

THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 61

February 2017

Spring Weekend 2017 - 3 and 4 June **Saturday 3 June: Finzi Meets Gurney on Chosen Hill**

The Spring Weekend will take place on the later date of June 3 and 4, 2017 in Churchdown. It will be **a joint event with the Finzi Society** and will feature a talk being given in St Bartholomew's Church on Chosen Hill, one of Gurney's loved places. The main events will be in St Andrew's Church Hall as usual.



For the Ivor Gurney Society, Saturday begins with coffee (10.15 am) and the AGM at 10.30 am. At 11.30 am, Philip Lancaster will speak in St Bartholomew's Church on Chosen Hill about *Benedictions and Baedekers: Finding Gurney*. **Please leave your cars in St Andrew's Carpark and transport will be available for all to St Bartholomew's Church.**

Packed lunch (pre-ordered) will be available at St Andrew's Church Hall from 12.45 pm. After lunch, there is a concert presenting Gurney and Finzi in St Andrew's Church and featuring the Chester Bach singers, Martin Bussey (conductor), Marcus Farnworth (baritone), and Libby Burgess (piano). For details of the programme and to obtain tickets, see the sheet enclosed with the Newsletter. Please return your ticket order as soon as possible to Ian Venables, 2 Turrall St, Worcester WR3 8AJ, with a cheque made out to the Ivor Gurney Society for the correct amount.

Sunday 4 June

By Severn; A Gurney Poetry Walk at Wainlode

led by Eleanor Rawling



The River Sever at Wainlode

If England, her spirit lives anywhere
It is by Severn, by hawthorns and those grand willows.

Meet at 10.30 am on Sunday 4 June, outside the Red Lion pub (GR 848258, postcode GL2 9LW). Carparking is available alongside the road. A short walk will take in the landscape features that inspired Gurney's poem, *By Severn* and draw on many more of his riverside poems. Lunch can be taken at the Red Lion but you must make a booking. Call them on 01452 730 935 or email: info@redlionwainlode.co.uk Also nearby is Haw Bridge Inn, 01452 780316 <http://www.hawbridgeinntirley.co.uk/>

Society Matters

Important News about the Website

Due to a technical problem, we have had to change the address of the Society's website. It is now www.ivorgurney.co.uk As ever, it is full of up-to-date information about Gurney, items for sale and notification of news and events. The Resources area allows downloads of music scores (Scores Downloads) as well as containing Biography and Bibliography sections. Note that it will soon be possible to purchase more CDs, new notecards and other shop items on the website, so keep checking what is available.

We hope to keep the News and Events section as up-to-date as possible. Members wishing to publicise a Gurney-related event should contact the Chair or the Secretary (see back page for e-mail addresses).

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2017-18. These are valid for a year from first payment date and can be paid through PayPal www.ivorgurney.co.uk or send a cheque to the Treasurer (see back page for address details). For acknowledgement, include your email address. Individual £14; Joint £18; Individual retired £10; Joint retired £12.50; student £5.00; overseas £25.

Ivor Gurney: Poems of War (ed RKR Thornton)

This is still available (£5.00). Contact Kelsey Thornton at 2 Rectory Terrace, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1XY. rkthornton@btinternet.com

Ivor Gurney Trust

<http://www.ivorgurneytrust.com/>

The Trust's primary purpose is to preserve and promote Ivor Gurney's literary and musical legacy. The website provides details of the Trust's history, its mission and its work. It also contains advice and information about public performances of Ivor Gurney's work.

The Trust intends to publish Gurney's motet, *'Since I believe in God'* ahead of a proposed recording with the award winning vocal ensembles, Tenebrae.

I will go with my father a-ploughing

Nicola Harrison

I Will Go with My Father A-Ploughing is a song-setting of words by the Northern Irish poet, Joseph Campbell who often went under the pen name of Seosamh MacCathmhaoil (1879 – 1944). Written in 1909 and published in a collection of poems entitled *The Mountainy Singer*, it was taken up by Gurney in 1921 and fashioned into a terrific song. The original poem, by Campbell, is included, with interpretations of both poem and song shown below.

I will go with my father a-ploughing
To the green field by the sea,
And the rooks and the crows and the seagulls
Will come flocking after me.
I will sing to the patient horses
With the lark in the white of the air,
And my father will sing the plough-song
That blesses the cleaving share.

I will go with my father a-sowing
To the red field by the sea,
And the rooks and the gulls and the starlings
Will come flocking after me.
I will sing to the striding sowers
With the finch on the greening sloe,
And my father will sing the seed song
That only the wise men know.

I will go with my father a-reaping
To the brown field by the sea,
And the geese and the crows and the children
Will come flocking after me.
I will sing to the tan-faced reapers
With the wren in the heat of the sun,
And my father will sing the scythe song
That joys for the harvest done.
(Text: Lyra Celtica 1924)

Best known for his poem *My Lagan Love*, Campbell was born and educated in Belfast. His interest in Irish language and culture led him to write both poetry, and verses to traditional airs. He worked with the composer Herbert Hughes and founded the Ulster Literary Theatre, later becoming an Irish Nationalist and taking part in the Easter Rising. After a spell of imprisonment in 1922-23, Campbell emigrated to the US for 16 years, returning to settle in County Wicklow in 1939.

The strength of Campbell's poem lies in its innocence, which enables us to see the world through the ploughboy's eyes: the busy farm workers moving to the rhythm of their task as the sun moves across the vast sky and the year draws to a close. Out in the field all is circular movement from the wheeling birds following the plough to the churning soil it leaves in its wake. The colour of the field changes from green to red to brown and reminds us that, like the seasons, life, too, is cyclical and action only ends once the work is done.

This farmer's boy is strikingly observant. Not only does he notice colour and movement, he also feels the pulse of his world and recognises that change is the most constant thing in it. The wild birds grab his attention the most: the fields seem to be thronging with them. There are gulls and crows at ploughing time to gobble the worms turned up by the share, starlings in early summer to peck up insects and broadcasted seed, and, at harvest-time, we see the geese, hissing and squabbling over fallen grain. Only now do the children appear, perhaps to gather leftover corn and to dance and play at the harvest celebration. We are shown a busy landscape that is constantly evolving and giving way to the next season until finally the crop is brought in to the sound of the scythe song, a spontaneous expression of joy for the good harvest.

Published in 1921, this is a celebratory song in which Gurney responds wholeheartedly to the energy of the poem and the opportunities it presents for word painting. The semiquaver pattern in the accompaniment suggests endless movement; the turning soil, the striding farmer, the gait of the boy as he chases along behind his father, and the cyclical nature of the poem.

The combination of text and music creates a living picture of a vibrantly busy but ordered world where everything in nature has its place. The ascending lark is replaced by the finch, which in turn yields to the wren. We can picture her hopping through the stubble in the lingering heat. Each verse of the poem has

its own particular colour. The first centres around 'green' and 'white,' so we know it is very early in the year. After ploughing, the colours shift to 'red' and 'greening' as the earth is laid bare. It is late Spring and sowing time for the wheat, at which time when the blackthorn berry, or sloe, has begun to form. In the third stanza, the colours change once more, this time to the mature shades of brown, and the tanned faces that signify late summer and harvest time.

Gurney, like the speaker, is powerfully aware of the birds in this poem – they fill the air with their clatter and, as elsewhere in his songs*, find a place in his musical imagination. Notice how he arranges the words 'and the lark in the white of the air' to an ascending line that imitates the lark's upward flight pattern. A similar touch is evident on the word 'flocking' in the first and third verses. Listen carefully in the third verse and you will hear an octave drop on the words 'scythe song', a musical representation of the sweeping action of the implement, perhaps, or of the cut wheat as it falls. Notice too, the pattern of striding chords in the refrain 'And my father will sing the plough song,' suggesting the physical power of the father's movement which is also reflected in his three different songs: that of the plough in verse 1, of the seed in verse 2, and the scythe, in verse 3. In the accompaniment, it is the alternation between striding and turning that sets the pace and keeps the song moving forward.

Our wide-eyed ploughboy sees everything. Full of wonder he imitates his father in rejoicing wholeheartedly in the world around him. *I Will Go with my Father a-Ploughing* is his song.

(e.g. *Desire in Spring, All Night Under the Moon, Spring, The Twa Corbies, When Smoke Stood Up*)

*** A Wordsmith's Guide to English Song; Poetry and Imagination
Vol II The Songs of Ivor Gurney By Nicola Harrison**

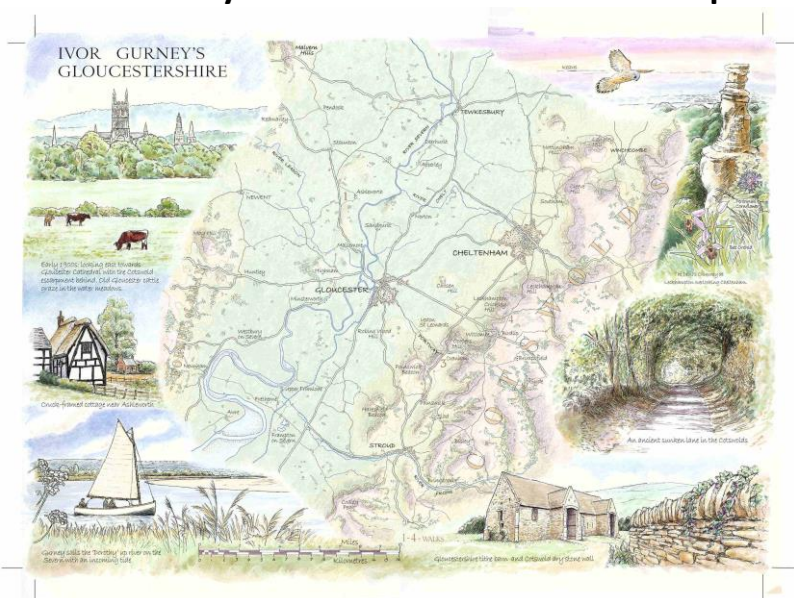
Published by Compton Publishing 2016 (ISBN 978-1-90982-55-7)

<http://www.comptonpublishing.co.uk/order.php#!/Ivor-Gurney-Poetry-Music-&-Imagination>

Note: Gurney's *Reconciliation* and *I will go with my father a-ploughing* are to feature in this year's Ludlow Weekend of English Song

<http://ludlowenglishsongweekend.com/>

Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire – Poster Maps



These map posters are archival quality colour prints suitable for framing, produced on fine art paper. **Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire** is the map featuring in Eleanor Rawling's book of the same name (2011). Order size of map required from Eleanor Rawling, 8 Mill Paddock, Abingdon, OX14 5EU enclosing a cheque made out to Eleanor Rawling, and your address.

Size of Map	Cost with map roll if collected at Spring Weekend	Cost if posted incl. map roll and postage
12 x16 inches	£18	£24
18 x 24 inches	£24	£30
24x 32 inches	£36	£48
Also map postcards are available; £1.50 per card or £6.00 for 5 cards		

Traces of Gurney in Texas

By RKR Thornton

I went recently to the Modern Language Association of America Conference in Austin Texas and, while I was there, I took the opportunity to go to the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas at Austin to look up some manuscripts of Hopkins that I had been wanting to see. Having finished my work on them, I looked around for other things that might be found among the many treasures which they hold there. It is a wonderful place for a scholar and the resources are so rich that one could spend many lifetimes looking at them. But I had only half a day and decided to look for things related to Gurney. The group of papers I was led to was the Edmund Blunden files. These are staggeringly rich and must cover all of Blunden's life. Among them I found two letters which throw a little light on the publication of the first selection of Gurney's poetry in the 1950s, and indicate Marion Scott's continued dedication to Gurney's interests, even though she was in her seventies – she died on Christmas Eve 1953. Pam Blevins writes in *Song of Pain and Beauty* that she last appeared in public in July 1953 and that 'Friends found her frail, but observed that "she had lost none of her alertness of mind nor interest in fellow musicians"' (p. 278), an observation which these letters bear out.

The first is from Marion Scott to Blunden, and is typed.

7 Porchester Terrace, / Hyde Park. W.2 / London

June 26, 1951

Dear Mr Blunden

It is difficult to express in terms of writing how grateful I am to you and to Mr Finzi for all the interest you have shown and the time spent over Ivor Gurney's affairs. Ivor would have valued deeply such generous friendship and understanding, and I feel that I am doing what he would have wished in begging you to accept the enclosed cheque for twenty-five guineas. No fee can make adequate acknowledgement to you for what you have given, and I can only beg you to accept this small cheque now as generously as you have always befriended Ivor.

Your report on Ivor's poems and the Introduction you wrote for them have made me more determined than ever to publish the poems under your guidance if it can by any means be done. I have told you that we have a fund of £250 available for the cost of publication, and this is very nearly the absolute limit, but we could stretch the sum to £300 if you think Mr Rupert Hart Davis

could be induced to accept that figure. Anything over and above that would have to be raised from outside sources, which is increasingly difficult. Will it be asking too much of you to add to your kindness by approaching Mr Hart-Davis and sounding him on the matter. I feel that coming from you our offer is more likely to be acceptable than if it came from anyone else.

Thank you again so much.

Yours very sincerely

Marion M. Scott [signature]

The second is from her hospital bed. It is manuscript but it explains at the top left that it is 'Dictated'.

Ward A, Woolavington Wing, /Middlesex Hospital, / London, W. 1.
21/3/53

Dear Mr Blunden

Thank you very much for your letter. All the news in it has rejoiced me extremely and I am so grateful to you (and also to Richard Church's intuitive understanding of Ivor) for this most happy result of all the work you have already put in on Ivor's behalf. I hope that in about a fortnight I shall be quite well enough to deal with any business letters that may come to me. The address of my flat at Rutland House will always reach me, though it is too early days yet for the surgeon to tell me when I can go home.

With again most true thanks,

Yours sincerely

Marion. M. Scott

When I get back to Rutland House I shall be able to give the amount of money available for the subsidy.

Richard Church (1893-1972) was a poet and reluctant civil servant who became journalist, poet, novelist and reviewer, and he was obviously consulted by Bridges on publishing Gurney's poems. *Poems by Ivor Gurney. Principally selected from unpublished manuscripts*, with a Memoir by Edmund Blunden, was eventually published in 1954 by Hutchinson, and it is dedicated 'To the memory of Marion M. Scott (1877-1953) a generous and constant friend whose regard for the welfare of Ivor Gurney and preservation of his manuscripts enabled this first selection to be made'.

There were two more letters which I came across, from John W. Haines to Blunden. The first was dated 5 September 1920 and dealt with Blunden's recent book *The Waggoner and other poems* (1920). This is part of that letter:

I wish Edward Thomas could have lived to review the book – The Barn would have appealed to him I am sure. The two poems that charm me most are “Leisure” & “Tench-fishing”, but I like others only less well.

I was showing it to Ivor Gurney (whose book is advertised on the back of yours) the same evening & he agrees with me. I remember he liked in particular “The Unchangeable” & “A Country God” & “The Waggoner” itself so there is variety in our agreement which is all to your Muse’s credit.

The letter ends with an offer of hospitality if Blunden should ever wish to visit the Forest of Dean.

Gurney was obviously familiar with *The Waggoner* (as he was with most new poetry at the time) and in three letters of 1922 also in the Harry Ransom Center (see the *Collected Letters* pp. 536-9) writes about his response to Blunden’s work, particularly *The Shepherd*, which won the Hawthornden Prize in 1922. In the first of them he reports that ‘Your “Waggoners” I tried to set and rather failed’. There is no copy of this failure, though there is a copy of his setting of Blunden’s ‘The Idlers’ from the 1922 book; it is unpublished and is in the Gloucester Collection.

The second letter is much later and dated 10 January 1935. It is typed, with his Bastion House address crossed out and Midhurst, Hucclecote written in.

Dear Mr. Blunden,

I do not know whether you remember exchanging two or three letters with me a good many years ago with regard to Ivor Gurney, the poet and music composer whose works you know, and I think you know him. His health broke down completely over ten years ago and he has been in hospital ever since.

I have been writing some articles in the local paper on various poets connected with the neighbourhood, and I thought you might like to see the one I wrote on him a few days ago, so I enclose it. I have masses of his poetry in manuscript, much of it incomplete, and the whole situation is curiously like that of Clare.

I heard yesterday from a lady who sees him frequently and is an old friend, and she reports that there is not the slightest chance of his recovery, but this is for your private ear. [added in ms] I have just had your last volume given me for Christmas.

Yours truly,

John W. Haines.

The piece Haines is referring to must be his article in *The Gloucester Journal*, 'An Hour With Books: Mr. Ivor Gurney, A Gloucestershire Poet', published on 5 January 1935, p.28. This was reprinted in full in Penny Ely's article in the *Gurnal* number 1. Haines's comment on the similarity of Clare and Gurney is reinforced in the titles of two of Blunden's books, his book of selections from Clare in 1920, *Poems Chiefly from Manuscript*, and his book of Gurney poems in 1954, *Poems by Ivor Gurney Principally selected from unpublished manuscripts*. The 'lady who sees him frequently' is obviously Marion Scott.¹

R.K.R. Thornton

Song

Only the wanderer
Knows England's graces
Or can anew see clear
Familiar faces.

And who loves joy as he
That dwells in shadows?
Do not forget me quite,
O Severn Meadows.

(Ivor Gurney 1916)

¹ We are grateful for permission to publish these letters to The Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Musical Update for 2017

Compiled from information provided by Ian Venables, Philip Lancaster, Anthony Boden.

'Do not forget me quite...'

Report of a Concert to mark the centenary of Ivor Gurney's *Severn Meadows* (Cranham Church, Gloucestershire, 11th February 2017)

A cold, raw February morning provided little encouragement to don winter clothing, turn out of a warm house and drive up to the shoulder of the Cotswold escarpment south-east of Gloucester; but for those who made the effort – and packed into Cranham Church for this concert – there were rewards aplenty. The programme, centred on songs and poems by Ivor Gurney (1890-1937), including a setting by Gurney of a poem by his close friend F.W.(Will) Harvey, also embraced music of solemnity and grandeur from seventeenth-century Venice and England, contemporary pieces by Hugh Barton and Bartholomew Mason, and a great rarity by Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006), his *John Clare Cantata*, all skilfully brought together in a powerful amalgam: an evocation of the tragedy of the First World War.

A linkage has for long been made between the poets Ivor Gurney and John Clare (1793-1864); a linkage explained in an extended programme note by Gurney and Clare expert Professor Kelsey Thornton. 'The lives of Clare and Gurney do indeed run in curious parallels', writes Prof. Thornton, 'the most striking of which is their incarceration in lunatic asylums for the later years of their lives, and the belated discovery of the range of their writing'. Surprisingly, a further linkage can also be made between Clare and Malcolm Arnold, an orchestrator of brilliance whose nine symphonies form the core of a considerable output. But Arnold, like Gurney and Clare (and Will Harvey) struggled against private demons: in Arnold's case depression and alcoholism. In his book *Philharmonic Concerto* (Methuen, 1994), Arnold's biographer, Piers Burton-Page, explains that in 1981:

The grip of alcohol was as powerful as ever...after over a year of steadily worsening circumstances he [Arnold] spent some months being dried out at a recuperation establishment called St Andrew's near his home town of Northampton. The irony of the hospital's location was not lost on the composer of *John Clare Cantata*. St Andrew's looked rather like a stately home

set in rolling parkland...But it was built as an asylum and John Clare...was a patient there for the latter years of his life.

Coming together specifically for this centenary celebration, *Sabrinensis*, a group of singers drawn mostly from members of the Gloucester Choral Society, provided not only the choir but also individual soloists and readers. These last, stepping forward to make individual contributions of undoubtedly heartfelt feeling. The excellent and wholly reliable accompanists were Beryl Berry and Sylvia Ardron; the gleaming sound of Royal Oak Brass and the superbly controlled contribution of the Cranham Handbell Ringers were inspired additions to the programme, and the whole enterprise was under the impressively skilled and impeccable direction of Judith Sheridan.

© Anthony Boden, February 2017

‘Do not forget me quite...’ a second concert is planned for the morning of **Saturday 25 March 2017 at Twigworth Church** to mark the Centenary of Gurney’s *‘Song’*. It is an appropriate location for the performance; not only is it in the area of the Severn Meadows but it is both the resting place of Ivor Gurney and Dorothy Howells, who was Dorothy Hawes when Gurney wrote it for her on the occasion of her engagement to Herbert Howells. The concert provides the context for the writing of the poem in Caulaincourt in France in the Spring of 1917 and includes readings and poetry by Ivor Gurney, songs set by Gurney and settings of his poems by contemporary Gloucester composers Bartholomew Mason and Hugh Barton (including First Performances), and to set the scene includes music written for handbells and brass by Hugh Barton, Purcell’s Funeral Music for Queen Mary, Gabrieli’s Sonata Pian’e Forte and Malcolm Arnold’s John Clare Cantatas. The singers are a newly formed group “Sabrinensis” with the Cranham Handbell Ringers and Royal Oak Brass Quintet, all under the direction of Judith Sheridan”. For further details and tickets contact: peter@gcs.me or tel. 07881-621201.”

Gloucester Music Society Concert on Saturday 25 March 2017:

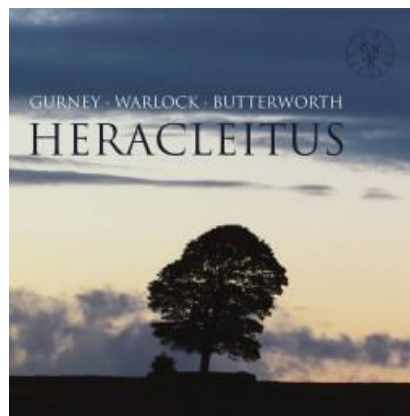
Nick Pritchard (tenor), Benjamin Frith (piano), Louise Williams (viola). Second performance of *‘Through These Pale Cold Days’* - a song cycle for tenor, viola and piano by Ian Venables plus songs by Gurney, Finzi, Quilter, Britten and Vaughan Williams and viola music by Schumann.

<http://www.gloucestermusicsociety.org.uk/>

The Ivor Gurney Trust intends to publish Gurney's motet, *'Since I believe in God'* ahead of a proposed recording with the award winning vocal ensembles, Tenebrae.

Gurney's most significant orchestral work, 'A Gloucestershire Rhapsody' has been recorded and released on a CD of British Orchestral Tone Poems for the Chandos label (CHAN10939). The recording was made by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Rumon Gamba.

Heracleitus CD (EM Records)



Ivor GURNEY (1890-1937)

Ludlow and Teme, seven songs for tenor, string quartet and piano (1919) [18:22]

Adagio (from String Quartet in D Minor) [7:39]

The Cloths of Heaven [3:08]

Severn Meadows [1:53]

By a Bierside [4:19]

Review taken from MusicWeb International

www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2016/Dec/this_month.htm

Little remains of Gurney's prolific output of chamber music. After the violin sonata of 1918/19 he composed a rhapsodic string quartet in A (unpublished) which has not yet been recorded (although a YouTube video of a public performance of it may be available). He wrote a 'cello sonata soon afterwards', probably in 1921. Then, in a two year burst of intense creativity, prior to his incarceration in 1926, he is known to have written a further twenty or so string quartets and other chamber works. Following Gurney's

death in 1937 Gerald Finzi made a quick survey of all the manuscripts and, on the head of the page on which they were catalogued, he noted: "Everything on this page is useless". Sadly, most, if not all, of these works are now missing, presumed destroyed, with the exception of a quartet in D Minor from 1924, for which copies of the parts have survived, albeit heavily annotated by Gurney. The full quartet is, apparently, now under reconstruction by Philip Lancaster and Track 21 provides us with an advance glimpse of the work in the form of this Adagio movement, a touchingly beautiful, uneasy and intense piece, here given a lovely and poignant world premiere performance. As Lancaster's note says, "This movement.....makes one wonder at what we have lost".

The final three tracks on the disc are devoted to three songs by Gurney with piano accompaniment: *'The Cloths of Heaven'*, *'Severn Meadows'* and *'By a Bierside'*. Paul Agnew's fine performances of these songs on Hyperion constitute the principal rival versions but, by and large, Daniels matches Agnew's sensitivity and the performances on the present disc are very acceptable.

Bob Stevenson

BBC *The Poet who Loved the War*

Documentary <https://vimeo.com/86701188>

This is the documentary about Ivor Gurney first shown in 2014 and it is available at this location. If you missed it at the time or want to watch again, do have a look.

BBC Radio World War 1 at Home, 2014, *Gloucestershire; Poet Ivor Gurney's Inspiration*. Music, poetry and interview with Eleanor Rawling, available at <http://bbc.in/LAipjB>

Note:

The first volume of *The Complete Poetry of Ivor Gurney*, edited by Philip Lancaster and Tim Kendall for OUP will be published next year.

The Ivor Gurney Society

www.ivorgurney.co.uk

The Ivor Gurney Trust (www.ivorgurneytrust.com)

Patrons of the Society:

Sir Andrew Motion

Ian Partridge CBE

Sarah Connolly CBE

President: Group Captain Anthony Boden **Vice-President:** Adrian Partington

Membership rates (UK) (all rates per annum):

Individuals £14; Joint £18; Students £5; Retired £10 single; £12.50 joint;
Institutional £12.50; International see website.

International membership:

You can join the Society by contacting the Treasurer at the address below
or online at www.ivorgurney.co.uk via PayPal.



The Ivor Gurney Society Journal

As well as the biannual Society newsletter, the Gurney Society publishes an annual journal, known as 'The Gurnal' which contains scholarly articles on Gurney's work and related items, incl. book and CD reviews. This is sent to all Society members and is for sale to non-members (see website).

Current officers:

Chair: Ian Venables chair@ivorgurney.co.uk

Secretary: Rolf Jordan secretary@ivorgurney.co.uk

Treasurer: Colin Brookes, 83 Castle Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton
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