

THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 48

November 2010

**The IGS Spring Weekend Event
in association with
The Arthur Bliss Society**

----- Saturday 14th May 2011 -----

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

12.noon - Annual General Meeting

12.30 - Lunch

**Launch of Eleanor Rawling's book 'Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire;
exploring poetry and place' and an opportunity to view an
exhibition of photographs, maps and walking routes illustrating this
theme**

**2pm - 'Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire; exploring poetry and place' –
a talk by Eleanor Rawling**

**2.30 - 'The composers of the Great War' – a talk by
Peter Ainsworth (Vice-President of the Arthur Bliss Society)**

3.15pm – An instrumental recital

4.30 - Tea

----- Sunday 15th May -----

A Gurney poetry walk with Graham Middleton



Members of the Society outside the Museum at Passchendaele

The Society's Trip to Ypres October 7-10th 2010

Twenty two members of the Ivor Gurney Society took part in the trip to Ypres, led by Ian Venables the IGS Chairman, on 7-10 October 2010. The aim was to visit those places in the Ypres area with close connections to the life and work of Ivor Gurney. The programme included visits to:

- The Menin Gate Ceremony, Ypres, in which Ian Venables represented the Gurney Society, laid a wreath at the monument and spoke the words of the poem by John Macrae, 'In Flanders' Fields';
- The 'In Flanders' Fields' Museum, where the Society was given an introduction by the Museum Director Piet Chielens;
- Ploegsteert ('Plug Street') woods south of Ypres, where the 1st Glosters were stationed from April-July 1915 and the 2nd/5th Glosters

in 1916. It was here in 1915 that Harvey wrote the lines 'I'm homesick for my hills again' in the poem *Flanders* which Gurney described as likely to be 'appearing in anthologies hundred of years hence'.

- The Tyne Cot Cemetery, which was covered in early morning mist at the time of the visit, presenting a suitably sad and ghostly backdrop to this huge memorial to the First World War soldiers;
- The Museum at Passchendaele which provided explanatory background to the three Battles of Passchendaele;
- Hill 62 and the memorial obelisk to the 1st Glosters;
- The location near St Julien where Gurney was gassed in September 1917.

There were many highlights to this fascinating expedition, one of which was finding the graves of two members of the 2nd/5th Glosters, J Hall and E Skillern, at the Royal Irish Rifles Cemetery in Ploegsteert Woods. These were the two colleagues for whom Gurney wrote the poem 'To Certain Comrades'. The peaceful atmosphere of the cemetery – a patch of well-kept green, hidden in the early autumn woodland – lent a particularly poignant air to this visit. Equally moving was the moment when members of the Society stood on the low ridge above St Julien, at the site of the gas attack (September 1917). Gurney himself was then part of the 184 Machine Gunners and was up on the ridge supporting the 2nd/5th Glosters, who were spread out below the ridge. He was directly in line for the gas that blew in from the south-east, and was sent back to England suffering from the after effects. A memorial to Ivor Gurney has been placed here by the In Flanders' Fields Museum.

The trip was given particular interest and authority by the contribution of Piet Chielens (IFF Museum Director), who accompanied the group on Friday and Sunday morning, and by inputs from Kate Kennedy, Kelsey Thornton and Ian Venables who provided sessions on Gurney's poetry and music, relevant to the sites visited.

Overall all those participating agreed that this was a most valuable and enjoyable trip. Special thanks are due to Roderick Dunnett, on whose original plans this was based, and to Ian Venables whose organisation, leadership and good humour ensured that everything proceeded enjoyably and to plan. Mention might also be made of the superb, sunny weather, enhancing the holiday mood and providing excellent conditions for the photographers in the group.

The Ivor Gurney memorial at Gallipoli Farm near St Julien



Chairman's AGM Report, May 2010

Ian Venables

This year has turned out to be another busy and eventful one for the Society. This increased activity is partly due to Gurney's burgeoning reputation but it is also, I think, a reflection of the success of the society's committee, whose members have devoted a great deal of time and energy to a range of projects that have brought Gurney's work before an ever wider public. What has seemed so remarkable to me is how all of this has been achieved with so few financial resources. This fact suggests that most of the work that goes on behind the scenes is given freely and without thought of recompense other than that of seeing Gurney's stature grow. This is why I would like today to pay a special tribute to our committee members and thank them on your behalf for all they have done in recent years.

I would like to give a very warm welcome to our newest committee member, Eleanor Rawling, who has kindly offered to take on the role of Newsletter editor. Eleanor is currently engaged upon writing a book about Gurney's Gloucestershire as seen through his poetry. I would like to take this opportunity to say how delighted we are that she will be joining us on the committee as the Newsletter editor. Secondly, I would like to thank Philip Lancaster for all his sterling work on our recent Newsletters and for all he is currently doing in developing the Society's website, which can be found on the internet at www.ivorgurney.org.uk. This website is marvellous window on the world, and I am confident that it will help to further the society's activities as well as being a major resource for Gurney scholars. Philip also has linked to the website his own 'blog' space, full of interesting and engaging discussion topics. www.ivorgurney.blogspot.com. I urge you take a look at it. Finally, Philip's cataloguing and ordering of the Gurney archive is nearly complete.

This year's annual Journal is Kelsey Thornton's 15th as editor. And what a marvellous publication it is! Every year, I ask Kelsey, "how it's going?" and he wryly replies, "I don't think there's going to be enough material for another Journal". Then is all goes quiet, and then suddenly it arrives one morning on the mat with a thud! This 15th volume is packed full of absorbing articles that cover a whole spectrum of Gurney-related interests and, leaving aside the recent special edition of the Cambridge Conference papers, at 168 pages, it is

by far the largest single journal we have had in many years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and all his contributors for making the annual Journal such an impressive and prestigious society publication.

One of this year's highlights was our very successful Spring Weekend Event, held here in Churchdown on Saturday 16th May. For this event we were joined by the Edward Thomas Fellowship. This collaboration, together with the launch of Pamela Blevin's much awaited book on Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott, produced a record attendance. The afternoon's programme began with a highly enjoyable survey of Edward Thomas's poetry given by the distinguished author, Richard Emeny. His talk, on the centrality of Thomas' poetry for Gurney provided a much needed context to the whole event. This was followed by Richard Carder's illustrated talk, once again on the subject of Edward Thomas, but this time from a musical perspective. Richard Carder has made a lifetime study of Gurney's Thomas settings and so it was a marvellous opportunity to hear him share with us his deep understanding of this music. The third most interesting talk was given by the American author, Pamela Blevins. Given the long gestation of her ground-breaking book and all her fascinating articles in the journals, it was also, for many of us, a wonderful opportunity to finally meet her in person. The whole event was rounded off by one of the best songs recitals we have had in recent years. The soprano, April Fredrick, together with the pianist, William Vann, presented a wide ranging programme, that introduced us to some lesser known songs by American composers as well as some rarities by British women composers including, Marion Scott, Janet Hamilton and Mary Taylor. The recital culminated in a moving performance of Gurney's 'Light's Out' cycle. The weekend concluded with Graham Middleton's Sunday morning poetry walk. Unfortunately, this had to be called off at the last moment due to inclement weather. However, Tony and Anne Boden came to our rescue with their very kind offer of a light lunch. So, in the end, all was not lost as we de-camped to their lovely home up the hill for yet more lively Gurney discussions.

One of the most important developments this year has been the introduction of a Reciprocal Membership Scheme. This scheme was the inspired idea of the Delius Society, who first approached us with the offer of such an arrangement. The committee subsequently approved the new scheme and it is now up and running. We feel that this scheme will bring substantial benefits, not only by increasing our own membership, but also through introducing members to the

work and activities of other societies, with whom we have a close artistic association. The details of how this scheme will work have been circulated in our recent newsletter, and we do hope that our members will take up these opportunities.

The focus of this year's activities has been upon Gurney as composer. The society's sponsored recording on the world famous Naxos label was released in August to great critical acclaim. Hilary Finch of *The Times* said that it was her favourite CD of the year, and Henry Fogel writing for *Archive music* said, 'Another triumph for Naxos! The discovery of Ivor Gurney, a composer with whom I was completely unfamiliar, has turned into one of the joys of the summer'.

Another major project that has come to fruition this year is the premiere recording of Gurney's 'Light's Out' cycle, in an orchestration by Professor Jeremy Dibble. This new orchestration was jointly commissioned by the society with the Edward Thomas Fellowship. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Edward Thomas Fellowship for their generosity and also to pay a personal tribute to Richard Emeny, Colin Thornton and Anthony Boden without whose vision and support this project would not have got off the ground. Jeremy Dibble's masterly orchestration has, in my opinion, given the cycle a new lease of life. The textual variety accorded by the orchestration has lifted the music into a higher realm. Even, the last song, Gurney's much debated setting of Edward Thomas's 'The Trumpet', has been transformed by this orchestration. This cycle has been recorded on the Dutton label by the acclaimed Baritone Roderick Williams. This 'must buy' recording also includes a deeply moving song cycle by the late Michael Hurd, entitled, 'Shore Leave's'. This work has been a revelation and I do hope that we will be able to have more of Michael's work recorded on CD in due course.

Other musical events this year featuring Gurney's music include, a 'Songs of War Concert' held in London last April and promoted by the War Poets Association. The first performance of Gurney's E minor 'Cello Sonata given by the cellist Joseph Spooner and pianist David Owen Norris. Finally our very own committee member Dr April Fredrick presented a programme of Gurney settings at the 'In Flanders Field Museum' in Ypres, last November.

Turning now to literary matters, I can report that the second two-day Cambridge Conference, entitled 'Music and Literature of the 1st World War' was a resounding success. This conference took place over the weekend 11th and 12th July and was once again organised by Kate Kennedy and Trudi Tate. This time the conference was more broadly aimed, bringing together scholars from all over the world to discuss the relationship between music and literature and the First World War. There was a strong emphasis on Gurney, with a Gurney exhibition, and two papers focussing specifically on his work. The highlight of the conference was a special recital and readings, given by the acclaimed tenor Andrew Kennedy, together with the pianist Julius Drake and actor Alex Jennings. This included a selection of Gurney's songs. The conference was well attended and a selection of the papers are currently being edited, and will be published by Routledge.

I mentioned earlier that Eleanor Rawling is currently writing a book on Gurney. This book entitled, *'Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire; exploring poetry and place'* (The History Press, March 2011) will retrace his footsteps in the Gloucestershire landscape and explore the relationship between his poetry and the places he loved. In addition, her book will contain suggestions for walks and provide illustrative maps, photographs and many published and formerly unpublished poems. (see below – forthcoming publications)

Although, that concludes my formal report on the society's activities, I would just like to mention that this years Three Choirs Festival, to be held in Gloucester has turned out to be something of a mini Gurney Festival. This innovative programme, devised by the festival's director, Adrian Partington will present a number of Gurney's lesser known works. These include, a performance of Gurney's Choral setting of Edward Thomas's 'The Trumpet', orchestrated by Philip Lancaster, together with a rare opportunity to hear the *Molto in F*, one of Gurney's single string quartet movements performed by the Dante String quartet. But, without doubt, the highlight of the week will be the first performance of Gurney's large-scale orchestral work, 'A Gloucestershire Rhapsody' written over 90 years ago. The festival will culminate in a recital of English song given by the baritone Roderick Williams. His recital includes a good selection of Gurney's songs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Adrian Partington, the society's Vice President for his continued support and for helping to promote Gurney's work.

THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY
Financial Statement: 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010

Balance brought forward on 1 April 2008
£3742.04

Income for the year

Subscriptions/donations (1)	2399.00	
2009 Spring event	2542.50	
Sales of merchandise	5.00	
		4946.50

Expenditure for the year

2009 Spring event	1536.00	
Purchase of merchandise	604.75	
Newsletter	60.35	
2009 Society Journal	1113.00	
Administration/Expenses (2)	695.66	
Sponsorship (3)	3358.75	
2010 Spring event	50.00	
		7418.51

Excess of expenditure over income **2472.01**

Bank balance carried forward on 31 March 2010 **£1270.03**

1. Subscriptions are up on the level of last year, donations down a little.
2. This is for postage of Newsletter, Journal and for details of the Spring event to members.
3. Sponsorship includes: The Cambridge Conference, the joint IGS and Edward Thomas Fellowship commission of the orchestration of Gurney's Light's Out cycle, a joint event with The Finzi Society and the sponsorship of the Naxos Gurney song CD.

Nigel Lowson, Honorary Treasurer to the Society

The Ivor Gurney Society

Website News and Membership Subscriptions

The Society's website is constantly being updated and improved. One of the most recent changes has been the inclusion of an online payment facility via **Paypal**. This will mean that members can now pay directly online for various items, such as renewing their membership subscription or paying for society merchandise. This online facility will be especially useful **for overseas members** who would like to pay their subscription in their own currency. During the coming months, it is hoped that more items of interest will be added to the website so, as they say, 'watch this space'.

For all the latest society news why not visit
www.ivorgurney.org.uk

From Ivor Gurney Blog (Philip Lancaster)
<http://ivorgurney.blogspot.com/>

'The National Trust have published an anthology of poems on the countryside, from which ten poems have been shortlisted and taken to the public vote to announce Britain's favourite poem of the countryside.

Whilst I consider such polls to be gimmicky and meaningless, it is gratifying to see one of Gurney's poems - 'By Severn'- in the pastoral decalogue.

.....since it would be nice to see Gurney being considered amongst England's more important poets, do take a look at the National Trust's page and vote for your favourite (as long as it's the Gurney!).'

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-trust/w-support/w-shopping_with_nt/w-books/w-books-countryside-poetryrefresh.htm

Forthcoming Events:

Thursday 25th November 8pm

An 'in camera' recital of a selection of
Gurney's 'unpublished music and poetry,
at
The Master's Lodge, St John's College, Cambridge,

This is a rare opportunity to hear some of Gurney's 'unpublished' songs, performed by choral scholars at John's and Girton colleges. Admission: free with a retiring collection.

If you wish to attend this special event, then please e mail asap Ian Venables at iv@ianvenables.com

The Arthur Bliss Society

Saturday 20 November

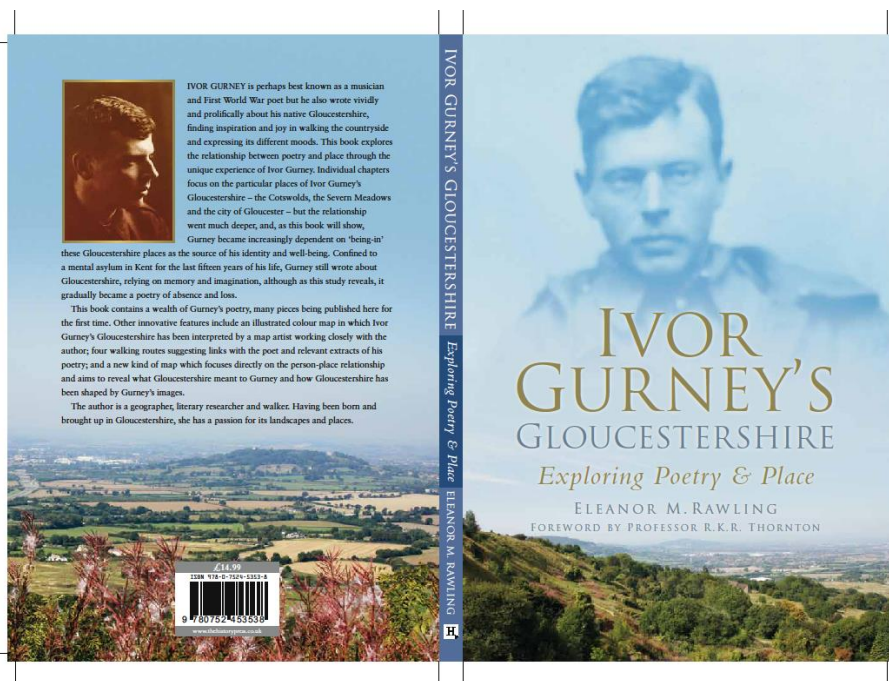
Sacred Hearts Church Hall, Moorend Road
Charlton Kings, Cheltenham GL53 9AU

'IAN VENABLES ON SONG'

A Composer's Perspective on Words for Music

Tickets: £5 from Society members, or at the door
Refreshments included

Forthcoming Publications:



Publication Date: March 2011

Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire; exploring poetry and place

by Eleanor M Rawling, The History Press, The Mill,
Brimscombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire

Can be ordered via The History Press, www.thehistorypress.co.uk

Price £14.99

From the Back Cover:

Ivor Gurney is perhaps best known as a musician and First World War poet but he also wrote vividly and prolifically about his native Gloucestershire, finding inspiration and joy in walking the countryside and expressing its different moods.

This book explores the particular Gloucestershire landscapes – the Cotswolds, the Severn Meadows and the city of Gloucester – that stimulated his creativity in poetry and music, but the relationship went much deeper. Gurney became increasingly dependent on ‘being-in’ these Gloucestershire places as the source of his identity and well-being. Confined to a mental asylum in Kent for the last fifteen years of his life, he still drew on his memories of Gloucestershire, but it was a poetry of absence and loss.

This book contains a wealth of Gurney’s poetry with many pieces being published here for the first time. Other features aim to clarify the poetry/place dialogue and include an illustrated colour map, in which Ivor Gurney’s Gloucestershire has been interpreted by a map artist working closely with the author; a layered model of Gurney’s relationship with these places; and four walking routes, with accompanying commentaries and poetry extracts.

The author is a geographer, literary researcher and walker. Having been born and brought up in Gloucestershire, she has a passion for its landscapes and places.

F W Harvey: Soldier, Poet by Anthony Boden

Douglas McLean Publishing is proud to announce that they will publish a new fully-revised and updated edition of *F.W. Harvey: Soldier, Poet* by Anthony Boden.

Unavailable for some time and much sought after, this fascinating biography of Ivor Gurney's best friend and fellow-poet is scheduled for publication on **26th March 2011**, the 123rd anniversary of Will Harvey's birth.

Douglas McLean Publishing
8 St John Street
Coleford,
Gloucestershire GL16 8AR
(www.forestbookshop.com/mclean.html)

Naxos English Song Series Vol 21



The English Song Series • 21

8.572541

DDD

Ian VENABLES

On the Wings of Love • Venetian Songs

Andrew Kennedy, Tenor • Iain Burnside, Piano

Richard Hosford, Clarinet



No 8.572514

Following on from Naxos's recent Butterworth Song disc (no 20) in their acclaimed English Song Series, the latest (no 21) is programme of songs by our very own chairman - Ian Venables. Performed by the tenor Andrew Kennedy, pianist Iain Burnside and clarinettist Richard Hosford, this recital includes the premiere recording of the song cycle, 'On the Wings of Love' Op.38 for tenor, clarinet and piano. The disc also has a selection of some of the composer's best-known songs, including his 'Love's Voice' cycle, 'Flying crooked' and his most popular song 'At Midnight'.

This CD is now available through the Society priced £5.99. Please e-mail Bruce Child at bruce.child@stockport.gov.uk

REVIEW:

'Giving Voice to Venables'

George Hall enjoys a song composer as fine as Finzi and Gurney

On the Wings of Love, Op. 38; Venetian Songs – Love's Voice, Op. 22; At Malvern; A Kiss; Midnight Lamentation etc

Andrew Kennedy (tenor), Iain Burnside (piano), Richard Hosford (clarinet)

Naxos 8.572514 66:04 mins

This release in Naxos's English Song Series celebrates the art of Ian Venables, born in Liverpool in 1955, whose work is a continuation of a tradition including Gurney and Finzi among its chief 20th-century representatives. Neither so searching nor as original in terms of its musical language as Britten or Tippett, let alone more recent figures, more importantly Venables manages to create worthwhile new artefacts within his conservative idiom. Expertly crafted, the results offer something genuinely personal and at times profound. Of the two major cycles here, *On the Wings of Love* (2006) adds a clarinet obbligato to the statutory voice/piano partnership. Richard Hosford is exemplary here in capturing and amplifying the mood of each song, memorably so in the long, lovely introduction to the Yeats setting, 'When you are Old'. The *Venetian Songs* (1995) comprise four settings of the Victorian writer John Addington Symonds, on whom Venables is as acknowledged expert, and whose *At Malvern* inspired Venables's separate, haunting and indeed hypnotic 1998 song – one of the finest things here. But the clattering piano in Tennyson's 'Break, break, break' (from the Op. 33 collection) and the imaginative Hardy setting *A Kiss* are also remarkable. Andrew Kennedy is the expressive, articulate tenor, Iain Burnside the outstanding accompanist.

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE REVIEW: DECEMBER 2010

PERFORMANCE *****

RECORDING *****

News from Other Societies

Arthur Bliss Society:

www.arthurbliss.org

Saturday 11 December 2010 at 7.30 pm

St John's Church, Spencer Hill, Wimbledon

Wimbledon Chamber Choir

Programme incl. Bliss: Cradle Song for a Newborn Child

Tuesday 5 April 2011 at 1 pm

Peel Park Campus, University of Salford

The Barbirolli Quartet

Programme incl. Bliss: String Quartet No.2

Sunday 10 April 2011 at 3 pm

Holywell Music Room, Oxford

The Berkeley Ensemble

Programme incl. Bliss: Clarinet Quintet

Friday 15 April 2011 at 7.30 pm

Auckland Castle, County Durham

The Bishop Auckland Music Society

The Barbirolli Quartet

Programme incl Bliss: String Quartet No.2

Delius Society

www.delius.org.uk

Tuesday 23rd November at 7.15

The Delius Society Branch Meeting

This event includes a talk by Alan Rowlands.

Thursday 16th December at 7.30

The Town Hall, Birmingham

The Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestra, conducted by Lionel Friend

will present a programme that features Delius' Brigg Fair together with works by Elgar and Strauss.

Contact:

Michael.green620@tesco.net

The Housman Society

www.housman-society.co.uk

March 1st 2011 at 7.30

Annual General meeting at 80 New Rd, Bromsgrove B60 2LA

Please contact Andrew Maund, editor at a_maund@o2.co.uk

CDs available to Society Members

Please e-mail Bruce Child at bruce.child@stockport.gov.uk
Include £1.50 for post and packing for each disc ordered.

<p>Elgar - Pageant of Empire, Sea Pictures / Ivor Gurney - Lights Out / Michael Hurd - Shore Leave [CD] Edward Elgar (Composer), Martin Yates (Conductor), BBC Concert Orchestra (Orchestra), Roderick Williams (Performer) Format: Audio CD Price: £10</p>	<p>Gurney: Songs Ivor Gurney (Composer), Susan Bickley (Mezzo Soprano), Iain Burnside (Piano) Format: Audio CD Copies 14 Price £5</p>
<p>Vaughan Williams - On Wenlock Edge Dante Quartet (Artist), Ralph Vaughan Williams (Artist), Ivor Gurney (Artist), Andrew Kennedy (Artist), Ian Venables Copies 10 Price £10</p>	<p>Finzi; Gurney; Ireland - Songs Gurney/Ireland/Venables/Finzi (Artist) Format: Audio CD Copies 1 Price £10</p>
<p>The Dark Pastoral: Music and Poetry from World War One Ivor Gurney, William Dennis Browne, Eugene Goossens Andrew Kennedy (tenor) (Artist), Julius Drake (Piano) (Artist), Simon Russell Beale (speaker) (Artist) Format: Audio CD Copies 9 Price £10</p>	<p>On This Island Peter Warlock (Composer), Roger Quilter (Composer), Hubert Parry (Composer), Charles Villiers Stanford (Composer), Ivor Gurney (Composer), et al. Format: Audio CD Copies 2 Price £12</p>
<p>Gurney/Ferguson: Piano Music Mark Bebbington (Artist) Format: Audio CD Copies 3 Price £10</p>	<p>Elgar - The Spirit of England Edward Elgar (Artist), David Lloyd-Jones (Artist), BBC Symphony Orchestra (Artist), BBC Symphony Chorus (Artist), Susan Gritton (soprano) (Artist), et al. Format: Audio CD Copies 2 Price £10</p>
<p>Venables: At Midnight, Songs and Chamber Music (Andrew Kennedy / Dante Quartet) Dante Quartet (Artist), Ian Venables (Composer), Andrew Kennedy (Tenor) Format: Audio CD Copies 5 Price £10</p>	<p>Nancy Evans - "The Comely Mezzo" Nancy Evans (Alto), Gurney Adrian Beecham (Composer), Manuel de Falla (Composer), Ralph Vaughan Williams (Composer), Thomas Beecham (Piano), et al. Format: Audio CD Copies 5 Price £3</p>

Judith Buckle - Songs Discovered Judith Buckle (mezzo); Peter Bailey (piano) rec. 19 November and 3 December, 2008, Copies 6 Price £10	David Goodland reads the poetry of Ivor Gurney (2007) Double CD reissue of the 1998 cassette recording Copies 19 Price £10
Sevenside Composers Alliance: Inaugural recital Dunelm Code:DRD0238 P Jacobs, piano, plays works by Self, Gurney, Laycock, Barnard, Kings, Coppard, Pitts, Patten, Caradon and Warren. Copies 5 Price £10	The Tend'rest Breast Dunelm Code DRD0237 soprano G Colwell, with pianist N Foster, in a recital of beautiful songs by British composers Roger Quilter, Frank Bridge, Ivor Gurney, Lennox Berkeley, John Ireland, A King, M Dring and M Phillips Copies 3 Price £10

Chairman

Ian Venables, 2 Turrall Street, Barbourne, Worcester WR3 8AJ Email:

General Secretary

Rolf Jordan, 24 Claremont Road, Birkdale, Southport PR8 4DZ Email:
rolf@rolfjordan.com

Treasurer

Nigel Lowson, 8 Somers Road, Barbourne, Worcester WR1 3JJ Email
nwl@rgsw.org.uk

Newsletter Editor

Eleanor Rawling, 8 Mill Paddock, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 5EU
Email: EleRawling@aol.com