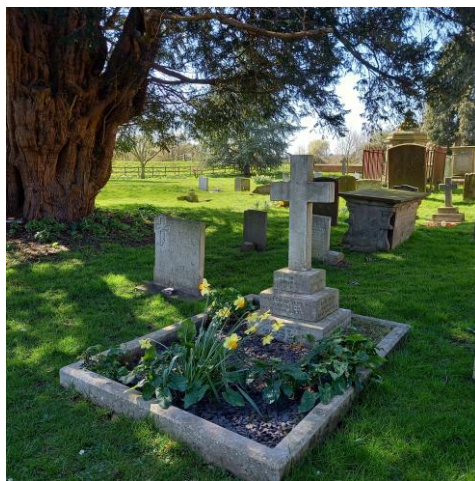


# THE IVOR GURNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 70

October 2024

## **The Riverside Village of Minsterworth**



**Will Harvey's grave in Minsterworth**

Minsterworth is a small riverside village to the west of Gloucester and, for Gurney, it was inextricably linked with Will Harvey. These two young men met in 1908 and explored Gloucestershire together, particularly in the 1908-1911 period. Will Harvey was already a poet. Gurney was writing music and was soon persuaded by Harvey to try his hand at poetry. Their creative development was forged outdoors – in walking and talking, in cycling the Severn lanes, in gazing at the stars and humming music, and in sailing their jointly owned boat on the River Severn between Framilode and Minsterworth. The music and poetry of both men reveal how a love of the Severn Valley, had become part of their friendship and their own identities.

## Society Matters

### **IGS Society Special Event, 7 June 2025 (keep the date!) Gurney, Minsterworth and the River Severn.**

There will be a Gurney Society one day event on 7 June 2025 at a Minsterworth Village Hall. It will include a poetry walk at Minsterworth, a session about Gurney's friendship with Will Harvey and some poetry readings. Simon Draper (County Editor for the Victoria County History, Gloucestershire), will present a talk about the history of this part of the Severn Valley, referring to features like fish houses, weirs and ferries that Gurney knew so well.

Details will be sent to members after Christmas, but to assist planning please email Eleanor Rawling asap to register interest. [elerawling@aol.com](mailto:elerawling@aol.com)

### **Website Manager**

The Society would welcome offers of help with maintaining the Ivor Gurney website, posting news items, checking membership records, adding products to the shop occasionally and generally making sure the site is working effectively to communicate with members. This is not an onerous task but does require someone with appropriate knowledge and skills and the availability to check regularly. Please email Ian Venables if you think you can help ([ianvenables7@gmail.com](mailto:ianvenables7@gmail.com)).

### **Subscriptions**

Subscriptions are valid for a year from first payment date and can be paid through PayPal [www.ivorgurney.co.uk](http://www.ivorgurney.co.uk) or send a cheque to Ian Venables, 2 Turrall St., Barbourne, Worcester WR3 8AJ. For current rates, see [membership@ivorgurney.co.uk](mailto:membership@ivorgurney.co.uk) For acknowledgement, include your email.

### **The Gurney Society Journal**

Philip Lancaster has taken on the role of Editor of the Society's journal and the next volume will follow once he and Tim Kendall have completed volume two of *Ivor Gurney: The Complete Poetical Works*.

**Thank you to Phil Richardson who regularly proofreads the newsletter.**

# Minsterworth; Orchards by the River

This is one of 20 poetry walks  
appearing in  
*Walking with Ivor Gurney in  
Gloucestershire*, Logaston Press,  
by Eleanor Rawling.

## Summary of this walk:

This is a short walk (3.8 kms/2.3 miles), starting outside St Peter's Church, Minsterworth. It follows the Gloucestershire Way through meadows with the River Severn flowing alongside. The walk is gentle, offering a settled view of low terraces, orchards, riverside trees. In spring there are wild-flowers and apple blossom; in autumn browns and golds and probably mud! Away to the east and south the Cotswold Edge can be seen whilst to the west the hills of the Forest of Dean appear on the skyline. After about 2.4 kms (1.5 miles), the route turns away from the river over fields to join a lane. From here there is a short extension to visit Redlands, the Harvey family house. The main route takes you back along the lane to Minsterworth Church and Harvey's grave.

Gurney's poem *Ypres-Minsterworth* is a celebration of this Severnside

landscape as well as a prayer for his friend incarcerated in a prisoner-of-war camp.

## Ypres-Minsterworth

Thick lie in orchards now  
Apples the Severn wind  
With rough play tore from the tossing  
Branches, and left behind  
Leaves strewn on pastures, blown in  
hedges,  
And by the roadway lined.

And I lie leagues on leagues afar  
To think how that wind made  
Great shoutings in the wide chimney,  
A noise of cannonade –  
Of how the proud elms by the  
signpost  
The tempest's will obeyed.

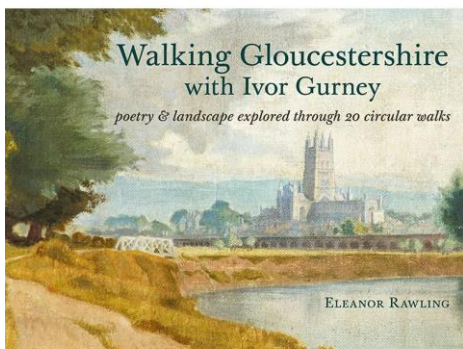
To think how in some German prison  
A boy lies with whom  
I might have taken joy full-hearted  
Hearing the great boom  
Of autumn, watching the fire, talking  
Of books in half gloom.

Oh wind of Ypres and of Severn  
Riot there also and tell  
Of comrades safe returned, home-  
keeping  
Music and autumn smell.  
Comfort blow him and friendly  
greeting,  
Hearten him and wish him well

# Walking With Ivor Gurney

by Eleanor Rawling,  
Logaston Press, 2023

***Walking with Ivor Gurney in Gloucestershire*** sets out 20 circular walks around Gurney's best-known Gloucestershire places revealing, through his poetry and extracts from his letters and essays, those places that were the sources of his inspiration and the well-springs of his creativity. Specially commissioned maps are presented to show each section of the trail and those historic, cultural and landscape features that defined it for Ivor Gurney.



## Chapters and Walks

### Chapter 1 The Old City

1. Gloucester; the Old City
2. Gloucester Docks and Llanthony Priory
3. Maisemore
4. Chosen Hill

### Chapter 2 A Blowy Severn-Tided Place

5. Minsterworth; Orchards by the River
6. Longney and Bollow
7. Framilode; A Blowy Severn-Tided Place

### Chapter 3 Sheer Falls of Green Slope

8. Uley and Cam Long Down
9. Coaley Peak
10. Brimscombe and Bisley

### Chapter 4 The High Hills

11. Great Painswick
12. High on Cooper's
13. On the Roman Hill; Crickley

### Chapter 5 Those Edges of Cotswold

14. Majesty of Leckhampton
15. Cleeve Hill and Belas Knapp
16. Far Bredon

### Chapter 6 Severn Meadows

17. Deerhurst; Lonely Village
18. Wainlode; By Severn
19. Above Ashleworth
20. Twigworth and Longford; Behold me walking

Available from your bookshop or  
[www.logastonpress.co.uk](http://www.logastonpress.co.uk)

## **Art from the Heart - Ivor Gurney**

*Report of a workshop held at the National Trust site, Tinkley Gate,  
Woodchester 24 September 2024*

This was the third of a series of art workshops for the Stroud Valleys Project, looking at well-known creative people who had lived or worked in the local area. Creative people included Laurie Lee, William Morris and the stained-glass artists of Selsey Church, as well as Ivor Gurney.

This session took inspiration from Gurney's poetry, much of which is so wrapped in the Cotswold landscape. The participants were introduced to Ivor Gurney's life, including his local Gloucestershire countryside, his education, the influences on his creative work (including his music tutors and Walt Whitman) and his wider travels and experiences of World War I. We read some of his poetry, concentrating on descriptions and the feelings landscape evoke, but also included *The Dursley Schoolmaster*, as an item which captured the imagination.

Workshop participants were shown the miniature artist's book Catherine had created to inspire them and we talked through the plan of action. The whole group then went for an exploration of Tinkley Gate, looking over the hills and valley towards Stroud, and noticing the beginnings of autumnal colour tints, the pond, the dried seedheads and grasses. Participants were encouraged to do quick 'doodling sketches' of things they wanted to remember, to note words and phrases that came to mind and write down anything inspirational.

Back inside, they were shown how to fold paper to create an 8-fold book, doodling blind contour sketches as a first layer, to forget stress and be playful and experimental. The next layer was added using watercolour, then details with fibre and felt pens, acrylic pens and watercolour pencils, and printer stamps.

We then discussed writing – how being creative with words does not mean they had to write anything that rhymed, and that two or three words was fine to sum up their response to the landscape. They were introduced to *haiku* and *tankas* as well, so they could have a go at writing to a specific form if they so wished. Participants were encouraged to think about where to place their poetry on the page, and not to feel that every page needed words. They could write by hand or use the stamps to print their words. It was suggested that each miniature book needed a title and the day's date.

There was a lot to get through and many participants admitted that they had started out feeling out of their comfort zone. Sadly, so many people have been told at school that they can't do art, or aren't creative....). It is often a new experience for people to find the words they want to write, perhaps by trying out new ways of making art, and to work freely and quickly without worrying about the outcome. The participants created some beautiful and individual work, and session reviews showed how much they enjoyed it and appreciated being challenged. If we ran the event again, we could use Ivor Gurney's music as a starting point for inspiration.

Catherine Jones, September 2024, [www.catherinejonesart.co.uk](http://www.catherinejonesart.co.uk)



## Minsterworth and the River Severn

Simon Draper, County Editor for the Victoria County History, Gloucestershire, gave a talk entitled *A Time Traveller's Guide to the River Severn* at the Gloucester History Festival in September 2024.

His talk focussed on the villages of Minsterworth and Elmore, both villages featuring in Volume XIII of VCH Gloucestershire and both villages which Ivor Gurney knew well. Minsterworth was the home of Will Harvey, Gurney's close friend and fellow poet, with whom he spent many happy hours walking the Severnside paths.

VCH Volume XIII provides 'authoritative accounts of thirteen ancient parishes alongside the River Severn near Gloucester or its tributary, the Leadon. Ten form a contiguous block north and west of Gloucester, extending from Upleadon to Sandhurst; two more, Minsterworth and Elmore, lie on opposite banks of the Severn below Gloucester. The volume also includes Twyning, a parish near Tewkesbury bordering Worcestershire'.

'It is a countryside of extensive meadows vulnerable to periodic flooding, of rich farmland between prominent, formerly wooded ridges, and of dispersed small settlements. Arable farming, which was widespread under its medieval monastic owners, eventually gave way to dairying, but cider and perry orchards, quarrying and fishing have also been important. River trade and settlement, and crossings by bridge and ferry, have influenced the area's economy and communications pattern, and its proximity to Gloucester attracted prominent citizens to build country houses and acquire estates there. Most parishes retain medieval work in their churches, and timber-framed domestic buildings are widespread.' (VCH introduction to Vol XIII).

Several aspects of Minsterworth landscapes and lives are referred to in Gurney's poetry – the changing moods of the River Severn, the frequent floods, the old established apple and perry orchards, the fish houses and the ferry across from Minsterworth Church to Elmore Back. Simon's talk provided fascinating background and a deeper historical context to these places. Some examples are given below.

St Peter's Church often flooded in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The floods of 1852, however, were so extensive that the main body of the church and nave were only accessible to the vicar by boat. As a result, the villagers decided to rebuild the church in 1870 at 4ft above the current level. It was concern about floodwater impeding movement that also resulted in a cobbled track being built at a higher level alongside the Minsterworth High Street. This straight cobbled track is still visible and has often mistakenly been called the remains of a Roman road.

When the sun's fire and gold  
Sets the bees humming,  
I will not write to tell  
Him that I'm coming

But ride out unawares  
On that old road  
Of Minsterworth, of Peace,  
Of Framilode...

*June-to-Come*

Fishing activities are frequently mentioned by Gurney. Simon's talk outlined how fishing has always been an important part of the local economy. In mediaeval times, many timber and wattle fish weirs were constructed across the river to funnel the fish into conical baskets. The catch included salmon, lamprey and roach, and supplies were plentiful enough to supply the monasteries as well as the local populace. At Minsterworth, the area known as the Naight is the site of a former fish weir, where a river 'cut' had to be made to provide a channel around the fish weir across the main river. Naight is a corruption of the word 'eyot' or an island, signifying that the piece of land was left like an island because of the channel cut around it for barges. There was another fish weir, downstream of Minsterworth, at Duni (Duni Farm is still on current OS maps) and the weir house eventually became a beer house after the fish weir was removed.

The fish house located near the Naight is one of only a small number of surviving houses although originally, they were located all along this





**Fish House near the Naight**

stretch of river south of Gloucester. Elver fishing was also a frequent occurrence with big nets, continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, often carried out at night using big lanterns, as Gurney's poem *Rainy Midnight* describes it - 'Long shines the line of wet lamps dark in gleaming'

Henry VIII eventually decreed that the fish weirs be removed as they were hindering trade and navigation. From Tudor times onwards, navigation was improved and increased. Even small places like Elmore Back boasted a quay. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a third of all men in Minsterworth and Elmore were employed in the river trade, especially trade from Ireland, and products for Minsterworth were landed at Elmore Quay. After 1827 with the opening of the Gloucester and Sharpness canal, the river trade declined and with it, the importance of Elmore and Minsterworth. Nevertheless, the traditional trades of basket making, orchard farming, cider making and local fishing continued until well into Gurney's time at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thick lie in orchards now,  
Apples the Severn wind  
With rough play tore from the tossing  
Branches....

*Ypres-Minsterworth*

The link between Minsterworth and Elmore Back continued by means of the ferry crossing, a journey that Will Harvey often made when he went to meet Gurney at Framilode or Longney for sailing and walking.

Victoria County History Volume XIII -The Vale of Gloucester and Leadon Valley, 2016  
<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/vch-publications/red-book-series>

*Eleanor Rawling*

.....

## **I have been Beethoven.....Ivor Gurney writes from Stone House**

*A Poem by John Warden*

I have been Beethoven as he soared and thundered.

I have felt his amplitude.

I have known England's graces; I have wandered  
through Severnside and Cotswold. I have loved lake and wood.

I have stitched and fashioned song; I have plundered  
metre and rhyme. These things have been good.

Part of myself I left behind in the trenches  
crouching in darkness. I live my memories:  
the mud, the smell of fear, faces in the torchlight,  
the cheerful songs of rough Welsh voices  
that healed my flesh and staunched  
the tears of my loneliness.

I am crouching now, constrained and tethered  
in darkness, bereft of the mind's light.

The flowers of my genius are withered.

(May some scent linger, in time's despite.)

Night closes; I can go no further.

Gentle reader, do not forget me quite.

# A Brief Introduction to Gurney's Piano Sonatas

By Ian Venables



Ivor  
**GURNEY**

Piano Sonatas  
Nos. 1 and 3

Piano Sonata No. 2  
– II. Adagio

Five Preludes

Autumn

George Rowley,  
Piano



Ivor Gurney's songs (Naxos 8.572151) have long earned him renown but his works for piano are hardly known. The lyrically beautiful *Five Preludes* reflect influences as wide as Schumann and Scriabin but preserve Gurney's expressive freshness. The *Sonatas Nos 1 and 3* inhabit very different sound worlds from each other, and only one movement of *Sonata No. 2* has survived, a deeply poignant elegy – all of which are heard here in world premiere recordings. His poem for piano, *Autumn*, offers further opportunity to discover this rarely heard music by a composer for whom the pursuit of beauty was of the utmost importance.

This CD recording is available on all major streaming platforms and can be ordered online from Prestomusic.com at

[www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9533060--gurney-piano-sonatas-nos-1-3](http://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9533060--gurney-piano-sonatas-nos-1-3) and on Amazon.

Ivor Gurney's earliest piano compositions date from around 1904 when he was only 14 years old. These pieces include several short descriptive works given titles such as *Reverie*, *Omar Khayyam*, and *The Sea*. In 1906, Gurney finished his schooling at the King's School and enrolled as an articled pupil to Dr Herbert Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral and while under Brewer's tutelage he began writing songs, violin music and more piano music. His most ambitious work is a three movement *Sonata in F minor* composed between May and December 1910. The sonata is, as one might expect, in the style of those by Brahms, Schumann and Grieg. Indeed, the first movement's opening idea, an expansive and self-confident theme that could well have been penned by any one of them. Unusually, though, Gurney departs from the classical tradition by not giving the first movement a definite ending but instead, the slow movement Largo 'grows' out of the coda of first movement. The finale is a lively Rondo that has a swaggering Elgarian second subject that is almost orchestral in its conception.

There is a nine-year gap between the composition of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Piano Sonatas. In June 1919, Gurney told his friend, the poet J. W. Haines; '*Just now work does not go well – a Piano Sonata has proved more difficult than pleasant*'. The *Second Sonata in D major* was intended to be a three-movement work but unfortunately, Gurney left the manuscript of the 1<sup>st</sup> movement in such a sketchy state with numerous crossings out and re-workings that it has proved impossible to reconstruct. All that remains of the finale are a few bars intended as a slow introduction. The only fully completed movement is the central *Adagio*. To my mind, this deeply poignant music is suffused with memories of loss; in particular, the death of his devoted friend Margaret Hunt in March 1919 during the flu epidemic, and also Gurney's father who died only a month before he began work on the sonata. The slow movement opens with an elegiac *nobilmente* theme that leads to a brief climax before a restatement of the opening music. This is followed by a contrasting section that is reminiscent of a similar passage in Gurney's orchestral *War Elegy* composed only a year later in memory of his fallen comrades.

Gurney's third *Piano Sonata in D minor* inhabits a very different sound-world from that of the first. Comprising of only movements, it opens with a lengthy essay that eschews a rigid sonata structure for one with a double exposition, where the material in the first half is repeated, with variation, in the second. Many writers have observed that, in Gurney's later style, there is a tendency towards constant semiquaver movement; a relentless rhythmic tread which can at times provide the listener with little or no relief. Others have remarked

that Gurney uses this stylistic fingerprint to great effect, and this adds to the view that his style was both advanced and modernist. Gurney creates considerable contrast in this long movement, relying heavily on textural variety and repetition and variation of melodic cells. Repeated listening will testify to the movement's structural cohesion and developmental ingenuity. The second movement begins in the distant key of F sharp minor, with the ghost of Beethoven close by: Gurney surely knew the former's 'Hammerklavier Sonata', with its slow movement in the same key? Again, semiquavers dominate but this time the slow, spectral tread transports us into a different soundscape all together. All three piano sonatas have been recorded for Naxos by the acclaimed young pianist, George Rowley.

### **Reviews of Ivor Gurney, Piano Sonatas Nos. 1 and 3:**

*Musical Opinion*, April 2024

This is a truly remarkable CD, splendidly played by this gifted young artist and finely interpreted; it is most strongly recommended, as are the accompanying booklet notes. © 2024 *Musical Opinion*

*Planet Hugill*, February 2024

Throughout, George Rowley plays with sympathy and discretion, never overdoing the moments of over-wrought Romanticism and bringing out a tender lyricism, whilst the recording captures the piano sound with a nice sense of naturalism, not too close yet not too far away, and the instrument's upper register never too glassy. © 2024 *Planet Hugill*

*The British Music Society*, January 2024

...in his well-paced accounts, with momentum, linear projection, and beauty of tone in abundance, Rowley makes an excellent case of persuading the listener of the music's cohesive qualities... This is an essential purchase.

© 2024 *The British Music Society*

## **Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-sort"** **Performance at the Edinburgh Fringe, August 2024**

Jan Carey performed *Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-Sort* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It was well received and one review is given below.

### ***Theatre Weekly***

*Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-sort* is "A celebration of the enduring friendship between Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott." The title is intriguing, and the description on the flyer drew me in. Who are—or were—these people, and what was their story? I assumed—rightly—that the backdrop would be the Great War and that it might be about unrequited love or love cut short through a heroic death. I also assumed it would be about music and poetry. I was almost right.

*Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-sort* is, for sure, a passion piece, and although it's about a lot of the themes I expected, it's actually the story of a long-held platonic friendship and tells the story of both Gurney and Scott. It's about love and passion, but the passion is for words and music. It's about the futility of war and the devastating impact of untimely deaths and being gassed. It's about women's rights and Scott fighting for them. Even if we haven't heard of them before, Gurney and Scott's stories have a familiar ring.

Jan Carey both wrote and performs this piece, with a quiet, refined accent for Scott and a lovely Gloucestershire burr for Gurney. The show is simply staged—just a table and chair with a table lamp, with the latter being used for effect occasionally. There is occasional music. It sets the scene initially (though perhaps for a little too long for my liking) and is used intermittently to highlight parts of the story. And extracts from Gurney's written work also help the audience to understand the character of the man.

[Author, Composer, Soldier-of-a-sort](#) is intriguing, informative, and understated. The performance has a quiet gentility which will likely send audiences back into the world with a lot to think about—but quietly.

Sass Macdonald <https://theatreweekly.com/edinburgh-review-author-composer-soldier-of-a-sort-at-greenside-riddles-court/>

## **Musical Update (details from Philip Lancaster and Ian Venables)**

### **New Release: Ivor Gurney's Songs Volume 2 on NAXOS**

Following the success of Naxos's CD premiere recording of Ivor Gurney's Piano Music the Society has sponsored a new recording of Ivor Gurney's songs performed by Marcus Farnsworth (baritone) and Eric McElroy (pianist). This second volume of songs presents fourteen premiere recordings, including Gurney's memorable settings of Edward Thomas's *Adelstrop*, W.B Yeats's, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* and one of Gurney's late songs *World Strangeness*, a setting of William Watson's poem composed in August 1925. Release Date: 11th Oct 2024, Catalogue No: 8574599, Presto Music <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9659773--gurney-songs-vol-2>

### **The Past & I: 100 Years of Thomas Hardy**

Music & Arrangements by Arthur Keegan  
Lotte Betts-Dean (mezzo), James Girling (guitar)  
This recently issued CD of songs with guitar includes the first recording of Gurney's June 1924 song setting of Thomas Hardy's 'In the black winter morning' <https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/products/9634515--the-past-i-100-years-of-thomas-hardy>

### **Song Recital - "Love Lives Beyond the Tomb"**

**5<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at the 1901 Arts Club, 7 Exton St, London SE1 8UE**  
James Laing (counter tenor) and Claire Habbershaw will present a programme of English song that includes works by Finzi, Howells, Gurney, Venables Pascoe and Muhly. The time of this evening concert is to be confirmed. Please Visit <https://www.1901artsclub.com> for further details.

### **EM Records -Gurney Songs**

A new disc of Gurney songs is coming early next year (2025) from EM Records, performed by baritone, Jeremy Huw Williams. Further details to follow.

### **A Gloucestershire Rhapsody Performance: Advanced Notice**

Ivor Gurney's orchestral work 'A Gloucestershire Rhapsody' will be performed by the Lavenham Sinfonia on 26th April 2026 at Lavenham Church, Lavenham, Suffolk.

# The Ivor Gurney Society

[www.ivorgurney.co.uk](http://www.ivorgurney.co.uk)

The Ivor Gurney Trust [www.ivorgurneytrust.com](http://www.ivorgurneytrust.com)

## ***Patrons of the Society:***

Sir Andrew Motion

Ian Partridge CBE

Sarah Connolly CBE

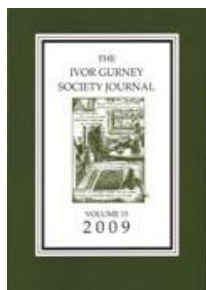
***President:*** Group Captain Anthony Boden ***Vice-President:*** Adrian Partington

## **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](http://www.ivorgurney.co.uk) via PayPal.



## **The Ivor Gurney Society Journal**

As well as the annual Society newsletter, the Gurney Society publishes an occasional 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 and Acting Treasurer:* Ian Venables [chair@ivorgurney.co.uk](mailto:chair@ivorgurney.co.uk)

*Secretary:* Rolf Jordan [secretary@ivorgurney.co.uk](mailto:secretary@ivorgurney.co.uk)

*Membership Secretary:* Sebastian Field [membership@ivorgurney.co.uk](mailto:membership@ivorgurney.co.uk)

*Newsletter Editor:* Eleanor Rawling [elerawling@aol.com](mailto:elerawling@aol.com)

*Journal Editor:* Philip Lancaster [journal@ivorgurney.co.uk](mailto:journal@ivorgurney.co.uk)