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# The Elgar Society Journal

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## Editorial

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

*Front Cover: First recording of The Severn Suite. A 78 of excerpts by the winning band, recorded the day after the Festival (Collection of Michael Plant).*

**Notes for Contributors.** Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. A longer version is available in case you are prepared to do the formatting, but for the present the editor is content to do this.

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**Illustrations** (pictures, short music examples) are welcome, but *please ensure* they are pertinent, cued into the text, and have captions.

**Presentation of written text:**

**Subheadings:** longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

**Dates:** use the form 2 June 1857. Decades: 1930s, no apostrophe.

**Plurals:** no apostrophe (CDs not CD's).

**Foreign words:** if well established in English (sic, crescendo) in Roman, otherwise italics.

**Numbers:** spell out up to and including twenty, then 21 (etc.) in figures.

**Quotations:** in 'single quotes' as standard. Double quotes for quotes within quotes.

*Longer quotations* in a separate paragraph, *not* in italic, *not* in quotes; please leave a blank line before and after.

*Emphasis:* ensure emphasis is attributed as '[original emphasis]' or '[my emphasis]'. Emphasized text *italic*.

**References:** Please position footnote markers *after* punctuation – wherever possible at the end of a sentence.

**In footnotes,** please adhere as far as possible to these forms (more fully expounded in the longer version of these notes):

Books: Author, *Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication), page[s]. Thus: Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993), 199.

Periodicals: Author, 'Title of article', *Title of periodical*, issue number and date sufficient to identify, page[s]. Thus: Michael Allis, 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', *Music & Letters*, 85 (May 2004), 198.

End a footnote with a full stop, please, and never put a comma before a parenthesis.

**Titles** that are 'generic' in Roman: e.g. Violin Concerto. Others in *italics* (e.g. *Sea Pictures*; the *Musical Times*). Units within a longer work in single quotes, e.g. 'Sanctus fortis' from *The Dream of Gerontius*.

## Editorial

For the past half century I have bought a monthly record magazine and turned first of all to see what new recordings of Elgar had been issued. In the sixties the answer was 'very few', though we could rely on EMI, at least, to provide succour. Then with the rise of the Naxoses of this world and the plethora of smaller independent record companies came something of a golden age for Elgarians: not only new recordings of familiar works but first recordings of just about everything the man ever wrote. Has the pendulum now swung the other way? Were it not for the enterprise of ICA Classics in scouring the BBC archive (and, in reality, scouring the archives of members with tape recorders to fill the BBC's gaps), the *Duett for Trombone and Double Bass* would be the only Elgar recording to be reviewed in this particular issue.

Thank goodness that the written word is alive and well! Six books are reviewed in this issue that add immeasurably to our knowledge of Elgar and his surroundings: all but 3,000 pages of fascinating information and not a Kindle in sight. Gracious ladies in Malvern and district, gracious gentlemen 'oop North', concert and tube line financiers – they're all here with more to come. A first volume of Kevin Allen's 'A Norbury Saga' leaves us eagerly awaiting its sequel, and first drafts exist of a further nine volumes of Elgar diaries ...

The written word is alive and well, too, within the pages of the *Journal*. When I took on the role of editor, I had a feeling that I might have to contribute more essays than was healthy. Not a bit of it! I have been delighted by the willingness of contributors new and old to submit their work, and glad that it is of so varied a nature that there should be something to interest everyone in each issue. And this is a bumper issue. Having donated some of my allocation of pages in August to ensuring that Dominic's *News* had a fitting send-off (and having had to 'pull' one essay as a result), I reclaim them with interest in December. You will find a major essay by Robert Kay on *The Severn Suite* and the first of a series of three articles by Bryson Mortensen on *Caractacus*, as well as essays on Elgar's religious beliefs and the background to a Barry Collett's new recording of the Powick music. Which brings us full circle: the recording, on the SOMM label, is scheduled for release in time to be reviewed in the next issue.

Martin Bird

# The Severn Suite: Manuscripts, Music and Myths

Robert Kay

## Introduction

*The Severn Suite Op.87* is Elgar's most ambitious completed work from his final compositional period. Best known as a brass-band classic, it also exists in official transcriptions for full orchestra, wind band and organ.

Since its composition a number of incorrect assumptions about *The Severn Suite* have been made by critics and commentators. The reader consulting an Elgar reference book which mentions the work is likely to encounter basic factual errors. These include received ideas which have acted to the detriment of Elgar's reputation as a musician.

This article surveys the source material for *The Severn Suite*, recounts in their entirety the complicated chronology and iconography of the work, and highlights the misapprehensions that have crept into the literature.

## Reluctance

Following the death of his wife in April 1920 Elgar effectively ground to a halt as a composer. Although *Beau Brummel* of 1928 was written at Elgar's own suggestion, the few other original works that he completed in the 1920s were written mainly from commercial necessity or to oblige friends.

One friend whose enthusiasm was not satisfied was the organist and brass band expert Herbert Whiteley.<sup>1</sup> Elgar later credited him with 'calling *The Severn Suite* into being' and as Whiteley wrote to Elgar's daughter Carice some years later,

Elgar was the first composer to give me any encouragement in my plan of improving the outlook of brass bands and their music. That was in 1912!

Whiteley had worked hard to nurture Elgar's interest in brass band music. He sent Elgar copies of brass band scores, and tried to persuade him to write a Test Piece for the National Band Championships at Crystal Palace in London. By early 1930 he appeared to have succeeded, only for his hopes temporarily to be dashed. His letter of 31<sup>st</sup> January 1930 drew on all his powers of persuasiveness:

1 Herbert Whiteley (1873-1953) was editor of the brass band journal *British Bandsman*, musical editor to brass band publishers R. Smith & Co., and advisor to the Crystal Palace National Band Festival 1910-1930.

Your last letter was a keen disappointment to me, especially after your promise to send a short score. The next Festival is the twenty-fifth, and I declined other works on the strength of your promise. Name your terms. Please do not let me down. I appeal to you - for the sake of the brass band - to write the next work.

In spite of this entreaty, matters might not have progressed further had it not been for the death of one of Elgar's staunchest supporters.

In 1921 Henry Embleton, conductor of the Leeds Choral Union and an indefatigable Elgarian, had advanced Elgar the sum of £500 in the hope of inducing him to complete the *Apostles* trilogy. This hope came to nothing, and on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1930 Embleton died, his personal fortune depleted almost to zero by his enthusiasm for choral music in general and Elgar's choral music in particular.

By coincidence, Whiteley had written to Elgar on the same day, offering improved terms<sup>2</sup> and telling Elgar that a pack of blank music manuscript paper had been dispatched to him the previous day in the hope of persuading him to commence composition. The offer was timely, as on 14<sup>th</sup> February Embleton's solicitors wrote to Elgar demanding the return of the £500 advance. Elgar tried to wriggle out of this obligation, first asserting that the £500 had been a gift, and then taking legal advice. This advice was not encouraging.

The dispute with Embleton's executors rumbled on during February and March,<sup>3</sup> but had the indirect effect that Elgar decided to accept Whiteley's revised offer. Having written little in the previous decade,<sup>4</sup> he took on the task of writing a substantial work, for a prestigious event with no possibility of the deadline being extended, in an unfamiliar medium – that of the brass band.



Herbert Whiteley, who 'called *The Severn Suite* into being' (British Bandsman).

- 2 Initially £100 was offered, but in January 1930 Whiteley offered £150 'inclusive'. The 7<sup>th</sup> February letter repeated this offer, but terms were eventually agreed at £150 for brass band rights only: this meant that Elgar was free to arrange *The Severn Suite* for other combinations and earn further fees from the relevant publishers.
- 3 The £500 was finally repaid on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. The contract for the brass band rights was signed, and the £150 handed over, on the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- 4 The 1920s saw three works of consequence: the *Arthur* incidental music (1923), *Empire March/Pageant Of Empire* (1924) and the *Beau Brummel* incidental music (1928). *Beau Brummel* is lost (see the December 2011 *ESJ* for details) but appears, like the other two pieces, to have been substantial in scope. Significantly all three works were, like *The Severn Suite*, written against immovable deadlines. The impression is that Elgar was reluctant to get involved but was capable of sustained high-pressure work once responsibility had been formally taken on.

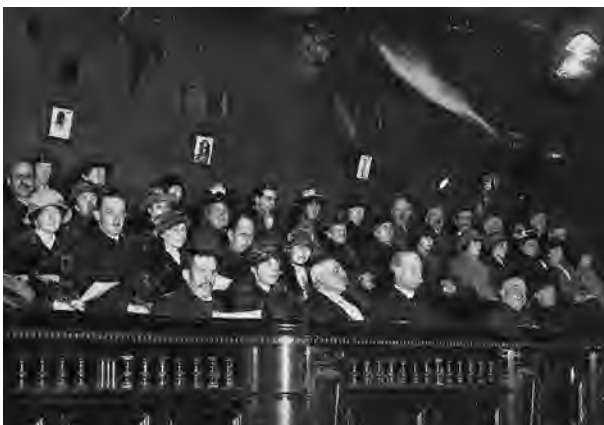
## Brass Bands — Men, Festivals and Music<sup>5</sup>

Although brass bands evolved from a variety of beginnings including civic waits, church bands and militia ensembles, by Elgar's time they had crystallised in format both as regards instruments and repertoire. Advances in mass-production in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century reduced the cost of brass instruments and improved their reliability. Instruments which were marginally popular or which were not simple to mass-produce fell into disuse, and by the 1880s a typical brass band consisted of Cornets, Saxhorns, Trombones and Tubas. Brass instruments, being cheap and simple to maintain, as well as easier to learn from scratch than woodwind, became the instruments of choice for the less well-off.

The stronghold of brass band playing was in the industrial heartlands in the north-East of England, South Wales and Cornwall. Many bands were founded and financed by those who subscribed to the Victorian belief that music, particularly highbrow (as opposed to mass-popular) music represented a positive force for the moral elevation of working people. An unofficial 'brass band movement' came to embrace many tens of thousands of brass bands, a service industry of instrument manufacturers and sheet music publishers and an extensive retail network.

Competitive festivals offering cash prizes were another feature of brass-band culture. A National Festival was held briefly in the 1860s and the Open Festival ran every year in Manchester from 1853 onwards. In these competitions not only were the instruments in the bands standardised, but also the number of players, and when Elgar came to write *The Severn Suite* he was instructed to write for an ensemble containing 24 or 25 players, the makeup of the bands being precisely specified.<sup>6</sup>

Many brass bands were set up with motives of benevolent paternalism by wealthy factory owners for their employees' benefit. As a result a very large proportion of brass bands was comprised of individuals from the working class, and this had an unfortunate consequence. The



**Elgar at a 1921 concert of his music by the Black Dyke Mills band** in the Victoria Hall, Queensbury, Bradford. Seated on Elgar's left, his host Herbert Anderton Foster, owner of the Black Dyke textile mill. The Foster family had created the Black Dyke Mills Band in 1855 from a moribund local band, supplying uniforms, purchasing new instruments and providing a rehearsal venue (Black Dyke Band archive).

5 This section relies for source material on *The British Brass Band, A Musical and Social History* ed. Trevor Herbert (Oxford University Press, 2000).

6 One Soprano Cornet, eight Cornets, one Flugelhorn, three Tenor Horns, two Baritone Horns, three Trombones (two tenor, one bass), two Euphoniums and four Basses (Tubas: two each of two sizes). One extra player could be added anywhere in the ensemble. Percussion was not permitted until 1973.

middle classes, wary of an identifiably working-class culture and in many cases viewing the working classes with distrust, refused to accept the brass band as a valid art form worthy of serious consideration. This attitude persisted at least until the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> In this respect brass bands were at a disadvantage, as their music consisted almost entirely of operatic selections and transcriptions, with no symphonic repertoire specifically composed for the brass band medium.

Herbert Whiteley's employers, R. Smith & Co., were owned by J. Henry Iles,<sup>8</sup> who also owned the *British Bandsman*. In 1900 Iles had revived the National Band Contest and instituted it as an annual brass band showcase at the Crystal Palace in London (he also ran the Open Championship held in Manchester). The competitive part of this festival culminated in the Finals in which bands were assessed by their performance of a set Test Piece. This Test Piece was normally an operatic selection, but in 1913 the composer Percy Fletcher had written the tone poem *Labour and Love*, specifically for brass band. Whiteley persuaded Iles to set *Labour and Love* as the Test Piece for the 1913 National Championships.

Whiteley's ambition was to raise the profile of brass-banding within the mainstream musical world. This meant creating a repertoire from scratch, and an essential step was to persuade established classical composers to write original music for brass band. In 1928 the Test Piece had been Holst's *A Moorside Suite*, but Whiteley's long-held dream was to persuade Elgar to write a brass band work. In 1930 this dream became reality.

## Composition

Elgar's compositional methods involved a preliminary stage where the music was sketched in fragmentary form, followed by the preparation of a 'short score'. This contained all the music, in its correct order, but written on two or three staves rather like a piece of piano music. The short score was then used for reference when scoring the music for full band (or full orchestra).

Whiteley's letters of 31<sup>st</sup> January and 7<sup>th</sup> February 1930 make it clear that he was initially expecting Elgar to send him a short score, rather than an orchestrated full score, of the work. The plan was for this short score to be handed to an expert in brass-band scoring who would then do the work of orchestration. R. Smith & Co. had recently published competition test pieces by the brass-band expert Henry Geehl<sup>9</sup> and it was intended that Geehl would create a brass-band full score from Elgar's short score MS.<sup>10</sup> A further two months were allocated for this task.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February, therefore, Whiteley dispatched to Elgar some specially-printed blank manuscript paper. This contained not only the music staves for the full band, but at the bottom of each page a two-stave system headed 'Solo Cornet/Conductor'. In his covering letter the next day he said:

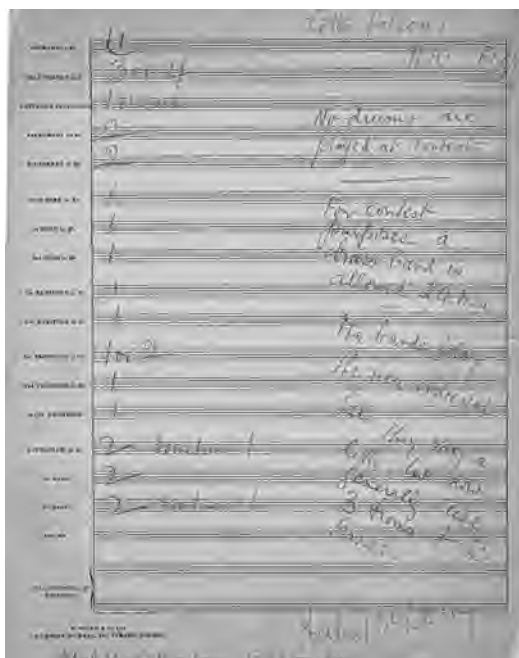
I sent some of the new scoring paper yesterday which I have had specially engraved for you in the hope that you would send a short score in the next three or four weeks.

7 This aspect of social prejudice is examined in Herbert *op.cit.*, 110-121.

8 John Henry Iles (1871-1951) was a leisure magnate. His modest abilities as composer and conductor can be heard on HMV and Regal recordings of the 1933-1936 Crystal Palace Festival bands.

9 Henry Ernest Geehl (1881-1961) was employed as editor by various music publishers including R. Smith & Co. Initially known for light music and songs, he is now remembered for brass-band works. He wrote test pieces for the 1923 and 1924 Crystal Palace National Festivals.

10 For a brass band expert to score a work by a mainstream composer is not unusual. For example, the 1958 test piece, Edmund Rubbra's *Variations on 'The Shining River'*, was scored by Frank Wright.



Herbert Whiteley's guide to brass band scoring.

First page dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 1930, the date on which the pack of blank score paper was dispatched to Elgar.

The second page, which contains more detailed information, may have been sent later. Note the excerpt from the Toccata written by Elgar on the lowest two staves, plus an aide-memoire for E $\flat$  and B $\flat$  Bass transpositions (Private collection).



Evidently this paper had been sent so that Elgar could copy his short score into these two bottom staves, the MS paper then being sent back to R. Smith & Co. within the four-week deadline. Henry Geehl would then do his scoring on the same pages, having the copied short score conveniently in vision for reference throughout.

Elgar began, however, by preparing a short score on his own manuscript paper. This ran to 34 pages headed 'Brass C[ompetition] P[iece]' and contained the entire Suite. Starting neatly, it soon degenerated into a scrawl, some pages being virtually illegible. Upon its completion Elgar commenced copying this short score, tidily, onto R. Smith's blank full-score paper. However, shortly after starting, he had a change of plan.

There is no evidence that a short score was ever sent to R. Smith & Co., but Whiteley had allowed until at least the end of April for the full score to be delivered. At some point Elgar decided to bypass Henry Geehl and do the scoring off his own bat.

This was an heroic decision, given that Elgar had no track record whatsoever as a brass band composer. However, he was an acknowledged master of orchestration, and by referring to the brass-band scores Herbert Whiteley had sent<sup>11</sup> would have had no difficulty in grasping the principles of brass band scoring.<sup>12</sup> And – crucially – with the pack of blank MS paper Whiteley had also sent a two-page handwritten beginner's guide to brass band scoring, detailing the instruments and their transpositions,<sup>13</sup> the makeup of the band, and suggesting a running time of approximately 12 minutes in line with the length of previous Festival test pieces.

Before he commenced composition, therefore, Elgar had already been made aware of all important aspects of brass band technique. Having started to copy his own short score onto the blank full-score paper, he stopped at page 15 of the full score (the beginning of the Toccata and the point at which his own short score begins to be significantly less legible), went back to page 1 and commenced the orchestration himself.<sup>14</sup>

From that point work proceeded at extreme speed and the entire brass band full score – 98 manuscript pages<sup>15</sup> – had been completed by 15<sup>th</sup> April 1930. The final instalment was dispatched

11 'You desire me to send one of the previous scores – I think you have had them all.' (Whiteley to Elgar, 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1930).

12 There were no textbooks for Elgar to consult. The first, *Scoring for Brass Bands* by Denis Wright, appeared in 1935.

13 Most brass-band instruments 'transpose', i.e. the note fingered by the player produces a sound different in pitch from that implied by the written note. A brass band consists of instruments 'in' C (the note coming out of the instrument is the same as that on the printed part), in B $\flat$  (the note sounded is a tone lower than that written) and in E $\flat$  (the note sounded is either a minor third higher or a major sixth lower than that written). Some instruments also sound one or two octaves lower. The printed parts for the individual players take account of these transpositions. For example, if a band is to play a unison C, the Bass Trombone (in C) will have a part showing the note C, the B $\flat$  Cornet will have a part showing D (i.e. written a tone higher than the note desired) and the E $\flat$  Horn will have a part showing A (written a major sixth higher). If the players of these respective instruments finger the notes specified and blow, a unison C will result. It is important to understand this concept in view of issues raised later in this article.

14 The foregoing account of events is inferred from the fact that the first 15 pages of Elgar's full score MS include the short score tidily copied into the lowest two staves, these staves being blank for the remaining 83 pages. The only logical explanation is that Elgar started to copy in his short score, intending to return the score paper to Geehl after this had been done, but then decided to do the full score himself. Elgar had a telephone in 1930, so this decision, which would have required an immediate policy change on Whiteley's part, may have been communicated verbally.

15 The pages are numbered 1 to 97 with a page 47A inserted after page 47.

the next day, along with a page of preliminary sketch which Elgar inscribed to Whiteley as a gift,<sup>16</sup> well before the appointed deadline. This left a further five months for score and parts to be printed.

In his covering letter Whiteley set out several considerations for the task ahead:

Bantock's *Kubla Khan* [*sic*: the work was called *Oriental Rhapsody*] did not come off on the brass band and Holst's piece [*A Moorside Suite*] was technically too easy especially in the opening movement. A piece which is technically difficult is as necessary as one on a subject which appeals to men who are most efficient technically but who know little about music in a general sense.

Sketches in the British Library include timings approximating to 12 minutes, but in the event *The Severn Suite* turned out to be over 17 minutes in duration, within which is contained some of the most inspired music from his post-1920 period. The five movements – Introduction, Toccata, Fugue, Minuet and Coda – play without a break and are linked thematically in a convincing symphonic structure. During composition Elgar consulted a Cornet player for technical advice. The writing is demanding in various ways, whether in the relentless quaver *ostinato* in the Toccata, necessary rhythmic precision in the Minuet, the problems of breath control and legato in the Fugue, and full-on volume and sonority in the Introduction and Coda. *The Severn Suite* was dignified with an opus number – the first since the Bach transcription of 1921/2 – and when it was later arranged for full orchestra and for Military Band the music was left entirely unaltered, showing that Elgar was fully satisfied with his initial inspiration.

This inspiration drew praise from Herbert Whiteley:

The *Minuet* is just lovely, and the muted cornets, trombones and basses will be most effective. This movement will make a big appeal owing to its majestic simplicity. You have shown the youngsters 'how to do it' in the Fugue.

### Publication, Performance, Reception

Elgar's manuscript full score having been received by R. Smith & Co., their next task was to prepare material for the music engravers who were to produce the printed full score and instrumental parts.

In many cases a composer's manuscript is suitable for use by the engraver without further work. However, in the case of *The Severn Suite* Elgar's score was written in C – all the notes were shown at exact concert pitch – and this did not take account of the transpositions necessary to put the music into the correct key for each individual instrument. As a result, Smith's needed to create a further copyist's score for the engravers with the correct transpositions built-in.<sup>17</sup>

The copyist – presumably Henry Geehl – therefore set to preparing a handwritten fair-copy score, as legible as possible (Elgar's full-score MS was somewhat untidy), incorporating all the necessary transpositions. This was done – but then a further problem arose.

It will be recalled that Herbert Whiteley had sent Elgar a guide to brass-band scoring as well as the printed scores of brass-band works. Elgar, a master orchestral technician, was thereby fully aware of the technical issue of transpositions, and would have known that his score in C would

result in a performance sounding a tone lower: the brass-band parts, written in C but sounding in B $\flat$ , containing the fewest possible accidentals in the key signature and thus being easiest for the players.<sup>18</sup>

Geehl, however, failed to take this point and assumed that the piece was intended to sound in C. He therefore prepared his copyist's score a tone higher, in the key of D, to give a sounding key of C in performance. This was a fundamental conceptual blunder and no sooner had the score been finished than the error was pointed out.<sup>19</sup>

It would then, in theory, have been necessary to prepare a further score in the key of C (sounding B $\flat$ ) – a copy of Geehl's score in D but a tone lower throughout – for use by the engraver. But it has been suggested<sup>20</sup> that the engravers, Messrs. Brandstetter of Leipzig, would have been competent to effect the additional transposition themselves, without the need to prepare a further score in C. Given the tight deadline, and given that no copyist's score in written C survives, this is probably what was done.

Geehl's score in D still exists. Its music and details of scoring are identical with Elgar's full-score MS, apart from a few minor alterations in texture. Geehl had omitted Elgar's percussion parts, as percussion was not then permitted in competition test pieces. For the purposes of general sale the percussion parts had to be reinstated, so Elgar added them to the Geehl D score in his own hand. One assumes that this score was then sent to Brandstetter's: in any event, the printed full score and set of parts, in the correct key of written C sounding B $\flat$ , were received back from Leipzig in time for the first performance.

The 1930 National Band Festival took place on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1930 at Crystal Palace. 189 bands participated, although only some competed at the Finals in which *The Severn Suite* featured. The winners were the Foden Motor Works Band, who the next day made a recording of excerpts for the Regal record label.

Elgar was scheduled to attend the festival, this being announced in the brass-band press. But at the last minute he had an attack of sciatica – possibly a symptom of his developing terminal illness – and had to remain at home.<sup>21</sup> George Bernard Shaw,<sup>22</sup> the dedicatee of *The Severn Suite*, attended the Finals and sent Elgar a very long and complimentary critique of the test piece and its executants:

The players all worked like Trojans at the suite: there was not a single slovenly or vulgar bar. The rise of enthusiasm continued steadily as the work became more and more familiar, and the audience listened harder and harder for their fancy bits. The scoring is infallible – you should have heard the curiously pleasant oboe quality of the muted Flugels picking up after the Cornets. Nobody would have guessed how beautiful the work is as abstract music.

<sup>16</sup> This page was later given to Carice by Whiteley and is now in the British Library's Elgar sketchbooks.

<sup>17</sup> Elgar presumably did not include transpositions in his full score because he found them too difficult to work out in the limited time available (some are specific only to brass-band scoring). His short score contains scribbled *aides-memoire* which show him grappling with the problem.

<sup>18</sup> A similar consideration applies to the few instruments in the brass band not pitched in the key of B $\flat$ . A performance in a higher key also involves higher top notes so is more strenuous to play.

<sup>19</sup> There is a handwritten note by Elgar on the final page verso of the original MS full score: 'Score transposed in D discarded – wrong key'. There is no evidence who made the actual decision.

<sup>20</sup> By Michael Brand, former co-proprietor of R. Smith & Co. Ltd., email to the author.

<sup>21</sup> 'We send you best wishes for speedy recovery. Your work great success with splendid performances. All deeply regret your inability to be present' (Henry Iles to Elgar, telegram from Crystal Palace 6.27 p.m. 27<sup>th</sup> September 1930).

<sup>22</sup> George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), playwright, vegetarian, and music critic, under the pen-name 'Corno di Bassetto'. A good friend and supporter of Elgar in the latter's last years.



*Four first pages: source material for the brass band version, in chronological order.*

**Elgar's original short score,** prepared as a preliminary to the full score. The music is presented in the key of C, on two staves. Later pages also carry indications of instrumentation, full score pagination and transpositions (British Library).



**Elgar's brass band full score.** The same music, also in the key of C, with the instruments all shown in exact concert pitch in either treble or bass clef. On the lowest two staves, a tidy copy in Elgar's handwriting of the original short score: this peters out on page 15 (Elgar Birthplace).



The copyist's (presumably Geehl's) score in D, later rejected by Elgar as being in the 'wrong key'. The notation is exactly the same as in the Elgar full-score MS, but the instruments are shown in their correct clefs (all in treble clef except for the Bass Trombone) and the music is transposed up a tone to give a sounding key of C (written in D). Note Elgar's handwritten correction in the bottom right-hand corner, relating to the Baritone II part: on later pages the Drums part is added in Elgar's own handwriting and there are some suggestions by Geehl for changes in texture (Private collection).

**The published brass band score.** The same notation as the score in D, but transposed down a tone so as to give a performance sounding in B $\flat$  (written C). This printed score incorporates Geehl's few suggestions for improvements in texture, but ignores one late amendment by Elgar himself. The printed score also contains numerous minor errors, most of which originate with the score in D and which were presumably due to haste on Geehl's part (Author's collection).





Other commentators appreciated the work's qualities, and between its composition and Elgar's death *The Severn Suite* also received no fewer than nine live broadcast performances.<sup>23</sup> It has, however, been stated<sup>24</sup> that *The Severn Suite* had a slow rise to popularity within brass band circles. This may have been because it allows little scope for individual virtuoso display, the writing being homogeneous rather than spectacular. The beliefs that the music derived from old material and that Elgar had been unenthusiastic may also have compromised the work's reputation. Today, however, *The Severn Suite*'s popularity is assured as a flagship work of the brass band repertoire.

#### **Canard No.1 — 'Based on old sketches'**

Within the *corpus* of Elgar literature the perceived quality of *The Severn Suite* depends on whether the respective authors appear to have studied the work in any depth. Basil Maine's Elgar biography, written in 1933, examines the music in detail and is highly complimentary. Percy Young describes it as capturing 'much of the old virility' while Robert Anderson speaks of the orchestral version as displaying 'the old wizardry at top voltage'. These are unequivocal votes of confidence, yet other commentators have sought to downgrade the music with the accusation that it was 'based on old sketches'.

Elgar was indeed in the habit of noting down musical ideas for use at a later date. But in this he was in good company with other composers, and such ideas did not find outlet only in his last compositions.<sup>25</sup> After finishing a work Elgar would discard much of his preliminary material: few sketches survive for *The Severn Suite* and all appear to be contemporary. Only with *The Spanish Lady*, where for obvious reasons Elgar was unable to complete this procedure, is the dependence on old sketches so extensive as to be almost embarrassing.

Of the five movements of *The Severn Suite*, three are, so far as we know, entirely new. These are the Introduction, the Coda (based on the Introduction) and the Toccata (by far the longest movement of the five). The third movement, Fugue, is a shortened and improved transcription of an unpublished work written in 1923. The Minuet is based on the early 'Shed Music' written by Elgar for his musician friends: the main theme from *Harmony Music No.5* of 1879 and the trio motif from *Promenade No.5* of a year earlier – both extensively reworked.

This does not add up to a work based on discarded material. The Fugue was unpublished, but had been performed in public and is in any case from Elgar's maturity. The Minuet is derived from two works which had been completed and given private performances.

The idea that *The Severn Suite* was 'dashed off from old ideas reshaped for the occasion'<sup>26</sup> seems to have originated with a somewhat ambiguous statement by W.H.Reed in *Elgar* (1939):

In 1930 Elgar did very little,<sup>27</sup> but during April (*sic*) he wrote a test piece for which he had been asked for the annual brass band contest. Having already made several sketches for a suite he accepted the proposal and wrote *The Severn Suite*.

23 Ron Taylor in *Elgar Studies* ed. Monk (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1999), 344.

24 By Paul Hindmarsh in Trevor Herbert *op.cit.* 255.

25 See Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 345.

26 Herbert Whiteley in the *Daily Telegraph*, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1939, defending *The Severn Suite*'s musical credentials.

27 An odd statement given that 1930 was by far the most productive of Elgar's years *post mortem uxoris*.

Reed does not state that the sketches were old, nor that they were made with any purpose other than *The Severn Suite* itself. The 'old sketches' notion has, however, taken root and been repeated by many commentators, the tacit implication being that *The Severn Suite*, being based on rehased material, is not worthy of serious consideration within the Elgar canon. This is particularly noticeable in Michael Kennedy's two Elgar studies: *Portrait of Elgar* from 1968 barely mentions the matter, but by *The Life of Elgar* (2004) the 'old sketches' theory is extended not only to *The Severn Suite* but to *Arthur*, *Beau Brummel* and *Nursery Suite* as well. Other books take the same approach with little attention to the actual music.

The accusation that *The Severn Suite* was derived wholly or substantially from old sketches is not tenable based on currently available evidence. Its persistent appearance in Elgar commentaries suggests that received value-judgements are being used as a convenient substitute for first-hand knowledge. The implication that Elgar had by that stage of his career run out of musical inspiration is inaccurate and damaging to his reputation.

#### **Canard No.2 — Geehl's involvement — a detailed refutation**

Following Elgar's decision to score the work himself, Henry Geehl's rôle<sup>28</sup> devolved to preparing a transposed and annotated score for the engraver, as well as copy-checking and proofreading. His suggestions for minor improvements in texture were adopted in the printed full score – one of Elgar's amendments, which would further have improved the sonority, was ignored – but otherwise Geehl played no part in the creative process of either musical composition or scoring. His preparation of a score in the wrong key could have jeopardised the entire project deadline. This score also contains a very large number of minor errors, most of which fed through into the printed product and have been the bane of players and conductors ever since.

In summary, Geehl could be said to have discharged his editor's duties with a certain lack of forethought or meticulousness. Nevertheless, some years after Elgar's death, Geehl made the extraordinary claim to have scored the entire work himself.<sup>29</sup>

I am responsible for the scoring of *The Severn Suite*. This well-known fact is mentioned by Basil Maine in his *Life Of Elgar*.<sup>30</sup> Elgar made a fairly comprehensive sketch, which had to be drastically modified when it came to the scoring. Much of the writing was not practical for brass, and it was left to me to alter where necessary. I relied mostly on a two-stave version when scoring.

Shortly before his death, Geehl elaborated on this claim:<sup>31</sup>

I was in continuous consultation with the composer, who provided me with a very sketchy piano part with figured bass and a kind of skeleton orchestral score, mostly in two or three parts, with an indication of the counterpoint he wanted me to add: the rest of the score he left to my discretion. Elgar

28 Geehl's [non-]involvement in the *Severn Suite* project was examined by Philip Maund in *ESJ* articles for July 1997 and March 2001, to which due acknowledgement is hereby given. Maund was not able to examine all the manuscripts and consequently did not come to a definitive verdict, but his articles should be studied closely as they provide essential background.

29 Letter by Geehl to the *Daily Telegraph*, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1939.

30 This is mendacious: Maine is referring to the later Military Band arrangement.

31 Geehl on 'The Unrecognised Arranger' in *The Conductor* magazine for April 1960, quoted in Maund 1997 *op.cit.*

had many pre-conceived ideas on brass treatment, usually unworkable, which he tried very hard to get me to adopt, and it took a great deal of argument on my part to convince him that his ideas were just not possible. I remember a particularly bad afternoon when I endeavoured to persuade him to omit the mutes in the Minuet, well knowing that the sound would be entirely different from what he imagined. But all to no purpose: the somewhat banal sound of the muted trombones will be handed down to posterity. My own ideas were adopted in several instances, but were always conceded grudgingly.

The highly circumstantial nature of these accounts has given them the ring of truth, and they have until recently been swallowed wholesale by virtually all Elgar commentators. Nevertheless, Geehl's claims are completely without foundation. As they imply a slur on Elgar's abilities it is necessary to go into some detail in order to refute them unequivocally.<sup>32</sup>

Because Elgar's brass band MS was not generally available to scholars until 2000<sup>33</sup> and the Geehl score in D remains in private hands,<sup>34</sup> it was impossible to refute Geehl's assertions until recently, and Elgarians can be excused for having been taken in by him, at least as regards books written before 2000. However, it is now possible to trace a clear iconographic and chronological trail from Elgar's initial sketches to the printed finished product, and this trail does not admit of Geehl's involvement in the manner he describes.

Sketches apart, the only manuscripts known are the Elgar short score (undated), the Elgar MS brass-band full score (signed and dated 15<sup>th</sup> April 1930 on its last page) and the Geehl score in D (undated). If Geehl's claim were true, he would have first created his score in D from Elgar's short score, scoring the music as he went along. When this score in D (which deals with all the technical aspects correctly, albeit in the wrong key) had been completed, Elgar would then have had to have copied Geehl's score to create his own 98-page MS (signing and dating it at the end even though the work had been Geehl's) which was in a different key and failed to incorporate any transpositions, thus being unsuitable as a printer's reference item. Finally, Elgar would have had to copy into his MS the notes from his original short score, petering out for no apparent reason on page 15. As a result Elgar would have generated an entirely useless full-score autograph MS, in the wrong keys for the instruments, after Geehl had already scored the work, all this being done in a ten-week period (7<sup>th</sup> February to 15<sup>th</sup> April).

This scenario is manifestly absurd, yet if Geehl's claim were true the existence of Elgar's own MS full score could not otherwise be explained. The foregoing paragraph furnishes a form

32 In Maund's 1997 *ESJ* article he says 'the answer [to Geehl's claims] lies in a detailed note-by-note comparison [of the printed score] with Elgar's autograph'. The author has performed this comparison: (i) The printed score reflects Elgar's original MS brass band full score to the extent of 100% of the music, (ii) The printed score reflects Elgar's original MS score to the extent of at least 99.75% of the scoring, (iii) the remaining 0.25% of scoring comprises suggestions by Geehl, marked into Elgar's original MS, relating to improvements in texture, (iv) Other than 'default cues' correctly added by the editor, Geehl's score in D contains no changes either to music or texture beyond the 0.25%, (v) The printed score contains many inconsistencies in dynamics and articulation, most of which originate with the score in D, (vi) These inconsistencies could largely have been resolved by someone who was *au fait* with Elgar's handwriting.

33 The brass-band MS was formerly the property of Wulstan Atkins (1904-2003), son of Worcester Cathedral organist Ivor Atkins (*q.v.*). It was auctioned at Sotheby's on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1995 but failed to meet its reserve. On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2000 it was sold, again at Sotheby's, to the Elgar Birthplace for £20,000.

34 The Geehl score in D and Whiteley's handwritten guide to brass-band scoring are the property of G. and M. Brand, former co-proprietors of R.Smith & Co.

of 'proof by contradiction'<sup>35</sup> that the claim was in fact spurious.

Existing MSS do not include anything resembling Geehl's 'sketchy piano part with figured bass', 'skeleton orchestral score', or 'fairly comprehensive sketch which had to be drastically modified'. True, Elgar's short score is on two staves, like a piano part. It is not a skeleton orchestral score – instrumental indications are simply pencilled-in at certain points, some referring to orchestral rather than brass-band instruments – and the music in the short score is that of the finished work: so Geehl's reference to drastic modification begs the question of what there was to modify. In certain places, particularly in the Toccata, the short score is so untidy as to be unreadable other than by its originator – but it does resemble Elgar's sketches for other works where ideas were modified by overwriting.

The statement that 'Elgar had many pre-conceived ideas on brass treatment, usually unworkable' is at variance with his reputation as an orchestrator whose treatment of the brass is regarded as masterly. Geehl states that mutes were impractical, but both Herbert Whiteley and Henry Iles had commented favourably on this aspect of the scoring, likewise G.B.Shaw. Geehl's 'particularly bad afternoon' sounds more like someone being presented with a *fait accompli* (a completed full score with some unconventional ideas on scoring), rather than an expert giving advice. There is even some evidence to suggest that he did not meet Elgar at all before 1933,<sup>36</sup> although logic suggests that they would have had personal contact in 1930.

It is hoped that the foregoing argument will convince the reader that to support Geehl's claim in the face of the existing evidence would be not only to throw Occam's Razor out of the window but to follow it with Occam's shaving brush, ewer, washstand and bathroom.

The only question is: why did he do it?

Geehl's claim in the *Daily Telegraph* was made after Elgar had been dead for five years and was not in a position to reply, while the letter to *The Conductor* came seven years after Whiteley's death. Geehl could make his assertions without fear of comeback.

His motives are difficult to fathom. By 1960 Geehl was in poor health and may have confused the brass-band project and the later wind-band edition. Possibly Elgar's short score was shown to R.Smith & Co. as advance warning of the extent of the work. But the detailed nature of Geehl's account smacks of a fantasist suffering from professional jealousy.

Whiteley's original scheme was indeed to have Elgar provide a short score which Geehl would

35 A procedure in mathematics whereby a proposition (in this case that Geehl was lying) is proved by demonstrating that its converse (in this case that Geehl's claim was true) leads to an absurdity.

36 Philip Maund in *ESJ* July 1997, 53-54.



**Henry Geehl**, who acted as Elgar's publication editor, but who later falsely claimed to have scored *The Severn Suite* himself (British Bandsman).

orchestrate. Had that happened, Geehl could have basked in reflected glory. But then Elgar decided to do the scoring himself: this may have been viewed by Geehl as a veiled disparagement. And then Elgar – who by 1930 was viewed by the musical public as a written-out has-been – proceeded in spite of his previous inexperience to produce an impeccable brass-band MS which required scarcely any alterations to scoring or texture, and this work then went on to become a brass-band classic, usurping the embryo reputation which Geehl might have hoped to develop further during the 1930s.

It is a pity that the document which would have destroyed Geehl's claims – the original Elgar MS brass-band full score – was not known to exist. If this MS had remained in Carice's hands there would have been no difficulty if interested parties had wished to inspect it. Wulstan Atkins (who we assume owned the score in 1960) could have discredited Geehl's account by announcing the fact of the full score's existence. Instead we have two generations of books by eminent scholars which perpetuate a falsehood reflecting adversely on Elgar's competence and judgement.

### 1931: Version for Full Orchestra

As a composer whose reputation rested substantially on his orchestral works, Elgar envisaged translating *The Severn Suite* into this format – and thanks to the terms agreed with R. Smith & Co. he was free to do so. In June 1930 he had signed a three-year exclusive contract with the publishers Keith Prowse & Co., requiring him to furnish three new works annually. Accordingly, he set about scoring *The Severn Suite* for full orchestra, finishing the MS full score in February 1931. This score presents the music in the key of C – the key most straightforward for orchestral players, sounding a tone higher than the brass-band version.

The orchestral version contains the same music as the brass-band original, with a few minor alterations to rhythm and inner harmonies.<sup>37</sup> The orchestra used is the standard Elgarian large orchestra, but lacking a Harp or Organ.<sup>38</sup> To prepare the orchestral version Elgar referred to his original short score, which was already marked with rehearsal figures and score pagination (for the brass band full score MS). For this reason both manuscripts have virtually identical page numbering (including the extra page 47A).

Elgar's orchestral MS was fairly untidy, and Keith Prowse therefore prepared a handwritten fair-copy score for the printers. Several copies of this score were made by a primitive duplicating process known as 'Dyeline' and these have made their way to various places including the Elgar Birthplace. The Dyeline Score has a certain significance which will be explained in due course.

The Dyeline Score was proofread by Elgar<sup>39</sup> and further articulation marks and tempo indications were added. Unfortunately the handwritten original Dyeline Score is lost, and as all surviving examples are themselves only copies, there is no telling which markings were added by Elgar and which by the copyist/proofreader. There are, however, no musical differences between the Elgar MS and the Dyeline Score other than the correction of a few wrong notes.

The Elgar MS carries the descriptive movement titles which first officially appeared in the

37 There is one curious difference in the 'tune' at the fourth bar after rehearsal figure 66. The orchestral MS and the Organ Sonata follow Elgar's short score: in the brass band and wind band versions (including Elgar's own brass band MS) this bar is modified.

38 Both were originally included on the MS but later deleted.

39 The Elgar MS includes a tipped-in list of corrections, which Elgar instructs to be transferred to the 'green score'. This presumably refers to the Dyeline Score, the second stage in the engraving/printing process.

printed wind-band arrangement. But these are not in Elgar's handwriting: they are in a script which matches that in the Geehl score in D, suggesting that Henry Geehl had added the titles at a later date.<sup>40</sup> Only the third movement title (*The Cathedral*) appears on the Dyeline Score.

The orchestral *Severn Suite* was first performed in 1932 (the commercial recording preceded the first public performance<sup>41</sup>) but although Elgar got to the stage of proofreading the score and parts and Keith Prowse advertised it in advance, the orchestral material was never engraved or published. Financial pressures<sup>42</sup> and delays to the issue of the 78 r.p.m. recording were contributing factors and the result was that the orchestral version languished in obscurity, totally overshadowed in reputation by its brass-band counterpart.

As a result Elgar's orchestral MS was totally forgotten by all concerned, Carice included, and it remained on Keith Prowse's shelves until 1975, when it was thrown away (!) during an office reorganisation. At that point the gods of fortune decided to smile on *The Severn Suite* (they certainly owed it something) and the MS was rescued from the skip by a passing Keith Prowse employee who took it home for his own library.<sup>43</sup> But as far as the outside world was concerned, the score was lost, so when the orchestral version was finally published in 1991, the publication was based on the Dyeline Score, then believed to be the only surviving material.

In 2010 Elgar's MS was offered for auction by its rescuer's family, but it was then pointed

*A New Work*  
By  
**EDWARD ELGAR**

### 'The Severn Suite'

Op. 80  
For ORCHESTRA (Full Score)  
For MILITARY BAND (see Henry Geehl)  
Composed by  
EDWARD ELGAR  
Worcester Cathedral (Transcription)  
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out that according to the provisions of Carice's Will it was actually the property of her legatees, the British Library (ownership had never been transferred to Keith Prowse but had remained throughout with Elgar's, and later Carice's, Estate). So the orchestral MS is now available in the BL for public consultation.

There is an Urtext problem with the orchestral *Severn Suite* which may need to be considered by the Elgar Complete Edition. Source material for Elgar works normally comprises his original MS plus the printed score (which would have been proofread not only by the composer himself but also by reputable editors such as Augustus Jaeger (Nimrod)). In the case of the orchestral *Severn Suite* we only have the MS plus the Dyeline Score, an officially-prepared handwritten fair-copy which contains extra articulation marks. There is no means of telling (because all Dyeline Scores are copies, the original being lost) whether these were added at the wish of the composer, but there is no reason to suppose that they were not, any more than one would dispute markings which appear in a Nimrod-proofread score but not in the corresponding Elgar MS. The most sensible course of action would be to produce two editions: an Urtext based on Elgar's MS, and a performing score containing the extra articulation marks which may in any case have been added with Elgar's approval.<sup>44</sup>

### 1931: Version for Military Band

Elgar's contract with Keith Prowse required him to deliver three works annually for publication. In 1931 this included *The Severn Suite* not only in its full orchestra version but also in an arrangement for Military Band.<sup>45</sup>

This task was entrusted to Henry Geehl who is named on the printed material as arranger. Here there is no dispute as to Geehl's involvement and his work was done with Elgar's complete approval.

The Military Band arrangement is in the key of B♭. Just as the decision had been made to adjust the written key of the brass band version down one tone, there are good technical reasons why an arrangement for Military Band is more player-friendly in the key of B♭ rather than C. In contrast with the brass band version, however, the performing materials included not a full score (one line of music for each instrument, incorporating transpositions) but a condensed score with all the notes on three staves, written at actual pitch (B♭). This procedure (which later assumed significance in connection with Organ Sonata No.2) was not uncommon practice at the time, and enables the conducting score to be used as a keyboard part if required.

In the Military Band arrangement, descriptive movement titles appear for the first time:

- I. Worcester Castle
- II. Tournament (Toccata)
- III. The Cathedral (Fugue)
- IV. In The Commandery (Menuet)
- V. Coda

(note 'Menuet' as opposed to 'Minuet' on Elgar's MSS). Much wind band music incorporates a

<sup>44</sup> This procedure has been adopted in the Acuta Music edition, currently the only version available for sale.

<sup>45</sup> A Military Band (now known as a wind band) comprises not only brass instruments and percussion but also woodwind. String Basses (Double Basses) are sometimes added for extra sonority.

scenic/descriptive element and such picturesque details enhance the music's commercial appeal. But these titles do not appear in the composer's handwriting on any of his MSS (Elgar was somewhat dismissive of them) and were presumably added to the wind-band version on Geehl's own initiative. That Elgar himself added the titles to the brass band or orchestral versions is an inaccuracy which has been dutifully repeated by numerous authors.

The Military Band version was published in 1931 and holds its place in the wind-band repertoire. To accompany H.M. The Queen's entry to Westminster Hall on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012 to deliver her Jubilee Speech, the Band of the Royal Scots Guards played the first movement of *The Severn Suite*.

### 1932: Fugue from The Severn Suite for Organ — 1923: 'Napleton' Fugue

Elgar's contractual obligations to Keith Prowse Ltd. were partly met in 1932 by an arrangement for organ of the third movement of *The Severn Suite*. This arrangement was made by Ivor Atkins, organist of Worcester Cathedral.<sup>46</sup>

Most reference sources state that the Fugue, as incorporated in *The Severn Suite*, is a transcription of an earlier unpublished work: the *Fugue in C Minor* (generally known as the *Napleton Fugue*, written at Napleton Grange, Elgar's new country retreat). This statement is only an approximation to the truth.

The *Napleton Fugue* was Elgar's first original composition following his return to Worcestershire. Dated June 29<sup>th</sup> 1923, it is a slow, meditative piece, thirty-five bars long, generally subdued in mood and rising to a climax shortly before the close. The layout is that of a piece for piano. Directions such as *espress.* and *teneramente* suggest that the work had extra-musical significance for its creator.

The *Napleton Fugue*, in its original form, remained unpublished.<sup>47</sup> The story later arose that the work had been intended for organ and was played at the inauguration of the Worcester Cathedral organ in April 1925. However, there is no direct evidence of this either in the relevant Service sheets or recital programmes, nor in newspaper reviews of the opening ceremonies: its first appearance as an organ piece is in a recital by Ivor Atkins in March 1927. This story originated with W.H.Reed in his 1939 *Master Musicians* biography, and has been repeated elsewhere, notably by Wulstan Atkins in *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (1984). Whatever the undoubted merits of this latter book in other respects, its account of the *Fugue in C Minor* and its interaction with *The Severn Suite* is a masterpiece of inaccuracy.

In October 1931 Elgar suggested to Keith Prowse that Ivor Atkins make an organ arrangement of the Fugue, and this was published the following year. However, for this arrangement Atkins used not the original *Napleton* material but a modified version of the Fugue which had by then been incorporated into *The Severn Suite*.

Both versions are in the key of C minor, but the *Severn Suite* version differs from the *Napleton Fugue* in several respects. There are trivial variants of countersubjects and the bass line, but the crucial difference is that the *Severn Suite* Fugue is four bars shorter: a somewhat bland middle

<sup>46</sup> Ivor Atkins (1869-1953), organist of Worcester Cathedral from 1897 to 1950 (and Librarian until his death). Knighted 1921. One of Elgar's closest friends, dedicatee of *Pomp & Circumstance No.3*.

<sup>47</sup> It is due to be published in Elgar Complete Edition Volume 35 (Piano Music). The reference to Volume 36 in Kent, *Elgar Thematic Catalogue* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 377 properly applies to the 1932 organ arrangement.

# WORCESTER CATHEDRAL.

## Programme of Organ Recital

TO BE GIVEN BY

SIR IVOR ATKINS, D.Mus., Oxon,

On Thursday, March 10th, 1927, at 8 p.m

### 1. SHORT FUGUE IN G MINOR. .... *Bach.*

This is an example of one of Bach's early works. It is one of the most popular of all the Fugues, and naturally so, for it has great tunefulness and spontaneity, whilst its rhythm is noticeable for its vitality.

### 2. (a) INTRODUCTION. PART II. "THE APOSTLES" .... *Elgar.*

### (b) FUGUE IN C MINOR. .... *Elgar.*

This work, which is dated June 29, 1923, was written at Napleton, near Worcester, where Sir Edward Elgar now lives. Built upon a short subject marked *Lento*, it is far removed from the conventional fugue in treatment. In its intimate character it recalls the few fugues which Brahms left for the organ, but there, of course, the resemblance ceases, for the music is purest Elgar. Indeed it has close affinity to the *Litany* at the opening of "Geroantius." The composer broods upon his theme in music which is tender and moving. For the most part the fugue is cast in quiet, meditative mood, but towards the end a fine climax is built up on a pedal, and the theme makes a last solemn entry, fortissimo, in the Pedal Organ. The diminuendo from this point to the end is one of the most beautiful passages in the work.

**First reliably documented performance of the *Napleton Fugue*.** The detailed programme note possibly implies a first performance (Worcester Cathedral Library).

section (Bars 19 to 23) being replaced by a single bar (Bar 19). All published incarnations of the Fugue are of this later, shortened version. The alteration was a stroke of inspiration on Elgar's part as the new Bar 19 contains the silent beat where the music comes to a complete standstill and which makes a dramatic effect in performance.

For reference Atkins was supplied by Elgar with the three relevant pages from his *Severn Suite* short score, which had been prepared prior to the brass-band scoring and which Elgar had also used for the full-orchestra transcription.<sup>48</sup> There is some mystery as to the current whereabouts of this

48 Elgar also supplied Atkins with a copy of the printed brass-band score. This copy contains corrections by Elgar in the Fugue only, so was probably supplied for the Fugue transcription rather than for Organ Sonata No.2. This item was [re]discovered during research for this article.

autograph fragment. Although the rest of the short score is safely in the British Library, the three pages containing the Fugue are lost,<sup>49</sup> although they were seen in Wulstan Atkins' possession in 1990. The same applies to Ivor Atkins' autograph of the *Napleton Fugue* arrangement, if he made one.<sup>50</sup>

There is also some uncertainty as to the exploits of the original *Napleton Fugue* MS. In 1939 it was found among the effects of Windflower (Alice Stuart-Wortley). Windflower's daughter Clare surmised that it had been handed over in August 1923, but given Atkins' use of it in 1927 this cannot have been the case. Clare returned the manuscript to Carice and it is now held at the Elgar Birthplace.

### 1932: *His Master's Voice* recording

The commercial recording of *The Severn Suite* should be considered as part of the work's prime source material, conducted as it is by the composer and constituting the orchestral version's first performance.

The recording session took place on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1932 at Abbey Road (an account is given in Moore, *Elgar on Record* p. 166). Moore lists a Harp in the orchestra, but this must be an error as the Dyeline Score does not include a Harp, Elgar having deleted its part in his autograph manuscript.

The recording is in the key of C. The performance is uncut, the standard of playing is high and the rendition is convincing. A few minor note errors in the Dyeline Score are audible in the recording.

The record labels do not contain the descriptive movement subtitles, although there was easily room to include them. Possibly Elgar did not consider the subtitles authentic, as implied by the rather disparaging comment in his programme note for the first public performance five months later:

The movements at first bore some fanciful titles connected with the river after which the Suite is named.

The records were not issued until 1934 due to delays in choosing a fill-up for the unused sixth 78 side. By that time Elgar had died and his musical star was firmly in eclipse: the 78s never sold well and were always considered by collectors to be rare items.

Some commentators erroneously date the orchestral version to early 1932, the date of the Elgar recording, because the original (dated) orchestral MS was believed lost.

### 1933: *Organ Sonata No.2*

In addition to suggesting that Atkins make an arrangement of the Fugue, Elgar had proposed to Keith Prowse Ltd. that other sections of *The Severn Suite* be given the same treatment. In 1933 this scheme came to fruition with the publication of Organ Sonata No.2, containing the bulk of the *Severn Suite* music.

49 The short score is numbered pages 1 to 34. The three missing pages are pp. 19 to 21.

50 The 1927 programme refers to 'the Pedal Organ', so Atkins must have made modifications to the original layout, but he may have done this at sight during performance, without rewriting anything, as he later did with the *Severn Suite* short score: 'Ivor Atkins played the Fugue in Worcester in July [1931] from my original sketch for brass band' (Elgar to Keith Prowse Ltd., 5<sup>th</sup> October 1931).



Figure 12: First page of the wind band piano-conductor score. Note the B♭ tonality. A copy of this score was sent to Ivor Atkins who used it as the basis for Organ Sonata No.2 (British Library).

Scholars have long speculated as to why Organ Sonata No.2 is in the key of B♭, not C which would have been much more suitable from the point of view of keyboard technique and was the key in which the Fugue had been arranged for publication in 1932. Some have used it as a plank to bolster a theory that B♭ was Elgar's 'key of choice' for *The Severn Suite*. The real reason is much more mundane: convenient source material in the key of C was not available.

Elgar's initial suggestion that *The Severn Suite* be arranged for organ was made in October 1931, but work did not begin until a year later. Elgar had been led to believe that Keith Prowse possessed a piano reduction in C of the *Suite* which Atkins could use for reference when making the organ arrangement. He was, however, mistaken, and as a substitute Keith Prowse suggested that they send Atkins a copy of the piano score of the wind-band version. This of course contained the same music, but with one important difference: the wind-band arrangement was in the key of B♭, not C.

The printed wind-band piano score was believed to have been dispatched to Atkins, but disappeared without trace. In July 2013 it was [re]discovered by the author in Worcester Cathedral Library. It bears extensive annotations and suggestions by Elgar – indicating that he took a more active part in the arranging than was previously believed – plus a suggested title also in Elgar's handwriting:

Sonata No.2 for Organ, after Op.87, edited and arranged by Ivor Atkins.

Later the title was amended to the more straightforward 'Sonata No.2 Op.87a for Organ'.

In Organ Sonata No.2 the somewhat long-winded Minuet is replaced by a Cadenza (by Atkins himself) which intersperses virtuoso arpeggios with motifs from the earlier movements. The Introduction, Fugue and Coda are unaltered, the Toccata is somewhat abridged. The first performance was by Atkins in January 1933, the first recording by Herbert Dawson three months later.

Ivor Atkins' manuscript working materials for Organ Sonata No.2 have disappeared in their entirety. MSS of the Cadenza and one page of the Toccata were in Wulstan Atkins' possession in 1990, but, like the missing pages of the *Severn Suite* short score, they have since vanished.

### The intended key of The Severn Suite

The *ESJ* for July 1997 poses the question of whether *The Severn Suite* 'was published in the key in which Elgar intended'.

The answer to this must be in the affirmative. Although the brass-band MS was written in the key of C, Elgar knew that this would form the basis of a published score written in C, technically the most straightforward key for the players, but sounding B♭ in performance – as evidenced by his note 'Score in D discarded: wrong key' on the original MS.

The same argument applies to the versions for orchestra (in C) and wind-band (in B♭). These are the easiest keys for the players. Practical considerations, rather than any preference towards a particular tonality, dictated which key was adopted for which version.

Organ Sonata No.2 is in B♭, not the most straightforward key on the organ. But as explained, B♭ was adopted simply because Ivor Atkins was not supplied with source material in C. By publishing the Organ Sonata in B♭ Keith Prowse also maintained a clear commercial distinction between this work and *Fugue from The Severn Suite*, published a year earlier. Apart from its key, the *Severn Suite* Fugue is identical with that of the Organ Sonata and if both had been published in the same key the earlier publication would probably have to have been withdrawn.

The matter of the intended key was confused in 1996 by a 'performing edition' of the brass band version, edited by Bram Gay. This presents the music in the key of C (written D) as does Geehl's copyist's score. Gay justifies C by citing it as the key of Elgar's brass band and orchestral MSS. He adds numerous phrasing and articulation marks, supplies optional modifications to the scoring in the light of contemporary brass technique and in the interests of more spectacular sound, reverses the few alterations Geehl made to Elgar's original – even though these must have been made with the composer's acquiescence – and imports the Timpani part from the orchestral version. Most errors in the R. Smith score are corrected (these largely originated with Geehl's score in D), but some are not (including a particularly excruciating wrong note in the Minuet).

Brass bands wishing to perform *The Severn Suite* in the key of C will find Gay's edition useful (it has itself been used as a competition test piece). But the many tempting tweaks it applies to the original scoring, plus the unauthentic Timpani part, make it virtually impossible that the resulting performance would be wholly faithful to Elgar's original concept.

There is a brass-band folk myth that Elgar was angry when he first heard *The Severn Suite* played in the key of B♭. This has no factual basis. On the contrary, Wulstan Atkins described Elgar as having been delighted when he heard the work in its B♭ incarnation in the Organ Sonata.<sup>51</sup>

51 *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, 454. Note also that Elgar did not attend the 1930 Festival even though originally scheduled to do so.

### Summary of myths and facts

Most of these myths can be found in standard works of reference and given the reputation of the respective authors have unfortunately acquired the status of absolute truth. The misapprehensions regarding 'old sketches' and regarding Henry Geehl's claim to have scored the brass-band version discredit Elgar's reputation both as a composer and as an orchestral technician.

**Myth:** *The Severn Suite* was based mainly on recycled early sketches.

**Fact:** The Fugue and Minuet were based on recycled material, but this derived from completed works which had previously been given performances. The Minuet music dates from Elgar's early years but the Fugue is from Elgar's maturity. The Introduction/Coda and Toccata are all new, so far as we know. This myth originated with a slightly ambiguous comment by W.H.Reed in 1939.

**Myth:** The *Napleton Fugue* was transcribed as the Fugue in *The Severn Suite*.

**Fact:** The *Severn Suite* Fugue is four bars shorter, the structure of the middle section having been improved.

**Myth:** Henry Geehl scored the brass band version from Elgar's short score.

**Fact:** Geehl's claim is fraudulent. The scoring was done by Elgar himself with Geehl making some suggestions for improvements. This myth arose from Geehl's claims in the press, plus the fact that the existence of Elgar's brass-band full-score MS was unknown to most scholars until 2000.

**Myth:** Elgar had a specific intended key of B $\flat$  in mind when he wrote *The Severn Suite*.

**Fact:** There was no intended key. The brass band (B $\flat$ ), orchestral (C) and wind band (B $\flat$ ) versions were presented in the keys known by Elgar to be the most suitable for each respective medium. Organ Sonata No.2 was scored in B $\flat$  owing to the lack of available source material in C.

**Myth:** Elgar was angry when he heard the brass band version played in B $\flat$ , not C as he expected.

**Fact:** There is no evidence to support this. Elgar did not attend the Crystal Palace Festival and in any case was aware of brass-band B $\flat$  tonality.

**Myth:** The orchestral version was scored in 1932 following HMV's suggestion that it be recorded.

**Fact:** The orchestral version was completed in February 1931. This myth arose because the (dated) full-score MS was lost until 2010 and only the date of the recording session was known.

**Myth:** The *Napleton Fugue* was written for the opening of the Worcester Cathedral organ in 1925.

**Fact:** There is no evidence that it was played either at the opening Service of Dedication or at the subsequent inaugural recitals – or, indeed, played in public at all until March 1927. This myth originated with W.H.Reed.

**Myth:** Elgar added descriptive titles to the movements.

**Fact:** These titles do not appear in Elgar's handwriting on any of his MSS nor on the composer-conducted 78s, and were probably devised by Geehl, with Elgar's agreement, for the Military Band transcription. The omission of the titles from the 78s suggests that Elgar did not consider them authentic.

### Conclusion — The Severn Suite assessed

Suppositions have coloured opinion of *The Severn Suite*'s musical value. The theories that Geehl fully scored the work and that it is a concoction of material from 50-year-old sketchbooks have led it to be viewed as second-hand, cheese-pared Elgar.<sup>52</sup>

History has not served Elgar's final works well. Some remained unpublished, others were neglected by their publishers. Elgar's creative decline coincided with changes in public taste which for many years consigned his music to the sidelines.

No great claims should be made for Elgar's final period. To quote Basil Maine, he was operating at a lower 'mental temperature'. But Elgar's last works are not totally lacking in merit and *The Severn Suite* has qualities which should have ensured a brighter future.

As regards acceptance within the Elgarian community, circumstances conspired against *The Severn Suite* from the start. The original version is popular within brass-band circles, but social-artistic prejudice has led to it being disparaged simply due to its perceived working-class associations. The orchestral version was never published and this doomed it to obscurity: readily available performing materials and effective marketing would have increased its chances of being appreciated.<sup>53</sup>

Nobody would claim that *The Severn Suite* is great Elgar on a par with the *Enigma Variations* or the symphonies. Within his *oeuvre*, *In The South* is perhaps the nearest equivalent. But *The Severn Suite* stands above his other completed *post mortem* compositions in one important respect: it alone (with possibly the Banqueting Scene from *Arthur*) has any claim to genuine symphonic credentials as regards contrast and development of musical material. Everything else that Elgar completed after 1920 can be described either as occasional music or one-dimensional vignettes. These works all contain memorable individual musical ideas, but whether Elgar could ever have recaptured sufficient intellectual power to translate such ideas into a sustained large-scale symphonic argument is open to considerable doubt.

*The Severn Suite* has a clearly defined structure with beginning, middle and end. It presents contrasted material convincingly handled. Its atmosphere is mainly upbeat but in the Fugue rises to a momentary climax of tragic grandeur. The Coda closes the circle in a way which is emotionally satisfying.

For these qualities, whether in its brass-band or orchestral guise, *The Severn Suite* deserves a sympathetic, informed re-evaluation by listeners and commentators.

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52 Bland & Maund, '60 years on: Elgar's band opus revisited' in *The British Bandsman*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1995.

53 Elgar's orchestral performance is available in the EMI Complete Electrical Recordings CD set. There is a good recording by Richard Hickox on Chandos as fill-up to the CD set of *Caractacus*. There have been many recordings of the brass band version.



## Appendix: Source material

(chronological order of composition/arrangement)

<b>Napleton Fugue:</b> (Fugue in C minor)	<b>Elgar MS</b> — Elgar Birthplace. Unpublished.
<b>Brass Band version:</b> (key C, sounding Bb)	<b>Sketches</b> (of <i>The Severn Suite</i> proper and also MS of ‘Shed Music’ used for Minuet) — British Library. <b>Elgar MS short score</b> — Key C. British Library (missing pages 19-21, see below). <b>Elgar MS full score</b> (Key C) — Elgar Birthplace. <b>Copyist’s full score</b> (in incorrect key of D (sounding C)) — private collection. Digital scan at Elgar Birthplace, consultation subject to owner’s prior permission. <b>Proofs</b> — Private collection, further details confidential (see Kent, <i>Elgar Thematic Catalogue</i> p.393). <b>Recording of excerpts</b> — Foden Motor Works Band (1930 winners) cond. Fred Mortimer, 28 <sup>th</sup> September 1930, on Regal 10" 78 r.p.m. MR 189. First published: R. Smith & Co., 1930 (full score and parts).
<b>Orchestral version:</b> (key C)	<b>Elgar MS full score</b> — British Library. <b>Dyeline score</b> (copyist’s fair copy, with extra editorial markings) — Dyeline (primitive photocopy) copies at Elgar Birthplace and BBC Music Library. Handwritten original lost. <b>First recording</b> — London Symphony Orchestra cond. Elgar, 4 <sup>th</sup> April 1932, issued 1934, HMV 12" 78s DB 1908-10 (five sides). Later reissued on LP and CD. First published: Acuta Music, 1991 (full score and parts). Revised 2013 following reappearance of orchestral MS.
<b>Military Band version:</b> (arr. Henry Geehl, key Bb)	<b>Arranger’s MS score</b> — not traced. First published: Keith Prowse Ltd., 1931 (piano score and parts).
<b>Fugue, for Organ:</b> (arr. Ivor Atkins, key C)	<b>Elgar MS</b> (pages 19-21 of short score (see above) plus correction page (see ECE 36 p.xxi)). — missing. Last seen Wulstan Atkins Collection, 1990. <b>Arranger’s MS</b> (if prepared) — not traced. <b>Printed full score of brass band version</b> , autographed by Ivor Atkins, with corrections by Elgar in Fugue — Worcester Cathedral Library. First published: Keith Prowse Ltd., 1932 as ‘Fugue from The Severn Suite Op.87’.
<b>Organ Sonata No.2:</b> (arr. Ivor Atkins, key Bb)	<b>Printed wind band piano-conductor score</b> , autographed by Atkins, with editorial markings and suggested title in Elgar’s hand — Worcester Cathedral Library. <b>Arranger’s MS</b> — not traced. MS of Cadenza last seen in Wulstan Atkins Collection, 1990, now lost. <b>First recording</b> — Herbert Dawson, Kingsway Hall, 6 <sup>th</sup> April 1933, HMV 10" 78s B 4422-3. First published: Keith Prowse Ltd., 1933.

## Acknowledgements

Footnotes have been kept to a minimum. Facts stated without attribution can be taken to derive from standard works of reference and from other readily available source material such as newspaper archives. Quotations from letters derive, except where indicated, from originals at the Elgar Birthplace or from Jerrold Moore’s various compilations. I am indebted to James Andrews, Martin Bird, Geoffrey and Michael Brand, David Good, Philip Harper, Esther Kay, Christopher Kent, Michael Kilshaw, Philip Maund, Jerrold Northrop Moore, Katharine O’Carroll, Pym Paxton, Michael Plant and Philip Sparke for helpful suggestions and advice, also to the Black Dyke Mills Band (Mike Shenton), Elgar Birthplace (Christopher Bennett, Susan Fairchild and Catherine Sloan), the British Library (Nicolas Bell), Worcester Cathedral Library (David Morrison) and Worcester Local History Library.

It should be noted that this article ignores two technical aspects of brass playing: sharp pitch (1930s bands were nearly a semitone sharp relative to their modern counterparts) and the different harmonic series encountered by players when playing in different keys. These issues affect the sound quality perceived by the listener, but this effect is primarily subjective – and therefore, unquantifiable.

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# Imperial propaganda and *Caractacus*: The woodlands and Elgar's love of country

Bryson Mortensen

## Introduction

Upon first listening, Edward Elgar's *Caractacus* presents the long and expressive melodies, leitmotifs and their transformations, intricate orchestration, and expressive harmonization that typify Elgar's later compositions. The libretto is engaging – quite a bit more so than that of its immediate predecessor *King Olaf* – with a plot line drawn from British history. *Caractacus*, however, has not enjoyed the warm reception that *Gerontius* and the later works have garnered. Its relatively cool reception is likely due to its overtly jingoistic character, with particular emphasis on the final chorus. Its blatant pro-English mentality, as well as its apparent lack of congruence with the rest of the work, has led to scholars and performers alike to dismiss the work as Elgar's overt attempt to gain respect by propagandizing the political attitudes of an upper class he yearned to join. While acknowledging the effects of Elgar's self-interest on this composition, the work as a whole represents Elgar's particular interpretation of the ideals of the *Pax Britannica* – a term associated with the positive aspects of British Imperialism as portrayed through a series of carefully crafted propaganda messages that centred around three primary concepts: national pride, militarism as a positive influence on growing young men, and Social Darwinism.

The following series of articles will approach each of these concepts in turn, articulating Elgar's particular image of national pride and how he integrated that particular message into the music and libretto of *Caractacus*. Each article focuses on a variety of sources to understand Elgar's musical portrayal of nationalistic ideals: texts like Ernst Pauer's *The Elements of Beautiful in Music* and Hector Berlioz's *Treatise on Instrumentation* in Elgar's personal library, Elgar's own annotations of leitmotifs as given to Herbert Thompson as he prepared the program notes for *Caractacus*, as well as an understanding of the libretto written by Harry Acworth and portions eliminated by Elgar. These topics will be paired with contemporary descriptions of the time, particularly found in an issue of the *Daily Mail* portrayal of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebration, just two years before *Caractacus* was performed.

## Elgar's love of country and countryside

Love of country is central to British Imperialism. To be able to stand behind a movement that projects its lifestyle onto cultures across the world, a citizen generally has a deep love for his country. With love of country comes love of those who made that country great, a sentiment echoed by J. Lawson Walton: 'The imperialist feels a profound pride in the magnificent heritage of empire

won by the courage and energy of his ancestry ...'<sup>1</sup> A similar pride in Englishness permeates The *Daily Mail*'s reporting of the pageantry of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; references abound to the 'greatness of the British race'<sup>2</sup> and the vastness and greatness of that Empire which produces pride to be a part of such a 'wondrous machine'.<sup>3</sup>

In his music, Elgar also expressed the same love of country. This is particularly evident by his pervasive use of the 'Britain' theme (See Fig. 1) throughout the work, as well as the several themes associated with the British soldiers. Percy Young stated that Elgar was '... firmly convinced that the Monarchy and the Empire were both admirable and necessary'<sup>4</sup> Elgar's oft-quoted opinion 'England for the English', was written in response to Jaeger's criticism of the final chorus of *Caractacus*.



Figure 1: Britain's Theme

J.P.E. Harper-Scott has argued that Elgar's love of country was inspired by less honourable motives: Elgar was too ignorant of politics and too ill-trained by his background to think very deeply about empire, though he unquestionably found its showy display and the (rather abstract) idea of Britain's majesty attractive.<sup>5</sup>

Although much of Elgar's overtly imperialistic music clearly falls in line with Harper-Scott's 'showy display' – the *Imperial March*, *The Pageant of Empire*, and even *The Banner of St. George* – other aspects of Elgar's patriotism suggest that there is much more to it than pageantry for its own sake. Elgar also expressed his love of country through references to the beauty of the English countryside. This particular brand of patriotism especially colours *Caractacus*.

## Love of Country and Countryside

In writing about *Caractacus*' plea to Emperor Claudius in the cantata's fifth scene, Elgar tells Jaeger that 'I made old Caractacus stop as if broken down on p. 168 & choke & say "woodlands" again because I am so madly devoted to my woods.'<sup>6</sup> Elgar's professed love of the English woodlands provides the pictorial background of the cantata. More importantly, Elgar's love of nature served as an important aspect of his patriotic feelings much like *Caractacus*' love of the English countryside was tightly intertwined with his zeal in defending his country.

- 1 Porter, Bernard, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995* (London: Longman, 1996), 137.
- 2 *Daily Mail*. 23 June 1897, 'To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route', 1.
- 3 *Daily Mail*. 23 June 1897, 'The Outlook: What it Meant', 3.
- 4 Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press 1987), 86.
- 5 Harper-Scott, J.P.E. *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007), 43.
- 6 Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press 1987), 43.

Elgar's depictions of the countryside are hardly unique to *Caractacus*. Diana McVeagh describes the *Serenade for Strings*, Op.20 as pastoral. She also cites Elgar's tempo markings (*piacevole*) as evidence that this music portrays the pastoral.<sup>7</sup> Vaughan Williams, a recognized lover of nationalist (and naturalist) music, describes Elgar's music this way: 'He has that peculiar kind of beauty which gives us, his fellow countrymen, a sense of something familiar – the intimate and personal beauty of our own fields and lanes; not the aloof and unsympathetic beauty of glaciers and coral reefs and tropical forests.'<sup>8</sup> Vaughan Williams suggests that Elgar's music goes far beyond the non-specific naturalist composer whose works are replete with portrayals of stereotypical pastoral scenes. Instead, Elgar portrays images that are unique to England as a way to highlight England.

Elgar's interviews and letters are replete with expressions of his love for country and countryside. To his friend, Sir Sidney Colvin, Elgar wrote: 'I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by the Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds ...'.<sup>9</sup> Again, in an interview given in 1896, Elgar says: 'My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, and (here he raised his hands, and made a rapid gesture of capture) – you – simply – simply – take as much as you require!'<sup>10</sup> Burley has recounted how Elgar explored the Malvern Hills, even following the Druid path from end to end in preparation for writing *Caractacus*.<sup>11</sup>

Elgar's regular depictions of the English countryside, as well as his expressed love for nature are ways that he expresses his love for his country. In much the same way that nationalist composers like Bedrich Smetana portrayed patriotic sentiment by depicting the scenes along the Vltava, Elgar expressed love of his country by praising the beauty of the British landscape. In *Caractacus*, Elgar expresses his love of nature (and, by extension, love of country) in two different ways: First, he includes pastoral scenes and musical depictions of natural elements (particularly in the 'Woodland Interlude' at the beginning of Scene III of the cantata); second, he composes melodies and sets texts that evoke the character of the English folksong.

### The Pastoral

Textually, the blending of nature and patriotism pervades the libretto. In the first scene, the English warriors express awareness of the Roman forces off their coast, who 'invaded their rivers, and wasted their woodlands', allowing the coast and woodlands to represent their country. These words are set to Elgar's 'desolation' theme in the aria, enhancing the Britons concern for their homeland. In his first aria (Scene I, [21]), Caractacus speaks in pastoral images such as 'The air is sweet, the sky is calm, all nature round is breathing balm' as a means to draw courage for the next day's battle. Even while lamenting the fate of the captive Britons, the fifth scene expresses more concern that they will never see their British land than concern over the potential punishment for their rebellion: 'They shall ne'er return again ... For they never more shall see British heav'n, or land, or thee.'

During the first scene, Elgar introduces a theme that he refers to as the 'mistletoe theme', (later referring to it as the 'oak theme'). Even in its first appearance (Scene 1, [40] bar 9) Elgar states

7 McVeagh, Diana, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 15.

8 Vaughan Williams, Ralph, 'What have we learnt from Elgar?', in Redwood (ed.), *An Elgar Companion* (Derbyshire: Sequoia, 1982), 266.

9 Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 157.

10 Harper-Scott, J.P.E., *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007), 36.

11 Young, Percy M., *Letters to Nimrod* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), 21.

in the score given to Thompson that it will be further developed in the second scene (see Fig. 2). For Elgar, this theme, symbolizing the British Empire, naturally links with the words of the final chorus: 'The oak has grown and shadow'd The shores of all the world'. The theme appears at least once in every scene, as well as during the final chorus. In fact, it is plausible to submit that the 'Modern Britain' theme that immediately follows is derived from it (see Fig. 3), strengthening the connection between the woodlands and Britain in Elgar's mind.



Figure 2: Mistletoe/Oak Theme (Scene 2, [3])



Figure 3: Oak Theme (Scene 6, [52] bar 5 and Modern Britain Theme (Scene 6, [54] bar 2)

Of all of the cantata's characters, Eigen seems to have the closest association with the English countryside. Her primary scenes in the cantata involve waiting for Orbin in the woods or recounting her woodland meetings with a Druid Maiden. Perhaps her association with nature explains the prominence of 12/8 metre for her scenes, given the long association of that metre with pastoral music.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the text of her major 'aria' at the beginning of the third scene abounds in nature pictures: 'The gentle wind with kisses playing', 'The fawn is leaping round the hind', and 'The dove is cooing', etc.

The harmonic elements of this aria also effectively portray the English countryside. It opens in G-Major, a key Ernst Pauer describes in his book *The Elements of Beautiful in Music* as a pastoral key and evocative of youth and calm meditation,<sup>13</sup> the key has also been associated with pastoral music in Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, Op. 68 and Haydn's oratorio *The Seasons* and the *Missa Sancti Nicolai*. The elements of youth and meditation are clearly prompts for the pastoral scene that Elgar composes. His musical depiction of the pastoral notably lacks any significant presence of dominant-tonic relationships, emphasizing chords that are somewhat removed harmonically from this defining polarity of tonal music. Eigen's first entrance over the subdominant heralds the emergence of Elgar's 'natural' harmonic language. Her second phrase (see Fig. 4) lacks any dominant-tonic cadences; the first opportunity for an authentic cadence is avoided by Elgar's use of a deceptive cadence. The next phrase begins with a typical cadential progression: from tonic, to subdominant and dominant, then returning to the tonic; but again Elgar avoids tonal expectation by returning to the sub-dominant on the downbeat of the cadential measure, arriving on the tonic shortly after on the weakest possible part of the beat and measure. The lack of harmonic function is underscored by a G pedal present throughout these few measures of the work. This replacement

12 The association of 12/8 with pastoral themes in general and Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony in particular are both found in Pauer's *The Beautiful in Music*. Since Elgar probably owned Pauer's text, his selection of the metre can safely be considered such a reference. Of course, this association was present as early as the Baroque period.

13 Pauer, Ernst, *The Elements of the Beautiful in Music* (London: Novello and Company, 1877), 21.

of traditional harmonic progressions helps to create the sense of timelessness that characterizes Elgar's depiction of the English countryside.

Figure 4: Scene III, [10] bar 4

Beyond Elgar's use of harmony to evoke the mood of timelessness associated with England, the melodies that Elgar writes for this scene mimic sights and sensations associated with woodlands. Any discussion of pastoral themes in Elgar's music must include Matthew Riley's discussion of the subject.<sup>14</sup> While acknowledging that Elgar tried his best to distance himself from other English 'pastoral' composers, Riley affirms the nearly universal feeling that Elgar's music evokes the English countryside. Riley summarizes Elgar's pastoral allusions within three thematic categories: references to Pan – mythology's anthropomorphic representation of nature and his reed pipe, portrayals of the sounds of wind in the woodlands, and instrumental mimesis of the Aeolian harp. While Riley highlights many examples found throughout Elgar's orchestral music, these do not appear categorically in *Caractacus*. What then, are the 'pastoral' representations in this work?

In many cases, a melody does not mimic any particular element of the text, but seems to recreate the general aura of an outdoor scene. The lilting rhythms of the compound metre (see Fig. 4) contribute greatly to this effect. In addition, sequential themes, like Fig. 6, combine with their rhythm to suggest a carefree afternoon among the oak woodlands. The dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythms create the sensation of the dancing and leaping woodland creatures, while the theme, which ascends from low strings to high, heightens this effect. Despite its 12/8 metre, the long, sustained notes of Eigen's theme at 'my heart is bright as the morning light' (see Fig. 5) contrast the lilting orchestra rhythm. The dotted crotchets of Eigen's melodies, doubled by the clarinet, soar over the lilting rhythm of the violins to create the sense of grandeur evoked by the open air and the vast woodlands. Despite the next section's change to common time, Elgar retains the dotted quaver/semiquaver theme implying the continuation of compound metre (see Fig. 7).

In addition, these melodies are played primarily by woodwinds – clarinet, oboe, and flute – all reminiscent of Pan's flute, another naturalist reference. Riley describes Elgar's use of Pan's flute in detail,<sup>15</sup> suggest that his choice of woodwinds makes passing reference to Pan's reed pipes. Although the particular melody is not reminiscent of that played by the pipes, the colour of the woodwinds is easily associated with the character. Berlioz, while associating the woodwinds with themes of tenderness and innocence, associates the clarinet in particular with the women who are

14 Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge University Press: 2007).

15 *Ibid.*, 157.

watching the warriors as they go to battle.<sup>16</sup> It comes as no surprise, in this case, that the clarinet is used so often in association with Eigen.

Figure 5: Scene III, [11] bar 1

Figure 6: Scene III, [12]

Figure 7: Scene III, Rehearsal [13] bar 6, 'The fawn is leaping'

In addition to consideration of how metre and orchestration evoke a pastoral quality, we know that Elgar consciously wrote themes to recreate the pastoral images of the text. Elgar's annotations on the vocal score given to Herbert Thompson show his intent: 'All forest sounds (written in our own woods) which I hope you will see someday.' This is not the first time that Elgar makes reference to mimetic representations of pastoral themes. Above the first bars of scene five, Elgar wrote 'the rolling stream of Habren (Severn). I made this on the banks of its [sic]'. During *Caractacus*' aria in the middle

16 Berlioz, Hector, edited by Richard Strauss, *Treatise on Instrumentation*. (New York: Kalmus, 1948).

of scene six (rehearsal 28-5), Elgar writes ‘He breaks down & chokes thinking of his woods’, adding at the foot of the same page ‘As I do when I’m away from Birchwood!’ Such commentary strengthens the opinion that Elgar attempted to mimic specific woodland sounds that appear in the text.<sup>17</sup>

In the next section of this aria, three distinct themes distinctly mimic the nature elements of the text. The first theme, played by the violas, consists of ascending and descending semiquaver passages with periodic chromatic inflections (see Fig. 8). These rapidly-moving lines are possibly an allusion to the Aeolian harp, an instrument that Riley describes as ‘played’ by the wind that sets the strings vibrating. As the speed of the wind changes, the pitches rise and fall. The rapidly rising and descending lines in the strings make them seem as if there are unseen breezes generating their melodies.<sup>18</sup> This gesture echoes Eigen’s words: ‘The gentle wind with kisses kind is playing on my brow’. Elgar passes this melodic motive between the upper strings throughout this segment, another potential metaphor for the capricious melody generated by the breeze.



Figure 8: Scene III, [13] bar 3, ‘The gentle wind with kisses kind is playing’

The second theme occurs in anticipation of Eigen’s text ‘The fawn is leaping round the hind.’ (see Fig. 7). The dotted, anapaestic figure passed from clarinet to flute to oboe, arguably portrays the fawn leaping through the woodland grove. The segment’s final theme (Fig. 9) features another exchange between flutes and first violins; their semiquaver gestures are in Lydian mode and mimic the motion of the ‘wind’ theme, but lack its breadth and whimsy. The clarinet’s subdued echo might reflect the textual image of ‘The dove is cooing to her mate’ (Fig. 9). Interestingly, Elgar uses this same theme during scene six (rehearsal 28) to recall the imagery of the British countryside while Caractacus sings of the freedom of the Britons under his rule.

These themes closely resemble ones found in the scene’s overture – entitled the ‘Woodland Interlude’ – that Harper-Scott describes as ‘... the brand of patriotism Elgar was most deeply interested in: a patriotism of green lanes, little river, and hills one can get up and down in the afternoon.’<sup>19</sup> Since the ‘Woodland Interlude’ was written after the third scene (including Eigen’s aria) was completed,<sup>20</sup> Elgar used instrumental themes associated with the aria as the basis for the Interlude to retroactively create formal cohesiveness between the two.



Figure 9: Scene III, [14], ‘The dove is cooing’

Transferred to the ‘Woodland Interlude’, this thematic interchange becomes a surprisingly realistic woodland picture, where the wind hardly stops, where a fawn is seen periodically leaping through the woods, and where, at the right time, one can hear a dove cooing from a distance. In addition, Elgar’s instrumentation seems apt for each image – the clarinet imitating the dove, the strings an Aeolian Harp, the oboe a nimble fawn.

The preceding recital of harmonic, metric, and melodic elements identified in the previous pages represent Elgar’s mimesis of the countryside he loved. Referring to these passages, Elgar said: ‘This is what I hear all day – the trees are singing my music – or have I sung theirs?’<sup>21</sup> These examples suggest that Elgar musically recreated the natural world in his music, emphasizing the English countryside as his particular way of showing his love for England, feelings that while patriotic, are not necessarily jingoistic. As these elements combine in the ‘Woodland Interlude’, we understand Harper-Scott’s assertion that Elgar’s patriotism took the form of natural images. Is this, however, the only way that Elgar depicted the countryside or extolled elements he regarded as uniquely English?

### The Folk Song and ‘Englishness’

Jeffrey Richards quotes an editorial that appeared in the January 1887 issue of *The Musical Times* as a landmark in making the case for nationalism in English music. Alluding to the national musical movement achieved by Germany and similar movements among the Slavs and the Irish, the author of that editorial wrote: ‘The roots of national music ... lie deep down in the nature of the people to whom it belongs ... Each country, recognizing its own nature in its own music, should cultivate the art for itself, [and] seize upon whatever is most distinctive and valuable in its own conception and expression...’<sup>22</sup>

This closely echoes Vaughan Williams’ opinion that Elgar’s music provided English Irish and Hungarian use of folk songs, *The Musical Times* editorial suggests that English folk songs, similarly used, might help foster a national musical identity. C. Hubert H. Parry, an advocate of folk song as representative of the English temperament, concurred with this notion: [English folk tunes] ‘are characteristic of the race, of the quiet reticence of our country folk, courageous and content, ready to meet what chance shall bring with a cheery heart. All the things that make the folk-music of the race also betoken the qualities of the race, and, as a faithful reflection of ourselves, we needs

17 Rushton, Julian. ‘Caractacus Thematic Table’. Personal email from author, 1 September 2012.

18 Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 169.

19 Harper-Scott, J.P.E., *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007), 43.

20 Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Elgar and His Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

21 Riley, Matthew, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 156.

22 Richards, Jeffrey, *Imperialism and music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester University Press, 2001), 11.

The English folk song does, in fact, personify the English people and countryside. If any music were capable of unifying the English nation by infusing its newest members with pride in their homeland, surely it would be the English folk song. As Georgina Boyes puts it, ‘Morris dancers, maypoles on the village green and orchestrated folk songs have been used to represent – and sell – “Englishness” throughout the world.’<sup>24</sup>

Despite regular references to the uniquely ‘English’ quality of his music, Edward Elgar deliberately did not quote folk songs in his music. Unlike Vaughan Williams, Holst, Stanford, and Parry, all of whom arranged folksongs as part of their compositional output, Elgar’s body of work contains nothing comparable.<sup>26</sup> Everett Helm, as quoted by Hans Keller, argues that this English quality of Elgar’s Music: ‘... can scarcely be defined in words, and it has nothing whatever to do with ‘folkiness’. Elgar had very little use for folk song as an ingredient of concert music, and it would seem most unlikely that he ever strove consciously to “sound English”...’.<sup>27</sup>

23 Boyes, Georgina, *The imagined village: Culture ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester  
University Press, 1993), 25.

24 Boyes, Georgina, *The imagined village: Culture ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester  
University Press, 1993), 2.

25 Richards, Jeffrey, *Imperialism and music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester University Press, 2001), 11.

26 There are a few times where Elgar is influenced by folk song, for example setting the text of an Eastern  
European folk song in his art song 'The Torch'. This examples, however, are rare.

27 Keller, Hans, 'Elgar the Progressive', in *Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait* (London: Continuum, 2007), 105.

28 *Ibid.*, 107.

Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs,  
Wreath our hallow'd wreaths of flow'rs,  
Priestly crowns of crimson hue,  
Opening roses bright with dew  
Come! scatter bud and blossom round you on the way,  
Come! Till the tender greensward blushes like the day,

**Soprano**  
Come! be - neath our wood - land bow'rs wood - land bow'rs.

**Alto**  
Come! be - neath our wood - land bow'rs wood - land bow'rs.

**Tenor**  
Come! be - neath our wood - land bow'rs wood - land bow'rs.

**Baritone**  
Come! be - neath our wood - land bow - ers, Come! be - neath our wood - land bow - ers,

**Bass**  
Come! be - neath our wood - land bow - ers, Come! be - neath our wood - land bow - ers,

**S**  
Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow'rs wreaths of flow'rs,

**A**  
Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow'rs wreaths of flow'rs,

**T**  
Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow'rs wreaths of flow'rs,

**B**  
Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow - ers Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow - ers,

**B**  
Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow - ers Wreathe our hal - low'd wreaths of flow - ers,

29 Later, Orbin explains that the wreaths are woven to be hung on the shrine when Orbin's treason is cursed.

While the first phrase of this chorus clearly follows the expectations of folk music, the second and third phrases become increasingly inventive in how the folk melody is portrayed: The second phrase is a repetition of the first phrase transposed down a whole tone (to B-flat, the lowered leading tone of C). By lowering the leading tone, Elgar suggests mixolydian mode, a frequent aspect of folk-song. Later, this transposition prepares a way for the re-transition to the G-Major of Eigen's aria (see Fig. 11) that interrupts the chorus. A transposed repetition of the chorus' second phrase leads to A flat major (the Neapolitan of G) and a diminution of the melody. The A flat is then inflected to an A natural, the root of a half-diminished seventh in G, preparing Eigen's entrance on C (in first inversion).



The continuation of the chorus setting the third and fourth phrases modulates to F (a key area frequently used by Elgar in this scene) resuming the alternation between the new key's tonic and dominant (Fig. 12). Here, the bass accompaniment becomes an antiphonal imitation between the divided tenor and alto voices, a textural expression that develops the simple texture of the preceding lines. The melody is also expanded, now extending over an octave. Elgar's method of elaborating on the basic elements of a folksong exhibits his ability to integrate a folk-like portrayal of the English countryside with his unique compositional style.

40

Soprano Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, Ope - ning ros - es bright with dew,

Alto 1 Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, of crim - son hue, Ope - ning ros - es ros - es bright with dew,

Alto 2 Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, of crim - son hue, Ope - ning ros - es ros - es bright with dew,

Tenor 1 Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, Ope - ning ros - es ros - es ros - es bright with dew,

Tenor 2 Priest - ly crowns of crim - son crowns of crim - son hue, Ope - ning ros - es ros - es ros - es bright ros - es bright with dew,

Baritone Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, of crim - son hue, ros - es bright with dew,

Bass Priest - ly crowns of crim - son hue, of crim - son hue, ros - es bright with dew,

This type of choral writing occurs throughout the cantata, an earlier instance being the final chorus of Scene I, in which, according to the libretto, the ‘Spirits of the Hill’ lull Caractacus to sleep. The textual commonality of ‘lulling’ leads to a pastoral key (G), simple phrase structure and *a capella* all keeping with this ‘nationalist’ folk style. Finally, as Scene II opens, the druids and druid maidens prepare to invoke the Druid God Taranis. Again, this choral singing is simple and folk-like, the sequential triadic melody of the maidens alternatively combine with a second melody in the manner of a quodlibet.

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# Elgar's Religious Beliefs

Peter Sutton

This article draws in part on material prepared for a discussion held at Plâs Gwyn on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2012, at which the speakers were the present writer, the Rev. Nicholas Lowton and the host, Timothy Day. According to the report by John Paulson, the meeting concluded that 'Edward was always a Christian, and for most of his life a practising Christian, albeit one with doubts, but came to care little for denominational differences.'<sup>1</sup> That statement is explored here in greater depth by examining the nature and consequences of Edward's early Catholicism, the possible causes of the crisis associated with the *Apostles* trilogy, and his beliefs in later life.

## Edward's early Catholicism

The Catholic context of Edward's early life can be summarised as follows.<sup>2</sup> His mother converted to Catholicism after his father, a non-Catholic, was appointed organist at Saint George's Catholic Church in Worcester, where he remained for forty years; Edward's first school was run by Miss Caroline Walsh, a member of the Order of the Filles de Marie (he was the only boy among the girls, who included his sisters Lucy and Pollie); and he then attended a school in Spetchley Park, just outside Worcester, sponsored by the Catholic Berkeley family. In 1886 he took over the duties of organist at Saint George's and composed several works in praise of the Blessed Virgin. For some fifteen years after he married, he and Alice regularly attended Catholic churches in London and Malvern, Catholic priests were frequent callers at their house Forli in Malvern, and Alice embraced Catholicism like her mother-in-law and acceded to the Catholic requirement to bring up any children of the marriage in the faith, just as Charlie Pipe had agreed to become a Catholic in 1880 before he married Edward's sister Lucy.<sup>3</sup>

Edward's Catholicism was of little apparent disadvantage in his early musical development. As an adolescent, he was a bell-ringer at Saint Helen's Anglican church opposite the family music shop, he rushed to the Anglican Cathedral after Mass at Saint George's to hear the voluntary, and he attended as many of the Cathedral services as he could 'so as to become thoroughly acquainted

with the English Church style ...'<sup>4</sup> Alice's friends the Fittons welcomed him into a musical circle that already included Fr. Henry Bellasis, the Birmingham Oratory priest,<sup>5</sup> and he was admitted to the musical life not just of Saint Helen's and the Cathedral, but also of the Worcester Philharmonic Society, Stockley's Orchestra in Birmingham, the Worcester City and County Lunatic Asylum in Powick, private schools and ladies' choirs, and so on. Moreover, when Richard Baxter Townshend introduced him to golf and he sought to join the Worcestershire Golf Club, his application was 'probably supported by Henry Dyke Acland, the cello-playing Malvern Bank Manager and Club Treasurer, whose help was later to be acknowledged in the dedication of the *Sursum Corda*.'<sup>6</sup> He was simply the son of the man who ran the music shop, and when he gave his piano lessons in Malvern, he did so at the premises of Mr. W. Haynes, the organist at Great Malvern Priory, the Anglican parish church.

That is not to say that there was no anti-Catholic feeling among the general public, as Nicholas Lowton pointed out forcefully in the Plâs Gwyn discussion. The Catholic Relief Act, granting Roman Catholics equal civil rights in England and Wales, was not passed until 1829, and the diary of a Worcestershire girl confirms that the Roman faith remained socially unacceptable among some well-to-do families in the 1850s:

Never before had my mother been angry with me, and... [my father] called down upon me the most dreadful maledictions if I should ever dare to become a Catholic. He reproached me for my wickedness, perversity and disobedience, made me hand over to him the books which had been given to me, and threw them into the fire, saying he hoped that if I ever became a Catholic I might burn in the fire of Hell.<sup>7</sup>

This prejudice did affect Edward in that one reason for Helen Weaver breaking off their engagement may have been his Catholicism, and Alice's friends and family used it as further evidence of his unsuitability. At the end of the century, he also encountered anti-Catholic sentiments in his artistic life when *Gerontius* 'was mercilessly attacked to the extent that the work was banned in some of the great cathedrals.'<sup>8</sup>

Much of this revulsion was born of a justified fear of the resurgence of Catholicism. The 1829 Act was rapidly followed by the re-establishment of a Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales and the building of new Catholic churches: 'since the Oxford Movement ... the number of converts has been much increased; for some time past it has averaged about 8000 souls a year.'<sup>9</sup> By 1870 there were a million Catholics in England (of whom three quarters were admittedly Irish and another 50,000 were foreigners) out of a total population of 21 million, and by 1910 there were a million and a half out of 33.5 million.

There were already Catholic chapels at Spetchley Park and Little Malvern Court, and Saint George's was constructed in the same year as the passing of the Catholic Relief Act, replacing an

1 John Paulson, 'A man after God's own heart', *West Midlands Branch Winter Newsletter*, January 2013, 9. I am indebted to Timothy Day, John Harcup and Martin Bird for their comments on the first draft of this article.

2 The most detailed account is still Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984).

3 Martin Bird points out that Charlie Pipe says in his memoirs that he 'had always been inclined to ritualism' but that 'the chief reason was because the young lady whom I intended to make my wife worshipped there.'

4 Rudolph de Cordova, Interview with Elgar in *The Strand Magazine* (May 1904), in Christopher Redwood (Ed.), *An Elgar Companion* (Ashbourne: Sequoia, 1982), 183.

5 Percy Young, *Alice. Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 98.

6 Worcestershire Golf Club website consulted 25th February 2013: [www.theworcestershiregolfclub.co.uk](http://www.theworcestershiregolfclub.co.uk)

7 Diary of Louise Lechmere quoted in Malcolm Fare, *The Hanleys. A history of Hanley Castle and Hanley Swan* (Logaston Herefs: Logaston Press, 2010), 19.

8 James MacMillan in a BBC Radio 3 interview, *In Tune*, 22nd January 2013.

9 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1911 edition, 1926 printing, Vol. 23, 498.

eighteenth century predecessor. Another long-established Catholic family, the Hornyolds, built the church of Saint Alphonsus five miles east of Great Malvern in 1846, together with a school and a small monastery, and Saint Wulstan's was built four miles south of Great Malvern (two miles from Craeg Lea) in 1862 on land sold off for that purpose by the Beringtons. Two Catholic churches were then erected in Malvern itself, Saint Joseph's in North Malvern in 1876, and Our Lady and Saint Edmund's in the fashionable heart of Great Malvern in 1905, this latter designed by Peter Paul Pugin, son of Augustus. A small Catholic monastery was also founded in 1891.

This rapid revival was due in part to the fact that the faith had never been entirely suppressed in the west of England. Worcester was proud of remaining faithful to the King in the Civil War, and while Robert Berkeley of Spetchley Park donated the altar of Saint George's and another Catholic, John, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, presented the copy of Raphael's *Transfiguration* that still hangs in the sanctuary, the building was designed by Henry Rowe, the Worcester City Architect, which suggests a degree of civic toleration.<sup>10</sup> In the 1830s the head of the Hornyold family, 'earned a reputation as the most popular man in the county, being styled "The Old Squire"', and was even elected High Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1841.<sup>11</sup> And by the 1860s, the Superior at St George's, Fr. William Waterworth, SJ, was allegedly 'much esteemed by Catholics and Protestants' on account of his 'learning and his kindness and zeal.'<sup>12</sup> In 1915, no less a figure than W.R. Inge, Dean of Saint Paul's, could write, 'Even those who have least sympathy with Catholicism cannot help feeling that it is a religion for a gentleman.'<sup>13</sup> Adherence to the Catholic faith thus still required commitment but was gaining in respectability.

Edward was certainly committed. Being a sensitive young man he felt the glory and the pain of the Christian story deeply, and his ability to hear music in the world around him strengthened rather than weakened his belief in an omnipresent God. However, he made little distinction throughout his life between a Catholic and an Anglican God and, although some parish churches were said to display the 'dryness and dreariness of Protestant worship',<sup>14</sup> he must have realised that the practical differences between Mass at Saint George's and Holy Communion at the Cathedral were only of significance to those who made them so.

His attitude to Catholicism must also have been influenced by his father as well as his mother. Not only did W.H.E. sneak out for a pint during sermons and 'damn' the blower, but he was outspoken in his condemnation of Catholic idolatry, and he was not received into the Catholic Church until the very end of his life.<sup>15</sup> His motives for playing the organ at Saint George's were therefore musical and financial, in much the same way that it was the music which attracted Edward to the Cathedral.

Nor was Edward inspired solely by his faith in all his early religious compositions. *The Light of Life* arose not out of religiosity but out of a golf match, when Edward played a round with the

Anglican cleric T. Littleton Wheeler, who was Secretary of the Worcester Three Choirs Festival and 'one of a golfing circle including Hugh Blair, Richard Arnold and the Nevinson brothers as well as Richard Baxter Townshend.'<sup>16</sup> The libretto of *The Light of Life* was then supplied by another Anglican, the Rev. E. Capel-Cure, who was an in-law of the Fittons, but into it went the dying Tristan's motif 'Still no ship in sight'. Edward had indeed played the un-Christian Wagner on the organ of Saint George's.

None the less, he was unquestionably a believer, if not a Catholic sectarian, until well into his forties. His specifically religious music, which forms about 15 per cent of his output, is concentrated in this early part of his career, and it includes both Marian works and the incomplete Christian trilogy of *The Apostles*. He would not have launched into such an emotionally and artistically demanding project if he had been equivocal about it from the outset.

### *The Apostles crisis*

Edward started on the path towards his 'gigantic work' by writing the non-Christian *Black Knight*, *King Olaf* and *Caractacus*, just the kinds of topic that Wagner himself might have chosen. They were historical or mythological and did not require Edward to explore his religious faith.

He then began making sketches for a Christian oratorio in the late 1890s, but having again consulted Capel-Cure, who impressed on him the scale of such a challenge, he realised that he could not complete it for the Birmingham Festival of 1900. The consequent decision to set *Gerontius* instead, perhaps prompted by Alice, was wise since although Capel-Cure and other Anglicans might object to the mention of purgatory, no serious questions of faith arose for Edward. A literal belief in angels and demons was scarcely crucial, and in a typical example of Elgarian recycling, a piece of music headed 'The Moods of Dan', George Sinclair's dog, turned into the opening of the work.<sup>17</sup>

Edward's well-known statement that his heart was 'now shut against every religious feeling' after the fiasco of the first performance of *Gerontius* was pure hyperbole,<sup>18</sup> akin to his earlier outbursts at the ineptitude of the choirs of Saint George's and the Philharmonic Society.<sup>19</sup> Rather, when he began in earnest on *The Apostles* in 1902, he was still swimming in a comforting sea of faith that allowed him, for example, to joke with Troyte Griffith over the naming of All Saints Anglican church, which Troyte designed, saying, 'You have got no saints of your own, so you grab the whole lot at one fell swoop.'<sup>20</sup> He went on to complete a shortened version of *The Apostles* for the 1903 Festival, and after the move to Hereford he continued to attend a Catholic church, sometimes Saint Francis Xavier's in Broad Street, and sometimes the monastic cathedral of Belmont Abbey, initially under Abbot Ildephonsus Cummins and then under Abbot Clement Fowler, on the far side of the city from Plâs Gwyn.

10 Fr. Brian Doolan, *Saint George's Catholic Church Worcester: A Brief Guide* (pamphlet available from the church).

11 Malcolm Fare, *op. cit.*, 36.

12 SJ Letters and Notices XVI, 1883, 150, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 15.

13 Figures from the Encyclopaedia Britannica 1911 edition; W.R. Inge, Types of Christian Saintliness, quoted in Sir James Marchant (ed.), *Wit and Wisdom of Dean Inge* (London: Longmans Green, 1927), 42.

14 Louise Lechmere, see Note 6.

15 See esp. Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 17 and 57. W.H. Elgar was presumably justified in damning the blower since a new organ was installed as soon as he retired.

16 Elgar had sent a proposal to Littleton Wheeler, which the cleric put before the Festival Committee after discussing it on the links. See Kevin Allen's commentary in his re-issue of R.B. Townshend, *Inspired Golf* (Gosport: Kevin Allen, 2004), 27. See also the Worcestershire Golf Club website.

17 This was pointed out by Stephen Johnson at the 2012 Three Choirs Festival.

18 Letter to August Jaeger, 9th October 1900, Elgar Birthplace Museum letter 9528.

19 For Saint George's see Note to Hubert Leicester quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 113; for the WPS see Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 234.

20 Notes by Troyte quoted by Jeremy M. Hardie, *Troyte Griffith. Malvern Architect and Elgar's Friend* (Malvern: Aspect Design, 2012), 55.

Below the surface, however, cracks had begun to appear, although it was not until 1905 that 'Elgar's religious views were undergoing a change from an orthodox Catholicism (of a kind) to some form of humanism.'<sup>21</sup> This change appears to have been well advanced if not completed by the end of 1906.

Many of his activities in 1905 still superficially suggest an untroubled mind and a continued commitment to religious composition. He began the year preparing the libretto for Ivor Atkins' *Hymn of Faith*, went on to give his lectures at Birmingham University, travelled to the United States in June and July, played happily with Carice's pet rabbit Peter in the summer, and in the autumn was involved in planning a new orchestral society for Worcestershire.

However, Alice's diary confirms that he was increasingly ill at ease. On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January 1905 she recorded, 'E. rather a cold, not out. A. to church in town -' and the following Sunday, 'E. still badsley though muss better - not out. Too cold for A. - C. & May to Church in town.' Again on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February, 'E. raser a cold started for church but felt the wind. A. C. & May to town Church at 11 -'.<sup>22</sup> On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May she wrote, 'E. badsley cold - not up till late. A. C. & May to church 11 -', although the following day, 'Ivor came to go through his work with E, he & E. fishing newts &c. in afn.' Edward was clearly up and down, since on the Tuesday once more she wrote, 'E. badsley cold in bed all day -'. By 24<sup>th</sup> November he was 'cold & very tired & depressed -' and Alice was 'Dreadfully worried.' On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November she wrote, '... A. C. & May to Church. Too damp for E. Very stormy afn. Much worried - Fate of 'Apostles' for Festival trembling in the balance.'

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1906, Alice records that Edward was well once more and 'happy writing', and he told Jaeger that the new orchestral Prelude to *The Kingdom* was 'the best thing I have done I know'.<sup>23</sup> But he fell ill again at the end of January and by Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February he was 'saying he must give up his work,' occasioning Alice to go to Birmingham to renegotiate the Festival contract with George Hope Johnstone. There is a long gap in Edward's church attendance in January and February 1906, although on 18<sup>th</sup> March once more 'E. & May rode to Belmont - long round home - out again after lunch lovely ride - A. & C. to Church in town.' But in April 1906, during preparations for the Cincinnati May Festival on their second visit to the United States, Alice could record in her diary, 'Parish Priest called, E. argued hotly with him...'. The following day he had one of his recurring bad headaches.

Edward continued to attend church every two to three weeks from late June to October. His eyelids troubled him increasingly in November and December, however, and he generally remained at home. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1906 Alice wrote, 'A. dreadfully worried about E. and plans generally. E having stormy weather [in Wales] but not minding it.' And on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Edward wrote to Ivor Atkins with a humorous irony that bordered on the insulting: 'I have been in an evil case & fit for no good works ... I know that owing to the ripeness of the year Xtians wax gross in their food and religion, of whilk twain the first concerns you not, whilst the second may hold you fast to tickle silver into collection plates with warily selected tunes - such is the Xtian way.'<sup>24</sup>

His eyes were hurting badly, but such a dismissal of Christianity surely had a deeper cause. There are several possible explanations: artistic, physical, intellectual and emotional. These will be addressed in that order.

21 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 200.

22 Unless otherwise stated, quotations are taken direct from Alice's diary.

23 Letter to Jaeger, 26 January 1906, EBM letter 8758.

24 E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (London: David & Charles, 1984), 157.

The purely artistic problems which Edward faced in composing a long and complex cycle need not be discussed here, beyond acknowledging that *The Apostles* imposed an immense artistic and mental strain. One moment it was a trilogy, the next a single work, and the next an impossible dream, and Carice reported that both parts, *The Apostles* itself and *The Kingdom*, were the only compositions that 'seriously disrupted family life' and 'took it out of him.'<sup>25</sup> Artistic difficulties over the text did have an effect on his faith, however, since his decision to compile his own libretto meant that he had to examine his attitude to the entire Christian narrative, reading, re-reading and questioning the New Testament, and pulling out those elements which he thought essential. He left no known record of this process.

Ernest Newman's caustic comments on *The Apostles* may also have touched a nerve, confirming Edward's suspicion that he was heading in the wrong musical direction.<sup>26</sup> If there is any truth in Newman's claim that Elgar spoke a few disturbing last words to him thirty years later, these may have concerned his regret at what he might have achieved if he had abandoned religious themes earlier.

His physical disabilities are comprehensively discussed in John Harcup's recent article in the *Journal* and do not need to be rehearsed here either, save to say that they were truly debilitating and centred principally on tonsillitis and damage to his one of his eyes caused by scratches from Scap (aka Aesculapius), the collie dog presented to Edward by Dr. Buck and his wife. These chronic problems would certainly have caused tension headaches and irascibility and would have explained his constant blinking, and they would have been exacerbated by his mental and physical exhaustion. His frequent mood swings are therefore not to be wondered at, although the term 'depression' frequently used by Alice cannot be understood in its clinical sense.<sup>27</sup>

His physical suffering may have caused Edward to wonder at the existence of a benevolent deity, particularly when allied with artistic difficulties, but it does not entirely explain the disaffection with religion shown in his letter to Ivor Atkins and his patchy church attendance. It is therefore necessary to look also at the impact of his intellectual development.

As he moved up the social scale, Edward inevitably found himself in contact with a range of intellectual views far wider than had been available to him in Worcester and Malvern - agnostic, atheistic, Jewish and eventually occult. By the time he came to draft the second part of the cycle, *The Kingdom*, in 1905, not only had he given lectures in Birmingham and toured the United States, but he had also visited Italy once more, been the subject of Frank Schuster's Covent Garden Festival, been offered a professorship in Manchester by Adolf Brodsky, been admitted to the Athenaeum, been awarded honorary degrees, membership of the Royal Academy of Music and a knighthood, been invited to hobnob with royalty, and been a guest of His Majesty's Navy on a romp in the Mediterranean. No wonder that Dorabella came to call him 'H.E.' (meaning 'His Excellency').

These encounters must have influenced his religious thinking for he was, as Sir Arthur Bliss described him, 'a very sensitive, highly imaginative, often harassed human being.'<sup>28</sup> Even if he

25 In a BBC recording played by Stuart Freed in his talk 'Recollections of Elgar' to the Elgar Society West Midlands Branch AGM in April 2012.

26 Gerald Cumberland, article in *The Musical World* (15 Jan 1905), in Christopher Redwood (Ed.), *An Elgar Companion* (Ashbourne: Sequoia, 1982, 188-192), 191.

27 Dr John Harcup, 'Edward Elgar - a medical enigma?', *The Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.17, No.6, December 2012, 16-31.

28 'The Fifteenth Variation': the BBC Broadcast of 12th May 1957, *The Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.15 No.3, November 2007, 33-44, 43.

never discussed Christianity with those he met, he would have been well aware of the range of views and attitudes represented by these erudite and intelligent new contacts. He must have been questioning his beliefs, and it is evident from his declining church attendance that he was beginning to find the answers worrying. When he had his argument with the Cincinnati priest in 1906, it was surely not over issues such as papal infallibility or the efficacy of relics, but over yet deeper matters such as the truth of the Resurrection. He had made a commitment to complete a great Christian saga, but did he any longer believe in it? If not, why was he doing it?

This brings us to his broader emotional state. In the first place, he was profoundly moved by the deaths of those close to him, especially his mother in 1902, Alfred Rodewald in 1903, and his father in 1906, besides which August Jaeger was seriously ill throughout that year. Of these four, only his mother was a devout Catholic, and he must have wondered about the fate of the others. Was there really a purgatory, as *Gerontius* suggested?

Relationships with women of his own generation were also important to him at this time: with Alice, naturally, but also with Rosa Burley and his newer acquaintances Alice Stuart-Wortley and Julia Worthington.

After the move to Hereford, Rosa insisted on going over from Malvern from time to time to ‘cheer’ him at the house she said ‘might be chosen by a prosperous and aesthetically not very exacting merchant rather than ... a sensitive and highly strung artist.’<sup>29</sup> However, despite her adulation for his artistic gifts there is no evidence that Edward discussed his deeper feelings with her – rather the contrary since she complained that ‘why the Elgars uprooted themselves from Malvern ... and went to Hereford was never really made clear to their friends.’<sup>30</sup> It is tempting to think that Rosa was in fact one of the reasons for the move in that Alice was keen to get Edward away from her; at the very least, the manifest antipathy between Rosa and Alice may have added to what Rosa called Edward’s unexplained ‘gloom’.

As for Alice, when young Ted first encountered his future wife in Mr. Haynes’s music room, she represented a realm of polite, educated society that was considerably above his station, and she was ready to sacrifice her own artistic pretensions and family ties in order to haul him up to her level and send him climbing higher. She did just that, and by 1905 the Sir Edward of her creation was, as it were, outgrowing her.

He was finding comfort not so much in Rosa as in the less abrasive company of the other two women. He first encountered Alice Stuart-Wortley (Windflower) at the Sheffield Festival in 1902, and their friendship ‘ripened from formality’ in 1906.<sup>31</sup> Michael Foster’s suggestion that guilt over love for her contributed to his suicidal feelings while writing *The Apostles* therefore seems a little premature, although there must already have been a strong affinity.<sup>32</sup>

The relationship with Julia Worthington (Pippa) moved rather faster. Edward and Alice met her en route to the United States in 1905, although there is a rumour that Edward had known her before.<sup>33</sup> At all events they instantly became firm friends, and Pippa visited England later that year. They met again in America in April 1906, and in July Pippa came to stay at Plâs Gwyn. There were

more exchange visits in 1907, notably when Edward returned to the United States on his own, and she was in and out of his life until she died in 1913, less than three months after Alice recorded in her diary, ‘First post a dear Valentine card from Pippa to E. & before we started another post brought terrible news of her illness –’.<sup>34</sup>

Neither Pippa nor Windflower came from quite such an apparently spotless background as Alice.<sup>35</sup> Pippa was divorced, and the Ruskin scandal hung over Windflower’s parents.<sup>36</sup> Nor was either a practising Catholic, which cannot have helped Edward’s faith: when Pippa came to stay at Plâs Gwyn in July 1906, the Sunday was taken up with an ‘excursion’, and it was left to Alice to show her the Cathedral the following day. Not only must Alice have found it hurtful, if not worse, that Edward enjoyed the company of this new muse, but was he also turning away from his religious beliefs because he was turning away from her? Her diary reveals nothing of such fears: she consistently calls Pippa ‘our dear friend’ but, as Carice pointed out later, at the time ‘no mention was ever made in a diary of anything disagreeable or vexing.’<sup>37</sup>

### *Edward’s later beliefs*

*The Kingdom* is ‘the end of Elgar’s religious choral music’<sup>38</sup> although he continued to produce shorter religious works: his touching *Ave Maria* and *Ave Maris Stella* were revised in 1907, he made a setting of Psalm 48 in 1912, two anthems were published or first performed in 1914, and his setting of Ben Jonson’s carol *I sing the birth* was published in 1928 and dedicated to the Rev. Harcourt Fowler of Elmley Castle. But these were mere bagatelles, suggesting that music and friendship were as important to him as belief, and that his attitude may have changed from time to time.

In January and February 1907, after the *Apostles* crisis, the Elgars travelled to Italy, where they again met Gorton and Pippa. In March and April Edward was back in the United States on his own, staying some of the time with Pippa, and in November the Elgars again went to Italy, where they attended Mass at various churches. However, ‘Rome offered no inspiration to Edward’s faith ... “If you have any religious feeling whatever, don’t go to Rome – everything money – clergy gorgeous and grasping ...”’.<sup>39</sup>

By 1908 at the latest, according to Percy Young, Alice was ‘resigned to going to church alone,’<sup>40</sup> although her diary records Edward attending Belmont or Saint Francis Xavier’s about once a month throughout 1908 and 1909. Either she was persuasive, or he wished to please her, or

29 Burley and Carruthers, *op. cit.*, 75.

30 Burley and Carruthers, *op. cit.*, 74.

31 Michael Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 130.

32 Michael Foster, *op. cit.*, 19.

33 See Richard Smith, *Elgar in America* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2005), 30. Smith cites an article by Nicholas Reed which speculates on an encounter in London in 1899.

34 Alice Elgar diary 22nd February 1913.

35 Though Martin Bird’s forthcoming book *An Elgarian Who’s Who* reveals that Alice’s brother Stanley Napier Roberts (1844–1922) abandoned his wife in 1875, became embroiled with the actress (and con artist) ‘Lady Gipsy Rogers’, and was subsequently declared bankrupt. Unsurprisingly, he is never mentioned by Alice.

36 Before marrying the painter John Everett Millais, Alice Stuart-Wortley’s mother Effie had briefly been married to his aesthetic friend William Ruskin. The alliance with Ruskin was acrimoniously dissolved on grounds of non-consummation, a subject not discussed in polite society.

37 Mrs Richard Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (London: Remploy, 1979), 64. First published 1937.

38 Michael Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 173.

39 Conversation at the Leicesters’ home in Worcester, 17th June 1908, as noted by Philip Leicester, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 527.

40 Percy Young, *Alice. Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 163.

he was still uncertain, or he liked the priest, or he felt guilty, or he wanted to preserve a veneer of faith and respectability. His motives may well have been mixed.

By 1912 however, when the Elgars moved from Hereford to Hampstead and he refused to write an opera about Saint Columba because the saint was so misogynistic that he banned female animals from Iona,<sup>41</sup> Edward had turned away not only from Catholicism but from all conventional religion. In the Great War, despite the patriotic posturing that he forced himself to adopt, he despaired of the cruelty to man and beast and declined to set a peace ode by Laurence Binyon, declaring that the Heavenly Spirit had been obtuse to the suffering.

This position was almost certainly influenced by the friendships that developed during and after the war with such unorthodox characters as George Bernard Shaw, who believed primarily in the omniscience of Shaw, and Algernon Blackwood, who wrote the original story of *The Starlight Express* and was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. At the end of his life he must also have been affected by the Jewish heritage of Vera Hockman.

Throughout the two decades and more following the *Apostles* crisis Edward none the less kept up personal friendships with clergy and organists in parishes and cathedrals and retained a lingering affection for the Church. In 1927, he wrote to congratulate Randall Davidson on his 25 years as Archbishop of Canterbury, describing him as ‘an ideal great churchman, a staunch friend, and an embodiment of all that is good and true in Christianity’. Of the distinctions between Christian denominations he said, ‘whatever differences exist there remains the clear, wide and refreshing Christianity, desired by all men, but obscured by the little darkness of their own imperfect vision. To the better understanding of such broad feeling I am thankful to have been permitted, in a small way, it is true, to exercise my art...’.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, according to Carice’s diary, he was still trying to complete the third part of the *Apostles* trilogy, *The Last Judgment*, in 1925, although he declined the opportunity to finish it for performance at the 1929 Leeds Festival.<sup>43</sup>

However, during his last illness in 1934 he informed his doctor that after death ‘I believe there is nothing but complete oblivion’ and ‘expressed a wish that he should be buried at the confluence of Severn and Teme, without religious ceremony. He had for many years avoided going to church and refused to see a priest.’<sup>44</sup> His words may be another example of overstatement since, as Jeremy Hardie has pointed out, he had written to Troyte on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1920, twelve days after Alice died, asking him ‘to find out whether the plot next to Alice at Saint Wulstan’s was to be had, and if so, to secure it for him.’<sup>45</sup> Inevitably, as Edward must have anticipated, ‘In the end Carice persuaded her father that burial must be beside Alice at Little Malvern.’<sup>46</sup>

Whether he persisted in his refusal to see a priest on his death bed is a little less clear. Jerrold Moore reports that, ‘At the urgent request of Carice and the Leicesters, but against the advice of Dr

Moore Ede, old Fr. Reginald Gibb came from St. George’s Church to give the Catholic last rites. Afterwards Fr. Gibb was quoted in newspapers as having obtained a confession of faith.’ However – there is always a however – Edward was drugged with morphia at the time, his physician probably knew Edward’s mind better than the Leicesters and possibly Carice, and Fr. Gibb’s own obituary was more circumspect, claiming only that he had ‘ministered to [Edward] such sacraments as he could receive.’<sup>47</sup>

### **Conclusion: ‘always a Christian’?**

Sir Edward Elgar was a complex and emotional man with an innate religious sensibility. Very probably he did open his heart about his beliefs to Pippa and later to Windflower, both in person and in letters that are lost or destroyed, and maybe also to friends such as Atkins or Sinclair, Buck or Gorton. However, when he was not complaining of lassitude, exhaustion, artistic failure or physical debility, he generally hid behind japes and word-play, which is why any attempt to establish his religious beliefs is necessarily speculative. Shaw ‘told Hesketh Pearson that ... Elgar avoided the subject of religion “with a deliberate reticence which convinced me that he was a nineteenth century unbeliever ...”’ and Billy Reed confirmed that he never spoke of his religion.<sup>48</sup> This was not unusual. G.K. Chesterton observed that ‘Religious liberty might be supposed to mean that everybody is free to discuss religion. In practice it means that hardly anybody is allowed to mention it.’<sup>49</sup>

Even at the last he could not entirely escape the imprint of his Catholic upbringing, but whether he was ‘always a Christian’, as John Paulson says, depends on what is meant. Timothy Day called attention in the Plâs Gwyn discussion to writers such as Matthew Arnold, William James and, more recently, Don Cupitt, Richard Holloway and André Comte-Sponville, among whom ‘the tendency is very simple: doctrine and belief dissolve away leaving all the spirituality intact.’ He suggested that Edward would have been ‘of a mind’ with them, and that ‘Through music – and through other aspects of his life – he found the way to maintain a precarious balance.’<sup>50</sup> As an example of that balancing act, he cited Lowes Dickinson, who tried at the turn of the twentieth century to rationalise how those inclined to religious belief coped with a lack of certainty:

...there is a certain attitude towards life which is very valuable, and which, in my opinion, may appropriately be called religious...an attitude of what I may call active expectancy – the attitude of a man who, while candidly recognising that he does not know, and faithfully pursuing or awaiting knowledge ... yet centres meantime his emotional, and therefore his practical life about a possibility which he selects because of its value, its desirability .... though I recognise the readiness with which it might lead into the illegitimate position of believing a thing to be true because we desire it ...<sup>51</sup>

Edward would have identified with this dilemma. Looking back on his life, he might well have seen his early beliefs as self-induced, and he would have agreed with Dickinson that ‘... faith would seem to be an expression of the imagination and the will, rather than of the intellect, though

41 Pointed out by Donald Hunt in his Introduction to the 2012 Three Choirs Festival performance of *The Music Makers*, talk to Elgar Society members at St Barnabas Church Centre, Hereford, 7th July 2012.

42 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 397. I am indebted to Timothy Day for calling attention to this letter.

43 Carice’s diary was quoted by Martin Bird in his talk to the Elgar Society West Midlands Branch in November 2011.

44 Quoted by Michael Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 268 and, among others, Byron Adams, ‘Elgar’s later oratorios: Roman Catholicism, decadence and the Wagnerian dialectic of shame and grace’ in Daniel Grimley & Julian Rushton, *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81-105.

45 Jeremy M. Hardie, *op. cit.*, 138.

46 Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 823.

47 Moore, *idem*. I am grateful to John Harcup for calling attention to this account.

48 Michael Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 268; W.H. Reed, *Elgar as I knew him* (London: Dent 1936).

49 G.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1937), 238.

50 Papers distributed at Plâs Gwyn, 24th November 2012 and personal communication, 21st February 2013.

51 G. Lowes Dickinson, *Religion: criticism and a forecast* (London: J.M. Dent, 1911), xi.

it be from the intellect that it takes its form. It is closer to music and poetry than to science.<sup>52</sup> He would probably also have agreed with the generous interpretation of Dean Inge, who wrote, 'Our own religion is what life has taught us. If we can clarify this body of experience...we shall have done what is best worth doing for ourselves ... and we shall have to offer to others the best that was in us to give.'<sup>53</sup>

Those who have come to love Elgar and his works would argue that he did that, even though he descended from the heights of religious fervour, turned away from regular observance and often took pains to disguise his spirituality.

Each of us will form our own view as to whether he was 'always a Christian', and in doing so we shall no doubt be influenced by our own beliefs. While Timothy Day, for example, feels that Edward was not tormented by a 'loss of faith',<sup>54</sup> I sense that he did completely lose his faith, although he retained a belief in Christ's moral message and a sense of the sublime. And I believe that he suffered in consequence. *The Kingdom* closes 'with what Diana McVeagh calls "gentle drooping chords of acceptance,"'<sup>55</sup> and tears ran down his face when he conducted the work in Cambridge in 1907.<sup>56</sup> If, as I suspect, those tears represented anguish at his loss of faith, then the *Apostles* trilogy is a tragedy that is enough to make anyone weep, although dear Alice might never have understood its depth.

*Peter Sutton is the author of the play Elgar and Alice, which toured starring Gerald Harper in 2007 and was revived at the Swan Theatre Worcester during the 2011 Three Choirs Festival.*

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52 G. Lowes Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 92.

53 W.R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, quoted in Adam Fox, *Dean Inge* (London: John Murray, 1960), 150.

54 Personal communication, 21st February 2013.

55 Michael Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 173.

56 Referred to by Michael Kennedy in his 2012 A.T. Shaw lecture.

## Elgar's Music for Powick Asylum

### Barry Collett

In 1879 the 21 year old Elgar was appointed Bandmaster to the Worcester County and City Pauper Lunatic Asylum which was situated at Powick, a village between Worcester and Malvern. His job was to train the musicians and conduct the Friday night dances, as well as composing the popular dances of the day – Quadrilles and Polkas – which the staff band played for the inmates' enjoyment. He held the position till 1884, and wrote in all five sets of Quadrilles and five Polkas. This much was always known, but the music was never printed and languished in total obscurity. Ken Russell's 1962 Elgar film featured a humorous clip of the band puffing its way through the *Nelly Polka*, and prior to that Professor Ivor Keys, then of Birmingham University, had played a little of the music, when the conclusion was reached that it was juvenilia not worthy of further investigation.

There the matter rested, until I went to the Birthplace in the mid 1980s to research the Elgar War Music for my forthcoming recording. I came across the Powick music volumes which had been placed at the Birthplace, and decided it was high time these pieces saw the light of day. The then Trustees fell into a panic and refused point blank to let me have the music for performance, the reason, as it was explained to me, being that the great composer of *Gerontius* and the Symphonies could not be seen to have perpetrated such youthful rubbish. My argument that the country dances of Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert hardly detracted from their masterworks seemed to convince a few of the Trustees, and after a lot of argy-bargy I was given permission to produce a private performance ('nobody must listen to it ...!').

Rehearsing the music with the Rutland Sinfonia was a moving, if frustrating, experience. The individual parts were all hand-written, badly in some cases, and there were numerous errors which had to be corrected. Some puzzles arose too; halfway through one piece the clarinet music ran out, but there was the instruction to 'go back to A'. Unfortunately there was no A! But it all finally came together, and we were invited to go to perform it at the closing down of the Powick Hospital, as the old Asylum had become, in 1988. This we did, and shortly after gave a complete performance in Oakham Church, and following year at the Royal College of Music at the invitation the London Branch of the Elgar Society. It was interesting to note that all the nay-sayers and doubters that were dubious about the music had disappeared by this time, as the music, if not great masterpieces, was very obviously charming, well-written, and full of good tunes.

I was privileged to give further complete performances of the Powick Asylum Music, at Worcester in 2007 with the Elgar Camerata, and last year, 2012, in Pershore Theatre with the English Symphony Orchestra. It was obvious that the orchestral players, as well as the audiences, were delighted with the music, and after the enthusiasm of the Pershore concert it was decided that a new professional recording was needed, the old Rutland Sinfonia recording then being twenty-five years old. The recording company SOMM picked up the idea, and after some negotiations with different orchestras, a hand-picked group of players, mainly from the CBSO, was chosen. Two days

of recording sessions took place in Birmingham at the end of July. As well as the complete Powick music two further Powick pieces were recorded, a Menuetto which was probably Elgar's audition piece when applying for the job, and a set of 'Singing Quadrilles' based on well-known Nursery Rhyme tunes which Elgar had left incomplete. They were completed and edited by myself with Andrew Lyle, the editor of the Powick volume in the Elgar Complete Edition. The short *Fugue for oboe and violin*, the *Duett for trombone and double bass*, and the charming *Andante and Allegro for oboe and string trio* were also recorded.

As for the music itself, it shows the self-taught composer learning his craft. The Asylum Band consisted of four or so first violins, a similar number of seconds, an occasional viola, a cello and double bass, a piccolo, flute and clarinet, two cornets, a euphonium, bombardon (bass tuba) and piano. It was his first job of conducting and composing, and he must have had some good players in the band. The first violin and first cornet parts are particularly difficult, and the woodwind and euphonium parts also need some agility. The Quadrilles all appear as a set of five dances, and the structure of them allowed Elgar little scope for invention. The Polkas are much more complex and inventive, but throughout there are fascinating glimpses of the composer to come; a sequence of chords that reappeared in *Sea Pictures*, the final quadrille of *L'Assomoir* which was lifted twenty-eight years later to become *The Wild Bears* in the second *Wand of Youth Suite*, or the characteristic crotchet-quaver pulse of many of the melodies. And what melodies! Good, bouncy tunes tumble over themselves in profusion, and the orchestration is full of subtle and inventive touches. Jolly tunes played in unison by piccolo, clarinet and cornet, with a burbling accompaniment for the euphonium, bring smiles of sheer pleasure at the saucy charm of it all.

But it is not all high-spirited jollity. The *Menuetto* has a gentle, Schubertian grace; the *Nelly Polka*'s spirited high-stepping main theme leads into a rather boozy middle section for solo cornet; the fifth of the *Valentine Lancers* starts and finishes with a grand stately passage marked *alla Marcia*, despite it being in three-four time! And the final Polka, *Blumine*, dating from 1884, is a gem. A mini-fanfare leads to a poised, wistful dance with its halting, lilting rhythm, but then gallops away to its exuberant coda that could have come from the pen of Percy Grainger!

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## MUSIC REVIEWS

### Elgar: Songs 1857-1900

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 15, edited by Brian Trowell (Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition Ltd., 2013)

Vol. 15 of the Elgar Complete Edition complements Vols. 14 and 16, which have already appeared, but these volumes do not exhaust Elgar's output of songs; others can be detached from larger contexts, such as *The Fringes of the Fleet* and *The Starlight Express*, to serve in recitals. Vol. 15 ends where Vol. 14 (orchestral songs) began, with *Sea Pictures*; in addition to the composer's piano version we have here his arrangement of *Sabbath Morning at Sea* for piano and organ. Otherwise the songs in Vol. 15 do not form cycles, although some were grouped under a single opus number, or gathered by a publisher. Some are well known; others have not previously been published, making the volume doubly welcome to those interested in Elgar's compositional development.

Establishing the contents of the volume was not entirely straightforward, as John Norris has already discussed in this Journal.<sup>1</sup> The editor, Brian Trowell, is author of a wide-ranging study of Elgar's 'use of literature'.<sup>2</sup> His research permits a full view of Elgar's poetic choices – by no means all, as he points out, from minor and forgotten writers; the original poems are given in full even when Elgar omitted parts of them in his settings. The substantial Preface discusses the earliest editions, and how songs were taken over by publishers on the back of Elgar's growing fame. Sometimes they were revised and, to accommodate different voice-types, published in more than one key (see Appendix 1 below). The edition chooses original keys, and publishes a single version with listed variants; only one song, *The Wind at Dawn*, was so much altered as to require both versions to be printed (both in the same key, F minor, in which it was later orchestrated).

As the editor of Vol. 14 (orchestral songs), I must declare an interest, and my regret that Elgar didn't score up a few more. *Like to the Damask Rose* is one of several that cry out for orchestral colour (including a brassy fanfare in the piano introduction); the left-hand grace-notes form a bass thanks to the sustaining pedal, an effect that again invites orchestral realization, as do the melting harmonies. This song of 1891 was republished in 1907 by Ascherberg (7 *Lieder von Edward Elgar*), and may serve as an example of the editor's procedures. No autograph survives, but details altered from the first edition

- 1 John Norris, 'Tales from the Complete Edition – 8', this Journal 18/2 (August 2013), 19–32.
- 2 'Elgar's Use of Literature', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 182–326 (including 394 fascinating endnotes).



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209 pp. + xxii.



imply the composer's involvement in the second, which is considered definitive. Today's trend in editing music is against conflating different versions, but in a simple case like this some clarifying detail missing from Ascherberg might improve the musical text itself, rather than being confined to the commentary. At bar 34, the forceful opening is repeated. The first edition marked this 'Tempo primo', cancelling the previous *stringendo*; this is clearly right, despite the surprising *pianissimo* dynamic (contrast bar 1's *forte, risoluto*) and clarifies what's surely meant. So why not put it back in (though no performer, I suppose, would continue to accelerate)? In bar 36, Barry Collett's 2005 edition<sup>3</sup>, also based on Ascherberg, places the *forte* at the fanfare rather than on the first beat, making better musical sense in the absence of the *crescendo* in bar 35 (which is in the first edition but not Ascherberg). The first edition is surely no less authoritative, and Ascherberg's edition may not have been scrupulously proof-read. Similar variation between the first and Ascherberg editions affects *The Shepherd's Song*, but this time there's an autograph which, as the editor points out, clarifies Elgar's intentions: he used repeat signs, rather than writing music out twice, so differences in repeated passages in previous editions were errors, and can be overruled.

The dates in the volume's title – 1857-1900 – suggest a composer singing almost in the womb, but the earliest song (*The Language of Flowers*) dates from 1872. It is, I think, the first piece of real juvenilia to appear in the Complete Edition; the manuscript is inscribed 'Not for publication', but its inclusion can scarcely damage his reputation. Elgar boldly chose a longish poem, and despite some minor crudity in harmony, the song is effective, and it establishes principles to which he returned: stanzas that could have been set by repeating the same music are varied, as are the short piano interludes. These techniques are used to excellent effect in later songs with a similar form, notably *As I Lay A-thynkinge*.

The second song, *The Self-Banished*, is a work of greater sophistication by a still teenage Elgar. It is a ternary (ABA) form, the middle section faster and in a different metre; it begins and ends in G major, but most of it (the second stanza and the middle section) is in E minor. Trowell notes Elgar taking the liberty of inserting an altered repeat of the second stanza before returning to G major for the last stanza. In *A War Song* (here No. 3) he ventures further afield harmonically, and links the contrast between death and glory by repeated use of a Valkyrie-like motive in the piano.<sup>4</sup> Trowell notes that the refrain ending 'rest in a grave' is changed by Elgar at its last occurrence to 'rest in the grave' Elgar's purpose, he suggests, is to add finality, though more of this is achieved by the singer's cadential bravura. *Through the Long Days* sets a short poem with sincerity and simplicity, over a continuous accompanimental tremor. It was later published in Op. 16 with two songs (*The Shepherd's Song* and *Rondel*) composed a decade later. At some point it acquired a metronome marking, the only one in this volume prior to *Sea Pictures*. *Is She Not Passing Fair* responds with splendid forthrightness to the chivalric poem (translated from Charles d'Orléans), and was included in the Ascherberg edition, whereas Elgar didn't return to *As I Lay A-thynkinge*, perhaps because of its length (though he cut some stanzas from the poem). Yet though the premise seems silly (a bird reacting, even anticipating, human woes), and the mock-medieval spelling could irritate, this is a touching piece.

Mary Tudor's lute song is better known, a perfect miniature in which the composer is entirely himself, and from here on there is no need to consider the songs as 'early' Elgar. *Roundel* (not to be confused with the later *Rondel*) is published here for the first time. Curiously, it survives only

in a manuscript copy, not an autograph, which only partly explains some curious features which I detail in Appendix 2 below, a couple of them evident errors that could surely have been spotted. Two other songs were first performed in 2013, and are first published here.<sup>5</sup> An elegant rotating figuration suggests Alice Elgar's evocation of a wintry beck (*The Mill Wheel*). This is not entirely a novelty since 32 of its 38 bars were recycled in the death scene of *King Olaf* where, the editor remarks, 'the original accompaniment survives with minimal change'. Not quite: the harmony and melody remain, but the rough North Sea brings different figurations to define these harmonies (as is obvious from the vocal score of *King Olaf*, even without orchestral colour). The *Muleteer's Serenade*, with its gently lolloping accompaniment, was recovered from its planned but eventually rejected metamorphosis into the *King Olaf* Epilogue, as is reported in Vol. 4 of the ECE.<sup>6</sup> Trowell calls the 1712 translation of *Don Quixote* from which the verses are taken 'much-criticised', and names two 'better known' ones, to which one might add Smollett's (1755). The song is a charming miniature, making much of its slight material.

The same could be said of *Love Alone will Stay*, better known as the second song of *Sea Pictures*, and *Dry those Fair, those Crystal Eyes*. Before those come the charming *Rondel* (Op. 16 No. 3), and the two Op. 31 songs, *After* (which Elgar perhaps unconsciously echoes in the *Olaf* epilogue), and *A Song of Flight*. The last song before the great cycle of 1899 is *The Pipes of Pan*, in which Elgar modified the poem, adding some ferocious sentiments not in the original ('Ours the fray – on and slay' instead of 'Turn and flee – It is he'); the editor speculates (p. xi) that this may explain the poet's refusal to allow Elgar to set another of his works. Trowell discusses Elgar's changes to the poetry in detail, but retains in the score only the words Elgar used, as in *The Swimmer* where 'strifes forbidden' for 'straits forbidden' is odd, and 'swift waves under the flying rollers' (my emphasis: for *sunder*) is nonsense. Surely singers could be allowed to substitute the original text in such cases? However, the information is all there in the edition, and for its gathering and completing the publication of an unfairly neglected area of Elgar's work we can only be grateful.

Julian Rushton

## Appendix 1: keys

Elgar presumably accepted publication in a variety of keys, and the choices of the ECE and Barry Collett's edition are shown in the table. Not listed are songs in the same key in both editions.

	ECE Vol. 15	Collett	
No. 4 <i>Through the Long Days</i>	A flat major	C major	MS in G major
No. 5 <i>Is She Not Passing Fair</i>	G major	F major	Also published in D
No. 7 <i>Queen Mary's Song</i>	E minor	G minor	
No. 10 <i>Like to the Damask Rose</i>	G minor	B flat minor	
No. 13 <i>The Shepherd's Song</i>	E flat major	F major	MS in E major
No. 16 <i>Rondel</i>	A flat major	B flat major	
No. 21 <i>The Pipes of Pan</i>	G minor	A minor	Also published in B minor; orchestrated in B flat minor
	ECE Vol. 16		
No. 5 <i>In the Dawn</i> Op. 41 No. 1	E flat major	C major	Also published in E
No. 6 <i>Speak, Music</i> Op. 41 No. 2	B flat major	A major	Also published in C

3 Barry Collett (ed.), *Edward Elgar. Thirteen Songs* (2 vols., Thames Publications 2005).

4 Small wonder that this, like the later *Pipes of Pan*, seemed suitable for orchestral dress; but Elgar apparently delegated the orchestration to someone else, and it does not appear in Vol. 14 of the ECE.

5 The editor probably expected to have an Appendix of four fragmentary songs, but his diligence has restored two of them to us whole. The Appendix is thus reduced to the sketchy *Temple Bar Rondeau*, and what remains of *Ophelia's Song*, possibly once complete, but recycled in *The Light of Life*.

6 ECE Vol. 4, ed. Robert Anderson and Roger Dubois. See p. xviii and note 6 on p. xxvii.

## Appendix 2: doubtful details

No. 8 (*Roundel*). This song seems accident-prone, and there is neither an autograph or authorized edition. There are two clear errors here. Near the end is a repeat sign, with first- and second-time bars, and no indication of where to go back to. The MS clearly marks just two bars (80-81) to be repeated. The edition sensibly writes these out twice, but fails to cancel the now meaningless repeat sign, and numbers the bars 80-81a rather than 82-83. Instructions for performance: ignore the repeat, and the voice repeats bar 81 exactly (i.e. repeat 'no tears' rather than resting on the last quaver). In bar 48, piano, right hand, third beat, the source has B not A, agreeing with the voice part (and with bar 8). With three other oddities, the edition scrupulously reproduces the source: bar 13, the right-hand A natural against the left-hand A sharp should perhaps be G (compare similar harmony at bars 52-53); bar 73, the first pair of semiquavers (right hand) should probably be an octave higher, to match other such passages; end of bar 84, C natural makes no sense (I suggest it should be D natural). Whether an edition should, without comment, reproduce the source in such unusual circumstances could be debated (but not here).

No. 9 (*The Wind at Dawn*), bar 7: piano left hand, D natural (both versions) is wrong; it clashes with the right hand, and in the orchestral version the correct D flat is given weightily to trombone and bass clarinet.

No. 11 (*The Poet's Life*), bar 18: the first note in the bass is manifestly wrong: it should be B flat, as in Collett's edition; it resolves the A and F of the previous bar and supports the vocal appoggiatura E-D.

No. 14 (*The Mill Wheel*): One can only admire the patience with which Elgar's notations have been disentangled (their condition is well described by John Norris).<sup>7</sup> But in bar 34 in the second half of the bar, the repeated right-hand figure clashes horribly with the left hand; it is clear in the MS and at bar 43 of the 'The Death of King Olaf' that it should be a step lower (F-G-F-D flat-F).

<sup>7</sup> Norris, op. cit., p.31. I am grateful to John for supplying me with information on the MS sources.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Kevin Allen: *Gracious ladies: the Norbury family and Edward Elgar. Volume One: Genius has its own rank*

Alverstoke, Kevin Allen, 2013

'This is a long book', observes Kevin Allen at the opening of his preface, and, certainly it is! Londoner, indeed, than Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, and like that great work, the product of decades of research. Society members are referred to Kevin's detailed account in the *Journal* (Vol.17 No.5, August 2012) of the remarkable discovery of the Norbury letters and diaries and how this immense treasure trove led him to so many further investigations.

Kevin might, as he has owned, have confined himself to the story of Winifred Norbury, Elgar, and the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society, but decided on a far fuller project – viz. a study of the Norbury family from 1850s to 1930s with the inevitable digressions this would bring. In all there were three brothers and three other sisters aside from the stay-at-home unmarried Winifred and Florence who feature in the Elgar story. With myriad relatives and acquaintances among the gentry, landowning and ecclesiastical classes of Worcestershire, one begins to appreciate the scope and scale of this book.

Moreover we have here merely Volume 1, which takes us to 1897 and the founding of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society. One imagines that Volume 2 will be of similar magnitude. Elgarians will certainly look forward to the unpublished letters to Elgar of Martina Hyde, Joint-Secretary with Winifred Norbury of the Society, and a full account of the importance for Elgar of this vital musical body over which he exercised a free hand and detailed control at the time of his emerging to fame. However, a patient wait seems called for since Volume 2 is not immediately due for publication.

Not only must we wait for this, but also for the Index which will appear with Volume 2, and this delay does mean that it is no easy matter to revisit/check things in Volume 1. I think, too, that a family tree of the Norburys would have been helpful. However, we have source notes, informative bibliography, and a very useful appendix detailing Hugh Blair's Festival Choral Society and Festival Programmes, 1889-1897. I suspect, incidentally, that in this book Blair's importance in Worcester music is for the first time given its due. His is a fascinating story, ending its Worcester phase in the personal tragedy of his resignation/dismissal as Cathedral Organist in 1897. Elgarians may well be amazed at Blair's intimate friendship with Elgar and their close musical working relationship over a number of years. Blair was dominant in Worcester musical life long before he succeeded William Done who clung on to the nominal title of Cathedral Organist long after retirement age, leaving Blair, his assistant, to do the work. Blair was succeeded by Ivor



960 pp + xiv

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Atkins, another great friend and advocate of Elgar and one who, like Done, went on and on in that role. Incidentally, we have (p.911) Atkins' letter of application for the post to the Dean and Chapter, one of so many details new to me.

An aim of Kevin Allen's was to show us Elgar in his local social and musical contexts. This is certainly achieved. The sheer volume of music making in Worcester, Malvern and the surrounding villages was immense – both professional and amateur. The Norbury sisters were very capable and very involved. Other 'gracious lades' – the Fittons, Martins, Hydes and Rosa Burley enter the story. Especially we learn of Lady Mary Lygon and the Madresfield Festival. The struggling Elgar found himself much involved. Much of the story of Elgar's creative life will be familiar to readers, but works such as *Froissart*, *The Black Knight*, *Sursum Corda* and the rest receive more detailed treatment, and Kevin has much to say about *King Olaf* and *The Light of Life*. Naturally, too, there is plenty of information about the Worcester Three Choirs Festivals from the standpoint of both Elgar and the Norburys. Moreover most readers will continually come across nuggets quite new to them – for example letters to the press from Elgar championing the Chamber Music of Brahms, or his views about the superiority of North of England choral singing.

Elgar's social condition improved continually, but, even after his marriage, no none would confuse the status of the Sherridge ladies with the residents of Forli. Music was just one of the preoccupations of the Norburys and there is much about their religious, philanthropic, and political (Conservative) involvements. Leisure pursuits included riding, archery, cricket, tennis and cycling. This last, of course, became an enthusiasm of Elgar, and this along with golf receives detailed treatment. By the close of the book Elgar and his wife had become increasingly accepted within the Norbury ambit, so that by 1897 Elgar's social ambitions were clearly, like his musical reputation, much advanced.

For Elgarians surely a great strength of this book will be the detailed information to be gleaned about so many figures in the familiar narrative who normally remain, even for informed readers, little more than mere names. I was glad to hear, for example, about Swinnerton Heap and Rev. Penny. Especially we learn so much about 'the variations' – 'RBT', 'RPA' 'BGN' really were 'friends pictured within'. At last I understand what they are doing in Elgar's great masterpiece. One wonders if Kevin should write another book with a chapter about each 'variation' other than 'CAE' and 'EDU' – i.e. 13 chapters if No. XIII is taken to represent two persons!

The question remains whether Elgarians would have preferred a book more concerned with Elgar and less with the minutiae of the doings of the Norbury family. Many will revel in winters in Leigh Sinton, farming in Canada, reactions to the Crimean War and the Jameson Raid, Victoria's Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 as celebrated in Malvern and observed in London, an infuriating vicar, etc., etc. Others may find themselves skipping much of this.

At all events this is what we have – a study not so much merely 'definitive' but 'unique'. Kevin Allen, publisher as well as author, proves the ideal person to have undertaken his task. Research apart, one is staggered by his erudition in Victorian history, politics, educations, etc., as well as, of course, music. The huge canvas is under complete control.

Indigently, the volume is beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated with photographs of numerous associates of Elgar ('WBT', 'RBT', 'Troyte', 'Nimrod', Lady May Lygon, etc.). The extensive Norbury photographs include a particularly fine image of 'WN'. At the price asked it is difficult to think of a greater bargain, though via the post there is a necessary 50% addendum: 'This is a long book', and a weighty one.

David Bury

**Martin Bird (editor):**

***Edward Elgar, Provincial Musician: Diaries 1857-1896***

Rickmansworth, Elgar Works, 2013

As most Elgarians know, Martin Bird has for many years been compiling a massive database on his computer of letters to and from Elgar, of the surviving Elgar family diaries, and of every scrap of related material he can lay his devouring hands on. For that, and for his generosity in making this resource available to fellow researchers, he deserves our respect, admiration, and gratitude. Now, published by Elgar Works, comes the first volume drawn from his industry.

Elgar began keeping diaries, as do many people, on holiday; first to Paris in 1880, then to Scotland in 1884. The first year he recorded daily was 1889, and most of the entries are still his during 1890, the year he married. From 1891 his hand is joined by Alice's, and from 1895 most entries are by her.

So far, these are not diaries in the sense of a journal. More are they engagement books, usually written after the events as a sort of aide-memoir. There is little description, comment, reaction, introspection. To that extent they are tantalising, even maddening. What did he think of Parry's Fourth Symphony or his *Job*? (Parry's diaries are far more informative.) What did the Elgars think of Dorabella when they first met her? Or of Rosa Burley? Or of first hearing music from *The Ring*? From these notebooks alone we have no idea. But Elgar preserved them, and as primary source material they are invaluable, as Moore found for his 1984 *Creative Life*. What other composers have left such daily records? What were Mr. and Mrs. Elgar doing on 1 November 1894? This book tells you.

What a social life they lived! – all those people to tea. How the pair of them enjoyed walking! – from Forli to Storridge, or to the top of the Malvern Hills. How much chamber music he was performing! and Alice was a good enough pianist to partner him in sonatas. The book's title is just: it was a very provincial life, and that of a musician, not necessarily a composer (though it reaches *King Olaf*). Above all it confirms Alice's total devotion to her Edoo.



492 pp + xvii

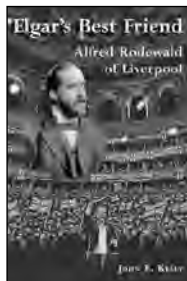
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‘Dr Eccles called to see ducky. Poult!’ was Elgar’s eccentric announcement of his wife’s pregnancy. ‘Poult’s arrival’ is warmly greeted, but thereafter the baby is scarcely mentioned. No first word, first step; when the Elgars go away (and there were long trips abroad) the family silver is packed off to the bank, and little Carice packed off to some friend. Edward’s slightest indisposition is documented day after day with sympathetic ‘EE raser poorsley’, in the baby language they used, but a blunt ‘Carice indigestion’ is all the little girl gets.

Martin Bird’s industry is indeed praise-worthy. He was faced with some pages with only a single, perhaps even boring, entry. He has identified people, filled out back-ground, borrowed from other sources and from complementary publications. The book’s liveliest pages are Bernard Shaw’s, not alas on Elgar’s music, but on concerts they both attended; the keenest insights are Rosa Burley’s. There is much social history here, much about trains, money, servants, much flavour of the period. But the editing is inconsistent. The devoted Elgarian will fill in any gaps, but a whole page on the Midland Railway and the steamship Columba in 1884 might, for instance, have been shortened to give more on Pollitzer and John Austin – both significant in Elgar’s professional life. *An Elgarian Who’s Who* for all the diaries (the other volumes are in preparation) is to come as a separate volume; a Personalia at the end of this book would have been even more useful.

Of course there is an enigma. What does ‘a. w. b.’ stand for? It appears some dozen times in this volume, the first time as ‘A. w. braut’ in Edward’s writing, and later in Alice’s hand as well. Bird does not speculate. It has been suggested by Brian Trowell this meant ‘[Edward] angry with Braut’. Tensions in the marriage there must have been; one page of two photographs shows it all: Alice’s girlhood home Hazeldine, large, detached, in its own grounds, above her married home, little Forli, semi-detached, suburban. Whatever strains there were, or were to come, Edward’s last entry for 1892 happily reads ‘Thank God for my sweet life with my sweet wife Braut. E.E.’

Diana McVeagh



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**John E. Kelly: *Elgar's Best Friend, Alfred Rodewald of Liverpool***  
Lancaster, Carnegie Publishing, 2013

John Kelly commences this book with a quote from Elgar’s letter of 25<sup>th</sup> March 1918 to William McNaught, the dedicatee of *O Wild West Wind*, enquiring about ‘Grosshandler TOST to whom Haydn dedicated a whole string of IVtets’: ‘I wish somebody would write an account of people to whom music had been dedicated’. How Elgar would have adored the Internet: it took a matter of moments to discover that Johann Tost ‘led the second violins of Haydn’s orchestra at Esterháza from 1783 until his departure for Paris in 1788’. But books will always be an invaluable source of in depth knowledge, and Elgarians will be particularly grateful to John Kelly for providing this comprehensive study of Elgar’s friend and dedicatee of the first *Pomp and*

*Circumstance March*, Alfred E. Rodewald.

Most members will have heard of Rodewald, probably in the context of his car, the ‘old mouldy Buzzer’ and its ‘shover’ or chauffeur: some will even have remembered the *Pomp and Circumstance* dedication. But we do need to know rather more than that about a person whose friendship was so dear to Elgar and this magnificent labour of love fills a big void.

The first third of the book covers the period before the two men met and is no less interesting for that. Here we have yet another example of the ability of the Victorian gentleman to pack more activities into a day than would seem feasible. For Rodewald was a cotton-broker with an international business to run, yet he still managed to found and direct an orchestra in Liverpool that bore comparison with many of the fully-professional ensembles of the day. His conducting abilities were admired by Hans Richter, no less, and the fact that he and his orchestra were preparing a performance of *Die Heldenleben* at the time of his death speaks volumes for both his and their abilities. The development of the orchestra in Liverpool in the late Victorian period is covered here, and that of their mutual friend Granville Bantock and his neighbouring New Brighton Tower Orchestra. It was when Elgar was in New Brighton for a concert of his music that he had the opportunity to meet Rodewald and the rest, as they say, is history.

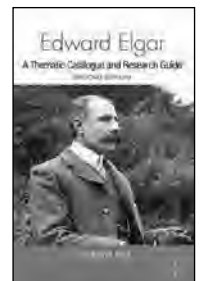
John Kelly covers the inevitably short period (a mere four years) of their friendship in great detail, and includes the majority of the surviving letters from Rodewald to Elgar (those from Elgar to Rodewald, if they survive, are yet to be found, but I live in hope). The warmth of their friendship shines forth in this account.

The book is exceedingly well illustrated with 18 pages of photographs, many of them in colour. The publishers will no doubt be cursing themselves for not noticing the occasional typo or inconsistency in layout, not least on the back cover, on which ‘Aldred Rodewald of Liverpool’ is writ large. But in context these things matter not a jot. What is far more important, as Michael Kennedy states in his Foreword, is that the ‘dedicated’ John Kelly ‘has revealed much about one of the most important of Elgar’s close friends’.

Martin Bird

**Christopher Kent:**  
***Edward Elgar: A Thematic Catalogue and Research Guide***  
New York and London, Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2013

The publication of what is described as a second edition of Christopher Kent’s *Edward Elgar: A Guide to Research* has been eagerly awaited by researchers, not least those working on the Elgar Complete Edition. While obviously of somewhat limited appeal to a wider readership, a volume such as this is a useful starting point for those wishing to undertake detailed research into Elgar’s music, particularly if it requires access to Elgar’s manuscripts, and



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especially for the more obscure and fragmentary works which the Complete Edition has to embrace.

But where does one start to review a volume like this? For those unfamiliar with the first edition of the *Guide to Research*, published by Garland in 1993, it is a comprehensive listing of all works composed by Elgar, recording details of all known source material for each work, whether manuscripts, proofs or printed editions, together with brief details of the dates of composition and first performance of each work and of arrangements and editions subsequently published by others. A book such as this can save hours of work tracking down the current whereabouts of known and anticipated source material essential to the volume. But there is no plot or story-line, and normal considerations of prose style do not apply. I therefore decided that I would have to start by defining the criteria against which to judge the new edition.

Accuracy is the obvious prerequisite for any reference work. Days can be wasted attempting to follow up inaccurate references, not least because the presumption is that the source must exist but not in the location indicated. On this criterion, the reputation of Kent's first edition did not stand high, being noted for the large number of incorrect references. It is a charge I have always felt somewhat ambivalent about: 100% accuracy can be no more than an aspiration for a concentrated encyclopaedic volume such as this. But a second edition at least provides a welcome opportunity for these errors to be corrected.

As important as the correctness of the recording of source entries is the completeness of each listing. The editor of a Complete Edition volume needs to consult all sources relevant to the volume and so must have confidence in the *Guide to Research's* comprehensiveness. In the twenty years since the first edition appeared, a number of important manuscripts have emerged from private ownership, others have changed hands or have been re-catalogued and, among the lesser known works, yet other manuscripts have at last been properly identified. A new edition provides the opportunity to update the locations of sources which have moved or changed hands since 1993, and to fill known absences from the first edition.

The selling point of the new volume, however, as reflected in its title, is the addition of a thematic catalogue: short extracts of scores to illustrate the themes to be found in each work. Use of the term catalogue here is slightly misleading. I recall some thirty years ago coming across a book which enabled me to look up the name of any tune that came into my head, simply by working out whether each of the first eight or ten notes was higher, lower or of the same pitch as the note which preceded it. But most thematic catalogues, including this one, work only in the opposite direction, making it possible to look up a work and find the main themes it contains, but not to look up a theme in order to determine the work it comes from. This is nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, the first index of Elgarian themes and as such a welcome addition.

So how has the new edition turned out? I first found a need to refer to the volume while in the British Library and immediately struck gold. David

Lloyd-Jones, the editor of the forthcoming volume of orchestral miniatures, has long been puzzled by the lack of a developmental score for the third of Elgar's *Bavarian Dances*. Adapted from three of the songs in Elgar's cycle *From the Bavarian Highlands*, the first two dances involved little more than the reassignment of a vocal line to appropriate instruments. But the third dance, adapted from *The Marksman*, displays greater differences, including a modulation not in the parent song. David was convinced that Elgar must have produced a score showing the changes he intended for the third dance, but a search of likely academic catalogues had come up with nothing promising. The *Guide to Research* entry in both editions is confusing, failing to draw a clear line between sources for the song-cycle and those for the set of dances, but the second edition lists two recent British Library acquisitions which looked promising. And so it proved: within an hour we had our hands on proof copies of the two songs on which Elgar based his first and third dances. The first proof contained a limited number of annotations effecting the rather superficial changes he made to convert the first song in the cycle (confusingly called 'The Dance') into the first dance; but the second proof contained, in Elgar's hand, the far more extensive changes he made to craft the third dance. Mystery solved.

But this initial success proved atypical. Checks on other scores which have surfaced since publication of the first edition encountered a low success rate. Admittedly the recently resurfaced full scores for both versions of *The Severn Suite* are recorded, as is the Theatre Band score of the *Beau Brummel* minuet. But reference to as many other discoveries over the past 10 years which have provided the source material for the Tales from the Complete Edition series published in these pages could not be found: no reference to Elgar's autograph orchestral full scores for *Follow the Colours* or the hymn tune *Darwall*, for example, nor to the coherent 9-page short score of *Pomp and Circumstance* March No.6 recorded by David Owen Norris in 2009 (and which is still recorded as a work composed in 1930, even though the short score clearly dates from some 20 years earlier).

Other lesser inaccuracies have also been corrected with only partial success. *The Kingsway*, Elgar's solo song re-using the trio from *Pomp and Circumstance* March No.4, is still categorized as a 'song for voice and pf.', but the only known source for the song is at least now identified as a 'full score' which most will correctly take to mean 'voice with orchestral accompaniment'. Conversely Elgar's 1914 hymn *Chariots of the Lord* is still categorised as a 'song for voice and orchestra' without any evidence that Elgar ever intended to provide more than a piano accompaniment. The confusion seeded by Elgar through labelling the manuscript of his part-song arrangement of *The Birthright* 'Marching Song' remains: MS69827 No.6 is listed as both the part-song arrangement (correct) and the solo song arrangement (wrong) of *The Birthright*, as well as the part-song arrangement of that other 'Marching Song', *Follow the Colours* (wrong). And the similar confusion between British Library folio numbers and Elgar page numbers in the references for many sketchbook fragments has similarly gone largely uncorrected.

At least the musical illustrations which make up the thematic catalogue are large and clear, giving a spacious feel to the large-format volume (which has a page size approaching A4). But sadly the two obvious examples to consult – the two *Olaf* songs premiered at the Birthplace back in June – both proved to have faulty vocal lines, probably resulting from a failure to distinguish Elgar's original songs from their later *Olaf* accretions on the manuscript. The opening words of the *Muleteer's Serenade* have become corrupted from 'Toss'd in doubts and fears I rove ...' to 'She toss'd in doubts and fears of love ...' with the re-introduction of a note heavily deleted in Elgar's manuscript to accommodate the additional first word. At least Elgar was faithful to Motteux's translation.

With an increasing feeling of desperation, I turned to the bibliography section, hoping to find greater consistency in what should be less challenging waters ... and where better to start than the listing of Complete Edition volumes. Here there is utter confusion. At least changes in the structure of the Edition have, with one exception, been captured accurately; but what I assume was intended to be a list of Complete Editions published by Novello turned out to contain only three pre-2001 volumes but six post-2001 volumes. The purpose of the list is thus lost on me as all the entries are repeated further down the page, albeit in most cases with conflicting detail. ISBNs are mislabelled as Novello catalogue numbers and vice versa, a number of ISBNs are assigned to the wrong volumes and in one case the ISBN of one volume has been tagged on to the end of the Novello catalogue for another to produce an unfeasibly long reference. Trifling errors in many ways ... but in this electronic age where bookshops order books by ISBN, a wrong order code often results in delivery of the wrong volume. I know from recent experience!

I am advised by someone better placed to judge that similar confusion reigns in the listing of Elgar letters returned from the Hereford and Worcester Record Office to the Birthplace 'on its re-opening in 2002'.

Feeling I had now delved sufficiently into the *Guide* to write my review, I returned to the day job where the Overtures volume of the Complete Edition was awaiting final checks before delivery to the printers. Needing to check the source references quoted in the volume, I found myself again picking up my new copy of the *Guide*. Editing of Vol.28 began long before publication of the second edition and I was surprised to find, and somewhat relieved at the timely discovery, that the second edition listed a number of secondary sources not recorded in the first edition and subsequently overlooked by the Complete Edition volume editor despite now being held at the Birthplace. There seemed to be an almost systematic error in recording the catalogue numbers of Birthplace holdings in the *Guide* but, with help from Chris Bennett, we were able to identify the relevant material: EBMS 105 turned out to be EBMS 104; EBMS 119 f.17v was actually EBMS 120 f.17 and EBMS141 proved to be EBMS142.

But *Froissart* presents us with a problem similar to the third *Bavarian Dance*. Between the work's first performance in 1890 and publication of the full score in 1901, Elgar made significant revisions to *Froissart*, notably to the

trombone part. These revisions do not appear in the autograph full score used by the engraver and our assumption is that Elgar marked his intended changes on an un-located proof copy. So the recording in the second edition of the *Guide* of a previously unknown proof copy now in the possession of Arthur Reynolds caused some excitement. It proved not to be the breakthrough we had hoped: Arthur speedily made the proof available to us for inspection but it turned out to contain only one correction, albeit in Elgar's hand. But at least the *Guide* had enabled us to avoid the potential embarrassment of the emergence of a significant source shortly after publication.

To summarise: the concept of the *Guide* is spot on and, even with its shortcomings, is to be welcomed. While occasional inaccuracies are inevitable, there are regrettably rather too many here, not only wasting researchers' time but also reducing confidence in the volume as a whole. But for me the greatest regret is that publication in hard copy has now ossified those errors until a third edition is published. How much better if this had been published solely as an e-book so that errors could be corrected as they came to light.

John Norris

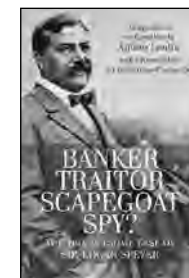
### Antony Lentin: *Banker, Traitor, Scapegoat, Spy?* *The Troublesome Case of Sir Edgar Speyer*

London, Haus Publishing, 2013

One of the under-researched aspects of British history is the extensive role played by German immigrants from 1848 to 1914, notably the power of their wealth in influencing many aspects of our national life, including what we like to think was 'English' music. An outstanding figure among them was Edgar Speyer, friend of Elgar, financier of the London Underground, the Promenade Concerts, the Scott Polar Expedition and, if the work under review is to be believed, practical dictator of English music.

Speyer, scion of a major German merchant banking family, was actually born in New York. He came to the UK in 1886, was naturalized six years later and rapidly established himself as a power in the land, forming close friendships with Liberal politicians and becoming a Privy Councillor in 1909. He was keenly interested in art and music and in 1902 he married the violinist, Leonora von Stosch, also American by birth. She was to be much involved with the creation of the Elgar Violin Concerto. According to Professor Lentin the couple met in Broadway. Surely this must have been at the home of Mary Anderson, at whose house Edward Elgar was also a frequent guest. Did he first encounter them there? The author also claims it was Speyer, not Henry Wood, who insisted on ending the deputy system in the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Indeed in his view Wood was practically Speyer's stooge, playing music and engaging performers under his instruction.

On the outbreak of war the Speyers became the objects of a hate campaign without parallel, making Edgar the English Dreyfus. Not only the press but



216 pp + xxiv

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the musical fraternity reacted against him, William Boosey being a notable example. The author recounts well the growing hysteria which led to the Speyers leaving, perhaps ill-advisedly, for America in 1915 but which did not cease even with the Armistice. Admiral Beresford, supported by Horatio Bottomley and the ludicrous Pemberton Billing, began a campaign to strip Speyer of his citizenship. A judicial tribunal in 1921 led to his naturalization being revoked and in consequence his Privy Council position lapsed. He never returned to live in Britain, dying in 1932.

Lentin makes a powerful case to the effect that the whole thing was a nasty piece of British Establishment skulduggery, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. The basic charges were clearly feeble. But in his conclusions the author is judicious in drawing attention to some curious, and not entirely creditable, facts about the Speyer's attitudes and actions. Throughout the vilification Elgar was a staunch supporter. The work is slight on direct reference to the composer but it has massive implications when read between the lines. Throughout much of his career Elgar was surrounded by a Germanic network. Beecham's snide remark that all his friends had been interned in 1914 is well-known, but however unpleasant it does give away the contemporary view that Elgar was in thrall to an alien group. The Speyers; Edgar, Leonora, and their cousin, Edward, were intimates. Richard Strauss treated him as an equal, Jaeger, who would have been deported had he survived to 1914, marketed his music and Richter, who renounced his British honours, performed it. Schuster funded Elgar events, Rodewald conducted them and Speyer commissioned the Second Symphony.

Lentin not only refers to the well-known letter at the Birthplace indicating Elgar's strong support when the hate campaign was getting underway, but more significantly quotes a previously unknown missive in the archives of the tribunal in which he declared Speyer to be 'the great uplifting force of English musical life'. Elgar remained in close contact and Speyer handled his US investments, which must have been considerable, advising him to sell in 1928 when they would have been at their height just before the Wall Street crash. Are there clues here to Elgar's attitude during the War? He produced only two nationally relevant works; *The Fringes of the Fleet* and *The Spirit of England*. The former is a trifle commissioned by Beresford, of all people. Was the curious gestation of the latter due in part to dismay over the treatment of Speyer? Elgar was in a dilemma, his fame and perhaps fortune had been largely created by German supporters. Speyer was his major financial adviser. Now these intimates were seen as national enemies and, worse still, some of his own associates were leading the onslaught against them. A false step and he too could have been dragged into damaging controversy. (Percy Grainger was savagely lampooned for his association with the Speyers). A low key approach to the national war effort may have seemed prudent. At least we must view more critically some of the simplistic reasons which have been given for his behaviour at the time.

In the chapel of New College, Oxford, there is a memorial to the German members who died in the First World War. One of the names is Erwin Beit

von Speyer, nephew of Edgar and Leonora. Small recompense indeed for their treatment at the hands of repellent creatures like Beresford, Boosey, Beecham, Bottomley and Billing.

Carl Newton

**Jeremy Dibble: *Hamilton Harty, Musical Polymath***  
Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2013

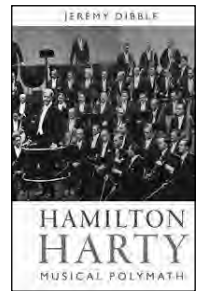
Last year I picked up a second-hand copy of *Hamilton Harty*, a comprehensive series of essays edited by David Greer in 1978 for The Queen's University of Belfast, and was quite content that I now knew all there was to know about a fine musician, albeit one somewhat peripheral to the Elgar scene. I had his Elgar recordings, his Berlioz recordings, and the marvellous recording of *The Rio Grande* with Harty as pianist and Constant Lambert conducting. I even have two entire CDs of his orchestral music languishing on my shelves. So when the postman delivered an unexpected parcel containing this new biography of Harty by Jeremy Dibble I was intrigued but no more.

Now, having read it, I must say that I am astonished by how much more there was to this man than ever I imagined. Just to take the Hallé years: I'm sure all of us give credit to Barbirolli for coming to the rescue of the orchestra in its wartime hour of need and re-establishing it both in musical and business terms, but I never realised that Harty had done a similar job after the First World War. In many ways his was the greater achievement: under his direction and encouragement the orchestra became the best in the country in the 1920s, and on the business side he established a regime under which not only could the orchestra, by and large, pay its way, but was one that encouraged financial support from local authorities.

All this, and far more, is revealed by Jeremy Dibble in great detail and in a manner that always maintains the reader's interest, making it imperative to turn the page to find out what happens next. The sheer number of primary sources that he has uncovered and explored is impressive, the more so when we realise that not only was Harty a very private man, but that Herr Hitler saw to it that many of his private papers were destroyed when his London home was bombed.

In structure the book owes much to that established by Jerrold Northrop Moore in his *Edward Elgar, A Creative Life*. Harty's compositions are analysed as part of the general narrative. This is an entirely logical and sensible way of doing things but has a downside, and that is that the flow of the human story is interrupted every time a new composition appears. I find Harty's personal journey alive and gripping, but I rather resent its constant interruption by analysis of his music. His music is alive and gripping, too, but when heard rather than read about. So those portions of the book will be savoured as extended programme notes when next I listen to my recordings.

None of which prevents me from acknowledging Dibble's very considerable achievement, or from recommending it wholeheartedly. It is, moreover, a



366 pp + xiv

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beautifully produced book and amply illustrated with photographs and music examples. It may not be cheap, but the publishers are offering it to members at a substantial discount and any who take up the offer will find themselves substantially rewarded in turn.

Martin Bird

Members may purchase *Hamilton Harty, Musical Polymath* direct from the publisher at a saving of 25% (£33.75 instead of £45).

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## CD REVIEWS

### Elgar: Symphony No. 2

#### Wagner: *Tannhäuser* (Overture and *Venusberg Music*)

BBC Chorus, BBC Symphony Orchestra conduct by Sir Adrian Boult



ICA Classics

ICAC 5106

Following on their release of Boult's outstanding Prom performance from 1976 of the First Symphony, ICA Classics have now issued his performance of the Second Symphony from the 1977 Promenade Concerts. To be honest, I've had difficulty reconciling the style of the performance – 'music takes off almost recklessly', 'pushing forward', 'little relaxing for the second subject' (to quote from Martin Cotton's liner notes) – with the 'swimmy sound in the Royal Albert Hall' as reproduced here. The string sound is rather mushy compared with the impact and bite of the brass and, on first hearing, I took quite a time to adjust to the orchestral layout. First and second violins are divided, as usual with Sir Adrian, left and right, but there were moments when they seemed to be the other way round, especially as the brass appears to be on the left. I spent some time checking that my hi-fi hadn't mysteriously reversed its channels and finally put the effect down to the narrow frontage of the Albert Hall stage confining the width of the sonic stage. I suspect that this is a performance to have experienced live, with all the atmosphere of a Prom concert and with the eyes to help the ears to hear, rather than to be listened to in domestic conditions 'in absentia'. But I'm equally sure that many will be delighted to have the opportunity to hear this final performance by Boult of a symphony with which he was so closely associated, and on those grounds alone it is an indispensable issue.

The 'filler' is a studio (Maida Vale) performance from December 1968 of the Overture and *Venusberg Music* from *Tannhäuser*, the latter never recorded commercially by Boult. I must admit to not having heard a note of *Tannhäuser* this century and, listening to this performance, rather regret it. Studio conditions ensure that the sound quality is first-rate, yet the 'live' quality of a Maida Vale performance leaps out of the speakers. The women of the BBC Chorus (shortly before their reincarnation as the BBC Singers) add a lustrous touch, especially in their beautifully controlled *portamenti* and Sir Adrian had me on the edge of my seat from first note to last. Thrilling!

Richard Wiley



Cala

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### Elgar's Trombone

Sue Addison (trombone) with Sally Goodworth (piano), Frances Kelly (harp), Chi-Chi Nwanoko (double bass), Crispian Steele-Perkins (trumpets), Judith Treggor (piccolo), Emily White (trombone).

We've had recordings made on Elgar's own piano, and now we can hear his trombone, almost certainly played as he never heard it himself. Sue Addison is principal trombonist of several ensembles, including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and has long had a special interest in period performance. This led her to work with and research the trombone which once belonged to Elgar and now resides at the Royal College of Music. She found this particular instrument difficult at first, as it appears not to have been played on a regular basis, so needed a great deal of 'playing in'. The decision to make a CD required much work, not least in sourcing suitable repertoire as very little exists. Only two works on the CD were specifically written for trombone: Elgar's *Duett for trombone and double bass*, written as a wedding gift for Frank Weaver, and *The Acrobat*, a well-known piece by J.A. Greenwood, which I'm sure Elgar would have loved. The other works are all transcriptions made by Sue Addison (with one exception), either of orchestral pieces or music written for other instruments. Apart from Elgar, the composers represented include Bridge, Vaughan Williams and Sullivan. The value of transcriptions is sometimes questioned, but they do allow us to hear often familiar music in a new light. I particularly liked *In Moonlight* (from *In the South*), Gurney's *Sleep*, and *Nimrod*, for which there is a historical justification as a letter from Alice to Jaeger tells of Elgar and Alice playing it as a duet for trombone and piano. Most of the pieces bring out the melodic capabilities of the trombone, but the ability to play quickly is demonstrated in some faster pieces, for example *I am the ruler of the Queen's Navee*, an arrangement by Crispian Steele-Perkins. The final track is *Land of Hope and Glory*, arranged from the original version which includes the verse and is played, as someone once said, 'as though you've never heard it before'.

Sue brought the trombone to the London Branch meeting in April 2013 to illustrate her talk (see *News* August 2013). I had special permission to play it for a few moments, which was a real treat, but I can confirm that it's not the easiest to play – it does not balance evenly in the hands and the slide needs more adjustment than usual to play in tune. Therefore it's testament to Sue's skill that the playing on the CD is extremely polished and musical and shows the versatility of the trombone, from the slow and melodic pieces to those requiring a more nimble approach. This is a narrow-bore instrument (a 'peashooter') so has a softer sound than we usually hear from modern brass instruments, although a good *forte* is demonstrated when needed. She has wisely chosen a range of accompanying instruments so the sound varies from track to track; her collaborators are all excellent, particularly the sensitive pianist Sally Goodworth, who has her own chance to shine in the *Piano Improvisation no.4*. Sue has done a great deal of research into

Elgar's trombone-playing activities and the history of his instrument, and the very informative sleeve notes provide many interesting details, as does the companion website ([www.elgarstrombone.com/](http://www.elgarstrombone.com/)). I may be biased, but I can say that this CD will make a fascinating, enjoyable and useful addition to the collections of brass fans and Elgarians alike.

Ruth Hellen

**Stanford: Partsongs** (*On Time; Heraclitus; To Chloris; Corydon, arise!; The swallow; Praised be Diana; Like desert woods; To his flocks; On a hill there grows a flower; The blue bird; Shall we go dance?; When Mary thro' the garden went; Diaphenia; The haven; A lover's ditty; God and the Universe; Peace, come away; A dirge; Out in the windy West; The witch; Farewell, my joy!; The train; The inkbottle; Chillingham; My heart in thine*)

Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir directed by Paul Spicer



SOMM

SOMMCD0128

Here we have no fewer than 25 of Stanford's partsongs, 10 are which are receiving their first recording. The eight Partsongs Op. 119 are all here, including that minor masterpiece *The blue bird*. For these riches the greatest thanks are due to Sive Oke and her Somm label for producing what as far as I can recall is the first CD to be devoted in its entirety to the gems that are Stanford's partsongs. Anyone who knows and loves the partsongs of Elgar will find treasures to savour here. Although many are in madrigal style and largely homophonic in construction there is no sense of 'sameness' in this well planned programme. The sheer variety and extent of Stanford's imagination combined with his very considerable ability to write for voices in a way that is a joy for performers and listeners alike means that 25 partsongs is not a single one too many. If you get the chance to sample before you buy then try *The haven* from the Op.119 set, a piece most evocative of Elgar's style in his later choral songs. If you still need persuading, listen to *Out in the windy West*, to a text by Arthur Benson, one of the 'Choral Songs in Honour of Queen Victoria' that Sir Walter Parratt commissioned for her eightieth birthday in 1899.

Add in excellent recording, a splendid acoustic (the Church of St. Alban the Martyr, Birmingham), first rate sensitive performances from Paul Spicer and his crack chamber choir, an essay by Jeremy Dibble and full texts and this CD is self-recommending. One might quibble here and there: *Shall we go dance* is rather-leadened footed by comparison with the Louis Halsey Singers, and it would be nice to hear *The blue bird* as Stanford wrote it, with all the sopranos on the top line and an accompaniment of two altos, tenor and bass rather than the (very fine) soprano solo with SATB accompaniment that we have here. But don't let these insignificant points detract from a very fine CD that gives us an opportunity to explore yet another aspect of that still underrated composer, Charles Villiers Stanford.

Martin Bird



ICA Classics

ICAD 5098

## DVD REVIEWS

### Variations for Orchestra (*Enigma*)

BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein

In April 1982 Leonard Bernstein conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra for the first (and only) time. The initial rehearsal was recorded for BBC television with the intention of broadcasting highlights – in the event it proved so fascinating that it was broadcast in its entirety, and I remember being riveted by what was unfolding before my eyes.

25 minutes of the rehearsal is included on this DVD, and a very revealing 25 minutes it is. As those of you who are familiar with Bernstein's DG recording made at the time will know, his view of how Elgar should go is not shared by everyone, and it certainly wasn't shared by the orchestra. Already wound up by the fact that they had been hanging around waiting for the conductor to show up, they then conveyed their displeasure at being told not only how to play Elgar but how to play their instruments. In his informative note Humphrey Burton sets out the background to this in detail and highlights some of the moments of particular tension to look out for. As he points out, the crossing of swords with the trumpet section – Bernstein asks for a softer-focussed sound, with better overall blend, and singles out the second trumpet for particular mention – is the most obviously tetchy moment, but I have to say that from what I can hear I am firmly on Bernstein's side in this particular instance! The excellent quality of the BBC recording of the rehearsal enables the listener to adjudicate on many such moments, and it is rather better, in fact, than that of the performance itself at the Royal Festival Hall.

But to get back to the Variations: hidden behind all the hype about the occasion and the subsequent DG recording is that fact that in Leonard Bernstein we have a supremely and multi-talented musician whose natural gifts as a conductor make it possible for us to experience a highly convincing performance in which many things are paced – and placed – to perfection. Let us dwell for a moment on his infamous reading of 'Nimrod', which lasts just over five minutes at the Festival Hall, six on the CD, and almost seven at rehearsal (compared with three on Elgar's later recording). Most conductors take around four minutes, but even Elgar's view on what he wanted varied: in the published score it is marked *Adagio*, crotchet = 52; in the original manuscript *Moderato*, crotchet = 66. Watch and listen to what happens in the last six bars of 'W.N.' leading into the first couple of bars of 'Nimrod'. You might imagine that after a lovingly graceful reading of 'W.N.' something of an undignified slamming on of the brakes would be necessary before lurching into 'Nimrod', but not a bit of it. The application of Elgar's *largamente* and *ritenuto* markings is judged with such musicianship and no little conducting skill that the transition is made quite wonderfully and the join is judged more

naturally than I can ever remember hearing before. The icing on the cake then comes with a stunningly simple and effective change of sound quality as the first violins move from D string to G string on their held G that links the movements before being joined by the rest of the string section.

I could go on – but judge for yourself, rather than from your preconceptions of Bernstein's performance. It is by no means traditional Elgar, but it is certainly great music-making that will make often take you to the heart of the piece. The rehearsal (and a brief conversation between Bernstein and Barry Norman) follows the concert performance on the DVD. Please watch the rehearsal first: it will enable you to appreciate the performance rather better and to see how a group of musicians with wildly differing views can produce a compromise in concert which enables us to understand a little better this product of Elgar's genius.

Martin Bird

# LETTERS

From Alan Tongue

## The Enigma

May I warmly congratulate Martin Gough on his brilliant detective work resolving the enigma of the Variations (Elgar Journal Vol.18, No.1).

After spending a few minutes converting his two canons into an approximation of orchestral sound, using the Sibelius programme, I was totally convinced. Playing the three top lines of his Old Canon gives a delightful version of the Enigma theme, if somewhat non-Elgarian in texture. The addition of Martin's lower lines transforms this into a rich and Elgarian version of the canon. Martin's inclusion of fingerprints from each variation is very ingenious.

As for his New Canon, what a perfect fit the Tallis tune makes. The sound of this music, together with Martin's lengthy reasoning, sold it to me. I can't wait for a suitable occasion on which to play these two canons, with explanation, before a performance of the entire piece.

Those of us who believed in the explanation of Dora's surname, Penny, leading via that coin's Britannia to the 'Never, never' theme might now realise that her C-of-E upbringing, rather than Elgar's and other friends' own Catholic church background, might have led her to the Tallis solution, as the Tallis hymn makes no appearance in Catholic church music. (Did Elgar know that her father would one day become a Canon himself?!)

Martin's passing reference to Elgar's fitting the National Anthem to the scherzo of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is apt. For those who have not managed the trick themselves, the solution is below. Elgar's '&c' is clever, as continuing the counterpoint is well nigh impossible. In the course of the anonymous letter (*The Musical Times*, November 1897), introduced by the editor as 'a musician of note', Elgar writes 'this setting has been declared suitable for cathedrals as well as profaner areas, and (perhaps a doubtful advantage) the conductor might join in the vocal part, as it has been found to require no conducting'. This is a veiled reference to Hans Richter's habit of starting the 5/4 movement and then ceasing to beat time. Elgar signs his letter 'Truly yours' followed by an E in the treble clef.



From Tony Jones

## The Enigma

I am aware that any new suggested solution to the Enigma 'problem' will be received with as much enthusiasm as the 'First Cuckoo' correspondence in *The Times* in former years, but humbly offer the following:-

It has long been known that Elgar was fascinated by riddles and ciphers. Therefore I propose the following solution to the Enigma puzzle, which I have not seen elsewhere, although it will probably be considered much too simple and naive to warrant consideration..

If one transposes the first eight notes of the Enigma theme up a tone into A minor, the resulting notes are :-

C A D B E C B D

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

Using the simple cipher shown in the table above, in which each note of the alphabet corresponds to one of the notes A to G, it can be seen that the opening four note motif of the theme equates to the letters **CARI** – the first four letters of **CARICE**, and the answering four note motif uses the last four of the same name in retrograde – **ECIR**.

It has always seemed rather odd that Edward and Caroline's 8 year old daughter, Carice, does not appear anywhere in the work, especially as the composer included not only his wife but also himself among the Variations.

Of course, Elgar also used the same name as a term of endearment for his future wife, for example in the dedication of *Salut d'amour* in 1888.

In order to accept the possibility of this solution one would have to assume that Elgar could have used the above cipher, but surely that is at least as likely as many of the erudite but rather obscure solutions put forward in the past? Did Elgar really spend so much of his energies on complicated and intricate processes, when he could have been putting his efforts into composition?

It may be coincidental, but the same cipher produces the D, E and G, which are prominent in the opening theme of the final (EDU) variation.

From Robin Self

## Shostakovich – or Sibelius?

I hesitate to differ from such a distinguished Elgarian as Carl Newton but I cannot accept his view that Dmitri Shostakovich was the greatest composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (August Journal p.51). I agree that Strauss and Elgar were both great composers, that they were products of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their music reflects this, however surely Sibelius was the greatest composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

and especially as a symphonist. His musical language distinctly speaks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as does Shostakovich of course, but Shostakovich's music is, in my opinion, incessantly loud, repetitive and meaningless whereas Sibelius says it all and much better in half the time and in less than half the number of symphonies.

Still it is all subjective but, for me, Shostakovich would not be in my top five composers of the 20th century, oh, no, no, no, no, no!

P.S. And don't forget Carl Newton, no, I mean Nielsen, of course!

*From Christopher Morley*

### ***Falstaff***

May I add a footnote to Andrew Neill's enthusiastic and well-researched article on the still comparatively-neglected (though heaven knows why) *Falstaff*?

The music's bleak ending chills us, but I think Elgar may have heard its atmosphere before: the demise of Richard Strauss' *Don Juan* (a perhaps obvious connection between these two colleagues), and, perhaps more revealing, Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, given in London in 1911.

*From Carl Newton*

### ***Symphony No. 2***

There is no reason to question Tom Kelly's interesting point that Reed was not present at the premiere of the Second Symphony and therefore a good deal of Elgar mythology falls by the wayside. However Reed was indeed present at the *second* performance which was given eight days later at the International Music Congress, attended by distinguished musicologists who were very likely to sit 'like stuffed pigs', particularly as they were in the middle of a gruelling schedule of lectures, concerts, and social events. So the remark, or something like it, was almost certainly made but in a different context which vitally changes it as evidence. Actually the Second was almost as popular as the First, the latter within a short time practically disappearing from the repertoire, and for long it achieved a higher rate of frequency of performance.

## RECORDING NOTES ...

Now that we are thinking about the centenary of Elgar's first recording session (21 January 1914 and at the City Road studio, according to The Gramophone Company's register), the far-sighted<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *Journal* has offered me the chance to discuss some of the features of this and each successive session in 'real time'. The next of these discussions will therefore focus on the session at Hayes on 26 June 1914 and the last, D.V., is scheduled for 2034 and will remind us all of the final one. This took place on 22 January 1934, when a little party assembled at Marl Bank to cheer up Sir Edward and help him bid farewell to his friends in the L.S.O. by live long-distance telephone line, the marvel of the age. Of course, these notes will draw very heavily on Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Elgar – A Creative Life* and the indispensable *Elgar on Record* (long out of print) and I gratefully acknowledge here the help and inspiration his work has provided over many years. I hope to be able to contribute these notes occasionally, as the centenary of each Elgar session approaches, and in this way to remind Society members, young and old, of the wonderful performances Elgar secured of his music in the studio and in public in collaboration with the staff of HMV over a twenty-year period.

The Gramophone Company (trading as 'His Master's Voice') saw itself as setting a standard for others to follow and had by 1914 made good profits by selling expensive, beautifully made cabinet gramophones and red-label records of famous singers (Caruso and others) at premium prices. At that time, it was found that the powerful voices of operatic singers recorded well, violinists could be faint or over-emphatic and pianists were generally disappointing. On the cheaper labels, music hall, musical comedy, military bands and ballads sold by the thousand!

The story of the recording of orchestral music begins with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 1913, featuring the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and the magnetic personality of the Austro-Hungarian conductor, Arthur Nikisch. He achieved quite good results with a somewhat reduced band of players on eight single-sided 12" sides and his much-reissued performance remains impressive today. Its success undoubtedly influenced HMV to look out for other opportunities to enhance the company's prestige by enrolling famous musicians such as Elgar onto its roster. Only one title was attempted at the session on 21 January 1914: *Carissima* ('Best Beloved' in both Italian and Latin, with an obvious allusion to Carice, Elgar's daughter). Elgar's recent publishing contract with Elkin envisaged the recording of each new piece before publication, so as to have records in the shops when the music appeared, and *Carissima* was the first to have this treatment. It was receiving its first performance that day (the first public performance was given by Landon Ronald on 2<sup>nd</sup> February) and the record (0967) still gives pleasure now. The unfamiliar effect of strings and a reinforced bass (required by the acoustic recording process) may seem both touching and absurd to modern ears but Lady Elgar was (predictably) enchanted, declaring it a 'lovely, most exquisite record'. The 'very beautiful interesting group' that came to Severn House the following Sunday afternoon, which included Frank Schuster and Windflower, were also 'much impressed'. *Carissima* was published as a 12" single-sided record and stayed in the catalogue for a number of years, latterly as double-sided D176 coupled with *Bavarian Dance No.3*. The orchestra was 'The Symphony Orchestra', meaning selected freelance players who were experienced in recording work and engaged as required.

Michael Plant

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1 Near-sighted actually, but let it pass ...

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

Home from their Welsh Holiday, Elgar's next commitment was the Gloucester Musical Festival. He attended the London rehearsals where Alice thought 'Gerontius & Symphony very beautiful', though Elgar was 'very depressed at being out of Gloucester for Fest.'. They had arranged to stay at Tibberton Court, home of Morgan Philips Price. Alice knew the family well, and had taken Carice there in January 1910, a 'very nice visit – revival of old times & dear old places'. She was greatly relieved 'to see E. finding it pleasant as he had not been there before'. Another friend of the Elgars, Charles Lee Williams, who had married into the Price family, recorded that on the Tuesday evening Elgar 'secured an impressive rendering' of *Gerontius*. On the Thursday morning Saint-Saëns conducted the first performance of his oratorio *The Promised Land*, and Elgar gave a 'Glorious performance of 2d Symphony in afternoon'. After the festival, while Alice went driving in a 'high dogcart (not liking it at all)', Elgar went to Hereford with George Sinclair and 'Called at Plas Gwyn – so changed'. Then while Alice spent a few days visiting old friends Elgar went to The Hut where 'E. expected parts to correct & Mr. Reed at Hut to help him but only very few came'.

The first rehearsal of *Falstaff* was on the 22<sup>nd</sup>: 'Orchestral parts only arrived this very morning from Germany – Orchestra played straight from them – Very few mistakes & they read wonderfully – Falstaff sounded magnificent & wonderful – audience greatly impressed'. Elgar thought that 'Falstaff went well & hummeth nicely – yea! Hummeth'. For the 1913 Leeds Musical Festival he was to share conducting responsibilities with Arthur Nikisch and Hugh Allen, and he started for Leeds 'in good spirits – & had good journey'.

The festival opened on 1<sup>st</sup> October with 'The most beautiful performance of "Gerontius"'. Soloists sang as if inspired – E. conducted as if inspired too – Chorus fine most of the time'. The following evening, after conducting Bantock's *Dante & Beatrice* 'splendidly but it seemed long & dreary', the Prologue to Boito's *Mefistofele* and a Verdi aria (soloist Muriel Foster), came the first performance of *Falstaff*. Alice, unusually candid, thought 'E. rather hurried it & some of the lovely melodies were a little smothered but it made its mark & place'.

The remainder of the year seems almost an anti-climax. On their return to Seven House 'E. turning to "Callicles" [a setting intended for Muriel Foster] – rather depressed' and the neighbours came to tea, although Mrs. Johnson was 'much shocked at maid's depravity not drawing curtains, &c.' Hugh Blair, who lived quite close, came regularly 'for evening & billiards'. One day 'E. & C. went to find a wow – one came who seemed nice', but within a week the 'Dr. came to see poor sick little wow' and it was never mentioned again. It was a 'Very depressing time – almost all these days'.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November Landon Ronald conducted the London premiere of *Falstaff* at Queen's Hall – 'Full of his mannerisms and distortions but a genuine product of his orchestral subtlety' thought Parry, who was hearing it for the first time. A visit to Madresfield Court and then to Pollie and her family at Stoke Prior followed.

The diary for the rest of the year mentions visits to shows and plays, to a billiards match, even to the Smithfield show at the Royal Agricultural Hall. Composition was limited to *Carissima* and *Sospiri*. Alice summarised the year thus: 'A year of loss of beloved friends & many trying things. Less financial good – so much worried. But the great blessing is E. being so much better & great artistic success'.

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