decca on the Argo label. The Elgar contribution to the service was the anthem "The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me" from *The Apostles*.

The Elgar one-day School held in conjunction with the Portsmouth Festival at the end of May was a great success. Some 125 students enrolled for the day, which was conducted by Jerrold Northrop Moore, Terry Barfoot, and Ronald Taylor.

Elgar's Birthday was remembered in other places than Worcester! One of the New York radio music stations played a number of Elgar works on the day, and the Toronto station CJRT devoted no less than six hours to Elgar on June 2nd! This included the complete recordings of *The Kingdom* and *Caractacus*.

It was on the same station some two weeks later that the Editor took part in a 90-minute programme in which the entire time was taken up with a discussion and review of the latest Elgar recordings - *King Olaf*, *Banner of St. George*, *The Music Makers*, *Sea Pictures*. The other participants in the programme were the conductor (and station music-director) Paul Robinson, and Bruce Surtees, owner of The Classical Record Shop, Toronto. The programme is also syndicated to a Dallas, Texas, station and so was heard there. The word is spreading!

Pershore Horticultural College won a silver gilt medal for their Elgar theme garden at the 1987 Chelsea Flower Show, and were accorded five minutes in a Central TV programme. The college is in a position to present a slide show on the subject if any of the branches are interested.

This year's THF Elgar Pilgrimages have been very heavily booked. This is partly due to Mrs. J. Moyle's excellent organisation Heart of England Country Tours, and partly to the publicity gained through television.

The Birthplace continues to do excellent business, with record numbers of visitors. The Annual Birthday Tea was held at the Birthplace following the traditional Elgar Evensong at Worcester Cathedral on May 31st.

APOLOGY DEPARTMENT. We very much regret that due to a transcription error we referred to the death of Miss E. Smith in our report of the West Midlands branch in the May issue. This should have read: Miss E. Wood, who was secretary of the Wolverhampton Arts Society and a very keen Elgarian.

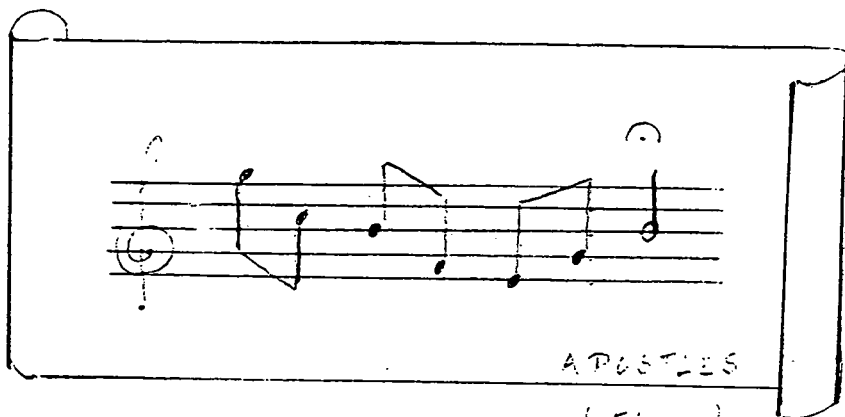
A more belated apology is due to Ken and Marion Simmons for failing to correct an omission in their final article on A Walk round the Elgar's Worcester. This appeared in our issue for January 1986, and on the bridge-over from pp. 12-13 part of the line was lost. It should have read: 'In addition to the WAIS (founded 1876), Quarterman belonged to both the Worcester Musical Society (founded 1870) and the Worcester Philharmonic Society (founded 1874), being one-time . . . Done.'

Members who are in correspondence with the Society may wish to know the names of the principal officials. They are:

Chairman:	Michael Pope
Vice-Chairman:	Trevor Fenemore-Jones
Secretary:	Mrs. Carol Holt
Treasurer:	David Morris
Journal Editor:	Ronald Taylor
Membership Secretary:	John Greig

In addition to these officers, there is a general committee, both elected and ex officio, of a further 14 persons. These represent both the branches and the individual members. General correspondence and enquiries should be addressed to Carol Holt, and membership applications or notice of changes of address should be sent to the Membership Secretary, John Greig. Subscriptions and questions relating to financial matters should be sent to the Treasurer, David Morris. Information and letters or articles for the Journal should, of course, be sent direct to the Editor.

CANON GORTON'S GRAVE STONE. The renovation and re-cutting of this stone has now been completed, thanks to the overseeing of the work by Hereford member, John Bartle. This stone, in the churchyard at the village of Breinton, west of Hereford, contains an Elgar musical quotation. It was badly worn, and the sketch below was an attempt to decipher the very worn inscription. Members might like to work out how it was re-carved! Answer in the next issue of the Journal



APOSTLES

Elgar

A

this is very
indistinct but seems
likely!

Note: no key signature or bar line (if any)
are visible

Change of Address

The Society's Treasurer, David Morris, has recently changed his address and correspondence and subscriptions should now be sent to:

2 Marriotts Close
Haddenham,
Aylesbury, Bucks
HP17 8BT

CITY OF GLOUCESTER ELGAR FESTIVAL 1987

Full details are now available of the Festival to be presented by the Philomusicas of Gloucester and Worcester. Conductors will be James Cowley and Nigel Edwards. The Gloucester Cathedral Choir, organist and conductor, John Sanders, the Gloucester Young People's String Ensemble, the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra, and others will also take part.

A series of concerts will take place from October 25th to November 1st, commencing with a Festival Service in the Cathedral at 3.0 p.m. on the opening day. Among the works to be performed during the week are: *SYMPHONY NO.1; THE KINGDOM; THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS; STRING QUARTET & PIANO QUINTET; SONGS FROM THE BAVARIAN HIGHLANDS; THE MUSIC MAKERS; ENIGMA VARIATIONS; IN THE SOUTH; POLONIA*, etc . . . Concerts will take place in either the Cathedral or the Guildhall Arts Centre.

Festival Patrons can purchase seven tickets at specially reduced prices. Under Block A seven seats to the value of £25 may be had for £21, and under Block B seats to the value of £22 for £18. Application for these Blocks must be made by October 1st, though earlier application is advised. It will be much to the Elgar Society's benefit if you do book in this way as the organisers have very generously agreed that the Society should benefit financially from such bookings. Full details and leaflets may be obtained from James Walkley, Craig Lea, 86 Wells Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 4PA. (Telephone: 06845 4208).

A Visit to Cambridge

June 1987 was an eventful month for the London Branch - an AGM crowned by David Michell's 'Dip into the Archives', and two expeditions by venturesome members, firstly to Cambridge and secondly to Settle.

Nearly 50 members and friends took the coach to Cambridge, with 20 others joining the party by car or train. The grey dismal day lightened as we approached Cambridge after an eventful drive. Our driver had never been to Cambridge before, but with minimal assistance found Silver Street, our alighting point. Lunch was enjoyed in a variety of venues - we certainly found Cambridge pub life fascinating - amazingly good food, and at the pub at which I lunched a strolling player, much in the grand 'Irving' mould.

Strolling and shopping took up the afternoon, and book and record shops yielded up their treasures. As tea-time approached scurrying parties could be seen hastening to meet at King's main entrance, to converge on the Somerville Room. The food, not of a kind to induce a 'Porterhouse Blue' was excellent, and graciously plentiful with an endless convoy of teapots bringing up the stream of liquid refreshment.

The crush of the inadequate toilet facilities meant that members were separated in the queue for Evensong, but all were safely seated to hear *Nimrod* as a stately incoming voluntary. Stephen Cleobury's choice of Canticles - 'Stanford in C' was wise given the acoustical delay, and slight wooliness of sound, which the chapel architecture and panning inevitably causes.

Great is the Lord was the chosen anthem, which to my mind lacked some vigour and contrast at the close. An alarm, of sorts, sired intermittently during the Canticles, sounding like a syphoning organ pipe, but the anthem was spared. Stephen Cleobury's organ recital of Elgar's two *Sonatas* was a rewarding close to the day. Vigour, richness, colour, the quirky changes of dynamic and shifts of mood were all here in spacious, but never overslow, performances. The applause was spontaneous and well-deserved.

After a meal in Cambridge we all eventually made our way back to coach or car to wend our way home replete with academe, food, and much-loved music. The success of the day was entirely due to the organising skills of Dr. John Buttrey, who quietly and self-effacingly had planned much for our delight.

MARTIN PASSANDE

My Love dwelt in a Northern Land

Elgar certainly spent a fair amount of time in Yorkshire and the story of his long friendship with Dr. Buck of Settle, his visits to the North, and the music associated with Yorkshire has already been chronicled in the pages of the 'Journal'. With the memory of the success of the Llangranog visit, and a Yorkshireman on the committee, what more natural than for the month of June to see members of London Branch setting forth intrepidly along M1 or M6 - or even in a few cases entrusting themselves to British Rail - on a weekend's pilgrimage to the North Riding?

Undeterred by a repetition of the Llangranog drizzle, the party gradually foregathered at the hospitable Falcon Manor Hotel. Good food and the local brew dispelled all doubts as to the wisdom of the trek, and congenial company, reinforced by members from the Yorkshire Branch, took in its stride the presence even of one doubter - husband of a well-known member - who let slip that he was not a convinced Elgarian. Ah well, there was an even greater heretic on the recent Cambridge trip, but that is another story!

The business of the evening was to attend Dennis Clark's justly famed 'Elgar and Yorkshire' presentation, together with accompanying small exhibition. What a treat to have the technical problems of Imperial College equipment a good 200 miles adrift, and to be able to wallow in Dennis's splendid photography and inimitable informality. An archetypal Dales landlord showed scant inclination to close the bar so that Elgarian talk went on in the small hours.

On the morrow the rain recommenced, as was pointed out, the moment our coach crossed the border into Lancashire. In these parts, too, it may be said, there is righteous indignation that erstwhile Yorkshire territory was forcibly transferred to the County of the Red Rose as part of Prime Minister Edward Heath's remarkable boundary changes. We spent the day on things non-Elgarian but diverting. Browsholme Hall proved a small, family-lived-in and utterly delightful, stately home, and our visit to the Pendle Heritage Centre was enlivened by a typical arrival of our chairman, delayed the while in his Midland country retreat, but now making a spectacular entry via a high wall.

The special concert laid on for us in the evening by Giggleswick School proved a highlight. From the moment one entered that marvellously eccentric chapel, to find it



London members at 'Clapham Town End'. Photo: Bob Hellen

crowded with members of the school and local community, it was clear that all would be well. A delightful programme, of absolutely the right length, contained examples of great and lighter Elgar, cunningly linked with readings from the Buck correspondence, splendidly performed by enthusiastic young people. Room was found, also, for a taste of England's other great composer (Purcell's *Bell Anthem*)!

The reception after the concert was sheer delight. Our glasses were assiduously replenished by the School's chaplain, Max Hutchinson responded to the Headmaster's warm words to telling effect, we joined in the refrain of *Clapham Town End* and some of us at least remained well into the night chatting contentedly with people genuinely pleased to see us. Our debt to Peter Read (Director of Music at Giggleswick) and Peter Hobson (Headmaster) is immense.

On the Sabbath Carl Newton, with true Yorkshire grit, led us in the rain round all the Buck/Elgar sights. We were lectured outside the National Westminster Bank - once Buck's surgery, gazed at the famous 'Naked Man', walked the bridge whereon the parrot incident had been enacted and so on. The second-hand bookshop fanatics were, perhaps, ever looking to nip off to search for bargains, some lesser spirits were heard to express a wish to decamp for morning coffee, but our leader kept the act together and everything was duly seen.

It was, of course, a long way home along wet and crowded Motorways. Each mile took us further from this wonderful part of England and back to the hurley-burley of the metropolis. One day, surely, we must return to Yorkshire and our new friends.

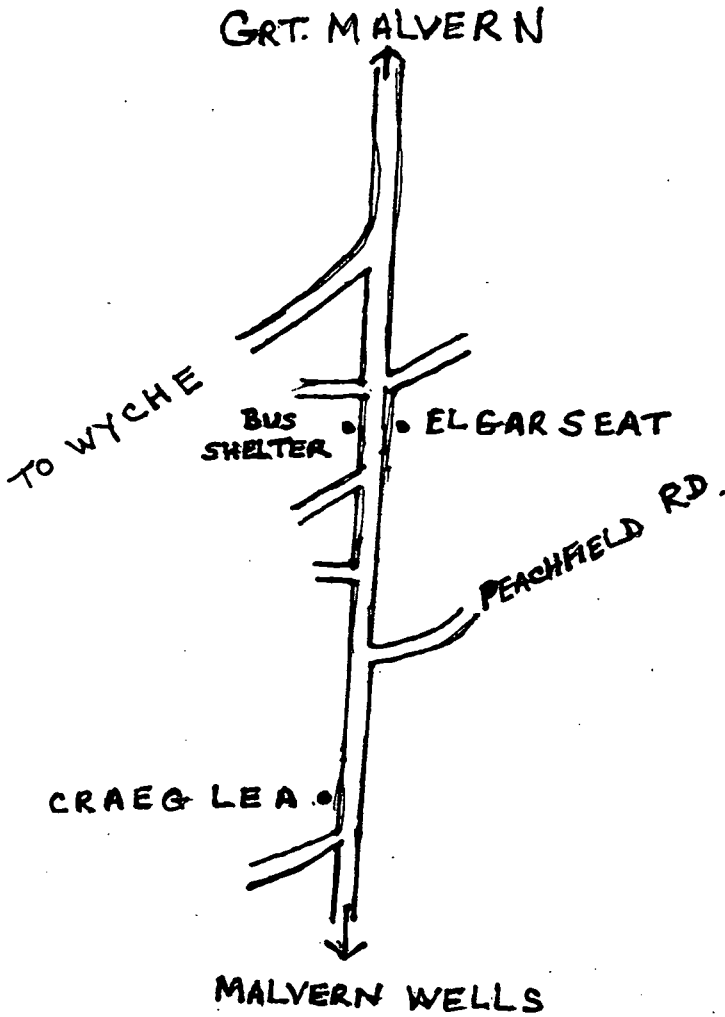
DAVID BURY

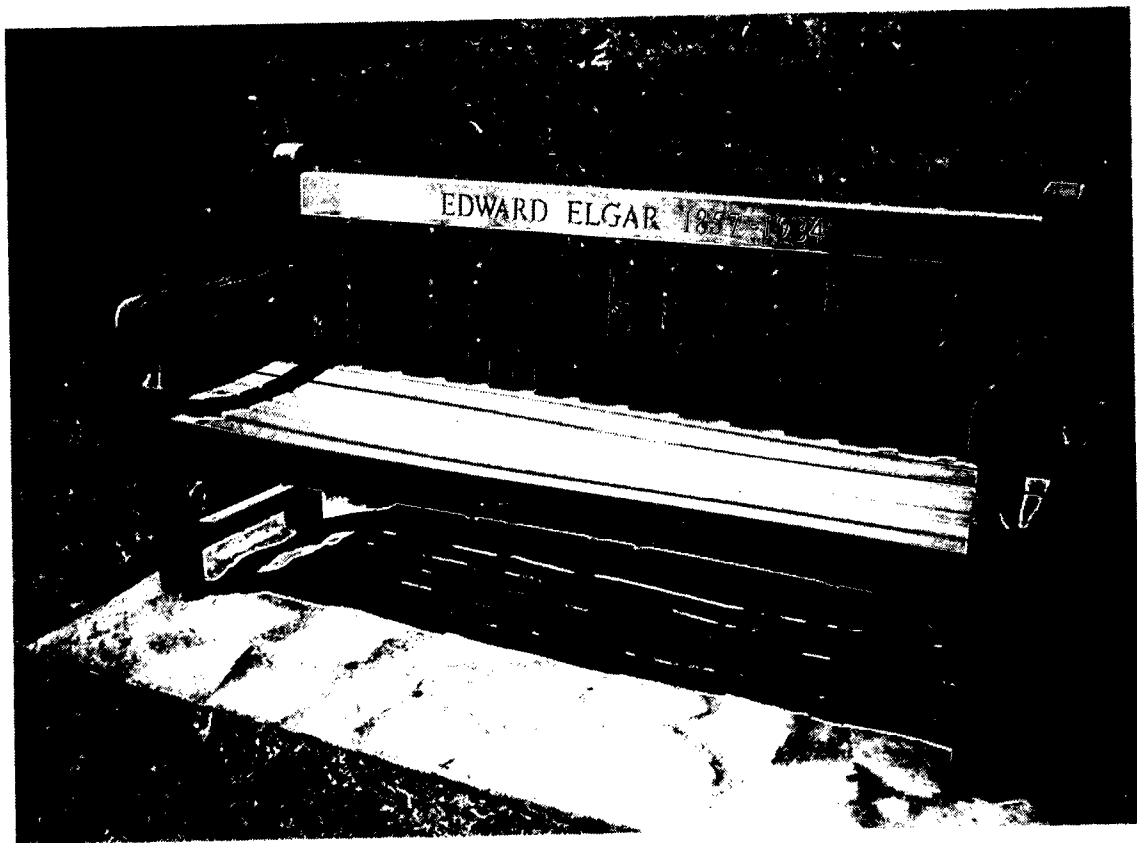
The Elgar Seat

This splendid seat, paid for by members' donations, hand-crafted by West Midlands member Vernon Cartwright, was dedicated on 31st May by the Chairman of the Malvern Hills District Council, Mrs. Lyn Norfolk, accompanied by our Chairman, Michael Pope, with an attendance of some 70 members and friends. In order that out-of-the region members may have a reasonable chance of finding it, the following simple sketch-map may help.

A few weeks later Vernon Cartwright died suddenly. He was a long-standing member of the West Midlands branch, and had been a branch committee member for several years. His association with the Society meant a great deal to him, and he was always ready with practical help. In addition to the seat, his crowning achievement, he made a notice board for the Elgar parents' grave in Astwood Cemetary, Worcester, carved the lettering on a cross marking brother Frank Elgar's grave, and had a photograph, taken in Italy, showing 'Via Elgar', on display in the Birthplace. He will be sadly missed, but well-remembered.

Alan Boon





Elgar Seat at Malvern.

Photo: Michael Trott

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

16 Sep.	Cockaigne Overture <i>LSO/Hughes</i>	Royal Festival Hall
20 Sep.	Symphony no. 1 <i>BBC Welsh SO/Loughran</i>	Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham at 7.30 p.m.
25 Sep.	Imperial March; Le Drapeau Belge; Carillon; Fringes of the Fleet; Empire March; Une Voix dans le Desert; Polonia; The Kingdom - Prelude and aria <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett, with Teresa Cahill and Richard Pasco</i>	Corby Festival Hall, Northants at 7.30 p.m. Tickets: Box Office (Corby 203482) or Secretary (Oakham 56211)
26 Sep.	Sea Pictures (with Stanford's 'Battle of the Baltic' and Armstrong Gibbs' 'Odysseus') <i>Broadheath Singers/Windsor Sinfonia/Tucker; Christine Bunning/Linda Hibberd/S. Rhys- Williams. Note: Introductory talk by Lewis Forman at 5.00 p.m. in Baldwin Institute, off Eton High Street</i>	Eton College School Hall at 8.00 p.m. Tickets from Secretary (0753 651578) or at door
3 Oct.	Falstaff <i>Philharmonia/Sinopoli</i>	Royal Festival Hall at 7.30 p.m.
4 Oct.	Serenade for Strings <i>Belgrade Strings/Pavlovic</i>	Wigmore Hall at 11.30 a.m.
18 Oct.	The Kingdom <i>LPO and Choir/Slatkin, with Yvonne Kenny, Alfreda Hodgson, Robert Tear, Benjamin Luxon</i>	Royal Festival Hall at 7.30 p.m.
27 Oct.	Cello Concerto <i>Lynn Harrell/Philharmonia/Salonen</i>	Derngate Centre, Northampton at 7.30 p.m.
28 Oct.	Cello Concerto <i>Lynn Harrell/Philharmonia/Salonen</i>	Royal Festival Hall at 7.30 p.m.
2 Nov.	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Davison</i>	Fairfield Hall, Croydon at 8.00 p.m.
14 Nov.	The Music Makers <i>Guildford PO and Choir/Groves, with Alfreda Hodgson</i>	Guildford Civic Hall at 7.30 p.m. Tickets from R. A. Forrow (Administrator) at Guildford 575274

25 Nov.	Serenade for Strings <i>London Soloists Chamber Orch./Josefowitz</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
7 Dec.	Enigma Variations <i>RLPO/Hughes</i>	Assembly Rooms, Derby at 7.30 p.m.
8 Dec.	Cello Concerto <i>BBC Philharmonic/Thomson, Raphael Wallfisch</i>	Free Trade Hall, Manchester at 7.30 p.m.
10 Dec.	Symphony No. 2 <i>RPO/Previn</i>	Royal Festival Hall
14 Dec.	Symphony No. 2 <i>RPO/Previn</i>	Royal Festival Hall

BOOK REVIEWS

Adrian Boult, by Michael Kennedy

Hamish Hamilton, £18

Adrian Boult is a difficult subject for a biographer. There is no shortage of information on his long life; for one thing he was a compulsive diarist. The problem, however, lies with the shyness and reserve of this very private man, who gave away little in the way of personal thoughts and feelings. As a result even Michael Kennedy, for all his exceptional sensitivity and psychological understanding, cannot get quite close enough to resolve some of the strange paradoxes in Boult's complex personality.

Nevertheless, the book is full of surprises for anyone whose image of Boult is limited to the courteous, benign Grand Old Man of British music - the role into which he slipped quite naturally in the last couple of decades of his career. As a wealthy young man of diverse musical talents (including being a baritone singer of professional standard), he was exceptionally ambitious, his original intention being to become an opera conductor in Germany. The first world war frustrated this plan. Thrown back on to establishing a conducting career in this country, he was able to use his personal wealth to promote concerts - with typical unselfishness he used the opportunities provided to enable the music of several struggling young British composers to have a hearing.

His post-war work with the ailing British Symphony Orchestra (and later with the Birmingham Symphony orchestra) led to his recognition as an outstanding orchestral trainer, and the obvious choice to be invited to take on the task of creating the new BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1930. All this was achieved against a background of constant struggle with his shyness and difficulty in personal relationships, particularly with women. Emotions he was unable to express could be released, however, in some performances of searing passion (sadly he made comparatively few recordings in his peak years) - but too often the extremes of frustration emerged in outbreaks of quite terrifying rage at rehearsal.

Despite his unselfish hard work during the second world war, Boult's popularity with the BBC hierarchy was on the wane, and in 1949 on reaching the compulsory retiring age of 60 he was removed from his job as chief conductor, despite previous promises to the contrary. The bitterness over the nature of this dismissal continued to rankle for many years, despite his association with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, which began shortly afterward, and which his experience (and more of his personal money) helped to restore to major international status.

Perhaps one of the great surprises in the book is Boult's late appreciation of Elgar, who he first met as a schoolboy. A 1920 performance of the *Second Symphony* (which led to a frequently-quoted letter from Alice Elgar, who had only about a month to live) was followed, for various reasons, by a period of estrangement between the composer and the conductor destined to become his great champion.

It will be obvious that this biography, while failing to move one in the same way as Kennedy's books on Barbirolli and Elgar, is constantly fascinating. It is well-illustrated and indexed, with detailed notes and appendices which include some correspondence between Boult and Elgar over tempi in the *First Symphony*, and an exchange of letters between Boult and the LPO shareholders at the sad time of the dismissal of Thomas Russell, the orchestra's first managing director, whose left-wing politics had become an embarrassment to certain members of the orchestra's board. This is not the only occasion when we get a glimpse of the subtle, indeed sometimes devious, politician behind the ever-courteous Boult facade.

I was disappointed that there was no discography, although Alan Sanders' definitive discography is still available from *The Gramophone* magazine.

Gareth H. Lewis

Portrait of Elgar, by Michael Kennedy.

Oxford Univ. Press £6.95
Paperback only.

This book, accepted as compulsory reading by any good Elgarian, now reaches its Third Edition. It seems incredible that it first appeared 19 years ago, and that the second edition, which had numerous revisions, has been with us for 5 years. Now, in paperback, comes a third revision, this time with all those minor adjustments to the Elgar story brought about by much patient research, not only by the author, but by the many specialist Elgar students who have filled in some of the gaps that remain, or who have corrected views previously held. The *Elgar Society Journal* has had the privilege of printing much of this new information and research, and Mr. Kennedy generously acknowledges his sources. The *Portrait* remains as clearly etched, as eminently readable, and the appendices are as well-constructed and valuable as they ever were. The fact that this important book can now be purchased for the sum of £6.95 should ensure a ready sale to a new generation of music-lovers, who have come to Elgar through his music, and wish to know more of his life and work. There could be no better introduction, or work of permanent reference.

R.P.T.

RECORD REVIEWS

Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf. Op.30.

Teresa Cahill (sop.), Phillip Langridge (ten.), Brian Rayner Cook (bar.)
LPO & LP Choir/Vernon Handley

EX 270553-3 (disc)
EX 270553-5 (tape)

The impact and stature of *The Dream of Gerontius* can be measured from the fact that, despite the shortcomings of its premiere in 1900, it had become thoroughly accepted by the English musical public within three or four years, and had thus eclipsed all of Elgar's earlier choral compositions. For instance in that great choral stronghold, the North of England, during the 1904-5 season there were nine performances of *Gerontius*, three of *The Apostles*, and only one of *King Olaf* (given at the Morecambe Festival under Elgar's baton.)

If *King Olaf* has lived under the shadow of *Gerontius* ever since, it should be remembered that in its day it was no less progressive and innovatory. Even such an experienced choral musician as W. G. McNaught was staggered when he first heard the work at a rehearsal for the Sheffield Festival in 1899, as Henry Coward later described:

'When the chorus sang the first bar (of "The Challenge of Thor") . . . he gave a slight start and looked at his score. The second bar seemed to impress him still more. At the third and fourth bars he seemed to quiver. At the words "I am the Thunderer" he gave the book a bang with his closed fist, passed his fingers through his hair, turned to his colleague and said "Well! This beats all I have ever heard".

It has taken 90 years for *King Olaf* to be recorded, and in the normal course of events it will be a long time before a second version appears. Essential, then, for such an unfamiliar work to receive a recording of the highest quality; and we can be grateful that EMI and Vernon Handley have provided us with that. How fortunate we are to have such a gifted and sympathetic interpreter of Elgar as Handley! *King Olaf* ably shows the integrity and lack of idiosyncrasy one has come to associate with him, and gives the lie to the old idea that the conductor must 'stamp his personality' on the music. Handley does do this, paradoxically as it may seem, by following the score and thus allowing the composer to speak for himself. He also shows himself to be a master of pace and structure, the latter vital necessity in such a fragmented work (sixteen separate scenes plus introduction and epilogue). Listen to his superb control in "The Challenge of Thor", firmly resisting any temptation to peak too early, so that the climax, on the word 'earthquake' (p.14, vocal score) is absolutely electrifying.

In *King Olaf* Elgar's inspiration burns fitfully. Generally the choral writing is stronger than the vocal - with the notable exceptions of "King Olaf's Return" and "The Death of Ironbeard". Not even Handley can make the Gudrun episode sound convincing, but elsewhere - particularly "The Challenge of Thor", "The Wraith of Odin" and the Epilogue - Elgar's genius is clearly demonstrated. I consider that *Caractacus* - in many ways the natural comparison with *Olaf* - is a more even work, but there is nothing in it, certainly not on a choral level, to surpass those three movements. With such a

magnificent performance now available, surely only the most hardened anti-Elgarian will fail to recognise in *King Olaf* the hand of genius.

Handley is ably supported by his forces. I confess to tremendous disappointment when I learned of Anthony Rolfe-Johnson's withdrawal, and to great trepidation on learning that his replacement was Philip Langridge. Could a lyric tenor provide the 1980s counterpart to Tudor Davies? To my surprise, the answer was yes. Obviously Langridge lacks some of the richness and sonority which the part calls for, but as Andrew Neill pointed out in the January Journal, he knew the work and has a real affection for it. I have found that his performance improves with each hearing.

Teresa Cahill, an outstanding soloist in *The Spirit of England* and the *Coronation Ode* ten years ago, gives a sensitive rendering of the various female characters in the drama. I have slight reservations about some of her high vowels (such as in 'evil', p.62, vocal score) but it is only a minor blemish, Brain Rayner Cook sings with his usual professionalism, again in a variety of small parts. His Ironbeard has a splendid uninhibited earthiness about it.

The LPO play up to the very high standards they have created, and having said that, little more needs to be added. The newcomer to this work will delight in the glorious orchestration, as usual an outstanding feature of Elgar's choral works. Listen to the accompaniment at letter T in "The Conversion", at the words 'Oh wide should the doors of Valhalla unroll', where the wailing oboe triplets presage the Largetto of the E flat Symphony. There are many other such moments, highlighted by the impeccable clarity of the recording.

The London Philharmonic Choir respond magnificently to the widely differing roles asked of them - narrator, Viking Gods, Norwegian peasants, etc. The ladies' expression in the Sigrid scene is beautifully realised, though they lack the fine edge of gossiping confidentiality in "A little bird in the air". The basses are wonderfully forthright, but the tenors occasionally sound under strength and thin when exposed. The singing of the unaccompanied "As torrents in summer", familiar enough but now heard in its proper context, is a magical moment and from it Handley builds impressively to the great climax "God is still God . . . Christ is eternal".

Twenty years ago, *The Dream of Gerontius* was the only major choral work of Elgar's to have been recorded in its entirety. Now we have all of them, and in the case of *King Olaf* it was well worth the wait. A review such as this would be incomplete without reference to the sound decision made by the executive committee of the Elgar Society to give this project its full support, including a considerable financial commitment. Michael Pope, Andrew Neill and the others all deserve our heartfelt thanks and congratulations in helping to make available what Alice Elgar described as 'splended saga-ing'.

G.H.

The Music Makers; Sea Pictures

Felicity Palmer (mezzo), London Symphony Orch. & Chorus/Hickox.
EML EL 2705891 (LP)
EL 2705894 (cassette)
CDC 7475022 (CD)

The Banner of St. George; Psalm 48 (Great is the Lord); Te Deum & Benedictus

Stephen Roberts (bar.) (in Psalm 48), London Symphony
Chorus, Northern Sinfonia of England/Hickox
EMI EL 2705551 (LP)
EL 2705554 (cassette)
CDC 7476582 (CD)

Hickox's performance of *The Music Makers* is excellent. More overtly dramatic than Boult's classic 1966 recording, wider tempo fluctuations do not prevent this episodic work holding together just as successfully. The choral singing is splendid, and my only criticism (a slight one) is that the slightly recessed choral balance in a rather resonant acoustic (Watford Town Hall) has resulted in some clouding of detail at climaxes. Curiously, the 20-year-old Boult recording, in its recent CD transfer, sounds crisper and clearer in places. Nevertheless the Hickox recording is a most welcome issue, and Felicity Palmer's dramatic mezzo is ideally suited to the solo sections.

I was less happy about the coupling. We have several excellent *Sea Pictures* recordings available, and this, good as it is, is not sufficiently individual to warrant a strong recommendation. I always regard the central and longest song 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' as the focal point, around which any new recording of this cycle stands or falls. Palmer and Hickox take it quite slowly, with insufficient forward movement, resulting in a lack of real dramatic unity. What a pity that an opportunity for recording another infrequently heard choral work (such as *Spirit of England*) was missed. Incidentally, the Bernadette Greevy/Vernon Handley *Sea Pictures* on CFP, coupled with the *P & C* marches has recently been released on a mid-price compact disc.

The three items on the other new Hickox release are very welcome first recordings. *The Banner of St. George*, commissioned by Novello as one of their contributions to the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, is musically much more than the jingoistic celebration of British supremacy which a lesser composer might have turned out, especially in response to Shapcott Wensley's doggerel verse. There are many anticipations of the sensitivity and introspection of the later great choral works. Only in the closing chorus, 'It comes from the Misty Ages', do we briefly enter the world of the *P & C* marches. This is the only part of the work previously recorded, its relative familiarity being perhaps the reason for the whole work having been undervalued in recent years.

The *Te Deum and Benedictus*, also first performed in 1897 (at the Hereford Festival) is a masterpiece. I have written enthusiastically, when reviewing one of the earlier recordings of the alternative version, with organ accompaniment, about the astonishing maturity of Elgar's choral writing at this relatively inexperienced period in his career. Without a doubt, however, the orchestral version recorded here adds a totally new dimension to our appreciation of the piece. It is Elgar at his most majestic and concise.

Psalm 48, dating from 1912, has also been recorded previously (on two occasions in the early 1980s) with organ accompaniment. Once again the orchestral version is most revealing: Jerrold Northrop Moore, in his excellent notes (for both of these discs) draws attention to the thematic relationship with the *Violin Concerto*, just completed, and this psalm setting is certainly much more than just an anthem for church performance, with its remarkable melodic freedom and taxing choral writing. The short baritone solo benefits from Stephen Roberts' experienced professionalism, and throughout Hickox's forces respond with great commitment and enthusiasm, the Northern Sinfonia, if anything, playing with greater involvement than the LSO. Choral balance is marginally clearer in this recording, despite having been made in the same hall at around the same time, and the CD in particular has tremendous impact.

G.H.L.

Note: A curiosity, which members may like to note, is a recording by Hildegard Berens. This is a recital of English Songs, including the rarely heard Elgar piece *Queen Mary's Song*. This is on CD from EMI, CDC 747551.

The Black Knight; Spanish Serenade; The Snow; Fly, Singing Bird; Imperial March; Caractacus - Triumphal March.

Royal Liverpool PO & Choir/Sir Charles Groves

EMI CD CDC 7475112

It is encouraging that EMI have now transferred this important premiere recording to CD and I hope very much that it will soon be followed by *The Kingdom*, *The Apostles* and *The Light of Life*. Of course, the Society had a major role in the instigation and sponsorship of this recording and this is acknowledged on the liner. The transfer to CD has brought a bigger improvement than I expected. Of course, the wider dynamic range and silent background add considerably to the dramatic outbursts and silences in part II. I remember there were problems at the sessions ensuring that all was quiet in the hall at these moments. A direct A/B comparison with the LP shows a much sharper focus, especially in the bass and a much more immediate choral sound. The choral fill-ups sound especially fine.

Two extra items have been included with this issue, but frankly they don't add up to much. Taken from a 1971 collection, which at the time was exciting because it included so many pieces that had long been out of the catalogue, the performances now sound stolid and lack-lustre. Here the digital processing seems to have made little difference, if anything robbing the sound of some of its richness, leaving the string tone rather thin.

Michael Pope has augmented his excellent notes from the LP and cassette issues to include some background to the marches.

J.G.K.

Dream Children & other Orchestral Rarities

Caractacus-Triumphal March; Carillon; Chopin; Funeral March. (Orch, Elgar); Dream Children; Elegy; Grania and Diarmid-Incidental Music and Funeral March; Polonia; Light of Life-Meditation.

London Philharmonic Orch/Boult
CFP 4527 (reissued from HMV ASD 3050 Feb. 1974)

Not all the items on this record can honestly be called 'rarities' as far as the gramophone is concerned - not even *Dream Children* itself, with three or four alternative versions currently available. Never mind - full marks to Classics for Pleasure for bringing back into circulation one of the most important of Boult's late collections of shorter Elgar works. And there are, indeed, a few real rarities, such as *Polonia*, *Carillon*, and the *Grania and Diarmid* incidental music.

The recorded sound was always outstandingly rich, and, if anything, sounds even better in this new transfer, the organ pedal notes in *Polonia* being most impressively captured (presumably an electronic instrument: the recording was made at Abbey Road).

There are moments when I noted some slight flaws in orchestral ensemble, for which limited rehearsal time for such familiar music was probably to blame. Nevertheless a record which should be in the collection of every Elgarian. Those who missed it first time round now have a second chance - but be quick: these CFP reissues have a habit of disappearing from the catalogues quite rapidly!

G.H.L.

Romance, Op.62. With: Sullivan, Cello Concerto in D major (reconstructed by Sir Charles Mackerras and David Mackie.) AND: Herbert, Cello Concerto no.2 in E minor.

Julian Lloyd Webber/London Symphony Orch./Mackerras

EL 27 0430 1 LP
EL 27 0430 4 Cassette

To review a record which contains but one short Elgar piece may be considered an indulgence in these pages, but the music is unique on record. The *Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra, Op.62*, is a delightful piece, skilfully put together at a high point in Elgar's career. What is less well-known is that Elgar himself immediately prepared another version in which the cello replaced the bassoon. Most writers on Elgar have missed this in listing his works, the only one I know who picked it up being Louise Dyer in her monograph on Elgar's works, published for the University of Melbourne in the early 1930s. All credit to Julian Lloyd Webber for rediscovering this little gem - it sounds like a movement from a Cello Concerto - and it is sensitively played, and finely recorded. Of the more substantial works on this record I found the Sullivan concerto, frankly, dull and disappointing. Historically it is interesting of course, but one can see why it was never printed nor taken into the repertoire. It is given a careful performance, but the music fails to come alive. The Victor Herbert concerto on

the other hand is a splendid work which has received previous recordings, though it deserves to be better known. Herbert was a fine musician, though he is known today chiefly through his many operettas, and no mean cellist himself. This concerto makes demands of both soloist and the orchestra, and they rise to the occasion here. Dvorak was present at the first performance, and was enthusiastic to the point that it encouraged him to write his own concerto, Op.104.

NEMO

CYRIL ROTHAM: For the Fallen; The Stolen Child; City in the West; Psalm of Adonis; Miniature Suite.

*Sinfonia Chorus, BBC Northern Singers,
Northern Sinfonia/Richard Hickox.*

*EL 27 0605 1 LP
EL 27 0605 4 Cassette
CDC 7 49021 2 CD*

Cyril Rootham came into the Elgar story when he began setting Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen' from the volume of poetry *The Winnowing Fan*. Elgar was also working on the same project, at roughly the same time, but he decided not to proceed as Rootham was already well advanced in his composition. The earnest pleading of friends persuaded Elgar to go on with the work, which included two other Binyon poems, making the complete *Spirit of England*. It is sad that Rootham's version has suffered under the shadow of Elgar's fine composition, because, now that we can hear it on record at last, we realise that it has many high qualities of its own. It is not a pale version of Elgar, but a completely different approach to the same subject. Several hearings have persuaded me that here is a work which we have neglected to our shame, and the other items on the disc from this highly-regarded Cambridge musician show what an excellent craftsman he was. The choral piece *City in the West*, a tribute to Bristol in music, is particularly fine, and one realises why Vaughan Williams and Holst held Rootham in such esteem.

NEMO

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

For EAST ANGLIA Branch's first post-Easter meeting David Barker produced a highly interesting diversion with an evaluation of works produced just prior to Elgar, and introduced a number of quite surprising musical gems. May meetings consisted of a concert in the St. Peter Mancroft church in Norwich, by the Broadland Singers, in which some Elgar works were included, followed later by another 'Members' Evening' at which cherished personal choices were lovingly caressed and expatiated upon. It would be pleasing, but (alas) untrue, to report improved attendances at these meetings, though happily the final events of the season - a truly absorbing talk by Bernard Keeffe on 'Elgar's Handling of the Orchestra', and the Summer Garden Party - both proved gratifyingly big attractions.

It has to reported, however, that the Branch is still encountering problems which, regretfully, have so far precluded any forward programming for next season.

SOUTH WALES. On June 20th Friendship House, Swansea, was the venue for the Branch's first meeting this year, at which Vernon Handley delivered, to an encouragingly large audience that included members from other Branches of the Society, a paper entitled 'Interpretations of Elgar'. The title of the talk being itself susceptible to a variety of interpretations, there was a certain amount of conjecture beforehand as to the possible substance of Mr. Handley's paper, and the Branch Chairman, in the course of his introductory remarks, was perhaps guilty of misleading the audience as to what they should expect. In the event, Mr. Handley devoted the greater part of the afternoon to drawing attention to liberties that had been taken with certain passages in the scores of *Falstaff* and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Failure to observe faithfully the composer's performing-directions has led to the perpetuation on records of many a misrepresentation of Elgar's intentions. No doubt for the reason that "dog doesn't eat dog", the speaker at all times refrained from disclosing the identities of the conductors who had been guilty of the transgressions discussed. His silence in this particular matter inevitably led to speculation and guessing on the part of, at any rate, certain members of his audience but, when pressed to mention names, Mr. Handley continued to stand his ground. Throughout the afternoon the speaker benefited from the assistance of Mr. R. A. Forrow, whose expert handling of discs, tapes and reproducer - involving, as it did, much split-second timing - contributed materially to the smooth progress of the talk. Mr. Forrow, Treasurer of the Guildford Philharmonic Society, has since undertaken to address the Branch later this year; further details in due course.

It might be *ad rem* to mention here that the South Wales Branch is still without a Secretary and that, accordingly, enquiries are invited from anyone who is interested in the possibility of filling the vacancy left by Terry Jenkins. For the moment Ken Wallace is dealing with secretarial work as well as discharging his own duties as Branch Treasurer. Any volunteer should contact either Mr. Wallace (address on back cover), or A. F. Leighton Thomas, Glynethin, Burry Port, Dyfed, SA16 0TA.

On May 31st a party of 12 NORTH WEST Branch members made a visit to Malvern and Worcester, arriving at Birchwood, in Storrige in time for coffee. It is a beautiful, peaceful place, and we would like to thank Mrs. Vockins for opening her home to people in this way. From there we went to the spot chosen for the placing of the seat in Malvern. It is just above the old golf course, and no doubt Elgar would have played there at some time, not far from his old home at 'Craig Lea'. We made a visit to the grave, then took the opportunity for a picnic on the Malvern Hills. At 4.00 p.m. we attended the Evensong Service in Worcester Cathedral, and the laying of the wreath beneath the Gerontius window. Then it was on to the Birthplace for a glass of sherry, a piece of cake, and, of course, a look round the house. This is the first time such a trip has been arranged, but everyone had such a good time, it may not be the last!

The new season has been planned, all meetings, except the first, at the Royal Northern College of Music, 124 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RD, at 4.30 p.m. 3rd Oct, Graham Eccles will perform the *Organ Sonata no.1* in St. Ann's Church, Manchester, preceded by an introductory talk to branch members. 7th Nov, a session at which members bring along some of their favourite Elgar pieces and talk briefly about the meaning it has for them. Also, a small exhibition of sketches of 'Elgar Country' by one of our members. 5th December AGM and Christmas social. 9th Jan, Chamber music of Elgar's time performed by branch members. We hope to include Stanford's *Piano Quintet. op.25*.

6th Feb, Dr. Christopher Kent on Elgar scholarship and in particular his work as editor of the Complete Edition. 5th March, English Songs by Elgar's contemporaries, performed by Vanessa Williamson (mezzo-soprano) and Michael Hancock (piano).

LONDON Branch completed its 1986/7 programme with Richard Hickox in March, speaking about his recent Elgar choral recordings; Pauline Collett in May with her delightful 'Elgar Travelogue', and David Michell supplementing the AGM in June with another of his inimitable dips into the Archives. Suffice it to say that these were all first class evenings and fully maintained the season's high standard. Since the AGM two extra-mural events have taken place: on June 23rd large numbers travelled to Cambridge for Evensong at King's College, which was followed by an Organ Recital by Stephen Cleobury, at which both the *Organ Sonatas* were played. On the weekend of June 26 - 28 Carl Newton led a smaller, but equally enthusiastic, group on pilgrimage to Settle where we were delighted to be joined by members of Yorkshire and North West branches. The Elgar/Buck haunts were duly visited and Dennis Clark gave his splendid 'Elgar and Yorkshire' presentation. On the Saturday evening Giggleswick School Chapel was full for the Elgar concert provided by the school in our honour. A fuller report on this is elsewhere in the Journal. After the summer recess we recommence at Imperial College on Monday, 12th October, with Dr. Donald Hunt.

The YORKSHIRE Branch has just completed its 1986/7 season, regarded by many as its best to date, both from attendance and interest shown by members and visitors. Also from the quality of the fare provided. Would that we had funds to engage the services of more of the top Elgar people. Actually, our most recent 'star' visitor was not an Elgar person, but a German - Winifred German, niece of another Sir Edward. She brought an immense amount of material to show us, which filled several tables. Included were letters which Elgar had sent to Edward German and many other interesting mss. Our own member, James Brown, gave what was only the second performance ever of a piano sonata by German, and then provided the accompaniment for soprano Barbara Parry, who sang a number of Edward German's songs. A delightful evening, in the company of a delightful lady. James Brown was due to take the floor himself at the following meeting, when we would have had more piano music to illustrate his talk on 'Elgar and the world of Childhood'. Unfortunately, James fell and broke his shoulder a few days before, and rather than use recordings, since he was now unable to play, he has decided to accept an evening in the next season's programme.

Writing in mid-July our programme for 1987/88 is not yet printed, but will include a visit from Margaret Elgar on October 26th. Also arranged is a talk by Dr. Percy Young (March 7th), and one on April 11th by Dr. Eric Mackerness, formerly Chairman of the Sheffield Elgar Society, on 'Elgar - the Sheffield Connection.' This report cannot close without mention of the enjoyment which some of our members gained during the visit of London Branch to Settle at the end of June.

WEST MIDLANDS claim a splendid pre-Christmas programme, and extend a welcome to non-branch members and friends. On 26th September, at Friends Meeting House, Sansome Walk, Worcester, at 2.30 p.m. Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore on 'Elgar's Correspondence with his Publishers'. On 17th October, same venue, The Elizabethan Singers, and on 14th November at the Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester, at 2.30 p.m. Henry Sandon (of Antiques Road Show fame) will speak on 'The Worcester Lay Clerks and Elgar'.

LETTERS

From David McBrien

A few days ago I spent a pleasant morning in the County Records Office in Worcester looking at a part of the large collection of Elgar's correspondence. One of the letters I sought out was one which is well-known, having been included in Dr. Percy Young's collection of letters published in the 1950s, and referred to by several other authors. This is the letter from Elgar to Troyte dated December 12th, 1922, and which refers to the recently completed acoustic recording of the Enigma Variations. Dr. Young quotes Elgar as saying: "Some of the varns, come off very well but your demons are not possible: the vagaries of the recording disc are interesting, you might come with me someday and hear the process." The word 'demons' struck me as odd and on inspecting the original letter I suspect that Dr. Young has misread the word 'drums'. Elgar's handwriting is often difficult to read but drums seems to me to make more sense in context, even though by acoustic standards the drums are not badly recorded. Jerrold Moore evidently formed the same opinion since he altered his quotation from the letter between the first and second editions of his Elgar discography. All this is relatively trivial but the discovery reminded me of another more significant occasion when Elgar wrote drum(med), but which found its way into print as a different word; whether with or without his agreement I know not. On the back of the sleeve of the original LP reissue of the Menuhin/Elgar recording of the Violin Concerto is reproduced the manuscript instruction to the strings on how to play the accompaniment to the cadenza. This says: "The pizz, tremolando should be 'drummed' with the soft part of three or four fingers across the strings." In the printed score the word drummed has been replaced by 'thrummed.' I am not a string player, but the word thrum seems to me much vaguer, and less specific than drum. Does anyone know the story behind this alteration?

From Jack McKenzie

Since 1974 when six unmarked birch trees, of different species, were planted in memory of Elgar, by the Elgar Society, on the west side of the Malvern Hills, I have fought for some named commemoration. At OS Reference SO 767 446 (map 150) the position of these trees is not easily accessible, but worth the effort for the superb view over Elgar's 'Sweet Borderland' - the theme of this venture masterminded by Martin Passande. Later, Vivienne joined me in this quest for identification and together we have researched, pestered, argued and kept a finger on the pulse of the Malvern Hills Conservators actions and policy changes. Originally we tried for a plaque near the trees. This was denied as 'Individual trees may not be marked on the Hills' - this does not apply to Royal commemorations, however!

By 1977 the six stunted trees were fighting for their lives against weeds - docks, nettles and the prolific rose bay willow herb, which gives the Hills their purple sheen in summer, and white fluff in the autumn. Our appeal to the Ranger resulted in the removal of an offending and useless fence, thus ensuring the the weeds were controlled round the trees, which began to grow quite nicely. At this point, while still adhering to the policy of not naming a tree or copse, we were given permission for a seat, suitably inscribed, to be sited near these trees. The price would be about £60, but the then

small Society did not feel able to copé with this expense.

Next, a seat in memory of Harry and Hilda Austin arrived beside the Elgar trees. Now we had lost this position for our seat, as there are strict rules to avoid over-crowding.

Well in advance of 1984 we discussed, again with the Ranger, the planting of another tree and a seat to identify it. Mr. Parsons was particularly sympathetic as by now the weather and vandals, as well as the natural hazards of planting non-indigenous species on quarry out-crop, had reduced the birches to three. (Now, in 1987, there are only two.) An oak or a beech would be acceptable, and at this time a seat would have cost about £160. Alan Boon even had a suitable oak tree available.

Next we heard that someone had decided the Society would plant a tree and seat in Grundy's Meadow. This position, on a depressing view-less waste patch, on the corner of West Malvern Road and The Wyche, appalled us. Once again Vivienne and I went to see the Ranger, and with very little difficulty persuaded him that "Rotten Row" or "The Ladies Mile", the ride across Malvern Wells Common, near Craeg Lea, looking east to the Severn Valley and over the golf course where Elgar played, was a much better site: and there was a vacant plot waiting for a seat. We also got permission, provided we used their design, for our own craftsman to make the seat. The Appeal was launched and money flooded in, confirming our belief the Elgarians would approve such a memorial.

Vernon Cartwright was thrilled to accept the commission to make the seat in Burma Teak, at his workshop at Kinver. Jim Holt kindly undertook the transportation, the seat, luckily, measuring no more than Carol's harpsichord, just fitting into his car. Messrs. Bob Abbott and Bob Nelson were responsible for setting the seat in a plinth of crazy-paving of hand-picked blue and pink Malvern stone: they expressed delight in their involvement on this historic occasion, and their appreciation of the craftsmanship and quality of the seat. All was now ready for the ceremony on 31st May.

It was with great sadness, shock, and regret that we heard of the death of Vernon on the 10th July; we went to his funeral at St. Mary's, Old Swinford, yesterday. It is particularly sad, since after the Elgar Evensong and wreathlaying at 4 p.m. in Worcester, on the same day as the seat ceremony, Vernon and Vivienne discussed with the Canon and Verger the details of a table, to be made in oak, to stand under the Elgar Tablet beside the Gerontius Window. Vernon had long wanted to make something on which the ceremonial wreath could be laid each year.

There now remains the question of planting a tree close behind the seat. On this site we will be allowed to plant a white flowering English chestnut, in keeping with the avenue already there but in a slightly forward position, as suggested by Mr. Parsons. Trees are planted between November and March - surely 23rd February should be the date to plan to complete a worthy Elgar memorial?

Vivienne insists that I include the OS reference to the seat which is SO 775 444 (map 150).

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

[President: Sir YEHUDI MENUHIN, O.M., K.B.E.]

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