

THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Number 46

February 2010

Spring Weekend

———— Saturday 15th May 2010 ————

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*St. Andrew's Church,
Churchdown, Gloucester*

12.noon - Annual General Meeting

2pm - 'Placing Gurney' - talk by Roderic Dunnett.

2.30 - 'Reputations: Ivor Gurney and Graham Peel' - talk by Rolf Jordan.

**3.15pm - Song Recital by Philip Lancaster
(baritone) and Andrew Plant (pianist)**

4.30 - Tea

———— Sunday 16th May ————

**Graham Middleton will lead a Gurney poetry
walk.**



The song recital will feature songs by Graham Peel, together with well-known settings by Gurney, Howells, Ireland and Vaughan Williams. Combined tickets for the talk and recital are £12 and can be obtained from John Phillips, by telephoning 01432 363103, or email: johnl.hay@googlemail.com or by using the enclosed booking form.

Society Business

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN **of the Ivor** Gurney Society Annual General Meeting to be held at St Andrew's Church Centre, Churchdown, Gloucester on Saturday 15th May commencing at 12 noon. Any motions or nominations should be with Rolf Jordan (Secretary), 24 Claremont Road, Birkdale, Southport PR8 4DZ no later than 1st May 2010.

CALL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The retirement and departure of a number of officers from the IGS committee has left some important committee roles vacant. These particular functions are essential if the society is to function successfully. If you feel able to offer any help in fulfilling these vital roles then do please discuss the matter further with Ian Venables (Chairman) by telephoning 01905 611570, e mail: iv@ianvenables.com

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Will all members who pay their subscription by cheque please remember that these are due by April 1st. Please send cheques [made out to 'The Ivor Gurney Society'] to the Treasurer, Nigel Lawson, 80 Somers Road, Barbourne, Worcester WR1 3JJ e mail: nwl@rgsw.org

'In Flanders Fields' - A Society Trip to Ypres.

Thursday 7th – Sunday 10th October

This autumn the society is organising its first ever trip to Belgium to visit the most important places where Gurney served in the Great War and where he wrote some of his finest poetry. Roderic Dunnett has devised an exciting and imaginative programme of tours and events for this four- day trip and it will be an excellent opportunity to explore the battlefield area with expert guides who know the area well. We will see at first hand the locations where Gurney's poetry originated and the landscape where he fought. Our trip will culminate in a visit to the recently raised memorial to Ivor Gurney in the Ypres Salient. This memorial has been placed near to the actual spot where he was in the line when he was asphyxiated by mustard gas in September 1917. This trip will cost approximately £300 per person, excluding supplements, but inclusive of travelling, hotel board and selected meals. Given that places on this trip will have to be limited to a maximum of 30 we have decided to allocate them on a strictly 'first come first served' basis. If you would like to join us for this special visit then I would be most grateful if you could complete the enclosed booking form at the end of this newsletter and return it asap to our events manager, John Phillips. Once we have a firm idea of overall numbers, we will then be in a position to send you all the relevant information and booking details together with the full cost of the trip.

Provisional Four-Day Programme

Thursday 7th (Day 1)

Depart from Gloucester at 10am

Arrive in Ypres (late afternoon)

Walk to the Menin Gate to hear the last post.

Friday 8th (Day 2)

Visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebecke Museum and Hill 62

Saturday 9th (Day 3)

Visit to the Cloth Hall Museum and a trip to selected Gurney Places, including Riez
Ballieul and Aubers

An Evening Song Recital

Sunday 10th (Day 4)

Visit to the Gurney Memorial at St Julien

Depart for England

The IGS lunch at the Three Choirs Festival, Gloucester.

Thursday 15th August at 12.15

Cheltenham Town Hall.

For members who wish to attend both the pre-concert talk and the afternoon orchestral concert that will include the world premiere of Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire Rhapsody we are hosting a special society lunch at the Town Hall. This two-course lunch (a vegetarian option available) including tea or coffee costs £20. The society has reserved a tranche of tickets for this event. If you would like attend this lunch then please fill in the booking form at the end of this newsletter and return it to John Phillips. Early booking is advisable as places are limited to a maximum of 50. The lunch is followed by a pre-concert talk (1.30 pm) given by Ian Venables on Ivor Gurney's orchestral music. The afternoon concert starts at 2.30. Tickets for all the Three Choirs Events will be on sale to the public after the 20th April. For tickets and further information please visit www.3choirs.org or email info.gloucester@3choirs.org

'Lights Out' Song Cycle - News

The IGS and The Edward Thomas Fellowship's joint commission of the orchestration of Ivor Gurney's six Edward Thomas settings by Jeremy Dibble is to be released on the Dutton Epoch label in early March (CDLX7243). This disc of orchestral songs for baritone sung by Roderick Williams will include the first orchestral recording for this voice of Elgar's '*Sea Pictures*' and the premiere recording of Michael Hurd's '*Shore Leaves*'.

Ivor Gurney Archive – Update.

The archive reorganisation and detailed cataloguing is nearing completion. The work of collating and chronologising the various sections of the archive has yielded some interesting facts and figures, not least the fact that Gurney wrote over 750 poems in 1925-26 alone – more than one poem for every day of that two year period. Much of it is of great interest, and not incoherent as one has sometimes been lead to believe.

Sections of the archive are gradually being reopened to researchers during February and March.

Articles and Reviews

‘The Hunt Sisters – A Family Affair’

By Pamela Blevins

Margaret Hunt was one of the most important people in Ivor Gurney’s early life. At the suggestion of the Reverend Alfred Cheesman, she and her sister Emily opened their Wellington Street home and their hearts to Ivor when he was about 15 years old. They provided him with a sanctuary where he found peace, intellectual stimulation and nurturing. Ivor held Margaret in particular affection and she became his early muse. He dedicated music to her and wrote about her in his later poetry, recalling her delicate figure, her dark hair, azure eyes and musical voice. ‘My music was meant for her,’ Ivor declared in his asylum poem ‘On A Memory’.

Little was known about the Hunt sisters beyond the fact that Margaret had been born in 1875, and that Emily was, according to Marion Scott, her ‘half-sister’ and ‘considerably older’. They were music teachers and had taught at a girls’ school in South Africa. As it happens their background runs to the colourful side with an occasional skeleton tumbling out of the family closet.

Margaret was born Ethel Margaret Hunt at Fawler, Oxfordshire in 1875 to William and Annie Roberts Hunt. She was the youngest of four sisters. Her father was from Little Compton, where he had been born in 1824. A successful farmer he built his holdings from 200 acres to 800 over a period of thirty years. His young wife, Annie Roberts, born at Waterperry in 1838, came from another prosperous Oxfordshire farming family. Her father Joseph Roberts owned more than 500 acres of land and employed a staff and labour force of 65. Joseph and his wife Mary valued education and sent at least two of their five daughters to a girls’ school at Kidlington. Later, Annie would see to it that all of her daughters were educated and prepared to be independent and self-supporting if necessary.

All reasonably ordinary, or so it seems except -- William Hunt was Annie Roberts’ uncle through marriage and the circumstances of Emily’s birth are unclear because it does not appear to have been registered. She seems to have been born out-of-wedlock in 1864, also at Fawler, but who was her father? The possibilities? 1. A man with whom Annie had an affair. But how does this explain Emily’s surname ‘Hunt’? William Hunt and his wife Miriam could have taken Annie Roberts in during her pregnancy and given Emily the Hunt surname. 2. In the early 1860s, Annie was staying with her aunt Miriam (her mother’s younger sister), William and their three young children. She was in her twenties. Annie and William could have had a relationship during that time. If Emily were the result of such a union, she and Margaret would be full sisters instead of the half-sisters Scott believed them to be. 3. Or Emily could have been a daughter of William and Miriam but sent away, because Miriam fell ill soon after her birth. When Annie married William, Emily would have become half

sister to the rest of Annie's and William's children. If this were the case, why wasn't the birth registered? To complicate matters, Margaret and Emily never seemed to live with Annie and William Hunt. When Emily lived with Annie's parents in the 1870s, they called her their 'niece'. But she was their granddaughter.

Miriam Hunt died in 1865, the year after Emily's birth. Two years later William and Annie married. Annie was listed as a 'spinster' on the marriage certificate yet Emily was born before she married. The other three daughters were all born after William and Annie were married. Margaret was the youngest. After William died in 1878, Annie left the area with her daughters Annie and Edith. Half of William's farm appears to have been sold which accounts for her financial independence. She settled in Brighton, where she ran a boarding house, a venture that would have added to her income given its well-chosen location near the busy Marine Pier. Margaret remained in Oxford to live with her mother's sister. Emily was in her teens and living with her Roberts grandparents (who claimed she was their niece). Annie Roberts Hunt eventually left Brighton and settled in Hammersmith again in comfortable circumstances. Her daughter Edith was a governess in Enfield while her daughter Annie worked in a dress shop. Emily was teaching at a girls' school in Hastings. Margaret was still at school and living with her aunt. Gloucester was the next and last stop in Annie Roberts Hunt's unusually peripatetic life. Once settled there, she opened her home at 54 Wellington Street to lodgers.

At some time in the 1890s, Emily and Margaret secured positions as governesses at a girls' school in Grahamstown, South Africa, where they lived until returning to England around 1902 to live with their mother. Annie died in Gloucester at age 69 in 1907, leaving Emily and Margaret in possession of the dwelling. They had enough money to retire early, Emily in her forties, and Margaret in her thirties. They maintained contact with family in Oxfordshire. Margaret died in 1919, but Ivor still continued to visit Emily until he left Gloucester permanently in 1922 for the City of London Mental Hospital. Emily died in the 1950s. © *Pamela Blevins and Ron Morris, 2010*

Gurney Naxos Song CD Reviews

Songs • Susan Bickley (mezzo); Iain Burnside (pn) • NAXOS 8.572151 (71:36 Text and Translation)



The Society's recently sponsored recording on Naxos continues to receive ever more plaudits in the national press. Hilary Finch of *The Times* said that it was 'her favourite CD of 2009' and in the BBC Music Magazine (Dec 2009) she wrote, 'This recording is also invaluable because Susan Bickley shares with Gurney a direct and instinctive response to the inflections, metres and emotional colours of the English language. Perceptively partnered by Iain Burnside...[there are] many favourites, and many discoveries here: none of them to be missed'.

This 'must have' recording will be on sale at our Spring Weekend Event (15th May) at a special discount price of £5. CD Contents: *On the Downs. Ha'nacker Mill. The Bonnie Earl of Murray. The Cherry Trees. By a Bierside. 5 Elizabethan Songs. The Apple Orchard. All Night under the Moon. The Latmian Shepherd. I Will Go with My Father A-Ploughing. Last Hours. Cathleen ni Houlihan. A Cradle Song. The Fiddler of Dooney. Snow. The Singer. Nine of the Clock. Epitaph in Old Mode. The Ship. The Scribe. Fain Would I Change that Note. An Epitaph. When Death to Either Shall Come. Thou Didst Delight My Eyes. The Boat Is Chafing. Lights Out*

'Gramophone' - Review by Edward Greenfield (Nov 2009)

'An impressive disc that amply demonstrates Gurney's greatness'

You might count Ivor Gurney as the "lost British composer". Tragically, he died in 1937 having spent most of the inter-war years in an asylum. Already in 1913 he had shown signs of bipolar instability, but Stanford considered Gurney the pupil of his who most clearly displayed the signs of "genius", no small claim when you remember how many fine composers Stanford taught. Certainly, this collection of 30 songs, the latest in the Naxos English Song series, demonstrates that genius, above all in his feeling for English words, which is also demonstrated in his own poetry. The writer of the excellent notes on this disc suggests very perceptively that Gurney's feeling for triplet hemiolas in his settings may owe something to his training as a chorister in Gloucester Cathedral, or even to his love of Brahms. Sadly, too few of these songs are well known. The one most familiar to me is "I will go with my father a-ploughing", folk-like and exuberant, which Dame Janet Baker included in one of her very first recordings. Otherwise the settings of John Masefield are especially memorable, notably "By a Bierside" with a wonderful final climax, superbly conveyed here by Susan Bickley. Another poet close to Gurney was Edward Thomas', best-known for the glorious poem "Adlestrop" and here represented by some of the most touching of the songs. It is interesting too that Gurney sets "The Bonnie Earl of Murray" with a real Scottish twang, a song, incidentally, that Brahms set earlier. Wherever you turn, these songs offer illumination and refreshment, splendidly captured not only by Susan Bickley but by her ever-sensitive accompanist Iain Burnside.

Reciprocal membership scheme update and apologia

In our last autumn Newsletter we outlined the arrangements of a new reciprocal membership scheme. Most regrettably, as presented, it gave the impression that the IGS was the originator of this new scheme. This is certainly not the case as this innovative scheme was in fact the brainchild of the Delius Society. We do apologise unreservedly for this unfortunate misrepresentation. This new scheme will bring substantial benefits to the members of both our societies and will help foster closer links.

To reiterate the scheme, IGS members are being offered an introductory 50% reduction in the membership subscription rates (one year only) to the Delius Society and those other societies who have also agreed to participate on the same basis. These other societies now include, The Holst Birthplace Museum and The Arthur Bliss Society.

As participants in this reciprocal arrangement the IGS has agreed to: 1. Offer a reciprocal honorary membership to a nominee from each of the above societies. 2. Offer members of the participating societies a concessionary first year joining fee (50% reduction) to the IGS in return for a similar concession for our members. 3. The IGS will add a 'News from other Societies Section' to our newsletters. This section will advertise upcoming meetings/events and other news items.

Through this reciprocal membership arrangement the IGS will enjoy an exchange of ideas and an awareness of the activities of participating societies. This will raise the profile of our society and hopefully lead to an increase in our own membership whilst encouraging a greater attendance at meetings and events. Ultimately, it will strengthen our ties with other participating societies, and lead to a mutually beneficial and long lasting relationship. If you would like to take up this offer then please write to the relevant Secretary of the participating societies mentioned above. Contact details for each society can be found in the 'Other Societies News Section' of this newsletter under the specific society mentioned.

The New F.W Harvey Society



The Ivor Gurney Society is delighted to announce the inauguration of a new literary society devoted to Gurney's boyhood friend, the poet F.W Harvey. The F.W. Harvey Society was launched on 31st January 2010 and its formation was the direct result of a suggestion made by Yorkley resident David Adams, a serious student of Will Harvey and his work. In 2007 Yorkley held its first festival which included a presentation by David about the life and work of Harvey and a history of the village. The small

Yorkley Memorial Hall was packed with local people keen to hear David's lecture and share their own memories of Will Harvey. Some of those recollections, like David's, had been passed down to the next generation from Harvey's friends in the village. That evening several Harvey works were recited and it was clear that they had lost none of their relevance and David's suggestion of a Society had a great attraction to many in the room. Hence work began to form a Society that could promote the legacy of Will Harvey. (Extract from the F.W Harvey Society website)

For further information about the society and how to join please visit

www.fwharveysociety.com



Other Societies News Section

The Delius Society - website: www.delius.org.uk

The Delius Society was founded in 1962 after the Bradford Delius Festival celebrating the centenary of the composer's birth. We have over 500 members world-wide with thriving branches in the UK and a branch in the USA. Our principal aim is simply to bring together those interested in Frederick Delius and his music. The atmosphere is genuinely friendly and new members are always made most welcome. Membership brings you the Delius Society Journal twice a year, a substantial publication of 80-90 pages, two Newsletters, access to all available meetings and activities and the opportunity of contact and correspondence with fellow members, Delius authorities and scholars, a world-wide network. The current subscription rates are: UK & Europe £23, USA & Canada \$45 (US), Far East/Australasia/South Africa £26. Your first subscription will bring you immediate membership and a copy of the current Journal and Newsletter. For all membership enquiries, contact Stewart Winstanley, Treasurer & Membership Secretary, TheDeliusSociety@aol.com. NB. **The Delius Society is offering a reciprocal membership arrangement with the IGS.**

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 10th March at 6.30pm at Steinway Hall, Marylebone, London W1U 2DB. 'A Viola and Piano Recital, with Martin Outram (Viola) and Julian Rolton, Piano. Their recital will include the Delius 'Cello Sonata (arr. Outram), Serenade from Hassan (arr. Tertis) and the slow movement of the Frederic Austin 'Cello Sonata (arr. Outram) Tickets priced £10 can be obtained by e-mailing: Events@TheDeliusSociety.org.uk . **Sunday 27th June** at 11am: Delius Society AGM and Annual Lunch (contact the Delius Society for further details)

The Holst Birthplace Museum – website: www.holstmuseum.org.uk

The Holst Birthplace Museum is an independent museum, one of only two composer

birthplace museums in England. As such it is very grateful for the support it receives from its Membership. As well as receiving various benefits, Members have the satisfaction of knowing that they are supporting the work of the Trust, further details of which can be seen on our website news pages. To become a member please contact The Membership Secretary, Holst Birthplace Museum 4 Clarence Road Cheltenham GL52 2AY or email: holstmuseum@btconnect.com Tel: 01242 524846

NB. The Holst Birthplace Museum is offering a reciprocal membership arrangement with the IGS.

The Arthur Bliss Society - website: www.arthurbliss.org

The Society was founded in 2003 with the aim of furthering the appreciation, understanding and knowledge of the music of Sir Arthur Bliss (1891-1975). He was one of the most important figures in British musical life from the early 1920s (when he was regarded as an *enfant terrible*) through to his later years and his tenure of the office of Master of the Queen's Music from 1953 until his death. In addition to being kept up to date about news, events and forthcoming activities via our website, membership of the society includes receiving two substantial Newsletters published each year in the Spring and Autumn. Membership Rates: single membership: £15 minimum, double membership (two at the same address): £20 minimum life membership: £250, overseas membership: overseas subscriptions to be paid by sterling draft (please add surcharge of £2 for countries outside Europe) and cheques payable to "The Arthur Bliss Society" or ask us for a Standing Order form. You can print off the application form from our website, or email our Membership Secretary susan.crownshaw@btinternet.com or telephone her on +44 (0) 1242 578 688.

The Housman Society - website: www.housman-society.co.uk

Forthcoming Events:

Wednesday 3rd March at 7.30 – The AGM followed by a talk by David Butterfield. Wine and refreshments.

Tuesday 1st June at the Hay Festival of Literature

We are delighted to announce that Richard Graves has accepted our invitation to give *The Name and Nature of Poetry* lecture at this year's Hay Festival of Literature. Richard's *tour de force* on A.E.H.'s standing in the literary world 1896-2009 was the highlight of the October weekend. Richard has written 17 books and gives lectures, among others, on Robert Graves and his Circle, the Powys Brothers, World War One in Literature, Richard Hughes, and T.E. Lawrence. For further information please contact Jim Page (Chairman), email jimpage@btinternet.com or tel 01527 874136

Celebrating English Song at Tardebigge

Tardebigge's seventh Celebrating English Song series this summer will not, for the first time, include any Gurney! However, amongst the less well known works being performed you will find some old favourites – Finzi's *Earth and Air and Rain*, Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, Britten's beautiful first Canticle, *My beloved is mine*, and *Winter Words* plus Purcell's *Music for a While*, *If music be the food of love*, and *Mad Bess of Bedlam*. Argento's *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* takes pride of place on 29 August, performed by Anna Stéphany and Simon Lepper, together with a group of songs by John Woolrich who will be giving the free pre-concert talk. The central concert on 25 July is given by Nicholas Mulroy and John Reid, whose programme is a tribute to Peter Pears who was born in 1910. The pre-concert talk will be given by Philip Reed, who was joint editor of the five volumes of Britten's letters. We begin the series on 27 June when Marcus Farnsworth, winner of the Wigmore Hall song competition last year, will be accompanied by Iain Burnside. Marcus will sing, sandwiched between the Butterworth and Finzi, song cycles by Martin Bussey and Mark-Anthony Turnage.

These popular Sunday afternoon concerts in north Worcestershire begin at 3.00 pm, talks at 2.00 pm. For full information look at www.CelebratingEnglishSong.co.uk or ring for a leaflet on 01527 872422.



Dates for your diary . . .

15th April – Gloucester Music Society - A Song Recital by Roderick Williams (baritone) and Andrew West (Piano)

This special 80th anniversary English song recital will include Gurney's *Black Stitchel*, *Severn Meadows* and *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, and the world premiere of a newly commissioned song cycle by the Gloucester Music Society '*The Pine Boughs Past Music*' *Op.39* by Ian Venables. This cycle includes setting of three poems by Gurney.

For further information please email info@gloucestermusicsoviety.org.uk

28th - 31st May - The 4th English Music Festival (programme to be announced shortly). Plans for the 2010 Festival include Vaughan Williams's **Five Mystical Songs** and *Elgar's Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, choral concerts from the Elysian Singers and Syred Consort and the Orchestra of St Paul's.

Thursday 3rd – Sunday 6th June – The Fourth Triennial Weekend of English Song, Ludlow. Programme highlights include, 'The Principle of Friendship: Ivor Gurney, Marion Scott and Herbert Howells' - talk by Pamela Blevins. Workshop and Performance of Gurney's '*Ludlow and Teme*' with Kate Kennedy, Ben Johnson (tenor), Carducci Quartet and Simon Lepper (piano). '**I sowed the Seeds of Love**' – a song recital with Ann Murray, Matthew Denton (violin) and Iain Burnside (piano).

This recital includes a performance of Gurney's '*Five Elizabethan Lyrics*'

Sunday 6th June at 11.15 am a song recital given by James Rutherford (baritone) and Simon Lepper (piano) features Gurney's songs, '*Edward, Edward*' and '*The Twa*

Corbies'. For further information please visit either www.finzifriends.org.uk or to obtain a full brochure please e mail jimpage@btinternet.com or telephone 01527 878586 or write to Jim Page, 80 New Road, Bromsgrove, B60 2LA.

11th August - Three Choirs Festival recital by Andrew Kennedy (tenor) and the Dante String Quartet. This concert will include a rare performance of Gurney's single quartet movement '*Molto in F*'.

12th August – The IGS Three Choirs Festival lunch at 12.15 (Cheltenham Town Hall), followed by a short talk (1.30) by Ian Venables on Ivor Gurney's '*Gloucestershire Rhapsody*'. **2.30pm** - Orchestral concert (Town Hall) that features the world premiere of '*The Gloucestershire Rhapsody*'.

13th August at 7.30 an evening orchestral concert that opens with Gurney's choral anthem '*The Trumpet*' (orchestrated by Philip Lancaster) **14th August – Song Recital by Roderick Willams (baritone) and Andrew West (piano).** This recital will include the songs, *Dinny Hill*, *The Sea is full of wandering foam*, *Down by the Salley Gardens* and *Praise of Ale* by Gurney and the second performance of Ian Venables's song cycle, '*The Pine Boughs Past Music*' *Op39*. For tickets and further information please visit www.3choirs.org or email info.gloucester@3choirs.org

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