

# The Elgar Society

# NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER

1977

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# Elgar Society Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

NEW SERIES No. 3

The summer has seen a great deal of musical activity, not least in the provinces, and the proximity of the Malvern Festival has helped to swell the ever-growing number of visitors to the Elgar Birthplace. As will be seen on other pages, it is hoped to increase co-operation between the Elgar Foundation, the Birthplace Trust (which administers the Birthplace), and the Elgar Society. This co-operation can only be good for the future of all, but in the meantime there is a problem which arises. Many members of the Society are under the impression that when they visit the Birthplace they are entitled to some special privileges. This is certainly not so. The Curator and the Trustees have always extended the warmest welcome to members of the Society, but members have no other privileges beyond that. Perhaps readers would bear this in mind to avoid misunderstandings in the future.

When the Society was founded in the 1950's our prime object was, and is, "to honour the name of Sir Edward Elgar." This has been interpreted largely to mean that we endeavour to propagate the performance of Elgar's music, and encourage studies in Elgar's life, work and times. The remarkable growth of interest in Elgar's music extending to minor or little-known works, is very gratifying, and the Society can claim some small credit in aiding this growth of interest. But it can be argued that so far as Great Britain is concerned the need for 'missionary' work is over - Elgar is no longer in need of protagonists. Concerts and records prove his popularity. The Society needs to be stronger, and this is gradually happening, but if one accepts the analysis that the missionary work has been successful, then where do we go from here?

Do members see our future as a music appreciation society? a forum for Elgar studies? or should we carry the message further afield to Europe and beyond? There are obvious practical difficulties here, but where should we go? We shall continue to honour Elgar's name, but the precise form that the honouring should take is something we should consider. Readers comments are welcomed, even if only to tell us that we are premature, and that much yet remains to be done!

RONALD TAYLOR  
Editor

Editorial: John Buttrey, Michael Rostron, Trevor Fenimore-Jones

## NEWS ITEMS

Our Congratulations to Sir David Willcocks, and to Sir Alexander Gibson, each made Knights in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Both have contributed much to music in the British Isles, and we are honoured that Sir David is a Vice-President of the Society.

The Malvern Festival was duly noted abroad, but an article in the distinguished Toronto Globe & Mail, dated June 4th, may cause some raised eyebrows in this country. "...The musical side of the Festival may not be quite so successful. The programs perhaps lean more heavily on Elgar than this composer can support, and when outside help is needed, they tend to go for other English composers such as Vaughan Williams, Delius and Britten." It seems that there is still a lot of missionary work to be done across the seas. Canadian members, where are you? You are needed!

Leslie Lake, of the Locke Brass Consort of London, tells us that for the Consort's recent RCA recording 'Jubilant Brass' he faced problems when preparing a transcription for brass and percussion of the 1927 "Civic Fanfare." The copyright belongs to Keith Prowse, but they have never published the work, nor do they possess a copy of the score. Mr. Lake worked from a photostat of the reduced two-stave score reproduced in Jerrold Northrop Moore's "Elgar's Life in Pictures", and also listened to Elgar's own recording made in 1927. From these he was able to work out a score, which was used for the new recording. We are very grateful for this enterprise, which will bring this brief, but interesting, piece from Elgar's last years to a wider public.

Three previously unnoticed songs by Elgar have come to light. A North American library sent them to Alan Webb, and he has kindly lodged copies at the Birthplace. They are: "The Merry-go-Round"; "Windlass Song"; and "The Brook". They were apparently written for an educational project The Progressive Music Series published in the U.S.A. between 1914 and 1920. It is good that these have been rediscovered, and one wonders if there are others still to be found. Can we hope that Mr. Collett's enthusiastic choir at Uppingham will give us a further recording which will include these latest songs?

E. Wulstan Atkins, Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, and formerly the Secretary/Treasurer of the Elgar Society, has just been elected President of the Croydon Philharmonic Society. The Society in Croydon has a long history of association with Elgar's music, and it was at Croydon that the composer conducted a memorable performance of "The Apostles."



## *Malvern Festival*

The success of the Shaw-Elgar Malvern Festival, held from May 23 to June 12 this year, owed much to its music content. This is traceable not only to the fact that the festival directors had been able to plan and announce a programme of concerts and recitals long before they were in a position to publicise either the Shaw play to be presented or the cast to act in it. After anxious weeks of negotiation this turned out to be Man and Superman, presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company, with Susan Hampshire and Richard Pasco in the leading parts. As a result of the delays on the drama side some promotion opportunities were inevitably lost. This led to a certain hesitation in some quarters about all-out commitment to the festival, though certainly not on the part of the concert audiences, as was made clear from the rush to book for most of the musical events. Eventually, however, all things fell into place, with firm leadership from the festival director, Ian Hunter, and the chairman of the promoting company, Len Mathews, whose associations with ATV and the Heart of England Tourist Board were invaluable in securing financial sponsorship.

The festival as a whole achieved a great success, and exhibitions, talks, and a large programme of fringe events made a notable contribution. Elgariana featured much in the exhibitions, and talks by Yehudi Menuhin and Jerrold Northrop Moore drew large and keenly interested audiences. Formally opening the festival, the Duke of Gloucester unveiled a plaque of Shaw and Elgar in the theatre foyer and later went to the Elgar Birthplace to unveil the bust of Elgar.

No statement about the financial outcome is yet available, but optimistically plans are going ahead for a four-week festival in 1978 from May 15 to June 10, probably with two plays, and with the music concentrated on three weekends.

F. B. G.

THE MUSICAL PART OF THE FESTIVAL was opened auspiciously by Yehudi Menuhin and his sister Hephzibah, who played the violin sonata and a selection of Elgar's salon pieces. Mr. Menuhin was also soloist with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, under David Atherton, in the Violin Concerto. The Cello Concerto, played by Pierre Fournier, and the Enigma Variations were the principal works in the concert given by Sir Charles Groves and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic; and Leon Goossens played the Oboe Soliloquy, which Elgar wrote for him as part of the concerto destined never to be finished. Each of these concerts drew a full house. Indeed, advance booking seems to have accounted for all the tickets. Unfortunately, word had been put about that all musical events were sold out. It meant that there were seats to spare for the remarkable GUS Brass Band Concert, for Philip Ledger's Organ Recital, for Robert Tear's song recital and for the faultless concert by the Monteverdi Orchestra, under John Eliot Gardner. Incidentally, Mr. Gardner gave one of the most brilliant performances of the Introduction & Allegro I have ever heard.

A. T. S



1978

- Jan. 6 Prelude from The Kingdom; Salut d'Amour; St. John's Church,  
Violin Concerto(Soloist:Campoli); Enigma Smith Square,  
Variations London, S.W.1  
New Westminster PO, cond. Joseph Pilbery
- Jan. 26 Symphony no.2; Cello Concerto (Soloist: Royal Festival Hall  
Zara Nelsova)  
LPO, cond. Bernard Haitink
- Jan. 29 Violin Concerto (Soloist: Gidon Kremer) Royal Festival Hall  
RPO, cond. Kyril Kondrashin
- April 25 The Spirit of England Royal Festival Hall  
LPO & Choir, cond. Daniel Barenboim.  
with Felicity Palmer

ADVANCE NOTICE. The 1978 Three Choirs Festival will be held at  
Worcester. Full details in our January issue

May 21st-June 5th. An Elgar Festival will take place in Tewkesbury  
Abbey in 1978. Full details to follow.

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FORTHCOMING RECORDINGS Sir Charles Groves recorded the Enigma  
Variations for EMI in July, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

RECENT RECORDINGS Symphony no.1: LPO/Sir Adrian Boult. HMV ASD3330  
(See Gramophone, and Records & Recording 4. 77) ::: Severn Suite:Grimethorpe  
Colliery Band/Elgar Howarth. Decca SXL6820 (See Gramophone, and Records  
& Recording 5. 77) ::: Severn Suite: Black Dyke Mills Band. RCA RK25078  
(See Gramophone 6. 77) ::: Serenade for Strings: Slovak Chamber Orch/Bohdan  
Marchal. Rediffusion ROY2002 (See Gramophone, and Records & Recording  
6. 77) ::: Civic Fanfare: Locke Consort of Brass/James Stobart. RCA  
RL25081 (See Gramophone 6. 77) ::: Sea Pictures; In the South: Yvonne Minton,  
LPO/Barenboim. CBS 76579 (See Gramophone 8. 77) ::: Pomp & Circumstance  
Marches 1 & 4: Royal Liverpool PO/Sir Charles Groves. HMV ASD3341 (See  
Gramophone 6. 77).

RECORDS RE-ISSUED Cello Concerto: Casals/BBC SO/Boult. HMV HLM7110  
::: Piano Quintet, String Quartet, Violin Sonata, Concert Allegro, Sonatina,  
Adieu and Serenade: Music Group of London, John Ogden & Allegri Quartet.  
HMV SLS5084 ::: Imperial March, Crown of India Suite, Pomp & Circumstance  
Marches, Enigma Variations, Cockaigne Overture. LPO/Barenboim. CBS  
79002.

EDWARD J. DENT and ELGAR

by John Buttrey

1976 saw the centenary of the birth of the musicologist, Edward J. Dent. To Elgarians, he will be familiar as the cause of an outcry in the early 1930's when he published an unfavourable account of Elgar in a reference book. Mr. Winton Dean (one of the most celebrated of living musicologists) knew Dent quite well, and, as a centenary tribute, published an article on him in the October 1976 issue of Music and Letters. When I read what Mr. Dean had to say, I realised that probably only a few people by now would be familiar with what Dent wrote; the offending comments on Elgar appeared in German in Guido Adler's Handbuch der Musikgeschichte, published in Berlin in 1930. Consequently it seemed to me that a translation of this criticism would give most of us our first chance to study the incident in detail, for, although the matter is dealt with in the current biographies, the text is nowhere given complete. Mr. Dean (to whom I am most grateful) has also kindly allowed me to quote from his account of Dent's character, so Elgarians may now see for the first time both the man and his criticism side by side.

Edward Dent held the Professorship of Music at Cambridge from 1926 to 1941. Nineteen years younger than Elgar, he was the son of a Yorkshire county family which produced no other artistic talent save his. After education at Eton, he went to King's College Cambridge (in the mid-1890's) where he began by reading Classics. Describing his subsequent vocation however, Mr. Dean goes on: '[Dent's] decision to embark on a musical career provoked considerable family opposition: music was not a respectable career for a gentleman, unless it could somehow be yoked with the Church. Such an association was not likely to appeal to Dent, to whom the regular church-going and sabbatarian piety of his family and class were a peculiar irritant... Further causes of prejudice and intolerance were Dent's homosexual inclinations and his political radicalism, [which were] curiously blended with a fastidious and aristocratic conservatism that remained central to his character.'

Mr. Dean also stresses how Dent whole-heartedly rebelled against the climate of English music in the Victorian age: '... This was still the era of massive oratorios, not only giant Handel performances but new festival commissions from such eminent foreign composers as Dvorak and Saint-Saens. Outside the church all the best music was considered to be of German origin; the broad highway passed through the Viennese classics... Wagner had begun to capture the more advanced spirits, and was soon to capture Dent, though he often tilted against him later. Gounod's church music was admired for its sacred qualities, as indeed was Faust; but the Italians, including Verdi, were condemned as superficial, if not metricious... Opera was ranked far below the



symphony, the concerto and the string quartet. . . Dent' Mr. Dean tells us, 'reacted violently against all this. To the end of his life he let slip no opportunity to rail at churches and priests of all denominations (especially Roman Catholics), and to pepper a whole series of targets: reverence for the [musical] classics in general, sacred oratorios, German music (as opposed to French and especially Italian), a puritanical attitude to the theatre, pomposity and grandiloquence of every kind. . . This was largely negative, and it would be futile to deny that it sometimes led Dent into false positions. . .'

One of these, as Mr. Dean goes on to mention, was Dent's attitude towards Elgar. '[Dent] could not understand the high reputation enjoyed by Elgar, whom he despised as a professional musician bent on living the life of a country gentleman (a course exactly opposite to his own) and a Roman Catholic composer of oratorios to boot. . .'. Hence, the source of all the trouble, and it certainly explains the derogatory terms in which Dent wrote. The article where these appeared must have been written in either 1929 or early in 1930; it is on "Modern English Music". There are two composers who get the lion's share of Dent's attention; both of them had been academics and, strangely enough, both of them were already dead and so could hardly rank as 'moderns'. They were, of course, Parry and Stanford. The comments on Elgar appear only after those on Alexander Mackenzie and F. H. Cowan (thereby implying that Dent preferred their music); they run as follows:

'Elgar arrived later than the others [Mackenzie and Cowan] on the musical scene and startled audiences by the unusual splendour of his orchestration and the ardour of his music. Like Mackenzie, he was a violinist by profession, and studied Liszt's work which conservative academic musicians abominated. He was, besides, a Roman Catholic and more or less self-taught, having little of Parry and Stanford's literary culture. He first attracted attention in 1890; in 1898 a cantata "Caractacus" was first performed in Leeds and in 1900 appeared "The Dream of Gerontius", a composition based on Cardinal Newman's semi-dramatic poem about death and purgatory. Thereon followed two more oratorios "The Apostles" and "The Kingdom". To English ears Elgar's music is too emotional and not quite free from vulgarity. His orchestral works, the Variations, two Symphonies, Concertos for Violin and Violoncello, and various overtures, are vivid in colour but pompous in style and with an affected nobility of expression. His finest orchestral work is the symphonic poem "Falstaff" which is weakened however through too great a reliance on the programme, but at all events is a work of great originality and power. His Chamber Music (Violin Sonata, String Quartet, and Piano Quintet) is dry and academic.'

The lofty and patronising tone which Dent adopted here is, to me, quite astonishing, and, as Michael Kennedy pointed out (Portrait of Elgar, p.261), the remarks in the last sentence were sadly hypocritical since Dent had written to Elgar ten years earlier rejoicing in the fact that the composer had turned his attention to writing Chamber Music. But, on top of that, these 1930 comments on Elgar, although tucked away in a German reference book, provoked a storm of response in England, and eighteen celebrities banded together and put their signatures to a letter of protest (it appeared, among other places, in The Musical Times of April, 1931). Bernard Shaw even wrote that, by belittling Elgar in a German book, Dent had belittled England itself; obviously the rancour of the First World War still went very deep! Mr. Dean tells us that Dent took this opposition to his opinions as a personal affront, and so the matter flared fiercely for a time. But now, nearly fifty years later, we can see the whole matter clearly and with complete justice -- and there can be no doubt that Dent, despite his great achievements elsewhere, did not emerge from this affair with honour.

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## GUIDE TO PLACES OF ELGARIAN INTEREST IN THE

### WORCESTER - MALVERN

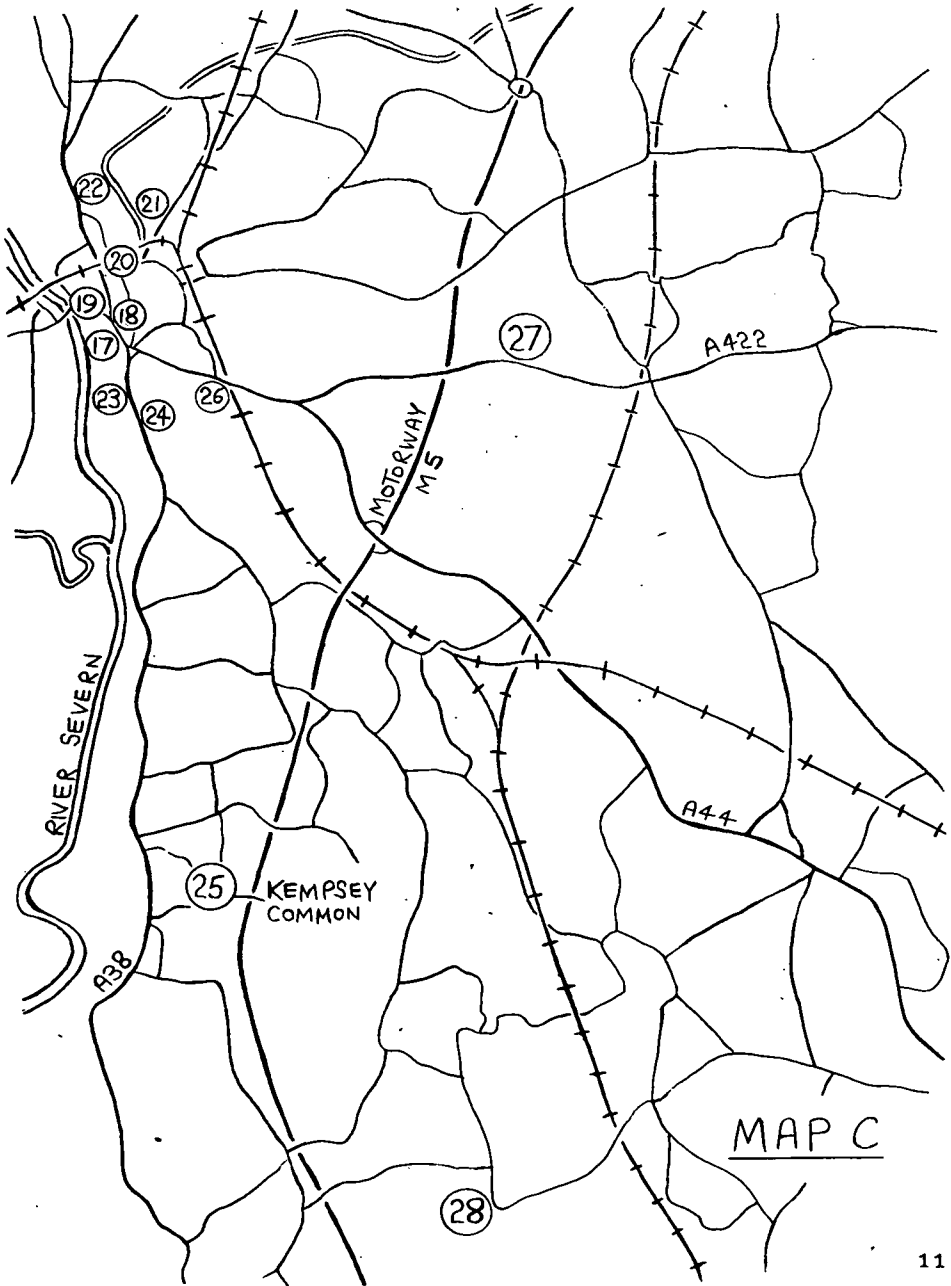
#### AREA

by Michael Trott

#### Part Two

WHEN THE ELGAR FAMILY, after a few years at Broadheath, returned to Worcester in 1859 or 1860, their home and shop was at 1 Severn Street, marked (17) on map C. It was, then, 1 Edgar Street and, to add to the confusion, this thoroughfare had been previously called Frog Mill Lane, Frog Lane, and High Timber Street. No.1 Severn Street is now an antique shop and stands next to the well-known Edgar Tower. This gives entry to the College Precincts, where the Elgars had lived before Edward was born. It was originally the entrance to the old Castle, and, later, to the buildings of the old Priory. Under its shadow Elgar spent his infancy.

Thanks to the efforts of an Elgar Society member, a plaque on a wall of the "Giffard Hotel" complex marks approximately the spot of 10 High Street (18), where the Elgars moved from 1 Severn Street in about 1864. The familiar music shop of Elgar Brothers (W.H. Elgar and brother Henry) was



in existence for many years and Elgar spent most of his boyhood in the rooms above the shop, leaving in 1879 when he was 22. Even later he helped occasionally behind the counter, and gave violin lessons among the pianos at the back of the shop.

Across the road is the Worcester Guildhall, reputed to be one of the finest "Queen Anne" buildings in the country. It was here during the Three Choirs week of 1905 that Elgar received the Freedom of the City of Worcester from his childhood friend, Hubert Leicester, Mayor of Worcester.

The Crown Hotel ( 19 ) in Broad Street used to be the meeting place of the Worcester Glee Club, which Elgar joined in 1873, being appointed conductor in 1879. A leading light of the Club was Charles Pipe, with whom Elgar visited Paris in 1880 and who became Elgar's brother-in-law the following year.

A few minutes' walk brings one to Sansome Place and St. George's Roman Catholic Church ( 20 ) where, in 1885, Elgar succeeded his father as organist, keeping the post until his marriage in 1889. The facade is Victorian, the nave Regency.

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Half-way up Rainbow Hill, on the left, some modern flats called Elgar Court mark the site of Marl Bank ( 21 ), Elgar's last home, which he rented in 1929, later bought, and where he died on February 23rd, 1934. The garages actually cover the foundations of the house, which faced towards the city. Marl Bank was demolished in 1969, in spite of vigorous public opposition. The Severn Suite, Nursery Suite, and Pomp and Circumstance no. 5 were composed here.

When Elgar left home in 1879 he went to live with his sister Polly (1855-1936) and her husband William Grafton at Loretto Villa, 35 Chestnut Walk. This house used to stand on the spot now occupied by Lansdowne Court (22), some modern maisonettes opposite the Chestnut Tree Inn. In 1883 the Graftons moved to Stoke Works near Bromsgrove, and Elgar went to stay with his eldest sister Lucy (1852-1925) and her husband Charles Pipe at 4 Field Terrace ( 23 ), just off the Bath Road. Uncle Charlie, as he was known to the Elgar family, was a partner in the firm of Browne and Pipe, grocers and hop merchants, of 25 Broad Street. Elgar stayed with the Pipes until 1889. It was while he was at Field Terrace that he acquired his first dog, Scrap.

Further along the Bath Road is South Bank ( 24 ), the nursing home which Elgar visited for treatment several times in his later years. It was here in 1933 that he gave Billy Reed the sketches of his projected Third Symphony.

\* 3 H  
blocks

In the summer of 1923, having grown weary of London life, Elgar rented a house called Napleton Grange ( 25 ), near Kempsey (pronounced Kemsey). He retained his flat at St. James' Place for a while (he was appointed Master of the King's Musick in 1924) but continued the tenancy of his new Worcester-shire home until 1927, when he was unable to renew the lease. These were the happy years of dog-ownership, and he loved to walk out all three on nearby Kempsey Common. For a few months in the Autumn of 1927, Elgar rented Battenhall Manor -- from a friend called Buckle -- while he looked for a more permanent home (which turned out to be Tiddington House near Stratford-upon-Avon). The black-and-white house has since disappeared, but in 1931 Elgar planted a tree nearby, and this survives in the front garden of a house near the corner of Arundel Drive and Midhurst Close (26). A small plaque reads: This mulberry tree was planted by Sir Edward Elgar on 31st March, 1931 to commemorate his stay at Battenhall Manor.

Three miles from Worcester on the Stratford Road is Spetchley Park, the home of the Berkeley family. For a short period, when he was about ten, Elgar attended the Catholic School ( 27 ), an H - shaped, red-brick building by Pugin, to the north of the main road. In view of the distance from Worcester, it seems probable that the boy was boarded nearby. In later life he recalled gazing in wonder from the classroom window at the trees swaying and sighing in the wind. Elgar was always extraordinarily receptive to natural sounds.

Croome Court ( 28 ), at Croome d'Abitot, used to be the seat of the Earls of Coventry. When W. H. Elgar went to tune pianos there, young Edward was taken along and told to amuse himself in the grounds. Many years later, when he was living at Napleton Grange, he returned as an honoured guest and friend of Lord and Lady Coventry. How me must have mused over the change in circumstances. Built in 1751, Croome Court was decorated by Robert Adam, and the extensive grounds were landscaped by 'Capability' Brown. After the last war, the house was sold off to an Order of Nuns, and is now a home for physically-handicapped children. The Gothic church in the grounds contains tombs of the Coventry Earls. Other features of interest around the Court are the Adam panorama tower on nearby Knight's Hill, and the mock ruin of Dunstall Castle on Dunstall Common, erected to be an 'eyecatcher' from the Court.

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ELGAR DISCOGRAPHY. For some time John Knowles has been preparing a catalogue of all recordings of Elgar's music issued from the earliest days of the gramophone, which it is hoped the Society may publish. The major record companies have been well-searched, but Mr. Knowles is still anxious to have details of foreign recordings, and details of records issued by companies long-since defunct. Information should be sent directly to:  
11 The Chase, Watford, Herts



## UNVEILING OF NEW BRONZE HEAD OF ELGAR AT THE BIRTHPLACE

BY H. R. H. THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER

As his personal contribution to the Appeal the well-known portrait sculptor, Sam Tonkiss, recently executed and presented to the Birthplace a Bronze Head of Elgar as he was between 1899 and 1906, the time of the composition of some of his greatest works.

On May 23rd, in the presence of some 150 invited guests, including a number of representatives of the Elgar Society and its branches, the Head was unveiled by H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester. The ceremony began, after a welcoming speech from the Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, Mr. E. Wulstan Atkins, with the planting of a flowering cherry tree by Lady Barbirolli, who made a short speech acknowledging the gift from Phoenix Preservation Ltd., who had also, as their contribution to the Appeal, carried out the chemical treatment to the walls of the Birthplace without charge.

On the arrival of His Royal Highness, the Mayor of Worcester, Councillor Mrs. D. M. Gething, was presented by the High-Sherriff of the County of Hereford-Worcester, Lt. Col. Edward Courtney Phillips. The Mayor then presented the Chairman of the Foundation who in turn presented Mrs. Wulstan Atkins; Councillor W. C. Allington; Sherriff of Worcester; Mr & Mrs. Chetwood, Hon. Secretary to the two Elgar Charitable Trusts; Mr. Jack McKenzie, the Curator; Mr. Sam Tonkiss; and Lady Barbirolli. After the presentations His Royal Highness was shown round the Birthplace. On the return of the party to the entrance, His Royal Highness was formally welcomed and invited to unveil the Head. Messages were also read from the Foundation Presidents, Sir Adrian Boulton and Yehudi Menuhin. After the unveiling, His Royal Highness in his speech warmly congratulated Mr. Tonkiss on the Head, and expressed his pleasure with what was being done to preserve the cottage and its contents as a permanent memorial to one of England's greatest composers.

Tea was then served, after which the Duke moved informally among the guests and met Dr. Donald Hunt and the members of the Worcester Cathedral Choir, who then sang a number of Elgar Part-Songs. After the part-songs the Royal party left. The guests were then invited to inspect the Bronze Head, and also to go round the Birthplace and examine the restoration and redecoration, and the improvements to the garden which had been carried out. The Elgar Head was greatly admired, and many complimentary remarks were made about the improvements. It was a special pleasure to the Trustees to be able to thank the Mayor in person for the work which the Council's Parks Department had generously carried out in the garden and on the paths.

E. W. A.

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Photograph opposite reproduced by permission of Worcester Evening News. Left to right: H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, Sam Tonkiss, E. Wulstan Atkins (Behind:) The Mayor of Worcester, and (hidden) Jack McKenzie.

# BOOK REVIEWS

Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Three Choirs Festival: A Commemoration in words and pictures. Three Choirs Festival Association, £2  
(plus 25p. postage)

That most distinguished of music festivals - the Three Choirs - is 250 years old this summer, and it was to be expected that the occasion would be marked in some way, apart from the expected choral and music feast. In less inflationary times doubtless the organisers would have produced a more ornate and handsomely-produced work, but it is most unlikely that they would have produced one more interesting. This collection of fourteen essays is eminently readable, is very well illustrated, (one suspects that many photographs are previously unpublished), and is very reasonably priced.

The editor, Barry Still, has struck a happy balance between scholarship and enthusiasm in his list of contributors, and although, inevitably, there must be gaps in the story, the 250 years are well covered. There are numerous references to Elgar, not all of them in the article by Michael Kennedy 'Elgar and the Festivals'. E. Wulstan Atkins writes on 'Worcester's contribution to the Festival', Percy Young on 'The First Hundred Years', and Herbert Howells gives his 'Memories of the Twentieth Century'. There is a most interesting account of 'Ralph Vaughan Williams & the Three Choirs Festivals' by Ursula Vaughan Williams, and an equally interesting article on 'Cathedral Musicians' by Michael Foster.

The standard history remains the work by Watkins Shaw, published in 1953, but as a supplementary account this latest book is well worth buying. A word of warning however, the glazed wrappers are not likely to last if the book is used often, and some form of folder may well be necessary.  
R. P. T.

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North Staffordshire Music, a Social Experiment. By Reginald Nettel.  
[Limited Edition of 300 copies] Triad Press. £5.50

Mr. Nettel is an indefatigable researcher into the history of music in the Midlands, and in this latest work he pays detailed attention to the choirs which flourished so remarkably late in the 19th century, and which, incidentally, gave such an impetus to Elgar's choral music. This slim volume, which is only available in a limited edition, gives biographical details of the conductors of the various choirs, together with photographs. Included is Charles Swinnerton Heap, whose championship of Elgar is well-known. An interesting and unusual little work, which will undoubtedly go out of print very quickly.  
R. P. T.



# RECORD REVIEWS

CELLO CONCERTO: \*\*ENIGMA VARIATIONS

CBS 76529

Jacqueline Du Pre, Philadelphia Orchestra, \*\*London Philharmonic Orchestra, Conducted by Daniel Barenboim.

This new recording of the Cello Concerto was taken from two live performances in America in 1970, and is important for historical reasons, due to Jacqueline Du Pre's subsequent tragic illness. But is this sufficient reason for you to buy it? There is, after all, another recording made by the same soloist in 1965 at the age of 19, with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli, which received great critical acclaim. Mention was particularly made of Miss Du Pre's mastery of the instrument and the committed nature of her playing. Others found the performance too overtly emotional; she lingered for far too long over the slower passages, trying to extract every last ounce of feeling. To those who subscribe to this latter view it must be said that this tendency is, if anything, accentuated in the later recording. This is borne out by comparing the times of the recordings: 31' 11" in 1970 as against 29' 40" in 1965 (cf. Tortelier/Boult 26' 45" on ASD 2906, and Harrison/Elgar 24' 40" on SH 175). Markings of tempo and dynamics are often ignored, yet this new version is in my opinion even more compelling and convincing. One feels that Elgar would have approved whole-heartedly (he did after all depart quite dramatically from his own markings on occasions!)

The recording quality is excellent, even allowing for the fact that it was recorded at live performances. The cello is more 'forward' than in the first recording and this somehow makes for a more personal and intimate reading. There are one or two audience contributions, but these are usually unobtrusive, although I wish one listener could have been a little more thoughtful at the end of the Adagio. The Philadelphia Orchestra play with great assurance, and always match the sensitivity of the soloist.

If this seems to reduce the Barenboim account of the 'Variations' to a mere fill-up then let me correct this immediately. I found this version as exciting and satisfying as any on record. Barenboim's interpretation is less idiomatic than in the symphonies, and he allows the music to speak for itself. C.A.E., Ysobel, and especially W.R.N. and Nimrod are played with great warmth and feeling without being over-indulged. The louder, faster movements are played with great restraint, exciting, but Barenboim never lets the music run away with him. The recording is good, and picks out many details which are often obscured, for instance the pizzicato of the second cello in C.A.E., and the sforzando on the cello and bassoon in R.B.T. Far from being mere latecomers on the scene, these two performances have

laid claim to be regarded as the definitive versions.

G.H.

PARTSONGS, ANTHEMS AND OTHER MUSIC.

Wealden Studios WS 152

Drake's Broughton (1878); Ave Verum, op. 2; As Torrents in Summer; The Prince of Sleep(1925); Doubt not thy Father's Care; The Snow, op. 26, no. 1; Fly, Singing Bird, op. 26, no. 2; I Sing the Birth(1928); Fear Not O Land(1914) The Shepherd's Song; Rondel; A Poet's Life; The Rapid Stream(1931); The Woodland Stream(1933); Skizze; In Smyrna; Duett for Trombone and Double Bass (1887). Uppingham Community College Choir, conductor Barry Collett. Judith Robinson (soprano) and Barry Collett (piano), and other artists.

This enterprising disc covering 55 years of Elgar's creative life presents at least nine pieces never previously recorded on LP and is thus a valuable issue for all Elgar-lovers. As Barry Collett disarmingly admits, the Uppingham Community College Choir contains no professional, or even trained, voices and this is certainly apparent, most of all in the rather uncharacteristic, consciously archaic carol I Sing the Birth with its many solos, provided here by three choir members. The singing, however, has considerable appeal--diction is commendably clear and there is an enjoyment, a sense of involvement that comes through nicely. Generally speaking, the simpler items come off best: the hymn tune Drake's Broughton, used much later in the Nursery Suite; the attractive Ave Verum; As Torrents, imaginatively performed; and the solid, stirring Fear Not O Land. It is good to hear the three-part female voice Opus 26 Songs with their original accompaniment of two violins and piano--the gay Fly, Singing Bird is strongly redolent of Edward German--and The Prince of Sleep is of considerable harmonic interest.

Judith Robinson sings her five solo songs with intelligence and a charming freshness, despite the recording balancing her somewhat backwardly, which means some of the words are not as clear as they might be, but this does enable us the better to appreciate Mr. Collett's sympathetic piano accompaniments, especially in the Shepherd's Song and Rondel. A Poet's Life is no more than a ballad, but a tuneful one, and is delivered with conviction here. The Rapid Stream and The Woodland Stream, originally for unison voices, go well as solo songs, the former having, both in vocal line and accompaniment, a lively Quilterish feel, the latter blander but with a pleasing, sustained vocal line. Barry Collett's piano solos are sensitively done, particularly the atmospheric In Smyrna; the other instrumental piece, the brief Duett of 1887, is a curiosity indeed--though it is a fughetta, the "voices" are scarcely equal ones dynamically, the trombone inevitably dominating from the moment it enters.

The recording is well managed, though there is a little distortion in Fear Not O Land. Mr. Collett's sleeve notes are succinct and helpful, and the words of the choral items appear on an insert.

P. L. S.

Sheila Armstrong(Soprano), Robert Tear(Tenor), Peter Glossop (Baritone), Brian Rayner Cook(Bass-baritone), Malcolm King (Bass), Richard Suart(Bass). Liverpool Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra, conducted by Sir Charles Groves.

Two records

'This is the highlight of the whole work, a magnificent solo with choral interjections, in Elgar's noblest vein of heroic melancholy.' So Michael Kennedy sums up Caractacus's lament "O my Warriors" in his admirable notes which accompany this recording. However, listening to Peter Glossop's performance turns me once again to this description, for the failure of singer and conductor to project the lyricism and heroic melancholy highlight the shortcomings of this recording and my deep disappointment in it.

Those who are familiar with the famous Peter Dawson recordings of excerpts from Caractacus will be aware of the conviction with which he invests the part during this great solo, and although there is no choral support, Sir John Barbirolli, who conducts, is in complete sympathy. Much has been written about Acworth's prose, and the appropriateness of Elgar's music, but this is no place to continue the controversy; but if Caractacus is to be performed then it must be done with conviction and style, which the older records have in abundance, and which I feel this set fundamentally lacks.

There are fine moments however, and Sheila Armstrong, Robert Tear, Brian Rayner Cook and Malcolm King rise to the occasion as best they can, but it is the part of Caractacus, although not dominant, on which any performance must be based, and I feel Peter Glossop does not involve himself sufficiently in the character to carry through the recording to anything but partial success. Sir Charles Groves seems to share this lack of conviction, despite the auspicious beginning to Side One. The opening has rarely flowed more smoothly, in my experience, and not being the most inspired of Elgar's choruses, the conductor has a difficult task to attract and hold the listener's attention, but Sir Charles succeeds admirably. The momentum is not maintained unfortunately, and at such important points as the duet in Scene Three, the Triumphal March, and the final chorus, the tension sags and the drama is underplayed to serious effect. It is interesting to compare Sir Charles's earlier recording of the March (ASD 2672), which, to me, is so much more striking in its appeal.

It gives me no pleasure to express such views, and, although they are naturally subjective, will concern those who have welcomed these records with enthusiasm. Unlike the recent recordings of The Coronation Ode the likelihood of a rival to this present issue must remain small indeed. This is therefore a set which most Elgarians will wish to purchase, but despite the great range of recordings of Elgar's music which have been issued of late, or perhaps because of them, I feel we might have expected more.

A. H. A. N.

## BRANCH NEWS

WEST MIDLANDS Secretary: Alan Boon, The Old School, Martley, Worcs.

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May Meeting. A change of venue, announced by circular to members, coupled with the attraction of hearing pre-release records of "Caractacus" introduced by John Sanders, organist of Gloucester Cathedral, drew a sizeable and responsive audience. Mr. Spencer Nobut is to be thanked for the loan of the stereo equipment, which he also helped to operate. Those who did not know the music were doubly delighted in having large samples to savour from a work which grows in the listener's affection with every hearing.

The retiring branch secretary, Martin Passande, thanked Mr. Sanders, and echoed the members' hope that he would soon return. The new branch secretary, Mr. Alan Boon, was introduced, in order that he and the members could get to know each other before the new season commences on September 17th.

### Branch Programme 1977/78.

All meetings held on Saturdays, 7.30 p.m

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|--------------------|---|
| <u>Sept. 17th.</u> | Old Palace, Worcester. An evening of reviews of new Elgar recordings.   |
| <u>Oct. 15th.</u>  | Worcester College of Further Education, Henwick Road, Worcester. Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore on "The Enigma Variations." |
| <u>Nov. 19th.</u>  | Old Palace, Worcester. 'Tapes Evening', including Wind Quintet music.   |
| 1978               |   |
| <u>Jan. 14th.</u>  | Alice Ottley School, Worcester. Annual General Meeting, and recital of Elgar's Piano Music by Rodney Baldwin.           |
| <u>Feb. 4th.</u>   | Old Palace, Worcester. Joint Meeting with the Worcester Recorded Music Society. Records introduced by Mr. A. T. Shaw.   |
| <u>April 1st.</u>  | Newland, Malvern. Musical Evening, and Cheese and Wine Party. (Further details to follow.)                              |
| <u>May</u>         | John Pike's Elgar film, at the Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury.   |
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LONDON Secretary: E.W.A. Jackson, "Killiegray", Batchworth Lane,  
Northwood, Middx. Telephone: Northwood 22010

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May 2nd Charles Farncombe: 'Practical Problems in performing 'Gerontius'

Apart from currently being Director of the Handel Opera Society, Mr. Farncombe has been assiduous in introducing Elgar's music to Scandinavia, especially Sweden where he is principal conductor at Drottningholm. Although the Scandinavians hitherto have been slow, unwilling perhaps, to accept Elgar and English music generally, we gather that the proselytising efforts of Mr. Farncombe and other musicians are beginning to bear fruit. At all events we understand that he gave the first and other performances of Gerontius in Sweden, and has lately given the work in Helsinki. Norway may well hear Elgar's music 'live' for the first time next year!

Mr. Farncombe explained some of the difficulties he has experienced in rehearsing a complex work like Gerontius with Swedish soloists, chorus and orchestra. Apart from the obvious problem of language (although he is well versed in Swedish), there was the added difficulty of trying to instil in the minds of his colleagues some of the atmosphere which permeates the oratorio. It required much hard work before they were ready for the first performance - even then the response from the public was luke-warm. Subsequent performances, however, have evoked an increasing interest, largely, no doubt, because both singers and orchestra have performed the work with greater conviction. Although the Engima Variations and the Cello Concerto are now firmly in the repertoire, Mr. Farncombe intends to introduce The Kingdom next year and later on The Apostles. Elgarians will be gratified to learn that, in Charles Farncombe, Elgar's music has a pioneer in a foreign country where English music has hitherto been largely ignored.

To illustrate his most interesting talk, Mr. Farncombe chose extracts from the Sargent recording of Gerontius (made over 30 years ago), in which the title role was sung by the incomparable Heddle Nash. It may be a pipe-dream but our visitor mentioned how much he would like to give both The Apostles and The Kingdom on the same day. A tall order for performers and listeners alike - but who knows!

June 13th Eric Fenby, O. B. E.: 'Elgar and Delius.'

Although postponed a week, owing to the original date being declared a public holiday, this meeting amply fulfilled our expectations. Direct links with Elgar inevitably dwindle, but in Mr. Fenby we welcomed a distinguished musician who was fortunate to have known personally both Elgar and Delius - the latter composer intimately, as he was his amanuensis for the last six years of his life. It was a coincidence that both Elgar and Delius died in 1934, and that a third British composer, Holst, also died in the same year.

It was a great pleasure to welcome as our guests a dozen or more members of the Delius Society who were anxious to hear their President talk about his other cherished composer, Elgar. We knew in advance that Elgar's music has always had a profound influence on Fenby, long before there was any thought of his joining Delius. Indeed it was amusing to learn that the newly appointed amanuensis surreptitiously took miniature Elgar scores into the Delius household which he had to keep hidden away, knowing that Elgar's music was an anathema to Delius and strictly forbidden!. It is quite impossible for us to imagine what faced the young Fenby when he arrived at Grez-sur-Loing for the first time; he had not realised that Delius was so completely and utterly handicapped physically (he could not even lift a handkerchief to blow his nose), even though his mind was fully alert and razor-sharp. It was a daunting prospect for a very young man, who must often have felt like packing up and returning to Yorkshire. We were told that fortunately he had a small radio in his room and listened quietly and in strict privacy to B. B. C. broadcasts of Elgar's music whenever possible. These gave him much solace and the mental refreshment and strength to carry on. Naturally much of Mr. Fenby's fascinating talk was autobiographical, though he gave us a clear picture of the fundamental differences between the two great composers in their concept of music, which helped to explain why they were so much at variance, particularly in their attitude to life. For the capacity audience it was a splendid end to our season.

#### June 27th Annual General Meeting.

There was the usual relatively small attendance, though 15 members had apologised for absence. Thus we must conclude that members in general are satisfied with the conduct of their affairs.

The Chairman referred to the fact that increasing membership may well necessitate obtaining larger accommodation for our meetings, at which attendances now average 90/100. We should also bear in mind the importance of paying realistic expenses to our speakers, all of whom willingly come without fee. The full minutes of the meeting will be circulated to members in due course. Meanwhile we can report that Douglas Guest, C. V. O., and E. W. A. Jackson were unanimously elected Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer respectively. Dr. J. M. Buttrey and R. M. Rostron retired from the committee by rotation and Richard Cann resigned for personal reasons consequent upon taking up a new career. To fill the vacancies on the committee the following members were unanimously elected - Miss Diana McVeagh, G. G. Hodgkins, J. M. Hutchinson. The Chairman thanked the retiring committee members for their considerable help during the past three years and warmly welcomed their successors.

The programme for 1977/78 is as follows:

October 3rd. John McCabe--Elgar's Piano Music

November 7th. Diana McVeagh--Elgar's Concert Overtures and other

associations. (Postponed from last season.)  
 December 5th. Edward Greenfield--Elgar - The Reviewer's Model.  
 February 6th. Michael Hurd--The Challenge of Biography.  
 March 6th. Dr. Gareth Lewis--Elgar's Singers.  
 April 3rd. Prof. Ian Parrott--Elgar's Harmony.  
 May 1st. Members' Evening - Details to be announced.  
 June 5th. Michael Pope--Elgar and Parry  
 June 12th. Annual General Meeting--to be followed by an Elgar Quiz.

Programme cards and biographical notes on the various speakers will be sent to London members early in September.

**EAST MIDLANDS** Secretary: Gordon Richmond, 1 Blankley Drive,  
 Stoughton Road, Leicester LE2 2DE.  
 Telephone: 0533 - 704930

We bring you a report this time of a splendid Recital given on Saturday, May 21st. Jane McDouall (mezzo-soprano), and John Taylor (bass-baritone), accompanied by Barry Collett (piano), delighted a capacity audience with a recital of songs by Purcell, Elgar, Schumann, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, Liszt, Peter Warlock, and Saint-Saëns.

The Elgar songs comprised Queen Mary's Lute Song; Dry those fair, those Crystal Eyes; Like to the Damask Rose; To the Children; and The River. The Peter Warlock songs were unaccompanied North-Country folk songs, superbly sung by Jane McDouall. All three artists, together with the branch Chairman, have been booked to appear again at a similar function next year.

The Recital was followed by an equally successful Cheese and Wine Party, two commodities with which Barry Collett combines very well. Our next meeting, a Quiz, is on Saturday September 17th, which is the week before the Boulton Concert in Worcester Cathedral.

We are very pleased to report a successful first season for the Rutland Sinfonia, conducted by Barry Collett. Amongst many items, the Sea Pictures were beautifully sung by Jane McDouall in January, and on May 28th the Orchestra played Grania & Diarmid Funeral March, the Pomp and Circumstance March no. 5, and Sevillana. It is a very fine orchestra, and worthy of the support that it receives. The next concert is on October 1st.

East Midlands Programme - - - 1977 / 1978.

September 17th. Elgar Quiz.  
 October 15th. Barry Collett--The Lesser Known Elgar, with particular reference to "Caractacus".

- November 26th. My Dear Nimrod. A taped programme presented by Tony Cross and George Wallis.
- January 21st. Punch and Mince-Pie Party.  
Preceded by the Branch Annual General Meeting.
- February 11th. Martin Passande--Record Evening.
- March 18th. Jack McKenzie--A talk by the Curator of the Birthplace.
- April 15th. Recital by Barry Collett, followed by a Wine and Cheese Party.
- May 13th. Branch outing to the Elgar Birthplace at Broadheath

\*\* All meetings held at 7.30 p.m. at St. Mary's Knighton Parish Centre.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE to members in Merseyside and the North-West of England.

A meeting has been called in Liverpool on Saturday, November 5th, at 7.30p.m to discuss and arrange the formation of a new branch of the Elgar Society. We have a number of members in Liverpool and in the surrounding areas, and we hope to secure an excellent attendance at the meeting. The venue is the SANDON MUSIC ROOM, BLUECOAT'S CHAMBERS, LIVERPOOL, and we look forward to greeting all members from the North-West who can attend this very important meeting

\*\*\* BIRTHPLACE NEWS \*\*\*

The Birthplace is having a remarkably busy year. Since our last report in May, no less than 4,417 visitors have been recorded. A recent outstanding gift has come from Raymond Monk, and comprises a fine stereo unit. We were able to appreciate this, for on a fine August afternoon we descended the stairs to the strains of the Piano Quintet coming from the Curator's room. The increasing number of visitors, (Mr. McKenzie hopes to reach 7,000 by the year's end), has meant a great deal of work and extra attention by Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie. Their constant enthusiasm, and devotion to the Birthplace, places all Elgarians greatly in their debt.

Visitors to the Birthplace are particularly requested to sign the Visitor's Book. It is of great help to the Curator to have this information, and only takes a few minutes of your time.

The Celebrity Concert on September 24th is to be marked by the issue of a special souvenir programme. This will be on sale at the concert, but afterwards copies will be available from the Birthplace.



THE ELGAR SOCIETY \*\*\*\*\* ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

[Although it has hitherto been the practice to include a full report of the AGM in the Newsletter, it has been decided to conserve space by giving here a summary of the proceedings. Minutes of the meeting will be circulated to members in due course.]

The 27th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Central Hall, Westminster, London, S.W.1 on Saturday, 11th June, 1977. Mr. Douglas Guest, C.V.O. was in the Chair. Apologies for absence were received from 17 members and 26 were present from a membership now approaching 800! How indifferent we are to such meetings, but it is a universal complaint which points a moral. From a steadily expanding membership, one would hope to see proportionately larger attendances; in fact we find the reverse happening. This matter provoked discussion - is a Saturday afternoon in high summer better than, say, a Wednesday afternoon in March or October? Is the location all important? It probably makes little difference - in general, the public has always shewn a consistent antipathy to such meetings. It appears to be a fact of life! However, the committee will carefully consider all the relevant data at its next meeting and try to find a solution to the problem which at best can only be a compromise.

The Hon. Secretary reported a satisfactory year. Since the last meeting 109 members had joined the Society; there had been 7 resignations, and the committee had had to notify 21 members that as their subscriptions were more than two years in arrears and they had not responded to reminders, their names had been deleted from the list. Thus the current effective membership had increased from the previous figure of 660 to 741. The committee was making intensive efforts to increase the membership during the next two years and hoped the figure would reach 1000 or more by the end of 1979.

The appeal for donations to the Elgar/Kilburn Letters fund reached a total of £264.51. The Letters had been handed over to the Elgar Birthplace Trustees the previous week. (A report appears elsewhere in this Newsletter).

The Accounts (previously circulated) were presented by the Hon. Treasurer, who added the comment that the Newsletter was expected to cost almost £700 this year. The Chairman said that in its new format the Newsletter had won universal approval - he congratulated the new Editor, Mr. Ronald Taylor, and his colleagues on their considerable efforts to sustain and improve the quality and value of the Newsletter, not only for present members, but also as an effective means of attracting new members.

The Hon. Secretary reported on the preliminary discussions between the Society, the Birthplace Trustees and the Elgar Foundation apropos the proposal to try to establish some form of unified body to control all Elgar affairs. The most important factor concerned the legal status of the three bodies involved. As both the

Birthplace Trust and the Foundation are registered charities, it became clear that it would be legally impossible to incorporate the Society within a new unified body or trust, unless it was also granted charitable status. It was reported at the 1976 AGM that the Charity Commissioners would not approve any such application from the Society under its present constitution. Earlier this year the Society's Hon. Solicitor, Mr. David Lucas, was asked to report fully on his previous discussions with the Commissioners, and also to advise the Committee whether he considered it expedient for us to amend the constitution so as to satisfy the minimum requirements for obtaining charitable status. In his able and detailed report (which was read out in full to the meeting), Mr. Lucas put forward wholly-convincing arguments to show why it would be unwise for the Society to make any further attempt to become a charity, by no means least because of the obvious loss of independence which would follow a fundamental change of this kind.

Mr. Christopher Harmer (a Birthplace Trustee and member of the Society) made it clear that the Elgar Foundation does not overlap the Society in any way. The former is primarily a fund-raising organisation, whereas the latter has an entirely different function. Mr. Harmer agreed that the advice given by Mr. Lucas was right, but he stressed that full and effective co-operation must continue between the Society and the Foundation. After discussion and questions from the floor, it was unanimously decided to accept the advice given by the Hon. Solicitor to 'leave well alone.' At the same time the committee was instructed to try to reach agreement with the Trustees and the Foundation whereby an effective liaison committee would be set up as soon as possible to implement the essential co-operation already stressed by Mr. Harmer.

After re-electing the present Officers and Committee, the Chairman referred to the announcement that morning of the honour of Knighthood conferred on our distinguished Vice-President, David Willcocks, C. B. E., M. C. It was unanimously decided to send congratulations to Sir David, from whom we subsequently received a charming letter of thanks.

Finally the meeting proceeded to one or the more important and acceptable items on its agenda. We had already been delighted to welcome Mr. & Mrs. A. T. Shaw who looked extremely well after their very early start from Worcester. The Chairman then reminded us that, but for Bertie Shaw, there might well be no Society! At the suggestion of Sir Adrian Boulton, Mr. A. T. Shaw founded the Society in 1951, and occupied the Chair with distinction for 25 years until his retirement last year. As a token of their affection and high regard for Bertie Shaw, many members had subscribed towards a present which the Chairman hoped would be a constant reminder, both to Bertie and Lydia, of their many friends and the Society they had served so admirably. On behalf of the Society the Chairman then presented Mr. Shaw with a piece of Mappin plate which was engraved:-

Presented to Mr. A. T. Shaw  
Founder of the Elgar Society  
to mark 25 years as

CHAIRMAN

1951-1976

As a small recognition of her constant devotion to the Society since its foundation, a bouquet had been sent to Lydia Shaw the previous day.

E. W. A. J.

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PRESENTATION OF THE ELGAR-KILBURN LETTERS

It was appropriate, albeit fortuitous, that Thursday, 2nd June, was chosen on which to present these important letters to the Trustees of Elgar's Birthplace. How better than that the occasion should mark Elgar's birthday, on a fine sunny afternoon in the garden of the cottage where he was born! Amongst members of the Society gathered for the ceremony were many of the donors to the Appeal, all of whom had been specially invited by the Trustees. Previous announcements in the Newsletter had drawn attention to the sale of these letters by auction, and pointed out that a member of the Society had generously purchased them for the Elgar Birthplace Trust, on condition that members as a whole were given the opportunity to share in the cost. The response was most satisfactory, especially as it was the first time the Society had been involved in such a corporate project.

It should be explained that the sale consisted of 100 letters written both by Sir Edward and Lady Elgar to Mr. & Mrs. Kilburn during the period 1897-1922. Letters sent in the reverse direction by the latter have long been a part of the Elgar archive at Worcester. At the sale it was possible to purchase the letters written by Lady Elgar; those written by Sir Edward fetched a sum well beyond our means, but through the splendid efforts of Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore we were allowed to make facsimile copies of the entire collection for the Elgar archive, on condition that they are not accessible for 5 years. Thus it was appropriate that the presentation should be made on behalf of the donors by Dr. Moore. On the platform to represent the Trustees were Mr. E. Wulstan Atkins (Chairman of the Elgar Birthplace Trust), Mr. Christopher Harmer and Mr. S. Driver White. Representing the donors were Dr. Moore, Mr. E. Buckhalter and Mr. E. W. A. Jackson.

Dr. Moore spoke of the importance of this valuable collection, especially for Elgar scholars and for posterity. He reminded us that it was one of the richest correspondences in Elgar's whole life, and that we were all much indebted to Mr. Buckhalter for his kindness in purchasing the letters

[Continued on page 31.]

# LETTERS

From Dr. GARETH LEWIS

Dear Sir, You will recall, that in September 1976 your predecessor kindly published my letter drawing attention to Clara Butt's claim, quoted in 'Clara Butt, Her Life Story' by Winifred Ponder, that Elgar intended that she should sing the part of the Angel at the first performance of "Gerontius" and that he had written that part specifically with her voice in mind.

I have now received from Geoffrey Hodgkins a photocopy of an article in the Strand Magazine of April 1901. It is entitled "What is the Greatest Achievement in Music" and consists of interviews with eleven leading musicians. Clara Butt's response was very interesting indeed, and deserves to be quoted--along with the comments of the interviewer, Frederick Dolman: 'Courage is generally required to recognise the greatest achievement in contemporary work, and Miss Clara Butt has certainly shown this quality in her reply to my question. "Of all the later works," declares the eminent singer, "Edward Elgar's 'The Dream of Gerontius' shows the highest art and genius, in my opinion." It may be said, however, that Miss Butt has only crystalised into one sentence the judgement generally passed by the critics on this musical setting of Cardinal Newman's well-known poem when it was first heard at the Birmingham Festival last October. In a musical review of the year 1900, too, I find this reference to the work: "The cantata made a very deep impression, and for its scholarly attributes, in union with beautiful treatment of a sublime theme, was worthy to rank among the best modern productions of its kind."

This is extremely interesting for several reasons. To begin with it suggests that, early in 1901, Clara Butt was already sufficiently familiar with the work to have formed a highly favourable judgement. Indeed few of the most devoted Elgarians would go so far as to pick the work as the greatest achievement in music. We know that she was at the Birmingham Festival that year, and as she already knew Elgar, she probably took the opportunity of attending that notorious first performance. But was she really such a perceptive musician that she was able to recognise the true stature of the work, despite the poor standard of the performance? Although Clara Butt was, in fact, a much greater artist than memories of the later stages of her career might suggest, the only conclusion we can come to is that her opinion was based on a familiarity with the work which went beyond the Birmingham concert. There was not another performance of the work in this country until 1902, so any further knowledge of the work must have been acquired from the score. Was this after the Birmingham performance (she was probably interviewed no later than February 1901, and possibly earlier) or did Elgar consult her

over the writing of the part of the Angel, enabling her thus to become familiar with the part before the first performance, and, incidentally, possibly leading her to believe mistakenly that Elgar was writing the part specifically for her. The other great interest in this quote from the Strand Magazine lies in the remarks of the critic, which reminds us that professional opinion was by no means universally hostile after the Birmingham performance.

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From MALCOLM WALKER

I recall, that in a recent issue of the NEWSLETTER, there was some query about the orchestrated version of 'Adieu' by Henry Geehl. I should point out that, in writing the sleeve-note for the Hurst recording, I did check with the producer, Brian B. Culverhouse, about the origins of the orchestration. He had, in fact, checked with Keith Prowse (the copyright holders of the score), who assured him that the version prepared by Geehl was made in conjunction with the composer, who in turn expressed his satisfaction with the arrangement

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From Professor IAN PARROTT

Mr. P. G. Leach points out (NEWSLETTER May 1977) that he finds a resemblance between the rhythmic pattern of the opening of the slow movement of Elgar's Violin Concerto and the opening of Mozart's G minor Symphony.

It is, of course, well-known that Elgar was an enthusiast for that particular symphony. He also enjoyed maintaining patterns. However, it may be that Mr. Leach is reading too much into this. Indeed, a resemblance has not previously been pointed out, has it?

If you wish to destroy a resemblance of notes in any two pieces, the easiest way is to alter the rhythmic values (see Scholes, etc.). In the present instance there is not in fact a resemblance of notes. The pattern (certainly similar to look at) can only be considered the same if you bear in mind the considerable difference of tempo and - more important - if you ignore the reversed accents. One suspects that if Mr. Leach were to play the piece again, with more stress in the correct places, he would find that the resemblance might fade.

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From ALAN WEBB

The widespread conversion to Elgar has recently taken some strange turns. Who, a few years ago, would have dreamed that John Eliot Gardiner, the Monteverdi expert, would conduct the 'Spanish Lady' Suite and other items at the Malvern Festival; that the tub-thumping glorification of Britain ending 'Caractacus' would be recorded; that King's College Cambridge Choir would sing "Land of Hope and Glory"; or that the Scottish National Chorus would

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call:

"Now in thy splendour go before us,  
Spirit of England. . . . ."

It is all very encouraging---and faintly amusing.

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From LADY HULL

I read with interest Dr. John Buttrey's letter in your May issue regarding Var. XIII of the Enigma. My husband told me quite definitely that Elgar had said the Variation was to be dedicated to Lady Mary Lygon and, as 'Dorabella' states in her book "Memories of a Variation", p.115, "the composer had written asking permission of Lady Mary to use her initials at the head of no. XIII but, as his letter was not in time to catch her before she sailed, he decided to replace her initials by three asterisks." I did not see Dr. Buttrey's letters to Sir Jack Westrup but I must defend Mrs. Powell as her story is not fiction but fact. It is obvious from Elgar's allusion to Mendelssohn's 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage' together with the whole atmosphere of a ship at sea that he was thinking of Lady Mary and wishing her well. It is a great pity that Novello's did not clear the matter up as it seems to have led to a lot of unnecessary conjecture when there was a quite simple explanation.

While on the subject of the Enigma, the Variation IX, Troyte, has always mystified me. Not long after we were married, Troyte asked himself to tea and, with his variation in mind, I expected the door to burst open and a sort of human tornado to rush in! To my amazement a very tall, thin, slightly-bent figure appeared, wearing a rather shabby mackintosh and enormous boots, and so shy that we could hardly get a word out of him. Apparently Mrs. Powell was also rather mystified by his Variation. Incidentally, my husband--as he writes in a letter to Mrs. Powell dated 13th June 1944--"was the first person ever to play the Variations in duet-form with Elgar and that was from rough proof sheets-- My hat! how we both sweated from sheer excitement! " When they got to Troyte, my husband said he "muffed" it a bit, and apologised to Elgar who only laughed and said "But didn't we make the old fellow buzz! " So, presumably, for those who knew him intimately, there was a quite different and a fiercely argumentative personality? \*\*

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\*\* [ Dr. Buttrey replies: May I squeeze a lot of evidence into a brief summary to show why the story about Elgar's letter failing to catch Lady Mary before she sailed is impossible?

We know (from the MS full score) that Elgar completed writing the Variations by 1st February 1899; he then scored the work between 4th and 19th February. Lord Beauchamp's appointment as Governor of N. S. W. had already been announced in Time Times a few weeks earlier, on 24th January, but, no doubt, the news of his and Lady Mary's departure was known to their friends locally

a little before this. Hence, it was Lady Mary's "projected" sea voyage which Elgar was referring to with the Mendelssohn quotation in Var.13. His statement (in 'My Friends Pictured Within') that Lady Mary was "at the time of composition, on a sea voyage" is unfortunately wrong, but since he wrote this nearly thirty years after the event (about 1928 as far as we know) Elgar may be forgiven for a slight lapse of memory. Lady Mary did not leave Malvern for Australia until 11th April 1899. By that time, Elgar had had two months in which to ask permission to use her initials over Var.13. From Lady Elgar's diary we learn that Elgar was in Lady Mary's company at least four times during those two months, and, on one of those occasions, he asked her to accept the dedication of "Three Characteristic Pieces" (Op. 10), which she did. Moreover, there is, in her family's possession still, the first letter Elgar wrote to Lady Mary after she had arrived in Sydney; with this letter, dated 25th July 1899--a month after the premiere of the Variations--Elgar sent a copy of the "Three Characteristic Pieces", newly come from the press, and, after announcing this, Elgar went on (I quote literally): "... The Variations (especially \*\*\* No.13), have been a great triumph for me under Richter..." So, from the way Elgar worded his statement there, we may gather three things: 1) that Lady Mary must have been told about the Variations before she sailed; 2) that she must have known that Var: 13 was headed in the score by three asterisks (although she may not necessarily have known why); and, 3) she must have known that Var. 13 referred to her--otherwise there was no reason for Elgar to mention it in this way. We may therefore conclude that Elgar had told Lady Mary about Var. 13 in person during the two months before she left Malvern, and so, with the greatest respect to all concerned, there never was a letter which failed to reach her, because none was necessary. But, as to why Elgar used the three asterisks instead of Lady Mary's initials? -- well, the question still remains. ]

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#### ELGAR / KILBURN LETTERS (continued)

at the sale, and to those members who had subsequently helped to defray the cost. To accompany the gift as a permanent record of their generosity, Dr. Moore also handed over a framed and printed Deed of Gift containing the names of all the donors. This will be displayed at the Birthplace. In thanking Dr. Moore and the Society on behalf of the Trustees for 'a magnificent gift', Mr. Wulstan Atkins said that for the time being the letters would be deposited in the Worcestershire Record Office in Worcester for the greater convenience of those wishing to peruse and study them at leisure. The Record Office already has a large collection of letters and other manuscripts relative to Elgar.

After the presentation, tea was served to the assembled company by kind invitation of the Trustees. Their hospitality was much appreciated and pleasantly rounded off another memorable event at the Birthplace.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Annual Subscription to the Society is £2 per annum.

Applications for membership should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, E.W.A. Jackson, 'Killiegray' 7 Batchworth Lane, Northwood, Middx. HA6 3AU. Existing members should renew their subscriptions to the Hon. Treasurer, John Knowles, 11 The Chase, Watford, Herts. WD1 7JQ

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

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NEW MEMBERS are needed, and warmly welcomed. If you are not sure if you reside in a branch area or not, the Society will be pleased to advise you. It is hoped to form further branches as support increases. All members receive the NEWSLETTER, at present issued in January, May, and September.

ELGAR SOCIETY NEWSLETTER. A few of the back numbers of the previous series remain, nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10. All enquiries for these issues should be sent to the editor, and a charge of 10p, plus 9p. postage, is made for each available back issue. All other issues are completely out of print