THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 60 October 2016

John Phillips (1936-2016)

Sketch by RKR Thornton

We report the sad news that, following a short illness, John Phillips died on the 13th September 2016. John was a great champion of Ivor Gurney and the driving force behind the idea to form a society. Over the past 22 years John worked tirelessly to promote Gurney's cause. He served on the committee as the society's Secretary for 10 years and as Treasurer for the same length of time, before becoming the Events Co-ordinator. The Society owes him a great debt of gratitude for all he did to bring the IGS to where it is today. He will be sadly missed.

John Phillips and the Ivor Gurney Society

by Anthony Boden

It was in July 1990 that I first met John Phillips at an Ivor Gurney centenary event that I organised in Gloucester.

This event was spread over three days in July 1990 and included recitals, readings, talks, films, an exhibition and a coach tour; it featured some of the first names amongst singers and instrumentalists, eminent academics and writers, and it was a sell-out. In fact, it would have been possible to sell far more tickets than I had anticipated. One enthusiastic member of that audience was John Phillips who, I am happy and grateful to say, made himself known to me. It was not long before John suggested that a Gurney Society should be formed under my chairmanship. However, I was deeply reluctant to take on this responsibility, believing that there were already too many musical and literary societies. Indeed, the Finzi Friends were already including Gurney in some of their events, and that seemed to be fine as far as I was concerned. However, John was not the sort of man to take 'no' for an answer – and he was absolutely right! I gave in – but could not have taken it on without his invaluable support.

We launched the Gurney Society at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester in 1995. John was our first Secretary, going on in later years to serve as both Treasurer and Events Co-ordinator. He was utterly reliable and meticulous in everything that he did; his administration was a model of efficiency and, quite rightly, he expected equal efficiency in those with whom he worked. In spite of his considerable physical difficulties, I never heard him complain on his own account. He remained to the end a gentleman of quiet, cheerful, inspiring dignity.

John will be sorely missed by all of us in the Ivor Gurney Society, and without his vision the Society would not have existed. Ivor Gurney is now rightly acknowledged as a dually-gifted poet and composer touched by genius; many of his songs and other musical works have been recorded; his poems are included in several anthologies; and his name is celebrated in the spheres of both music and literature. And yet, only a quarter of a century ago his name meant little or nothing to the majority of music lovers, and you would have looked in vain to find one of his poems in the *Oxford Book of English Verse.* I believe that John Phillips' enthusiasm and hard work on behalf of the Society has been instrumental in making this happen. One of John's favourite Gurney poems was *The Songs I Had*, and I shall think of him whenever I read it:

The songs I had are withered
Or vanished clean,
Yet there are bright tracks
Where I have been,

And there grow flowers
For others' delight
Think well, O singer
Soon comes night.

Gurney Society Walk in Cranham Woods, May 2016

Society Matters

Spring Weekend 2017 - DATE FOR DIARY: JUNE 3 and 4
This 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 an event in St Bartholomew's Church on Chosen Hill. Details available in the next newsletter.

Subscriptions
Subscriptions for 2016-17. These are valid for a year from first payment date and can be paid through PayPal http://ivorgurney.org.uk/join.htm 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.

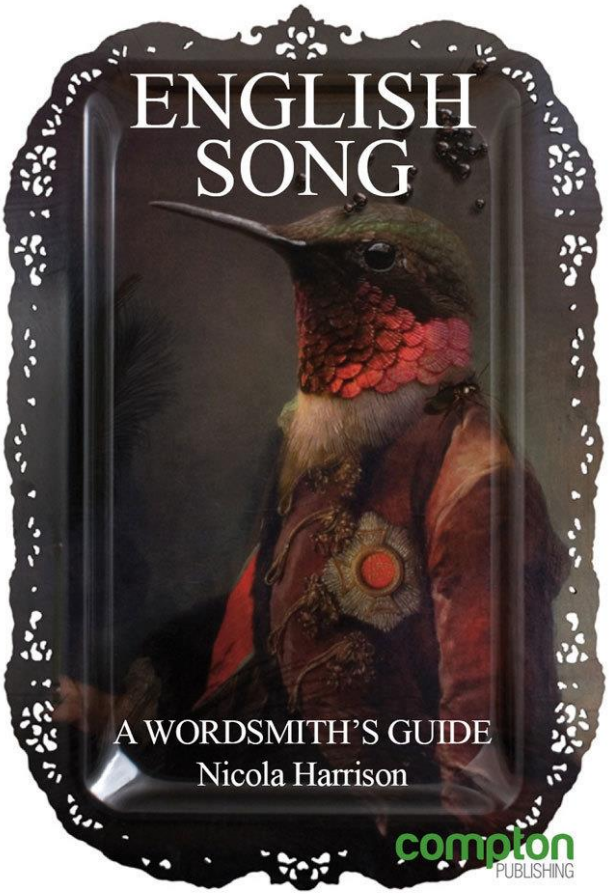
Website News
The Ivor Gurney Society website http://ivorgurney.org.uk/ is full of up-to-date information about Gurney and notification of news and events. The Resources area allows downloads of music scores (Scores Downloads) as well as containing Biography and Bibliography sections.

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).

Ivor Gurney: Poems of War (ed RKR Thornton)
This is still available (£5). Contact Kelsey Thornton at 2 Rectory Terrace, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1XY. rkrthornton@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.

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



Focusing on the music of Ivor Gurney, Nicola examines the poetry of the songs, taking into account the symbolism, mythology, religion, philosophy, historical and romantic background and the many other influences on the writer – digging deep into the text with fascinating results.

A second book in this series focuses on Roger Quilter.

Published by Compton Publishing 2016

(ISBN 978-1-90982-55-7)

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

The Wordsmith's Guide to English Song: Poetry and Imagination
Vol. 2: The Songs of Ivor Gurney, by Nicola Harrison

Review by Roddy Dunnett

It is almost 30 years since Michael Pilkington's *English Solo Song - Guides to the Repertoire*, including (in vol. 2) Gurney, appeared. It bridged a notable gap, and although other partial views, e.g. by Stephen Varcoe or Trevor Hold, have surfaced since, there remains ample room for a weighing up of Gurney's artistry, song by song.

This volume appears with Pilkington's *imprimatur*, and though it includes none of the most recently recovered or recorded items ('Western Sailors', 'Everyone Sang', 'Red Roses' or Richard Carder's edition of Seven Sappho Songs), and cautiously skirts the Edward Thomas Cycle *Lights Out*, it does examine in detail just about all the other songs listed by Michael Hurd.

The results are rewarding. There is the odd literal (St Lawrence's, Ludlow for St Laurence's, P. K. Kavanagh, Neil Jenkin) but these do not constitute a major issue.

More relevant is that Nicola Harrison has penned a highly perceptive, thoughtful book, and one which is as discerning in the way it explores the background to each author and poem text Gurney sets, carefully noting the discrepancies between his version and the original.

A few (e.g. 'Severn Meadows') are left to fend for themselves, without any extended commentary on the music. With most, she leads us through well-sculpted biography, and often excellent and insightful analysis of the poetry, preceding an examination of the way Gurney responds to each text in the music which not always, but often, uncovers something new.

And what a treasure trove she unravels: the simplest variation from quaver to semiquaver may, she argues, have import. She emphasises with examples the way Gurney gives 'space' to a poem, not least by significant use of pauses. The use of triplets, chromatic touches, accidentals, key shifts: all, she suggests, play a role in many of his finest songs. Nor does she omit to find meaning in

those prolonged conclusions (or codas) that are an endearing feature of Gurney - though not uncritically, opining that one such attempt is misjudged.

Her attention to individual songs yields numerous insights. She dubs 'Sleep' 'A kind of love song to sleep'. The unearthly feel of 'All Night Under the Moon' she attributes not least to Gurney's choice of 'the unusual key of G**#** minor'. 'Desire in Spring', 'In Flanders', 'The Fields are Full', 'The Cloths of Heaven' and 'The Folly of Being Comforted' are among the most inspirationally and instructively examined, and the backgrounds to Ledwidge, Edward Shanks and (though not the cycle) Edward Thomas are fruitfully unfolded. Gurney's two Housman cycles make a striking *envoi*, with 'The Western Brookland', 'Ludlow Fair', 'Lent Lily' and 'The Aspens' proving especially revealing.

Harrison is considerate enough to allow that one may take a different view of any of the songs for which she offers such an articulate breakdown. Nonetheless, I cannot imagine these lucid and percipient explorations will not be welcome and indeed helpful to many, both performers and enthusiasts, supplying, as she hopes, 'stimulating new ideas and encouraging fresh departures for the singer.'

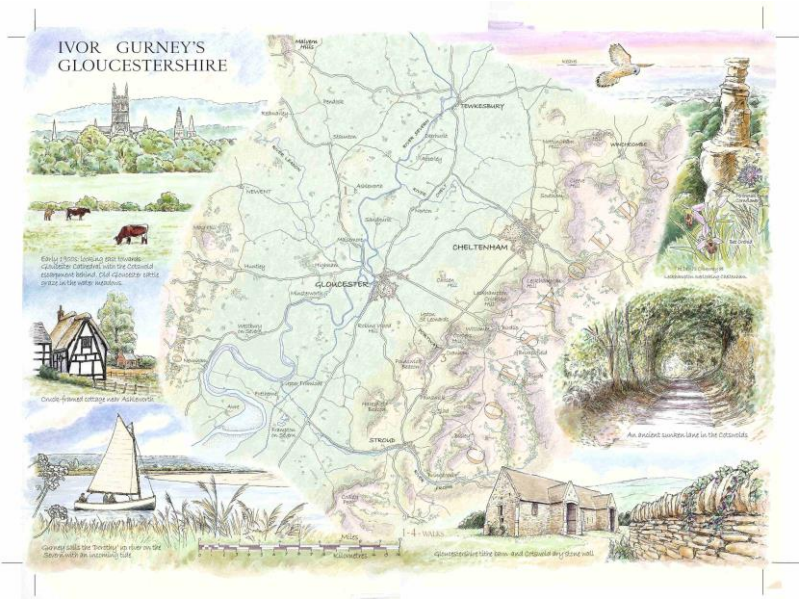
Tony Boden writes: George and Sarah Sharpley, who live alongside St Matthew's Church at Twigworth Old Rectory, have opened their home as a B&B. Members of the IGS visiting Gloucester and Ivor's grave may welcome the opportunity to stay in the house at which Ivor spent so very many hours as a boy. Here is the link:
http://www.gloucestershirebnb.co.uk/theoldrectory/

The framed portrait of Ivor Gurney that John Phillips donated to the Society some years ago now hangs in the Ivor Gurney Hall at the King's School.

For many years Tony and Anne Boden have been funding two Speech Day prizes at the King's School, Gloucester:- The Ivor Gurney Music Prize and the F.W. Harvey Literature Prize.

Tony Boden's biography of FWH has been republished by The History Press (under their Phillimore imprint) in a revised edition. Available on Amazon.

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 cardboard map roll if collected in person	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		

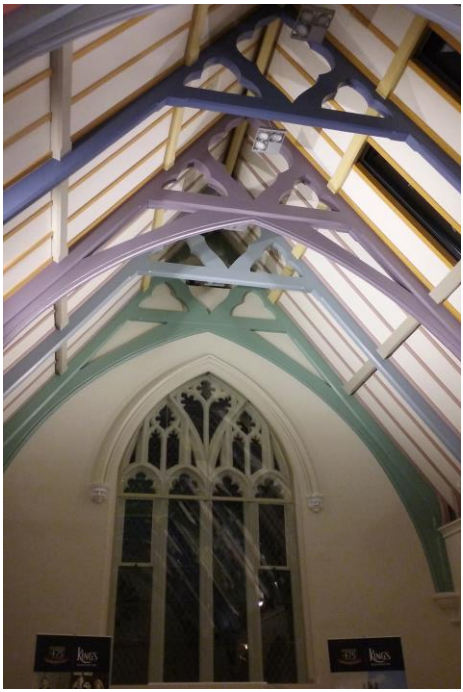
The Opening of Ivor Gurney Hall

'So here's to the room where the dark beams cross over'

February 2016 saw the opening of the Ivor Gurney Hall at the King's School, Gloucester, UK, located in the former grounds of St Peter's Abbey, now Gloucester Cathedral.

Gloucester Cathedral choristers are educated on scholarships at the King's School. The revamped Hall, its exposed roof beams now bright with pastel colours and its walls a warm light beige or cream, was formerly the Old Schoolroom (the school was founded in 1541 by Henry VIII), where all the pupils were taught in Victorian times.

Now the building's beautiful exterior has been sandblasted and renovated to restore the original light stone: this offsets the magnificent, 'rainbow' interior, which is the work of architect John Christophers, of Birmingham-based Associated Architects.



The new title of this Performing Arts venue commemorates the First World War musician and poet Ivor Gurney. In the early 1900s Gurney, who is also remembered on a plaque in the cathedral, was a King's School pupil, boy chorister, soloist and in due course articled assistant to the organist of Gloucester Cathedral, Dr Herbert Brewer. Gurney's songs and writings have gained a tremendous following in the past decade. His poetry can be found in the current *Oxford Book of English Verse*, where it is rightly set alongside that of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.

At the opening, the Headmaster, Alistair Macnaughton, explained that the new space - once home to reluctant gymnasts - is already in use for music, drama and, increasingly, dance. The cathedral and hopefully the wider community will have a place there, too.The opening music, led by the school's Director of Music John Pennington, included sixth-form pupil Beatrice Kinsey's ravishing, intensely musical performance of a violin solo, the 'Méditation' from Massenet's *Thaïs*; a moving, nigh-on perfect rendering by Joshua Saunders, Gloucester Cathedral's former Head Chorister, of Gurney's setting of John Fletcher's 'Sleep'; and 'In Flanders' ('I'm homesick for my hills again'): a thoughtful version for choir, by music master Lyndon Hills, of verses by Gurney's school friend F W Harvey, published in *A Gloucestershire Lad* (1916). This setting, like Iain Farrington's recent setting of Gurney's five *Elizabethan Songs* for the BBC Singers, demonstrated how effectively certain of Gurney's solo songs could be converted into choral items, just as his church anthems and organ pieces are now gradually being recovered.

The evening's guest of honour was Group Captain Anthony Boden, author and President of the Ivor Gurney Society, who gave a unique insight into the composer's life and achievements.

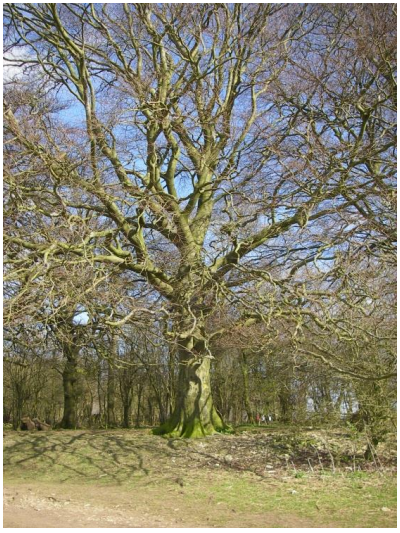
The renaming, as an Arts Centre, of this now beautiful, colourful, high-beamed building makes a perfect tribute in this, the centenary of Gurney's participation in the Great War campaigns of Aubers, Neuve-Chapelle, the Somme and ultimately, Ypres.

Posted on Here and There; Classical Music News, 7 March 2016 by Roderic Dunnett

http://www.mvdaily.com/news/

Gurney Society Notecards
Soon to be available on the Society's website

8 different cards designed and produced by Eleanor Rawling Each card is 4" x 6" and presents a high quality colour photograph of a landscape with special meaning for Ivor Gurney, and a poetry extract. Envelopes provided. One pack of 4 cards showing Cotswold Edge scenes £6.00 inc. p&p; One pack of 4 cards showing Severn Valley scenes £6.00 incl. p&p. Two packs cost £12.00 (incl. p&p). Specify which packs you want and send a cheque made out to



The Ivor Gurney Society for the correct amount to:

Eleanor Rawling, 8 Mill Paddock, Abingdon, OX14 5EU. elerawling@aol

The world premiere production of IT IS EASY TO BE DEAD
by Neil McPherson.
9 Nov-3 Dec 2016
Based on the poetry, letters and brief life of Charles Hamilton Sorley.Music and Songs by Gertrud Emily Borngräber, Rupert Brooke, William Denis Browne, George Butterworth, Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, André Devaere, George Dyson, Ernest Bristow Farrar, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ivor Gurney, A. E. Housman, John Ireland, Donnchadh MacIain, John Masefield, Rudi Stephan and Ralph Vaughan Williams.
www.atgtickets.com/trafalgarstudios
Telephone Booking: 0844 871 7632.

Musical Update for 2016

by Philip Lancaster

In September the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by Rumon Gamba, recorded Gurney's *Gloucestershire Rhapsody* for future release on CD. It will appear on a disc of British Tone Poems, alongside William Alwyn's *Blackdown*, Granville Bantock's *Witch of Atlas*, Balfour Gardiner's *Berkshire Idyll*, Frederick Austin's *Spring*, and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The Solent*. The disc will be released by Chandos Records in 2017.
On National Poetry Day, 6 October, Philip Lancaster and pianist Gavin Roberts gave a lecture–recital at the British Academy: Ivor Gurney — Poet of the Great War. The event was recorded and is now available to view online on YouTube, should any be interested. It is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Vj5dho5C2g.

At the end of May, EM Records released a CD which features Gurney's *Ludlow and Teme* and the slow movement from the 1924-25 String Quartet in D minor. These works are on a disc titled 'Heracleitus', performed by Charles Daniels (tenor), the Bridge String Quartet, and Michael Dussek (piano). This CD is to be launched formally in an event at 7pm on 21 November 2016 at the 1901 Arts Club in Waterloo, London. The launch is open to all, with tickets costing £12. Two songs from *Ludlow and Teme*, the String Quartet movement and the song *By a Bierside* will feature in the launch recital. Details and tickets for this event are available online at em-records.com/events.html.

Cecil Woolf Publishing has just issued a short new study by Phil Carradice of Ivor Gurney in their extensive War Poets series, for which the General Editor is serial-biographer Jean Moorcroft Wilson. Titled 'Ivor Gurney, Poet of the Trenches & the Gloucestershire Countryside', the book draws upon published sources to present a 34 page biographical introduction to Gurney. The book appears only to be available from the publisher, retailing at £9. ISBN: 978-1-907286-47-6. For further details contact them on 020 7387 2394 or email cecilwoolf@gmail.com.

Gurney is a featured poet in the forthcoming issue of the poetry journal *Raceme*. It features two articles on Gurney, by Bristol University Professor of English, David Punter, and by Philip Lancaster. Details will become available at www.racemepoetry.com.

There are possibilities on the horizon that Gurney's second song cycle with string quartet and piano, *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)*, for baritone, might be recorded for CD before long, in Philip Lancaster's recent edition of the work, which resolves many of the problems with the score that have put performers off taking on the work. No details are yet confirmed.

From Philip Lancaster's Blog, The Unknown Region

https://theunknownregion.wordpress.com/

posted 7 July, 2016

Arthur Benjamin in the Trenches

In early 1917 the composer Arthur Benjamin was serving with the Royal Fusiliers in the trenches of France. In the Gurney archive, at Gloucestershire Archives, is held a letter, dated 26 January 1917, that I cannot help but transcribe for his description of his situation. Benjamin writes to Marion Scott:

' These are lines of intense frost, clear skies & dainty sunsets. It is so cold that in one of our worst trenches where there is, as a rule, 2ft of water, one can walk dry-shod on 3 inches of ice. Of nights myriads of stars and the narrowest of sickle moons give us that feeling that Heaven is closer to use; and if Turner could have lent Corot his palette we should have had a reproduction of last week's sunsets. No splashes of vivid orange or red, no purples, no silhouetted clouds [;] in short, none of the fantasy of the east or south. Simply the blue merging peacefully into rose-grey and a ball of orange infusing an aura of its own colour into the rose-grey and dipping behind lace-like trees and shrubs of that green-tinged grey only Corot could mix. If only Turner could enliven Corot and Corot subdue Turner!

It is all very lovely.'

Other Matters of interest:

The Australian Premiere of *A Gloucestershire Rhapsody*

The Australian Discovery Orchestra conducted by Kevin Purcell gave the Australian premiere of A Gloucestershire Rhapsody on August 14th. The ADO concerts are streamed globally from a non-public venue for an international audience, lasting approximately 50 minutes. If you would like to hear A Gloucestershire Rhapsody then please follow the link below. Note that the website also uses five interactive maps which can be accessed to illustrate themes found in the music. Two of the maps are taken from Eleanor Rawling's book – **Ivor Gurney's Gloucestershire**. The concert also includes the premiere of Armstrong-Gibbs' Third Symphony.
http://live.australiandiscoveryorchestra.com

A Finzi Window

On Saturday 25 June 2016 a new companion to the Gurney window in Gloucester Cathedral's Lady Chapel was dedicated. Thomas Denny — the artist who created the Gurney window - designed and created a window to Gerald Finzi, which now sits below that to Gurney. A devout champion of Gurney's work, Finzi was one of those to whom we are indebted both for his work in bringing Gurney's music and poetry to public attention and also for ensuring the preservation of Gurney's extensive manuscript archive. There can perhaps be no better companion.

'Grief is the thing with Feathers'

This is the title of a new book published recently and written by Max Porter. It is 'part memoir, part novel, part experimental sound-poem..'. (Andrew MacMillan, Guardian Books of the Year).

Bruce Childs draws our attention to page 80 where there is an extract from the character of 'Crow' (ref. Ted Hughes). He opens his mouth and 'screaming beautiful English melody comes out, garden-song, like a blackbird Ivor blooming Gurney.'

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Grief-Thing-Feathers-Max-Porter/dp/0571327230/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1473513340&sr=1-1&keywords=grief+is+the+thing+with+feathers

Forthcoming Events and Society Activities

Edward Thomas Fellowship

CD of poetry and prose by Edward Thomas

Fast Beat My Heart: Edward Thomas and Family at Steep is an hour-long CD featuring readings by Alastair Danson and Harriet Grasby of the Spoken Word company, specialists in literary and poetry events and programmes. The CD includes the voice of Myfanwy Thomas with a few extracts from her book *One of These Fine Days*. This is an audio-anthology compiled, recorded and produced for the Edward Thomas Fellowship by Chris Brown. This CD costs £10.00 including post and packing. Cheques should be payable to 'The Edward Thomas Fellowship'. Orders (with a return address clearly stated, please) should be sent to: Richard Emeny, Edward Thomas CD, Melrose House, 4 High Street, North Petherton, Bridgwater, Somerset,TA6 6NQ.
www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk

Gloucester Music Society

Concert on Saturday 18 February 2017:
Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin), Matthew Rickard (piano) playing Bliss (Sonata),Whettam (Solo Violin Sonata 1), Delius (Sonata no. 2), Holst (Five Pieces), Gurney (Sonata).
Concert on Saturday 25 March 2017:
Nick Pritchard (tenor), Benjamin Frith (piano), Louise Williams (viola)**.** Second performance of "Through These Pale Cold Day" - 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/

Finzi Friends

3 June 2017. It is proposed that a joint event with the Gurney Society takes place on Chosen Hill near Gloucester because of the significance it had to both men. For Finzi, it was the inspiration for *In Terra Pax*. Details of the day have still to be finalised but one member of the Finzi Society, the Reverend John Risdon, is Rector of St. Bartholomew's Church, Chosen Hill and is offering to host part of the day. http://www.finzifriends.org.uk

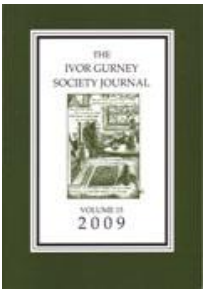
The Ivor Gurney Society

www.ivorgurney.org.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.org.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.org.uk
Secretary: Rolf Jordan secretary@ivorgurney.org.uk
Treasurer: Colin Brookes, 83 Castle Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton CV10 0SG treasurer@ivorgurney.org.uk
Newsletter Editor: Eleanor Rawling, 8 Mill Paddock, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 5EU newslettereditor@ivorgurney.org.uk
Journal Editor: April Frederick journal@ivorgurney.org.uk