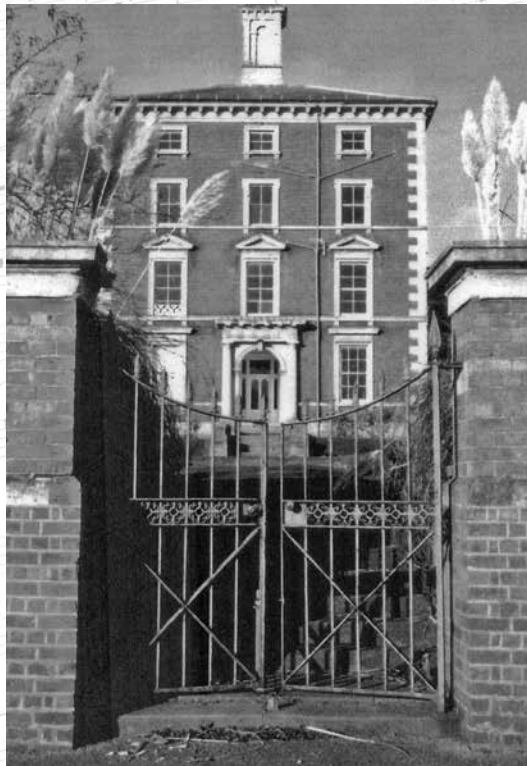


The Society

Elgar



JOURNAL



August 2015 Vol.19, No. 2



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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors,
nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

Front Cover: The entrance to Powick Mental Hospital.

Notes for Contributors. Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. A longer version is available in case you are prepared to do the formatting, but for the present the editor is content to do this.

Copyright: it is the contributor's responsibility to be reasonably sure that copyright permissions, if required, are obtained.

Illustrations (pictures, short music examples) are welcome, but *please ensure* they are pertinent, cued into the text, and have captions.

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

Dates: use the form 2 June 1857. Decades: 1930s, no apostrophe.

Plurals: no apostrophe (CDs not CD's).

Foreign words: if well established in English (sic, crescendo) in Roman, otherwise italics.

Numbers: spell out up to and including twenty, then 21 (etc.) in figures.

Quotations: in 'single quotes' as standard. Double quotes for quotes within quotes.

Longer quotations in a separate paragraph, *not* in italic, *not* in quotes; please leave a blank line before and after.

Emphasis: ensure emphasis is attributed as '[original emphasis]' or '[my emphasis]'. Emphasized text *italic*.

References: Please position footnote markers *after* punctuation – wherever possible at the end of a sentence.

In footnotes, please adhere as far as possible to these forms (more fully expounded in the longer version of these notes):

Books: Author, *Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication), page[s]. Thus: Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993), 199.

Periodicals: Author, 'Title of article', *Title of periodical*, issue number and date sufficient to identify, page[s]. Thus: Michael Allis, 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', *Music & Letters*, 85 (May 2004), 198.

End a footnote with a full stop, please, and never put a comma before a parenthesis.

Titles that are 'generic' in Roman: e.g. Violin Concerto. Others in *italics* (e.g. *Sea Pictures*; the *Musical Times*). Units within a longer work in single quotes, e.g. 'Sanctus fortis' from *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Editorial

From soon after the outbreak of the Great War until the summer of 1915 Elgar served his country as a member of the Metropolitan Special Constabulary, and then as a member of the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve. When working at the Birthplace some years ago I was delighted to stumble over box of miscellaneous documents, at that time outside the main letter collection, containing a 'Special Constable File' – the surviving correspondence from Elgar's time as a 'Special'. This has formed the basis of my essay in this issue. Incidentally, in these days of online availability, it was rather nostalgic to spend a day at Camden's Local Studies and Archives Centre going through paper copies of the 'Ham and High'.

But there is no disputing the convenience of online research. Needing a 'filler' for this issue, I thought of including the article on Sir Henry Gee Roberts, to which his daughter contributed so much, from the *Dictionary of National Biography*. I remember transcribing this by hand one morning in Worcester Library: now all 63 volumes of the original edition are available online at the click of a mouse. So too are digital versions of 'Hansard' from 1803 to 2005, and I was delighted to turn up within seconds a transcript of the proceedings in the House of Commons on 14 April 1859, when various Resolutions were passed giving thanks to Roberts and others for their service in India.

One of the pleasures of the job of editor is to receive unsolicited articles of interest to Elgarians. One such is from Ken Crump, who worked at Powick Mental Hospital from 1963 to 1979, and continued his association with the institution until its closure ten years later. His fascinating essay 'recalls life in the hospital for patients and staff during the time when Edward Elgar worked as bandmaster'.

Finally we have 'Elgar's Birds', an essay on the bird-life of Worcestershire, which I have attempted to illustrate using some of Elgar's own drawings as well as a photograph of him with his beloved chickens.

Martin Bird

‘A policeman’s lot ...’: Elgar’s war service

Martin Bird

In mid-July 1914 the Elgars went on holiday in Scotland, expecting to return refreshed in time for the final preparations for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival. *Gerontius* was to be performed at the opening concert on Tuesday, 8 September, and ‘new works by Elgar,¹ Sibelius, etc’ were on the programme for the Wednesday evening Secular Concert in the Shire Hall.

Unsuspectingly on July 19th, we left London travelling by night to Glasgow, and then on by easy stages to Inverness. Our objective was Lairg, but on arrival we took an instantaneous dislike to the place and to the hotel in particular. We had booked for two weeks but somehow we managed to extricate ourselves and went on to Gairloch ... Time passed all too quickly. But the news of the assassination of the Archduke was very disturbing and it was very difficult to get any news. Eventually we sent a telegram to Novello’s to try and learn something of the situation. All our friends were on holiday and it was almost impossible to get in touch with anyone.²

On 5 August they heard the news that war had been declared the previous day.

Frightfully anxious for news. Had a telegram saying Germany had declared war against us. The Govt. proclamation dates war from 11 P.M. on Augt. 4. May God preserve us, our conscience is clear that we tried all means for peace & waited at our own disadvantage in patience & forbearance – So we can go on with a brave heart – Glorious spirit seems to pervade all – Saw the Territorials start on the old Char-a-Banc. Splendid spirits. All flocked out to see them shaking hands & waving. Very thrilling –³

Carice recalled that they ‘were unable to leave until the 10th as every available vehicle was commandeered to fetch the Territorials and the Lovat scouts from the entire district, and the little steamer was collecting men from the islands. It was very moving to watch these men going off every day and all the way to London we were aware of the vast movement of men.’⁴ Alice and Carice arrived at Severn House on the 13th, and Elgar the following afternoon, having stopped at Leeds *en route* to visit Henry Embleton, to whom he had promised the final part of *The Apostles* trilogy.

1 *Sospiri*.

2 Carice Elgar, quoted in Percy Young, *Alice Elgar, Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 174.

3 Alice Elgar diary, 5 August 1914.

4 Carice Elgar, quoted in Percy Young, *Alice Elgar, Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 174-175.

Once home, Father did not lose a minute in offering his services for the war ... He went to Hampstead Police Station and was sworn in as a Special Constable ... My Mother, full of indignation, embarrassed us by going into the local shops and asking how many recruits they had.⁵

The 'Metropolitan Special Constabulary' had been established within days of the outbreak of war.

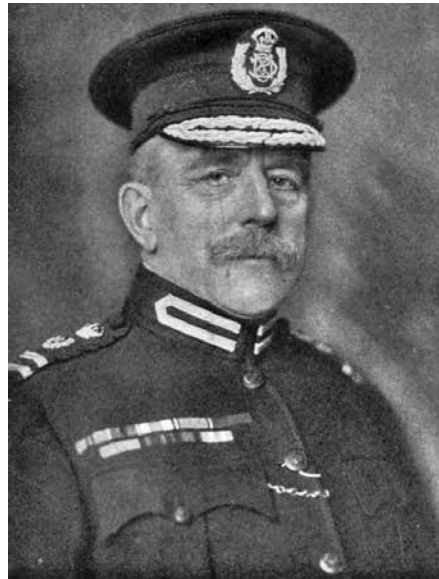
War had just been declared, many enemy subjects were within our gates and were a potential menace to unprotected works of high public utility, such as railways, reservoirs, power-stations, and the like. From the Regular Police Force – never kept at a strength beyond the considered actual needs of the most law-abiding metropolis in the world – suddenly confronted by an abnormal extension of duties, reserve men were being called to the Army and the Fleet, while hundreds of others – spirited, fit to perfection, and brave – wanted immediately to range themselves by the side of those scores of thousands of civilian Britons who, in response to the call of the blood, had sprung to arms on the challenge of a powerful, impudent, and unscrupulous foe.

In this concurrence of circumstances – the sudden need of very many more police and the prospective departure of large numbers of trained policemen – Colonel Sir Edward Ward was asked by the Home Secretary to undertake the organisation and control of a force of Special Constables. He at once accepted.

With characteristic energy and speed, went to work the man who in earlier days successfully organised army food and transport supplies, military tournaments, all sorts of things which call for brain, initiative, insight, and judgment. Within forty-eight hours of his appointment, his scheme for raising, organising, and managing 20,000 honorary Special Constables was in the hands of the Government. Authority to go full-speed ahead was promptly given, and on that Saturday afternoon of August 8, between sixty and seventy men, who had rallied to the Chief Staff Officer, as he was called, so soon as they knew with whom they had to deal, met at Scotland House to get their appointments and orders.⁶

Within days recruitment in Hampstead was well under way.

At last week's meeting convened by the Mayor of Hampstead (Councillor E. A. O'Bryen, J.P.), in connection with the Prince of Wales's National Relief Fund, an appeal was made for Special Constables for Hampstead. Their duties would be to guard certain strategic points, and otherwise take



Colonel Sir Edward Ward, Bart., GBE, KCB, KCVO, Chief Staff Officer, Metropolitan Special Constabulary.

the place of those policemen who by reason of the war had had their ordinary duties interfered with. At that Meeting Col. R. W. Dunlop, on behalf of the Special Constabulary, asked for five hundred men for Hampstead, and stated that some 280 had already come forward. It is gratifying to be able to state that the balance of numbers was very quickly made up ...⁷

Elgar was among the first to come forward, and soon heard from the Inspector of the Hampstead force – none other than his local builder, Charles Bean King.⁸

Special Constabulary
Hampstead Station. S. Division
15th August 1914.

Sir
There will be a short drill at the Drill Hall, Heath St. Hampstead on Thursday next 20th August at 9 p.m.

It is most important that every Special Constable should be present, and sharp on time.

The Companies will drill in at 9 p.m. & Inspection will take place at 9.15

Yours faithfully,
Chas B. King
Inspector of Hampstead S.P.C.⁹

Formal swearing in commenced on 17 August.

A quick and gratifying response has been given to the appeal for special constables in London. During the last few days the number of volunteers has been so large that when the formal enrolment begins to-day at 84 appointed places in the several divisions of the Metropolitan Police district between 14,000 and 15,000 will present themselves. Representatives of all classes and of almost every profession and occupation have offered their services, and it is beyond doubt that within the next few days the 20,000 members of the Special Constabulary Forces at present asked for will be obtained.¹⁰



'Members of the new Special Constabulary, enrolled for service in London to help the Police' (Illustrated London News, 22 August 1914).

The 'Specials' took the following oath:-

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the office of Special Constable for the Metropolitan Police District

⁷ *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 30 August 1914.

⁸ Charles King (1872-1928) had visited Severn House for the first time in October 1912. Alice commented: 'Nice Mr. King came to see about various things – Evidently loves this house & much interested in Indian furniture'.

⁹ EBM letter 10711.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 17 August 1914.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁶ Col. William Thomas Reay, *The Specials: How they served London* (London: William Heinemann, 1920), 6-8.

and the City of London without favour of affection, malice, or ill-will, and that I will to the best of my power cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against persons and the property of his Majesty's subjects, and that while I continue to hold such office I will do to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge the duties thereof faithfully, according to law.¹¹

Alice noted that 'When some of the police or rather the one taking his name saw the O.M. he sd. "there are not many of them going about".'¹²

... on Monday morning, the time fixed for the swearing in, about seven hundred men of the neighbourhood presented themselves at the Police Station for enrolment as Hampstead's quota towards the special force. The magistrates held two Courts for the purpose of swearing in the constables, Mr. G. H. Hoste, Mr. W. Hayward Pitman, and Mr. C. T. Green sitting in the usual court-room, and Dr. Macdonald Brown, Mr. H. J. Glanville, and Mr. A. B. Russell in the Juvenile Court. The men, who were sworn in in batches of ten, represented all classes of the community, and a large number of the Borough Council's workmen enrolled themselves en masse. Presiding in the upper Court, Mr. G. H. Hoste announced that for those who found it impossible to remain that morning to await their turn to be sworn in, owing to the demands of their usual business in the City, a special Court would be held the same evening. He also thanked the men for their patriotic conduct in coming forward, and said they would receive from the proper quarters instructions as to their future duties. Several of the special constables drove up to the Court in motor cars, whilst others arrived on the less pretentious motor cycle. Of the total number enrolled 228 were for duty in the Borough of Hampstead.¹³

W. H. Reed remembered that Elgar ...

... proudly showed the author, who was constantly with him those days, his armlet and baton, so utterly unlike the baton to which he was accustomed. It was very dreadful to think of a man of his genius and sensitive temperament going on duty at stated times, night and day, with a semi-lethal weapon like that heavy baton, and every one of his family and his close friends prayed devoutly that he would never be called upon to use it.¹⁴

Elgar was attached to S. Division.

S Division, with an area of over eighty-two and a half square miles, [was] the most spacious of all, and its organisation meant much effort and travelling to the officer in charge. To that end continuity of policy was desirable, if not imperative, and it is remarkable how much, at the beginning, the Division underwent in changes of management chiefly owing to competent men being called in succession to other duties.

Mr. Ducane, the first Commander, was only a few days on the scene; his successor, Colonel R. W. L. Dunlop, went to the Army after a fortnight's police work. Then came Mr. Somers Somerset, who, within three weeks, gave place to Colonel Beckett, who took charge on September 25, and under whose able direction, with Mr. R. A. Simson as Assistant-Commander, the organisation was completed.

Colonel Beckett was nothing if not thorough. He was amongst the first of the Commanders to imbue himself with all that he could learn in the theory of police work, and then to teach that work to his men. His lectures on police duty, given at the St. Catherine's schoolroom in the early days of the war, were amongst the best that Special Constables have heard.

11 *Ibid.*, 18 August 1914.

12 Alice Elgar diary, 17 August 1914.

13 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 30 August 1914.

14 W. H. Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1938), 115.

S, as we have seen, is spacious, and a car-round of its fourteen stations, starting from headquarters in Albany Street, had to be quickly run, and comparatively little time given to station inspection, if packed into the sunlit hours of a single day. That will be understood when we say that there were stations at St. John's Wood, Hampstead, West Hampstead, Finchley, Hendon, Whetstone, Golders Green, Barnet, Edgware, Bushey, Elstree, Wealdstone, and Mill Hill. For a time there were also stations at Shenley, and far-off South Mimms, some fifteen miles away from the Albany Street administration centre.

The highest strength of the Division was 2,056, but the average was between 1,700 and 1,800 ... Each of the Hampstead units had over 300 men, and Finchley and Barnet each over 200, the greater part of the time. The work was as varied as were the needs of the localities served. At Albany Street, for example, and at those smart stations, St. John's Wood, long known as Portland Town, and Golders Green, it was typically urban; at such stations as Barnet and Hendon, not to speak of the country village of South Mimms, it was "truly rural"; while at Hampstead and West Hampstead there was a combination of both sorts of duty.

Every class of strictly police work and the war auxiliaries to it were developed and brought to a high point of efficiency in S Division. Its fifty-four vulnerable points at the outset included fourteen railway-bridges, guarded day and night; its ambulance and its transport service were always strong; it encouraged and excelled in rifle-shooting; and its fire-brigade, rescue and demolition parties were composed of trained men, ready instantly to move anywhere, within or without the Division, to meet an emergency.

Military drill was studied and practised at all stations, and some of them reached a high point of proficiency. No fewer than 1,420 men passed from S Division to His Majesty's fighting forces.¹⁵

Inspector King was quick to take advantage of Elgar's standing in the community, writing on 18 August:

Dear Sir,

Your attendance is particularly requested at a meeting to be held to-morrow, Wednesday, at 8 p.m.

I feel that your assistance will be very valuable to the Detachment of Special Constables, and if you are agreeable I should like to recommend you to Colonel Dunlop for a position on our Council.

If you are unable to attend I should be much obliged if you would kindly let me know.¹⁶

But Elgar was unwell, 'fuming & raging as he is kept in bed with a frightful cold & he is pining to be out & doing something.'¹⁷ Nevertheless, following the meeting he was appointed Staff Inspector by Colonel Dunlop and, despite his piteous complaint of 24 August to Windflower ('I fret & fret at my inaction – I am not well enough to exert myself yet – & I am Staff Inspector to the whole corps & dying to do a man's part in the work – on the top of it came this awful cold.')¹⁸ responded that evening to another request from Inspector King.

Would it be possible for you to be at the Drill Hall to-night at 8 o'clock, to assist in the distribution of equipment to the Special Constables?¹⁹

15 Col. William Thomas Reay, *The Specials: How they served London* (London: William Heinemann, 1920), 82-85.

16 EBM letter 10710.

17 Letter from Alice to Troyte Griffith, 21 August 1914, EBM letter 7225.

18 EBM letter 7674.

19 EBM letter 10707, 24 August 1914.

Next day he told Frank Schuster that he had been ‘equipping (serving out ‘weapons’) & taking receipts & registering my men for hours last night’²⁰, adding, in a letter to Frances Colvin, that he ‘was out at all the posts at six o’clock this a.m. & have been doing secretarial work since. How awful it all is – I cannot write of it – oh, my horses, my horses, that is all I moan to myself, to others I try to be cheerful & keep all hearts up.’²¹

On the 27th Elgar was ‘still pulled down by his cold’, though ‘raser better but not recovered’ next day. On 29 August he went ‘to P. Court at 10 – not back till after 1 – Very busy & serious’, and on the 30th, a Sunday, after attending communion at Hampstead Church, Alice went ‘To see Special Constables Parade – Watched them for an hour. E. looked very distinguished & was photographed with Mr. King in front of the body. Mr. Whitehorn²² came in with him. Seemed so nice had been on duty at night on a roof at Euston.’²³

On 14 September it was announced that ‘Recruiting for the Special Constabulary has ceased for the present, the number of men required – between 20,000 and 25,000 – having been obtained.’²⁴

Over the following weeks Alice records ‘E. busy at Police Station’ on most days. Some light relief was afforded when he was asked by Edward Duveen, a Hampstead Borough Councillor, and now a Deputy Chief Inspector in the Special Constabulary, for assistance with the design of a Certificate.

Dear Sir Edward,

I should be much obliged if you would arrange to see Mr. Felkin or Mr. Drake in reference to the Certificate.

I explained your ideas to them and they are very anxious to work with you.

You will always find one of them here [at the Station], if not both.²⁵

Frederick Felkin, a school teacher from Nottingham, became a regular visitor to Severn House. William Drake, another local builder, wrote to Elgar on the 7th to invite him to attend a meeting at his home in Parliament Hill.

My dear Sir

Speaking with Mr. Duveen this morning with respect to the certificate he has offered to subscribe for presentation, it was arranged to hold a meeting at this address on Wednesday afternoon next at 5 o’clock to consider the form and design it shall take. Will it be convenient for you to attend at that hour and give us the benefit of your valued suggestions? Mr. Duveen will be at Rosslyn Hill Police Station at 4.45 on this day and will bring you along with Mr. Felkin.²⁶

Elgar summoned the assistance of Troyte Griffith.

20 EBM letter 6944.

21 EBM letter 3452, 25 August 1915.

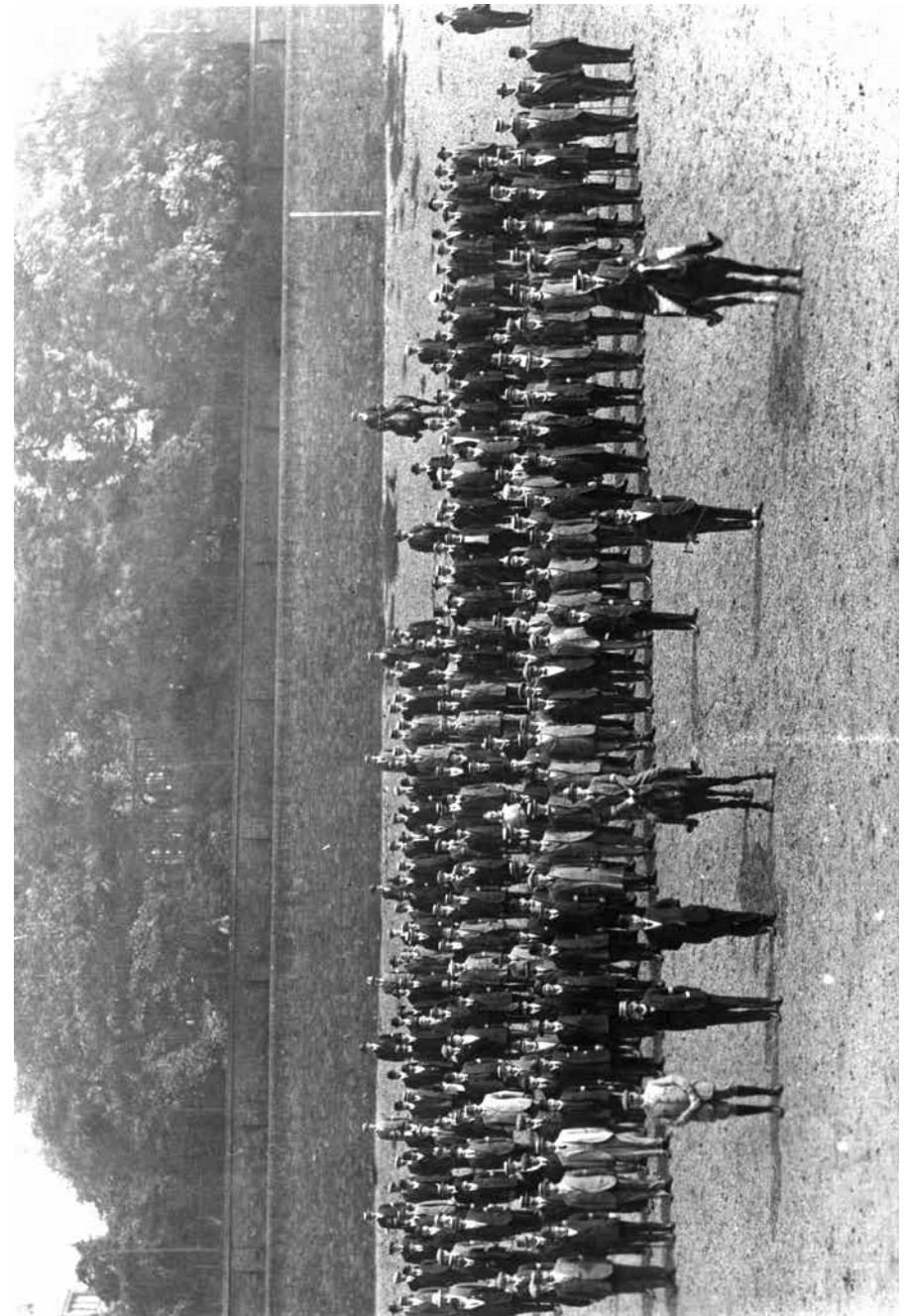
22 Walter Whitehorn, who lived at 61 Netherhall Gardens.

23 Alice Elgar diary, 30 August 1914.

24 *Daily Herald*, 14 September 1914.

25 Letter from Edward Duveen, 5 September 1914, EBM letter 10708.

26 EBM letter 10703.



S. Division on parade, 30 August 1914; Elgar is at the front on the left.

Dear Troyte:

I have been asked to make some suggestions for the (sort of) certificate we need for our S. Constabulary of which I am Staff Inspector.

I had mentioned your assistance when we got out the simple design for the Wor. Phil. Socy.

Can you suggest anything for a border connecting the 'views' (pictures) of Hampstead etc. – it is doubtful if the lower corners will do. They wanted to give it over to Waterlow or some firm but seeing the work they turn out I ventured to ask for a day or two to consult a friend, that is you. I know the trade designer will make a filthy thing. If you cd. suggest a borderure or anything else – failing that can you tell me where I could look up some existing designs.

Hope you are well

Yours ever
Edward Elgar
Staff Inspector²⁷

Elgar attended regular administrative meetings.

Sir,

You are requested to attend a Meeting of the Council to be held in the Court Room on Monday the 21st inst. at 8.30 p.m.

Yours faithfully,
[illegible]
Officer on Duty

AGENDA:

1. Minutes of Last Meeting.
2. Chief Inspector King's Report.
3. Discussion on matters arising out of the Report.
4. Invoices and Accounts.
5. New Business²⁸

He requested leave to visit his sister Pollie at Stoke Prior – the first of many visits during the war.

22nd September 1914.

Sir,

In answer to your letter of the 18th: I have very much pleasure in granting you leave of absence for the time you mention.

I feel I should take this opportunity of saying how much the Constabulary appreciate the fact that you have so ungrudgingly given your valuable time to the organising of the various Companies during the last five weeks.

I am arranging with Colonel FitzHerbert and Mr. Cotton to take over your duties during your absence.

27 EBM letter 7270, 16 September 1914.

28 EBM letter 10705, 12 September 1914.

I am, Sir,
Yours faithfully,
C. B. King
Chief Inspector²⁹

He travelled that very day ...

Lovely day – E. to The Elms after visit to his Station. Travelled with wounded Soldiers (Mons) & gave them tea – he said, "wonderful men."³⁰

... but returned on the 25th, 'Too opprest [sic] with the war to stay away'³¹. Next day he wrote again to Troyte Griffith.

Dear Troyte: I fear a note I wrote to you on Tuesday did not get to Post.

This is only to say thanks for your suggestions for the certificate – they will give the donor some sort of a guide. I meant to say the whole thing wd. be one process, lithography.

Of course – my remarks about 'photos' views & engraving only referred to the sources from which we shd. draw in two senses!

I am just back from my sister's – damsons pears & a quiet country cottage – & luckily a whole lot of 'Temple Bars' of the early '70s containing much criticism of the arts including music – very very amusing to read now & took me back to boyhood's daze. We were so solemnly warned that Wagner was all wrong & wd. never be heard twice by any sane person etc. etc.

Yours ever
E.E.³²

In June Elgar had recorded the *First Pomp and Circumstance March*: now HMV sought to cash in on Elgar's 'patriotism'.

At a time when patriotism is welling up in the breast of every British-born citizen, Elgar's super-patriotic suite [sic] is doubly welcome, especially a performance conducted by the great composer himself. In 'Pomp and Circumstance' Elgar reaches great heights of national feeling. The patriotism of the artist shows itself as vividly in this work as in his acceptance, despite his age, of an active part in protective work during the war: Sir Edward has become a Special Constable in Hampstead. That thrillingly broad march-melody now known to every British ear, 'Land of Hope and Glory' is played with unspeakable breadth of tone and majesty by these fine players directed by Elgar. No one can listen without experiencing feelings of noble patriotism, such is the nature of its immediate appeal. Every Britisher should possess this unique record.³³

Attendance at 'Special Parades' was also required of Elgar, for example on 4 October ('Special Constable Parade & meeting in morning') and the 11th ('E. long Parade & Constabulary Meeting').

29 EBM letter 10709.

30 Alice Elgar diary. 22 September 1914.

31 *Ibid.*, 25 September 1914.

32 EBM letter 7275.

33 *His Master's Voice Records*, (October 1914), 3.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL PARADE

You are particularly requested to attend a Parade, to be held at University College School Parade Ground, on Sunday morning, October 11th, at 11 a.m., for inspection by Lieut.-Colonel Beckett, the Commander of "S" Division, Special Constabulary.

Constables on guard at a vulnerable point will be excused this duty, but will be visited by Lieut.-Colonel Beckett between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

I take this opportunity of thanking you for the Duties you have carried out, and to inform you that you will be entitled to a Certificate from His Majesty's Government, provided you are on the strength of the Constabulary when it is disbanded.

I have a letter from his Majesty the King, a copy of which I am forwarding to each Special Constable.

You are asked to wear a bowler hat for this parade if you have one.

C. B. King
Chief Inspector
Hampstead Special Constabulary.
2nd October, 1914.³⁴

On 10 October Elgar took part in a charity concert organised by Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford.

Our neighbour Madame Clara Butt and her husband, Mr. Kennerley Rumford, who are already generously giving concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, also at Aberdeen and Peterhead, and devoting the entire profits to Her Majesty's "Work for Women" Fund, have now decided to give the whole of the proceeds of each of the concerts (after deducting the actual working expenses only) during their forthcoming autumn tour to this and other war relief funds, as their personal contribution to the funds.³⁵

The concert included the first performance of a *Song for Soldiers*, a setting of Edward Begbie's poem, *The Roll Call*, which Elgar had composed on 6 September. A later note in Elgar's hand against Alice's diary entry for that day says, simply: 'Withdrew it -'.

First part of concert trying. Then E's splendid Roll Call & at end The Kings Way & Land of Hope & Glory. Audience began to applaud as soon as that began & all stood at 2. verse & many joined in singing, Wonderful thrill. C. Butt sang the Kings Way splendidly. Sir F. Bridge came up & sd. is not that Roll Call of Elgar's splendid, he did not see A. who told him she cordially agreed.³⁶

The 'Ham & High' noted:

Our neighbour Madame Clara Butt and her husband, Mr. Kennerley Rumford, gave a concert last Saturday afternoon at the Albert Hall in aid of the Queen's Work for Women Fund. One of the conductors was our neighbour Sir Edward Elgar, whose present duties towards his country were made clear by a notice on the programme that our foremost composer appeared by permission of the Chief Inspector or the Hampstead Special Constables.³⁷

34 EBM letter 10706.

35 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 3 October 1914.

36 Alice Elgar diary, 10 October 1914.

37 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 17 October 1914.

On 17 October he went to The Hut for the weekend: Frank Schuster had invited him some weeks earlier.

Sir,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th inst, in which you ask that a special constable shall be detailed to visit The Hut for an indefinite period. I must point out that it is necessary to receive fuller particulars than those contained in your letter; I shall therefore be obliged if you will give replies to the following questions as soon as convenient.

- 1) For how long is the presence of the Special Constable desired?
- 2) For what emergency, if any, is a special guard required?
- 3) Failing the Constable asked for – (Elgar, 0015014 – who is now Staff Inspector to the Division), would an ordinary policeman be equally welcome????!!!!!!
- 4) State any circumstances known to you personally which may lead the council to decide that The Hut is more important than other private dwellings and should have the special guard desired.
- 5) State what feminine society The Hut will provide for No.0015014.

On receiving your reply the matter shall be proceeded with at once.

I have the honour to be,
Your obedient servant,
Edward Elgar
Staff Inspector.³⁸

He returned to Severn House on the evening of the 19th. On the 22nd he was 'out [in] morning at Station & again out in aftn.', and went again 'to his Station' the following day. There is then no mention of the 'Specials' in the diary for two months, during which time he spent a week at Stoke Prior, and was working on *Carillon*.

After a concert at Severn House on 10 December in aid of Belgian charities ('Large audience – really a great success. Fine aftn & house looked lovely. Many Belgian guests, result £36.10-0- for artists & Belgians)³⁹ he wrote to Windflower:

I am sorry I saw so little of you today at our music but I was torn in many pieces: I hope you liked some of it. I rushed out & had a very refreshing walk after it all as I wanted air & refreshment – both of which I had & am now better for the rest from crowds & police work. How beautiful it is in the still quiet streets without the trying brilliant lights: all seems so muffled – a muted life to me and so sweet & pure; I do not like the idea of garishly lit roads & streets again – I love them so much, so much as they are.⁴⁰

On 14 December he resumed his 'Constabulary duties', though, seemingly, only on Mondays and Tuesdays, when he was 'at Police Office all morning'.

At the end of the month:

38 EBM letter 9613, 13 September 1914.

39 Alice Elgar diary, 10 December 1914.

40 EBM letter 4193.

The following message to the London Special Constabulary [was] communicated by the Home Secretary to the Lord Mayor of London and to the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police:

“At the close of the year I wish to take the opportunity of expressing my great appreciation of the admirable work done during the past five months by the special constabulary of London enrolled since the outbreak of war. With a fine public spirit this body of citizens, consisting of men who have passed the age at which they could do military duty, and in general fully occupied in their ordinary avocations, have given their services without pecuniary reward, and often at great personal sacrifice. During a period of exceptionally trying weather they have not hesitated to expose themselves day and night to all the rigours entailed by the performance of the duties they had undertaken. The result of the zealous performance of these duties has been to provide an efficient watch and ward, and has secured to London no less safety in war than it enjoys in peace. They have constantly worked in the most cordial co-operation with the regular Constabulary, and the Commissioner of Police assures me that their assistance has been invaluable, and that he feels he could make no calls upon them, where the general interest is concerned, to which they would not respond. I desire to express to each member of this force my grateful thanks for the help they have given, and the confident hope that they will continue to work in the same spirit throughout this time of national crisis.”⁴¹

On 19 January 1915, a Tuesday, came the first Zeppelin raid of the war.

Seemingly tranquil but at night a German air raid on Yarmouth & that part of East Coast. They damaged houses & caused some loss of life, engulfing themselves more deeply in crime than ever. Brutes – E. called out about 10.40 – Roamed around till a telegram released the Specials. A. sat up looking out for what might be going on. E. in about 1 a.m.⁴²

Two days later he was ‘still rather tired from being out late on Tuesday night as S. Constable’, and a month later, on 22 February, he went in the ‘evening to Constabulary meeting & finally resigned.’

Our feelings we with difficulty smother
When constabulary duty’s to be done;
Ah, take one consideration with another,
A policeman’s lot is not a happy one!⁴³

24th February 1915.

Staff Inspector Sir Edward Elgar, O.M.,
42 Netherhall Gardens., N.W.

Sir,

In accordance with your desire I am forwarding your application to Head Quarters, with a recommendation that it be accepted.

May I take this opportunity of placing on record my keen appreciation of all you gave done for the Special Constabulary since its formation six months ago.

Knowing as I do how very valuable your time is, I consider it most patriotic of you to have devoted so much of it to Constabulary work.

41 *Middlesex Chronicle*, 2 January 1915.

42 Alice Elgar diary, 19 January 1915.

43 W.S. Gilbert, *The Pirates of Penzance*.

I have observed that you were always one of the earliest arrivals here on receiving the “Emergency Call”, and it was by your kindness and the manner in which you, and other gentlemen in the Constabulary forgot “social standing” for the time being, that made my position as Chief Inspector, a privilege and pleasure.

I am Sir,
Yours Obediently.,
C B King
Chief Inspector.⁴⁴

It remained only to return his equipment ...

1st March 1915.

Sir,

Would you kindly leave your equipment at this office.

I have not yet been advised that your resignation has been accepted, but I have good reason to believe that such notification will be received in the near future.

Yours faithfully.,
L. Crooks⁴⁵
Chief Inspector.⁴⁶

... which he duly did.

11/3/15

Received from Sir Edward Elgar
the following equipment

1 Truncheon, 1 Armelet, 1 Warrant Card Case, 1 Whistle, 1 Badge

R Aldridge⁴⁷

W. H. Reed’s ‘relief was very great when I heard that he had resigned; but it was not long before he joined the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve’.⁴⁸ It had been formed in September 1914.

Hampstead men who are unable to enlist, yet desire to prepare for the eventualities of war by drill and rifle practice, are invited to join the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve. Col. Sheffield has secured the use of the Drill Hall of the Headquarters, 1st C[adet].B[attalion], the Royal Fusiliers in Pond-street, from 6.30 to 7.30 every week-day evening except Saturday. Candidates must be British subjects, and if qualified for enlistment must give a satisfactory explanation of their inability to do so. Recruits may attend at the drill hall on the evenings mentioned, from a quarter-past to half-past six. Mr. T. Hancock Nunn is the honorary organizer.⁴⁹

44 EBM letter 10701.

45 Lindsay Crooks, a Hampstead stockbroker.

46 EBM letter 10702.

47 Worcestershire Record Office microfilm BA5184.

48 W. H. Reed, *Elgar as I knew him*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), 54.

49 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 12 September 1914.

The social reformer Thomas Hancock Nunn (1859-1937) had become a founder resident of Toynbee Hall in 1885. In 1898 'he joined the Hampstead Charity Organization Society and in 1899 he laid the foundations for the Hampstead Council of Social Welfare, the first of a new wave of voluntary associations which were to seek closer ties with the poor law authorities. Over the next decade he was involved in setting up numerous voluntary associations, many related to his two main passions – public education and health. He became a manager of the Kilburn Group of Elementary Schools in 1902, and in the same year formed the Hampstead Health Society. In 1908 he founded the first clinic for schoolchildren and in 1913 the Hampstead Health Institute. On the national stage Nunn's most influential work was as a member of the royal commission on the poor laws from 1906 to 1909.⁵⁰

A letter from Nunn to the Editor of the *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette* shows clearly what Elgar was letting himself in for: a case of 'out of the frying pan, into the fire'.

Invasion may be neither imminent nor probable. But it is possible, and in face of that possibility every able-bodied Englishman may yet have to decide whether he will take his stand as a recognised combatant, or learn from the enemy the rules to be observed by a submissive population.

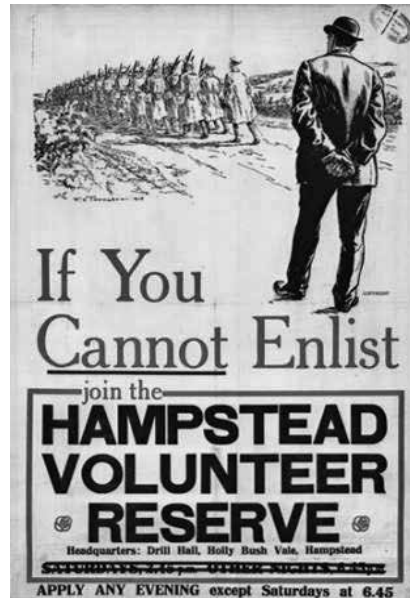
Those who can join the Army should join now, and get their training in time. Those who cannot, and yet feel fit to fight should join such a body as ours in time to train for what may yet befall. Even if they get no fighting, they will get their exercise at the only game worth playing in times of war. They will harden themselves and play their part in the struggle for life and death in which every Englishman is virtually engaged.⁵¹

He had been persuaded to join by his friend Richard Alexander Streatfeild (1866-1919). Streatfeild had been an assistant in the British Museum Library since 1889, and from 1898 to 1912 was music critic of the *Daily Graphic*. The Elgars knew him through Sidney Colvin, Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. He first came to tea at Severn House in December 1912, when Alice thought him a 'nice interesting man quite devoted to E'.

E. & C. to Hadley Wood. Mr. Streatfeild to tea – Induced E. to join Hampstead Volunteer Reserve –

50 Justin Davis Smith, 'Nunn, Thomas Hancock (1859–1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69001].

51 Letter from Thomas Hancock Nunn, published in the *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 7 November 1914.



A 1915 recruitment poster for the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve by the artist Frederick Henry Townsend (1868-1920), a colleague of Elgar in S. Division.

nice talk – Mr .S. so distressed that E. had given up Binyon's Poems – because he had so generously retired in favour of Wrootham – but quite angry too – (quite right.) –⁵²

The Standard of 11 June 1915 contained an article on the Corps.

The Hampstead Volunteer Reserve was formally inspected on February 21 by Colonel Dundonald Cochrane, C.B., who reported favourably, and the members, the corps having been duly affiliated to the Central Association, are entitled to wear the red brassard denoting "Government Recognition". The corps' headquarters were formerly at those of the 1st Cadet Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, Pond-street, Hampstead, but are now at the headquarters of the 7th Middlesex Battalion at Holly-bush Vale, close to Hampstead Tube Station, and there they have a magnificent drill hall at their disposal every evening in the week, and spacious further accommodation for engineering, ambulance, signalling, and bayonet drill and musketry instruction. A cyclist section is in process of formation, and the corps. hopes soon to have its own band.

The equipment is exceedingly economical, for the regulation greenish-grey tunic, cap, breeches, leather belt, and puttees can be obtained by the members for about £2, and practically all the 450 members have their uniforms.

There are route marches every Sunday. Next Sunday the corps will parade at the Whitestone Pond on Hampstead Heath at 10.30 a.m. and proceed to Caen Wood, where they will exercise all day in conjunction with the Kilburn V.T.C., which has a movable canteen, very useful on such occasions.

Every Saturday afternoon the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve parades at 2.45 at its headquarters for company and battalion drill. Among the members who train regularly with the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve are Sir Edward Elgar (the famous composer), Mr. Arthur Rackham,⁵³ Mr. Lewis Baumer,⁵⁴ Mr. Herbert Draper,⁵⁵ and many other well-known artists. Two Chancery Masters are members of the corps, which is almost entirely composed of Hampstead residents, and is a model of what a suburban Volunteer Training Corps should be.

The corps is in close touch with the local police and fire brigade. There is a squad hard at work this week at Ongar learning entrenching.

There is no entrance fee, but the members of the H.V.R. pay a regular subscription of 2s. 6d. monthly, and pay it with commendable punctuality, the monthly subscriptions being enough to keep the corps going. The majority of the members are men over 40, but there is a proportion of younger men who are physically unfit to enlist in the Army; those members under 40 who could pass the doctor have practically all enlisted.

The corps is especially fortunate in its engineering branch. Ex-sergeant Byard, of the Royal Engineers, the instructor, is a veteran of twenty years' Army experience, and has constructed some first-class models of trenches of all kinds, wire entanglements, glacis, gabions, fascines, traverse trenches to meet enfilade fire, obstacle abattis, and other details of defensive fortification. He lectures on these every Monday and Thursday at 7.30 p.m., and also directs the men's practical engineering work, giving his services freely. His models are works of art of extraordinary realism.

Few civilians know even that a gabion is a cylinder formed of brushwood, sheet iron bends, wire netting, canvas, and so forth, or of substitutes for these, standing several feet high; filled with earth it becomes bullet proof, and a number of gabions are an excellent defence for certain positions. The Hampstead men practise making them.

All members have strict instructions to wear the red brassard, whether in mufti or uniform, when on parade or carrying a rifle, and always when in uniform, and also to salute, if wearing uniform, any officers in uniform of the Army, Navy, or Volunteers, wherever they may meet them, and always their

52 Alice Elgar diary, 5 April 1915.

53 The illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland*.

54 The caricaturist, who worked for *Punch* for more than half a century.

55 The English Classicist painter.

own officers, whether they themselves or their officers are in uniform or not.

This corps is so exceptionally favoured by their location and beautiful surroundings that it is hardly surprising that its members are setting an excellent example to other corps by regular attendance at drills. It is growing in numbers steadily, and all residents in Hampstead or its neighbourhood who are suitable for training (aged 40 and upwards, or unfit to enlist if younger) are strongly advised to join without delay. They will not be expected to learn everything at once, and the recruit squads are handled with especial care.⁵⁶

Elgar had been given a letter from their Commander.

Hampstead Volunteer Reserve
April, 1915

Sir,
We are approaching the crisis of the great encounter.

During the next six months immense efforts must be made by the British Empire and its Allies to end the War.

Every man capable of bearing arms will be expected to take his share in the tremendous stakes at issue.

From the action already taken by the War Office in certain seaport garrison towns, it is clear that the Volunteer Training Corps will be increasingly used as a third line of defence.

Will you not take your place in the ranks by giving a few hours regularly every week to the work of the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve, and thus support the men now fighting our battles in Flanders against our powerful enemy?

I am,
Yours faithfully,
Frank Sheffield
Colonel Comdg. H.V.R.⁵⁷

On 7 April Elgar went 'for his first drill – with Mr. Streatfeild who returned with E. & stayed for dinner & played Spelka. Very nice'.⁵⁸ A week before the corps had ...

... turned out 300 strong and made a route march through Hampstead, headed by the band of the 1st C.B. the Royal Fusiliers. It now includes a machine-gun section, the corps having recently acquired two Maxim guns. To-day a sham fight is arranged, and members will fall in at the Flagstaff, Hampstead Heath, at 10.30 a.m. sharp.⁵⁹

Elgar's services were in demand immediately.

Rosslyn Grove, Hampstead, N.W.
April 8th, 1915.

Dear Sir,
Your advent at the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve curiously enough coincided with our first effort to

56 *The Standard*, 11 June 1915.

57 EBM letter 6389/6, April 1915.

58 Alice Elgar diary, 7 April 1915.

59 *Sunday Times*, 28 March 1915.

arrange a Recruiting Concert whose programme is to be drawn almost entirely from our own men – although you have only so lately joined us and although anything we can arrange must necessarily seem a very small affair to you, my committee which met this evening, directed me to enquire whether you would care to help us.

The Concert is fixed for Saturday evening the 17th of April. Colonel Sheffield will be in the chair, and our member Mr. J. S. Fletcher will I believe give a short address. Would you be willing to say a few words and should we be trespassing too far upon your kindness if we were to ask you to play something of your own on the piano (a fresh one will come for the occasion)?

We should be so grateful for your help in this big effort we are making to bring our members nearer to battalion strength, at present we number only about 450.

Do not write to reply if you cannot help us. But if you can, I shall be in all the morning in case you care to telephone.

I am dear Sir
Yours faithfully
Thomas Hancock Nunn

I enclose a copy of the letter and folder we are sending with the ticket.⁶⁰

The *Sunday Times*, which in the first half of 1915 had a regular section of 'Home Defence News', published details of the concert.

The Hampstead Volunteer Reserve Corps is giving a recruiting smoking concert next Saturday at the Headquarters in Pond-street, Hampstead. Recruits are needed to make up the vacancies caused by members of the Reserve joining the Regular Forces. An attractive programme has been arranged and well-known artists, including the Misses Hillyard-Swinstead, and Messrs. Gordon Cleather, Griffith Humphreys, Reginald Higgins, and Franklin Taylor, have promised to assist. Short addresses will be given by Sir Edward Elgar (who is a member of the corps), and Mr. Fletcher, M.P. for Hampstead. Tickets, for men only, may be had free of charge on application to the officers of the battalion. The chair will be taken by Colonel Frank Sheffield, V.D., the Commandant.⁶¹

Eulalia Hillyard Swinstead and her sister Valerie were both amateur singers, the daughters of the Hampstead artist George Hillyard Swinstead (1860-1926), who had designed the ticket for the concert.

Volunteer Reserve, 23/25 Pond St Hampstead
April 9th 1915

Dear Sir Edward Elgar
Mr Swinstead thought you would like to have a copy of his first print of the ticket by you; so I have much pleasure in sending you one.

I am yours sincerely
Thomas Hancock Nunn⁶²

60 EBM letter 6389/3.

61 *Sunday Times*, 11 April 1914.

62 EBM letter 6389/2.

By the day of the concert Elgar's presence was less certain.

One of the latest recruits to the ranks of the Hampstead Volunteer reserve is Sir Edward Elgar, O.M., Mus.Doc. It is hoped that he may be able to take part in a recruiting concert which the Corps is holding this (Saturday) evening ... Men who are at all likely to join the Reserve will be welcomed, and are cordially invited to apply to any of the officers for cards of admission.⁶³

He had been to drill the previous evening, and on the 17th went 'to drill on College ground in aftn. Rather too cold for him'.⁶⁴ He was not at the concert, sending his apologies, and saying that 'his other engagements did not permit'⁶⁵ his attendance. From the diary it may be deduced that these involved an armchair, a fire, and, possibly, a stiff drink.

The concert was an undoubted success: however, reading the comments on the performance of 'Land of Hope and Glory', Elgar's absence in understandable.

... there was a large attendance of both members and the general public, and although the concert was labelled "smoking" concert a good sprinkling of ladies occupied the seats reserved for them in the front of the room. Behind them were rows and rows of officers and men of the Reserve.

The proceedings opened with a short address by the Commandant of the Reserve, Col. Frank Sheffield, who ... pointed out that it was not to be used as a shelter for men who, while of military age and suitable physique, had neither reason nor excuse for not serving their country in the Army ...

Mr. J. S. Fletcher ... said he feared that the English people as a whole had a difficulty in realizing what it was to be a nation at war, and the sacrifices required of them, and also in understanding the real nature of the fierce hatred of the English which had overtaken the Germans, and the horrors and the hardships inflicted on their enemies by the latter. He instanced the case of a little Belgian child whose hands had been cut off by the Huns – a little child so young that when Christmas time was coming she enquired whether God would send her new hands by Santa Claus ... Round after round of applause greeted the end of the speech ...

During the interval which followed a call for recruits was made, and a number of the visitors present handed in to Quartermaster Lieut. Poole their application for membership on the forms for that purpose which had been attached to the printed programmes.

The concert was of exceptional excellence ... One of the chief features was the singing by Miss E. Hillyard Swinstead of "Land of Hope and Glory". Its composer, Sir Edward Elgar, is a member of the H.V.R., and it was at one time hoped that he might have been able to be present to play the accompaniment; but his other engagements did not permit, and Miss V. Hillyard Swinstead therefore accompanied her sister, who sang with great charm, while the chorus after each verse was lustily trolled out from the throats of all the members present ... The popular hit of the evening was perhaps that scored by Private Reginald Higgins in his original recitation, "Percy and Albert", embodying the descriptions by recruits – one a swell and the other a workman – of how they came to enlist. It is a gem of the first water, radiating in good humour, and was most ably rendered – with enunciation clear as a bell and delightful light and shade – by the author.

The singing of the National Anthem brought to an end a gathering which had proved very useful and enjoyable, and had provided a very excellent example of the enthusiasm and of the spirit of genuine comradeship which seems to pervade the members of the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve.⁶⁶

63 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 17 April 1915.

64 Alice Elgar diary, 17 April 1914.

65 *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, 24 April 1915.

66 *Ibid.*

On 19 April Elgar was 'rather chilled & headache – to drill in Evening',⁶⁷ but, two days later, 'muss better – Out after lunch. & to drill later',⁶⁸ and he told Windflower on the 23rd: 'My hand is shaky: I have just been doing rifle exercise'⁶⁹

On 26 April the Elgars went to Stratford-upon-Avon for Frank Benson's Shakespeare Festival. While there Elgar maintained his rifle practice.

E. to study Rifle with Sergeant – Mary de Navarro motored over – Very dear & nice – Embraced E. at front door! Took E. & A. for lovely motor drive to Wilmcote to Shakespeare's Mother's house – 2 attached cottages not kept up at all. Romeo & Juliet in Evening. Mercutio very good – Too harrowed after his death. Lovely walking back. gorgeous moonlight.⁷⁰

Mary de Navarro later recalled that 'Edward was more proud of his pistol than of his many musical triumphs!'.⁷¹

Practice continued!

Lovely morning. Sunny, warm – birds singing – E. to rifle range – In afternoon to Twelfth Night. Rather too rough – some of it good.⁷²

Lovely day quite hot. After lunch had a car & motored near Rifle Range – E. stayed there to practise. A. had a lovely round by Charlecote &c to call on [Archibald] Flowers – Larks & sunshine & blossom ... E. much excited about shooting – Hit target at 600 yards, wonderfully good as he never tried a rifle before. E. & A. dined with Mrs. [Betty] Leggett – all very pleasant. Then to play, Coriolanus – Most interesting & absorbing. One of the best performances. E. very interested – Walked back in the lovely moonlight –⁷³

They returned from Stratford on 1 May. On the 3rd Elgar went 'to try his uniform', and the diary records a spate of activity at the end of the month ...

(20 May) E. to Meeting Volunteers –

(21 May) E. to drill in Evening.

(22 May) E. out in aftn. Severe drill &c.

(23 May) E. out for march &c - Came in very hot but not over tired -

(24 May) Not out. E. did not go for the sham fight day.

... and from that point: nothing. For whatever reason, Elgar seems to have resigned from the Volunteers, less than two months after joining. Richard Streatfeild remained a member, the diary

67 Alice Elgar diary, 19 April 1914.

68 *Ibid.*, 21 April 1914.

69 EBM letter 4157.

70 Alice Elgar diary, 28 April 1914.

71 Mary de Navarro, *A Few More Memories*, (London: Hutchinson, 1936), 148.

72 Alice Elgar diary, 29 April 1915.

73 *Ibid.*, 30 April 1915.

revealing that on 5 July he ‘came late aftn. & had dinner before drill’, and again on 30 September: ‘Mr. Streatfeild came – on his way to drill’. Elgar’s wartime service was at an end.

My thanks are due to the friendly staff of the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre – an oasis of calm in a crowded city – for their assistance.

Edward Elgar at Powick Mental Hospital

Ken Crump, R.M.N.

The Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum was opened at Powick, close to the western edge of the City of Worcester, on 11 August 1852. After the Lunacy Act of 1890 this asylum became Powick Mental Hospital. It was built on the site of the White Chimney Estate, purchased from John Stallard of Worcester. It was close to the village of Powick, between the City of Worcester and Great Malvern, and had stunning views of the Malvern Hills.

Only two of the original lunatic asylum buildings remain: the remainder have been razed to the ground and the site is now a housing estate. During this development strenuous efforts were made by local Elgarians to save the Asylum ballroom as a local community centre. However, the planners and builders of the new development would have none of it and this piece of musical history was lost.

The author of this article wanted to recall life in the hospital for patients and staff during the time when Edward Elgar worked as bandmaster. Music making for patients was part of the treatment almost from the beginning. Dr. James Sherlock was Medical Superintendent from 1854 to 1881. This medical man believed that music would soothe patients as well as entertain them, and it was he who established the band. He was in charge of the asylum when Elgar was appointed bandmaster in 1879. Dr. Sherlock showed a remarkably enlightened attitude for that time. He recognised the importance of occupational therapy as well as recreational activities including music. Thus he understood the importance of maintaining a good band in the asylum. He died in 1881 at the age of 53, and is buried in Powick Parish Churchyard by the church door. He was succeeded by Dr. Edward Marriott Cooke (1852-1931) who continued to improve patient care.

The mental afflictions of inmates of the asylum included melancholia, mania (both acute and chronic), dementia, epilepsy, alcoholism, idiocy and imbecility, general paralysis of the insane (GPI) and puerperal mania. However, Powick Lunatic Asylum only treated pauper lunatics. It was a Poor Law Institution that by law could only treat people eligible for Poor Relief; individuals to whom the epithet ‘pauper’ was applied. Non paupers who were declared insane were treated in private lunatic asylums.

The regime

When a pauper was admitted to the asylum a records clerk would write down the patient’s personal details and give them a personal number, Then records were created which were maintained by the Assistant Medical Officers: doctors who were in everyday contact with patients. In fact, these doctors wrote the patients’ personal notes regarding their treatment and progress, having consulted both the attendants of the wards where the patients lived, and the comments of instructors who were with the patients when they were out at work in the asylum. The patients were placed in



**The Elgar Bandstand
in the western gardens,
Powick Mental Hospital.**

wards according to their behaviour and the ease with which they could be managed. If a patient's condition and behaviour altered they might change wards. Reading through the case notes of Dr. Sherlock's Superintendency reveals how the doctors tried to help patients within the limits of the resources available.

Treatment in a lunatic asylum set out to contain or restrain rather than to heal. Victorian asylums were closed institutions, and were authoritarian, where everyone knew their place. No drugs were available to treat mental ailments apart from sedatives such as laudanum. Pauper lunatic asylums used what was called 'moral treatment', where there was no restraint, strict seclusion or physical punishment allowed. Patients became 'institutionalised' within the asylum, which often changed their behaviour, so that those considered no longer to have untoward behaviour were released as 'recovered'. While some patients stayed in the asylum for only a short time, until their behaviour was thought no longer to pose a threat, others who continued to pose a threat stayed in the asylum for long periods, in some cases for the rest of their lives.

The diet of patients in Powick Asylum was the responsibility of the Medical Superintendent and other resident physicians. At the time that pauper lunatic asylums were set up it was the opinion of the Poor Law Board that an asylum diet would be the same as that of a workhouse: meagre. However, Medical Superintendents, supported by the Lunacy Commission that oversaw the asylums, insisted that the successful treatment of pauper insanity depended on the patients being well fed, and they were then given whatever was thought necessary by the medical man treating them. The diet consisted of bread, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit (in season), porridge, milk and tea. Drinking water proved a problem at Powick Asylum until a water works was built, so to prevent infectious disease weak beer was the drink provided for patients. There was also butter and salt available. Importantly Powick Asylum was intended to be as self sufficient as possible: most food was provided by the asylum farm and it was well cooked in well equipped central kitchens. In special circumstances patients would be given special diets.

The asylum during Elgar's day was centred around the main building, called 'White Chimneys'. It took its name not only from the original estate, but also from the chimney stacks in the vicinity of the central part of the building. These chimneys, which served the furnace that

heated the buildings, divided the male and female 'sides' of the asylum, with each 'side' being a mirror image of the other, with a similar arrangement of wards. The male and female patients were not allowed to meet unless there was rigid supervision, such as in the asylum chapel and at weekly dances: a stipulation of the Poor Law Board 'lest they might breed'. All wards had an airing court, an area surrounded by high walls where patients could be sent for exercise. In Dr. Sherlock's days there was one court for every ward, but gradually the walls between courts were pulled down so that two or more wards could share a larger area for exercise.



Powick Mental Hospital: the ballroom is situated on the first floor of the facing building.

The asylum had been built to house 200 patients, 100 of each gender. However, the demand for places had been underestimated and by 1858 there were 365 patients, rising to about 400 in Elgar's time. The wards had painted brick walls with wooden floors, except in the ward for 'dirty' patients where the floors were made of granolithic asphalt. The accommodation was lit by coal gas, made at a gas works on the asylum site. This was situated downwind from the asylum buildings and was screened by trees. It extracted gas from coal, producing coke that was burned to heat the asylum buildings and by-products such as coal tar which were used in maintaining the buildings and roads on the site.

There were a few padded cells that were used for patients exhibiting extreme behaviour which was likely to result in injury to themselves. These cells were situated next to the wards intended for maniacal patients: the most likely to exhibit such behaviour. The cell was intended to prevent injury: the law required the use of a moral treatment regime where no restraint or lengthy exclusion was allowed. This meant that strait jackets and waistcoats that figured in popular fiction as part of the treatment in lunatic asylums were not allowed in pauper lunatic asylums such as the one at Powick.

The band

Elgar was paid a salary of £32 per annum plus fees for composing music for the Friday evening dances, for instance five shillings for a quadrille. Such music was considered efficacious for the patients by the Medical Superintendent and the Committee of Visitors of the Institution. He was paid the same amount for a polka and one shilling and sixpence for composing an accompaniments to popular ditties of the day. His duties also involved him in teaching this music to the band, which consisted of asylum staff members. Elgar attended the lunatic asylum on Friday evenings to conduct the band at the weekly dances. The band was sometimes supplemented by jobbing musicians, including Frank, Edward Elgar's brother, his father William and his uncle Henry.

The range of instruments in the band was curious; it included a clarinet, two cornets, a cello, a double bass, an oboe, a piano, percussion, a viola, two violins and even a euphonium. The music he wrote for this collection of instruments, like much of his early work, not only taught him a great deal about orchestration, but it also provided valuable ideas for his later works. For instance sections of his Powick Asylum music were used in the *Wand of Youth Suites*. He could never be

certain which instrumentalists would be available for a particular performances because of the changing work rota of the band members and this made his composing task ever more complicated.

Management and staffing

The Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum at Powick, to give the institution its full name, was managed by a Committee of Visitors made up of Magistrates, landowners, local dignitaries and senior Churchmen. This meant that this socially elite group had responsibility for the care of mentally impaired members of the poorest members of society. The Committee of Visitors then employed medically qualified staff who were from a similar social background. Thus the attendants, both male and female, and the craft instructors employed to teach and supervise various skills in places like the workshops, the farm, the laundry and central kitchens, and a few domestic servants employed in the asylum, were the only individuals with an understanding of the hopes and aspirations of the pauper class of society. It was these asylum general staff who acted as the eyes and ears of the Assistant Medical Officers, who in turn reported to the Medical Superintendent. The release of patients from the institution 'recovered' depended on the reports provided by these 'ordinary staff'.

The Moral Treatment Regime operated at Powick Asylum had the aim of 'institutionalising' patients so far as to change their behaviour so that they could be reintegrated into the communities from which they came. Once patients had settled and were relatively controlled they were sent out to work, which had the advantage of removing them from their wards during work hours, thus reducing the number of attendants needed in the wards to control patients. When at work patients were supervised by male and female instructors adept in the skills necessary for a particular occupation, which could be regarded as therapy, which improved their mental well being and gave them a purpose in life within the institution. It may also have provided the inmate with training for an occupation outside the institution when they were discharged 'recovered' from their mental ailment.

Female patients did domestic work. They worked in the laundry or in the central kitchens, whilst a few women were employed on the farm. However many more women thought unsuitable for work outside their wards were employed in tasks on the wards. Male patients were employed in building work maintaining the asylum site; others were employed in making and mending shoes and clothes, in the upholstery shop, on the farm and asylum gardens, in the gas works, or in the bakery and brewery. All of these work tasks were intended to make the asylum as self sufficient as



The interior of the ballroom.

possible as well as providing effective therapy for inmates.

Most of the attendants (the phrase initially used in the lunatic asylum for what would today be called nurses) were recruited from farm labouring and domestic service. Other individuals with craft training were employed as instructors, and oversaw patients when they were at work. After about 1870 female attendants were called nurses, but the males were still called attendants. They were managed by a Head Attendant, one on each side of the institution. The wage for a male attendant was about £20 per annum: that for a female nurse somewhat less. There was no formal training for attendants/nurses until around 1900.

Attendants were required to live in the wards where they worked using the ward as their office during the day and sleeping in quarters at night. Should staff wish to sleep out of the asylum a request could be made once a fortnight by written application. Working hours were very long and the conditions of service affected morale and in turn the standard of care.

Attendants were responsible for supervising baths for patients on a weekly basis, with bath water shared by several patients. Male patients were shaved by the attendants on a weekly basis. The weekly dances took place on Friday evenings. Services in the asylum chapel took place on Sunday and usually on Wednesdays.

In Elgar's time all of the wards were locked and the attendants had to carry large bunches of keys, plus a whistle for raising the alarm if there was trouble.

The 1960s

The author recalls that when he was interviewed in 1963 to become a student nurse at the Powick Hospital (the name 'mental hospital' was replaced with the advent of the National Health Service in 1948), one of the questions he was asked was 'do you by any chance play a musical instrument?' He played the drums and he got the job! At the time he began his training most of the wards had a piano and Harry Jones was the resident pianist, touring the wards in the afternoons and evenings playing for the patients. Later Harry was provided with a mobile organ. On Friday evenings in the 1960s in a long stay ward in the annex music was provided for the patients' enjoyments by a small concert party featuring Arthur Bancroft (violin), Harry Jones (piano), Vera York (singer), and occasionally Jack Richardson (violin).

The hospital staff put on a concert with various acts once a year at Christmas for patients and visitors. Music was provided by Harry Jones on piano and organ and myself on drums and a group of various musicians played music at the Occupational Therapy Christmas Party. All of these musical events at the Hospital were very popular and the musical traditions of the Powick Lunatic Asylum were carried on to the closure of the hospital.

When the hospital closed some of Elgar's compositions were found. Barry Collett discovered the manuscripts and there was a great resistance to publishing them and associating a great British composer with a lunatic asylum and music making there. Such institutions were considered to be something you simply did not talk about in Elgar's lifetime and this belief persisted into the twentieth century. Barry Collett encountered that resistance when he attempted the first recording with the Rutland Sinfonia in 1989. Now in 2014 we realise the importance of this music in Elgar's journey to become a great composer. To the end of his life when talking to people who were patronising and pompous he liked to start conversations with 'When I was at the lunatic asylum ...'.

Postscript

- Mental illness remains a difficult and ill understood part of medicine.
- Deciding whether a person has a mental illness is often as difficult nowadays as it was in the nineteenth century and knowing how to deal with the problem is very difficult indeed.
- In Victorian times there was a tendency to remove people with mental illness from Society and to place them in lunatic asylums, whereas now we try to manage people in the community as much as possible.
- Addiction to alcohol and drugs was and is a major problem for which there are no simple solutions.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the help given by Dr. John Harcup, Chairman of the West Midlands Branch of the Elgar Society, and Dr. Frank Crompton, a Social Historian at the Infirmary Museum, Worcester.

Ken Crump trained and worked at Powick Hospital, where Edward Elgar held his first post as bandmaster, from November 1963 until June 1979 and he was associated with the institution until it closed in December 1989.

‘... the career of my father, the late Sir Henry Gee Roberts’: a Major-General in India

Martin Bird

In 1882 George Smith, of the publishers Smith, Elder & Co., proposed the publication of a biographical dictionary of people from word history, and appointed Leslie Stephen, then editor of *Cornhill Magazine*, editor. During the planning stage its scope was reduced to subjects from the UK and Empire, and the first volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography* appeared in January 1885. Leslie Stephen resigned as editor in 1891, and was succeeded by Sidney Lee (1859-1926), who had been Stephen’s assistant from the start.

Lee was educated at the City of London School, and in 1882 graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, with degrees in Classics and Modern History. A literary scholar, alongside his work on the *Dictionary* he produced a considerable body of work on Shakespeare including his *Life of William Shakespeare*, published in November 1898. In 1907 he was made an honorary D.Litt at Oxford, in 1910 elected a fellow of the British Academy, and was knighted in 1911. In 1913 he was appointed Professor of English Language and Literature at the East End College, Mile End Road, a position he held until 1924; and from 1918 to 1922 was Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the University of London.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* extended to a total of 63 volumes by the time of its completion in 1900, successive volumes having appeared quarterly since 1885. Volume 48, ‘Reilly-Robins’, containing an article on Major-General Sir Henry Gee Roberts, was published in October 1896. Lee had approached Alice Elgar for assistance the previous year.

Dictionary of National Biography, 15, Waterloo Place, S.W.
8.6.95

Dear Madam,
I am obliged to you for your letter. I shall be happy to receive now any notes you care to send & will incorporate them in our article, as far as possible.

Yours very truly,
Sidney Lee¹

Over the next fortnight Alice collected and organised her material.



A silhouette of Henry Gee Roberts, c.1837.

1 EBM letter 9258

Forli
Malvern
23 June 1895

Dear Sir

I am much obliged for your letter of 8th inst. & now send some notes I have collected regarding the career of my father, the late Sir Henry Gee Roberts.

In arranging them I have endeavoured to present a continuous narrative which I trust will assist in elucidating the course of events and also give an idea of the long continued, and distinguished services he rendered.

It is a very great gratification to know that there will be an article on Sir H. R. in your great work, a memorial which I am sure you will see is firstly one to his long career.

I should be very much obliged I, at some future time, when no longer required, you would kindly return the printed papers, as I fear it might be difficult to replace them and they are of great interest and value to us –

I trust I have rendered the Indian names &c. correctly.

Again thanking you for allowing me to send these notes,

Believe me
Yours very truly
C. Alice Elgar²

She 'posted her notes to Dictionary'³ next day, and they were passed to Colonel Ernest March Lloyd (1840-1922), who had been invited to write the article. Lloyd, the son of a tobacco manufacturer, was educated at Blackheath Proprietary School and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, and had been commissioned in the Royal Engineers.

10 Sheffield Gardens
Camden Hill W
28 June 1895

Dear Madam:

The Editor of the Dictionary of National Biography has asked me to write a notice of the late Sir Henry Gee Roberts, and has sent me the materials you have been kind enough to furnish. May I venture to ask you if you can give me information on the following points:

- 1) the exact date & place of birth.
- 2) the name of his mother and of her father.
- 3) the regiment to which he was posted on arrival in India.
- 4) the date of his marriage.
- 5) how many sons & daughters survived him.

Yours very truly
E. M. Lloyd⁴

2 EBM letter 10639

3 Alice Elgar diary, 24 June 1895

4 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar, Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 135.

On 6 July Alice 'Sent rest of papers for Memoir, Dict. of Nat. Biography',⁵ and heard from Lloyd three days later.

Dear Madam:

I am obliged for your letter & its enclosures. It is seldom that one is able to obtain such complete information as you have kindly furnished.

I will take care to return you all the papers.⁶

At the beginning of November 1896 the Elgars were staying with Alice's cousins, Willie and Vera Raikes, in Norwood on the outskirts of London. On the 7th they went 'to town. E. to his Club [the Junior Conservative]. Met at the London Liby. A. saw the Memoir in Dicty of Nat. Biography. Back to Oaklands at 6'.⁷

Roberts, Sir Henry Gee (1800-1860), major-general; born at Chosen House, near Gloucester, on 18 July 1800, was second son of William Roberts, M.D., by Margaret, daughter of Roynon Jones. He obtained a cadetship in the East India Company's service in 1818, and on 11 April 1819 was commissioned as lieutenant in the 13th native infantry, Bombay establishment. In 1820-2 he saw some service in Ahmadabad and Mahi Kantha against the coolies and others. He was promoted captain on 22 July 1824, and in 1825 he was given command of the resident's escort in Cutch, the resident being Major (afterwards Sir Henry) Pottinger of his regiment. The recent annexation of Cutch had irritated the ameers of Sind, who encouraged the Khosas and other marauding tribes to make incursions. Forces had to be raised to meet them, and Roberts was placed in command of the Cutch irregular horse. He was soon afterwards employed politically, as assistant to the resident, and succeeded in establishing order and quiet among the inhabitants of Thar, the district to the north of Cutch, who had hitherto been inveterate robbers and cattle-lifters. He had an important share in driving the Khosas out of the district. Sir Bartle Frere afterwards wrote of him: 'He used the influence acquired as a daring sportsman and a successful soldier to give to the wretched people about him their first experience of power used for other purposes than tyranny and oppression, and of intelligence directed to protect the right and punish the wrong doer'.

After three years' furlough in England, Roberts was selected to raise a regiment of regular cavalry in Gujrat, which he commanded till 1841. He had become major in the 13th native infantry on 9 Nov. 1835, and in 1841 he was promoted to be lieutenant-colonel, commanding the 11th native infantry, from which he was transferred on 23 Nov. to the 20th native infantry. With this regiment he took part in Sir Charles Napier's campaign in Sind in 1843. As second in command he was left at Sukkur during Napier's advance on Haidarabad in February, and was not present at Meance. 'An energetic officer, good in every situation' (as Sir William Napier describes him), he sent on reinforcements, which contributed to the victory of Haidarabad. Napier cordially acknowledged his assistance and wrote eight years afterwards: 'It was impossible to exceed the boldness and readiness of the support he gave me in the south, at great risk, enfeebling himself in the north'.

In May 1843 Roberts was ordered down the Indus to Schwan, with fifteen hundred men, to co-operate in the movements for intercepting Shere Mohamed. There he learnt that the brother of Shere Mohamed, with three thousand men, was encamped at Pirari, fourteen miles to the west. By a night march on 8 June, with a troop of horse and five companies of foot, he reached the camp. He sent his cavalry round to prevent a retreat, captured the ameer and his guns, and completely dispersed his force. Napier wrote of this to Lord Ellenborough as a most brilliant exploit, and thought it would have

5 Alice Elgar diary

6 Percy Young, *Alice Elgar, Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 135.

7 Alice Elgar diary

the greatest moral effect throughout Sind. Roberts then crossed to the left bank of the Indus, and, in combination with Napier and General John Jacob, converged upon Shere Mohamed, whose troops were ultimately attacked and routed by Jacob.

This put an end to the fighting in Sind, and Roberts was sent back to Cutch as resident, with the command of the troops. The chiefs welcomed him as an old friend, and his administration proved most successful in repressing disorder and allaying feuds of long standing. When Napier gave up the command in India in 1851, he wrote to the commander-in-chief in Bombay that Roberts was the best officer in the Bombay army, and perhaps in India, of his rank, and that he had shown in Cutch that his abilities as an administrator were equal to those he possessed for war.

He became colonel of the 21st native infantry on 24 Feb. 1852, and major-general on 28 Nov. 1854. He held commands successively in the southern division, at Satara, and at Karachi; and in May 1853 received the command of the Rajputana field force. He went home on leave, and returned to India in May 1857 at the beginning of the mutiny. During the latter half of that year he commanded the northern division of the Bombay army, and the government expressed its sense of the judgment, resolution, and self-reliance with which he acquitted himself of his most arduous duties at that time. In January 1858, when it had become possible to use the Bombay guard against the mutineers, he was appointed to the command of the Rajputana field force. On 30 March he took Kotah by assault after a week's siege, capturing seventy-five guns. One brigade of his force was then detached to assist Sir Hugh Rose (afterwards Baron Strathnairn), and the remainder was divided between Nimach and Nasirabad to cover Rajputana against inroads from the east.

After the capture of Gwalior, the native leader, Tantia Toppee, made for Jaipur, but Roberts anticipated him there. He then turned southward, made an attempt on Tonk, and tried to make his way up the Bamas into the Mewar hill-country. Roberts fell in with him at Sanganir on 8 Aug. 1858 and drove him off. On the 14th Roberts again came up with him, drawn up in position on the Bamas, and defeated him, taking his guns and killing about a thousand men. Tantia escaped to the east. Roberts soon afterwards handed over his force to General (afterwards Sir John) Michel, and was appointed commissioner and commander of the troops in Gujurat.

He received the thanks of parliament for his services, with the medal and clasp for Central India, and was made K.C.B. on 14 May 1859. He left India in 1859, and died on 6 Oct. 1860 at Hazeldine House, Redmarley d'Abittot, in Worcestershire.

He married Julia, daughter of the Rev. Robert Raikes of Longhope, Gloucestershire, on 2 May 1838; and he left two sons, both soldiers, and one daughter.

[Wilson's Hist. of India, vol viii; Napier's Conquest of Scinde, and Life and Opinions of Sir C. J. Napier; Malleson's Hist. of the Mutiny; Royal Engineers Prof. Papers, new ser. vol viii. (for siege of Kotah); East India Company's Reg.; Gent. Mag. 1860, ii 565; Illustrated London News, 17 Nov. 1860; private information]

E. M. L.

The article notes that Roberts 'received the thanks of parliament for his services'. This was done by way of Resolutions submitted to the House of Commons by Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State for India, on 14 April 1859.



Henry Gee Roberts in his early 30s, a portrait presented to the British Library by Carice.

THANKS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND ARMY IN INDIA.

LORD STANLEY

Sir, I believe that, by the practice and courtesy of the House, Resolutions like those which I am about to submit take precedence of other business ... I believe I may now congratulate this House – I believe I may congratulate the country, after two years of public peril and national alarm, on the complete restoration of our military ascendancy in India, and on the return of peace to that unhappily distracted country. There may still be local disturbances, there may still be unsettled districts; the waves may here and there continue to run high, though the storm that raised them has subsided; but every mail and telegram bring us news of the submission of some insurgent chief under the terms of Her Majesty's Proclamation, of the dispersion of some body of rebels lately in arms, and of the restoration of law and order in some district where anarchy lately prevailed.

... If, Sir, I am right in the judgment I have formed – if I am right in believing that the military difficulty is at an end, and that nothing now remains to deal with except difficulties of administration and finance – then I am sure this House will feel that it is not premature on our part to offer our thanks to those, whether in civil or in military employ, under whose wise direction, or by whose skill and courage this state of things has been brought about.

... The next name on my list is that of Major General Roberts, who commanded the Rajpootana field force, and who, on the 30th of March, made a successful assault on Kotah, taking fifty-six pieces of artillery. He also defeated a force of the Gwalior rebels on August 14th, with a loss of 1,000 men, and subsequently defeated another body of them at Sanganeer. He, in short, rendered most valuable service throughout the operations in Central India, and afforded the utmost assistance to Sir H. Rose.

... Without further comment, Sir, but with regret that I have detained the House so long, I beg to move the Resolutions which I have placed in your hand.

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON

Sir, in rising to second the Motion of the noble Lord opposite, I do not hope, nor will I attempt to add anything to those glowing and manifestly heartfelt commendations which the noble Lord has bestowed, in the speech which I am sure we have all listened to with the utmost sympathy and admiration, upon the distinguished men, civil, military, and naval, who are the subjects of the vote which he has proposed. But I cannot refrain from asking permission of the House to have the honour of coupling my name with the tribute of gratitude and respect which the noble Lord has now proposed that we shall offer to the persons who are the subjects of the Resolution.

VERNON SMITH [a Member of Parliament since 1829]

Sir, although it may appear somewhat presumptuous in me to think that I can add anything to the speeches which we have just heard, yet I hope the House, considering the position which I filled in the councils of the country during the great part of the mutiny in India, will allow me, in a few short sentences, to express my cordial concurrence in the Vote of Thanks which the noble Lord has proposed. During the whole of the anxious autumn of 1857, one of my chief consolations was the confidence which I could repose in the great and illustrious men of whom the noble Lord has spoken in such eloquent terms. When every heart was throbbing with anxiety in England, and even the most sanguine entertained fears for the safety of our Indian empire, what a consolation was it to reflect that we had in the East such men as Canning, Outram, Grant, Mansfield, and the others whose names are included in the Vote of Thanks!

... There is another name not so generally known in England, but known to me from the opportunities I had of becoming acquainted with it – I allude to Major-General Roberts. He is known through the Bombay army as one of the best officers in that service and his achievements, as described by the noble Lord the Secretary for India, have been of invaluable service.

The Resolutions were then put and agreed to.

Resolved, Nemine Contradicente, That the Thanks of this House be given to ... Major General Henry Gee Roberts ... for the eminent skill, courage, and perseverance displayed by [him] during the Military Operations by which the late Insurrection in India has been effectually suppressed.⁸

Major-General Roberts was knighted exactly one month later.

Elgar's Birds

Ed Wiseman

At the outset, I must make clear the following to readers of this article. Firstly, it is not about Elgar's loves and lady friends! Rather, though perhaps a tenuous connection with the great man, I offer, as an ornithologist, a personal presumption as to bird species with which he may have been acquainted in Worcestershire, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Secondly, in the ornithological connection, as far as Worcestershire and Elgarian literature are concerned, I am obliged to admit I am an impostor. My knowledge of that county's avifauna is meagre and field experience much less so and limited only to week-long holidays in July and August, during Three Choirs Festival weeks and then only since the mid 1990s. I must at once, therefore, extend my apologies to real students of Worcestershire's birds. I also acknowledge that my research into Elgar bird references is confined to a few well-known publications. I made no attempt to search primary sources such as letters and other documents but have now incorporated material provided by Martin Bird from his personal research.

Elgar was never happier or so much at peace as when at home in the countryside of his native Worcestershire. His love of the outdoor life, to some extent, was a legacy of his mother's philosophy and teachings. Ann (née Greening) Elgar, described by Michael Kennedy as a 'remarkable woman', was the daughter of a Herefordshire farmer and spent her childhood in the Forest of Dean. She was widely read and much interested in natural history. She was a great influence on Edward and urged her children 'to play outdoors at all times of the year, to take note of the changing seasons and to learn to respect and glory in the natural world';¹ it is also possible that in this respect, close friends such as Dr. Charles Buck, who Elgar met in 1882, were also mentors. They shared many interests, obviously music and a love of the countryside and Buck was also a keen naturalist.

Though his family moved into the city of Worcester when Edward was very young, the countryside was close by and easily accessible. We know that late in life he confided to a close friend 'I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds and longing for something great'; one such incident apparently occurred when he was about six years of age.² I am reminded that it is not only budding musicians whose interests are sparked to such a remarkable degree when so young. It is reputed that a personal bird-watching friend, when at a similar age, remained alone overnight in the New Forest, wrapped in an army greatcoat.

It would be inconceivable to learn that Elgar took no interest in wild birds and their songs; they were an integral element of the countryside, which so inspired him. That this was not so is indicated by references to birds throughout the literature. For example, during his early cycling days, Rosa Burley recounts 'I found he (Elgar) was particularly touched by bird song and that he loved and

8 Hansard, HC Deb, 14 April 1859, Vol.153, cc.1729-65

1 Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape* (London: Robert Hale, 2011), 19.

2 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 19.

knew all the little creatures that darted in and out of the hedges'.³ On another occasion he appeared to be asleep in his sister Polly's garden at Stoke Prior, but opened his eyes to tell a startled maid he was not dozing but listening to a 'symphony' – that of the birds'.⁴ One of Elgar's favourite haunts was Longdon Marsh, though on one occasion, he admitted 'the weather is too cold for me to go and sit in the marsh with my beloved wild creatures to get heartened up and general inspiration'.⁵ Unsurprisingly he often yearned after Longdon. In 1912, soon after he acquired Severn House in London, Rosa Burley recorded Elgar as saying 'I long for a sight of my own country' and that 'he couldn't conduct his music without finding his mind had slipped back to summer days on the Malvern Hills, to Birchwood or to the drowsy peace of Longdon Marsh'.

Wild bird populations were greatly threatened during the Victorian era. For instance, other than natural fluctuations brought about by events such as climatic or migration disasters, birds were shot, netted and snared by fowlers to provide food and income and together with their eggs, were much sought after for fashionable private and national collections. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was formed in late Victorian times to combat the trade in Egret and other birds' plumes, used to adorn women's hats; in Britain, also, Great Crested Grebes and Kittiwakes were killed for their plumage. At the same time, prime habitats, particularly wetlands, were affected by over-exploitation, principally to aid farming prosperity. Longdon Marsh, formerly supporting marsh birds such as the Bittern and butterflies such as the Swallowtail, had already suffered in this way when Elgar first became acquainted with the area. In 1867 the naturalist Edwin Lee wrote 'Longdon Marsh is covered with water in a wet autumnal season and at that time assumes the appearance of an extensive lake. Even in summer a few days of continued rain inundates these flat meadows. In autumn the marsh is covered with geese and the ground, white with feathers presents a strangely barren aspect amidst the cultivated country that slowly advances on its lessening borders'.⁶ The Marsh was finally drained in 1870. Fortunately, in 2001, the purchase of the 120 ha. Hill Court Farm and the Blacklands by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, was made possible by grant-aid from a number of agencies including Worcestershire County Council and Natural England; it is the Trust's intension to restore the marsh to something of its former glory. As devotees of Elgar's music and of Worcestershire's countryside, we should all support this most worthwhile venture.

In *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester* of 1901, R. F. Tomes⁷ listed 207 bird species as having occurred in Worcestershire. A later author, A. J. Harthan, in *The Birds of Worcestershire*,⁸ was of the opinion that seven rarities listed in 1901 were no longer acceptable, on the grounds that there was insufficient detail and so did not justify inclusion on the county list. However during the intervening 45 years, an additional 26 species were added, so that in 1941 the Worcestershire list stood at 226 species, of which of a total of 151 occurring on a regular basis, 97 species nested in the county. Worcestershire's list is currently in excess of 300 species, a significant total for a landlocked county, though it must be recognised that the Severn valley, an obvious bird migration route, lies on a direct line from the open sea via the Bristol Channel.

3 Kevin Allen, *Elgar The Cyclist* (Malvern: Aldine Press, 1997), 16.

4 Michael Grundy, *Elgar's Beloved Country* (Worcester City Council, 1988), 4.

5 Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape* (London: Robert Hale, 2011), 32.

6 Worcestershire Wildlife Trust website.

7 Robert F. Tomes, 'Birds of Worcestershire', in J. W. Willis-Bund (ed.) *The Victoria History of the County of Worcester, Vol. I* (London: Westminster, 1901).

8 Anthony. J. Harthan, *The Birds of Worcestershire* (Worcester: Littlebury, 1941).



A selection of Elgarian birds, led by a Great Auk named Nicholas, and pursued by a Giggleswick cat.

Many of Worcestershire's birds, for example birds of prey such as Red Kites and Buzzards as well as Ravens, were extinct in the county (though all were to return a hundred years later) before or shortly after Elgar's birth, though he would have become familiar with the Kestrel and perhaps Sparrowhawk. He was presumably most acquainted with the commoner countryside and farmland songbirds – those which he encountered as he cycled and walked the lanes and byways of his native shire, in the woods around Birchwood cottage or when fishing the Rivers Avon, Teme or Severn. It is possible he was acquainted, at least in some degree, with at least 83-85 species of which around 62 would have included common residents such as the Nuthatch, Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Robin, Wren, Skylark and Meadow Pipit, regular passage migrants such as Ring Ouzel, winter-visiting thrushes for example, Fieldfare and Redwing and those well-known summer residents, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Whitethroat and of course, Cuckoo, Nightingale, Swallow and Turtle Dove. Elgar may also have known others with a more local or specialised breeding distribution at that time e.g. Corncrake (less common by 1901), Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Reed and Sedge Warbler (all mostly confined to streams and rivers), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (commonly found in old orchards), Nightjar (commonest in north Worcestershire), Red-backed Shrike or Butcher Bird (nested irregularly in 1901, though was still breeding on the Malvern Hills in the mid 1940s), Redshank (a few pairs may have continued to nest at Longdon Marsh in Elgar's time) and Tree Pipit, Woodlark, Wood Warbler and Wryneck (all to be found in the Malvern Hills district, of which the latter, also a denizen of old orchards, became less common after 1901). We know Elgar was very interested in local customs and country sayings, so it is possible he may have known some birds by their local or folk names, for instance, around Upton-on-Severn the Starling was known as a Black-steer and the Chaffinch as a Pie-finch; in the wider Worcestershire countryside, the Magpie was called a Magget.

We know with certainty that Sir Edward and Lady Elgar were acquainted with several of the above species. At Plâs Gwyn, their Herefordshire home, where Lady Elgar provided food and water for wild birds, she records, in her diary for 4 August 1906, the presence of a Willow wren. The old name for the Willow Warbler and a common enough bird, though less so nowadays, especially in southern England, that bird's delightful, cascading song is as much a harbinger of spring as that of the nightingale. In the same entry we learn that Sir Edward and Lady Elgar were not appreciative of all 'local' birds. Their neighbour's particularly noisy parrot was a source of great irritation. On 5 August 1906, Alice records 'E. made great progress with his work – up in the spare room on account of dreadfully shrieking parrot. Wrote to next door and complained – Curious letter in return. Our dear doves complained of ...'; the parrot was removed the following day. The Plâs Gwyn dove-cote and its residents appear to have been a constant source of interest and pleasure. A number of entries in Alice's 1906 diary refer to those birds, including that for 26 January 1906 when she records that they named a newly-hatched dove, 'Bellerophon'. Elgar may have been acquainted with the Nightjar in earlier Worcestershire years. Alice and he certainly

became aware of it when at Brinkwells in West Sussex when, writing to Alice Stuart Wortley, Alice describes ‘the endless paths in the woods and the nightingales, larks and nightjars – birdsong being the only sounds to be heard.’⁹ The Nightjar is a summer resident with a peculiar churring song, more often heard at dusk or during the hours of darkness. Among countrymen, its crepuscular habits earned it the name of Fern Owl; another was Goatsucker as it was thought to have sucked goats’ milk. Associated, though not exclusively, with heathland, a charismatic landscape portrayed so evocatively by Thomas Hardy in *Return of the Native* and by Holst in his tone poem, *Egdon Heath*, this habitat provides an apt home for so strange a bird. Other species specifically mentioned by Elgar were the Nuthatch and Robin, encountered when living at Napleton Grange.¹⁰ Elgar often indulged in word-play, giving the nickname of ‘Great Auk’ to Nicholas Kilburn, a close friend and dedicatee of *The Music Makers*, who hailed from Bishop Auckland in Co. Durham.

In 1934 at least 52 bird species were recorded in and close to the grounds of Shelsley House, Upper Colwell. They included Little Owl and Hobby (a small, fast-flying falcon, a summer visitor to Britain and breeding mostly in the southern half of the country), both of which were very rare in Worcestershire in the early 1900s and probably unknown to Elgar. At the time of his death, more than 60% of Worcestershire’s countryside was under permanent grassland though much was ploughed during and following the Second World War. The Malvern Hills however, other than scrub encroachment on the lower slopes, remain much as Elgar would have remembered them. During 2011, a team of 60 experienced birdwatchers recorded 143 species of birds in and around the immediate surroundings of the Hills and commons. Included were Ravens and Buzzards, both again breeding in Worcestershire since the early 1950s and Red Kite, though not yet nesting, reported annually since the late 1990s. Not only is this indicative of the variety of habitats to be found within a relatively small area, but also the health of those habitats. Underpinned by four Acts of Parliament between 1909 and 1995, in order to protect the rights of commoners and the public and to prevent intrusive development, the Malvern Hills Conservators, formed under the Malvern Hills Act 1884 are responsible for their management. Elgar would be delighted to know his beloved Malverns and their wildlife remain in safe hands.



**May Grafton’s
snapshots of Elgar
at Napleton Grange
surrounded by his
chickens (Arthur
Reynolds collection)**

9 Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape* (London: Robert Hale, 2011), 40.

10 Letter to Carice, 12 May 1927, EBM 284

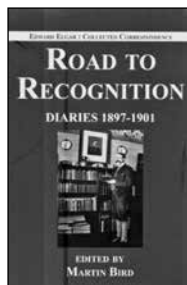
Sir Edward’s funeral, at St Wulstan’s in Little Malvern on 26 February 1934, ‘took place on a brilliantly sunny, crisp day, with snow lying on the hills. One friend later recalled how vigorously the birds were singing – as if they were wishing the great composer a safe passage to the next stage.’¹¹

Acknowledgements

Much of this article appeared in the September 2014 issue of the Southern Branch newsletter *In the South*. My sincere thanks are due to John Kelly for prompting me to contribute ‘something to do with birds and Elgar’, to both he and William Cole for encouragement to offer it to a wider Elgarian readership, to Southern Branch for allowing me to do so and to Martin Bird for kindly allowing me the use of additional material, unearthed during personal researches.

11 Em Marshall, *Music in the Landscape* (London: Robert Hale, 2011), 49.

BOOK REVIEWS



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Martin Bird (editor): *Road to Recognition: Diaries 1897-1901*
Rickmansworth, Elgar Works, 2015

By the time Martin Bird completes his series of the edited diaries of the Elgars we really will know virtually every last detail of the composer's life and that of Alice Elgar, too. It is to her that we owe this information and we can see, through these pages, how Elgar developed as an artist and how his life changed. These changes could be subtle. For example in the first few pages we observe Elgar attending Mass regularly, a habit he was to lose before long. Alice Elgar, the Roman Catholic convert, of course, was a regular attendee and became a worshiper at Spanish Place in London during the war.

Martin Bird has given much of the background to the diary entries so that the context of the entries can be understood and the individuals appreciated and their importance placed in relation to the entry. If I have a criticism it is that some of the background may not be entirely relevant, such as that on page six where a quote from *The Standard* discusses the Schubert centenary celebrations, part of which Alice Elgar attended on 1 February. It is good to know how much the great String Quintet in C major was admired, however.

Any future biographer and note writer will be indebted to the detail contained in this volume. It is also fascinating to see how fashions change and how Elgar emerged as the leading composer of his time to the detriment of his contemporaries. We have the benefit of hind-sight, of course. On 4 May 1899, just one month before the 'Variations', Elgar's *Spanish Serenade* played very much 'second fiddle' to Mackenzie's *The Dream of Jubal* – another name on that long list of British choral works consigned to that enormous pile of forgotten pieces. We know it all too well but it never ceases to surprise how Elgar swept aside his contemporaries and, even if much work has been undertaken to promote the music of Parry and Stanford (to name but two) recently, Elgar's reputation now seems unassailable.

In this volume there, in detail, is the evidence of the march to greatness in the 'Variations' and *The Dream of Gerontius*.

On the front cover of this important book is a hand-coloured photograph of Elgar standing by the bookcase in his study in Craeg Lea. Dominating the bookcase and the composer is a portrait of one of music's greatest revolutionaries, Richard Wagner. This is a reminder of how far Elgar had to go in 1897 and by 1901 how far he had travelled. Elgar was not a revolutionary (in Wagner's sense) but he revolutionised British music, as this book shows. Of course Elgar was an unwitting slayer of reputations but his genius and reputation can now be picked over in the finest detail: 'warts and all'. We can now criticise his music based upon minute evidence and find that the works we consider to be 'great' really do stand the test of time and the 'slings and arrows' which assail them.

Readers do not need me to remind them of the success of *King Olaf* and the 'Variations' and the disastrous first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* (perhaps not quite as disastrous as Elgar believed, as these pages make clear). All this is contained within this valuable volume: an historical document as well as a book of scholarship. We learn, for example, of the potential for a warm friendship that might have developed between Sullivan and Elgar when they met in Leeds in 1898. This was to be frustrated by Sullivan's early death two years later. We read of the perception and quality of contemporary reviews as Bird places diary entries and compositions in context. This is from the *Pall Mall Gazette* of October 1898: 'Before I deal, however, with the new work [Stanford's *Te Deum*] let me mention ... a work of considerably greater artistic importance, also sung this morning, Palestrina's "Stabat Mater".' In March 1901 the *Worcester Herald* commented on a recital in which Elgar had participated as pianist with the violinist Adolf Brodsky and cellist Carl Fuchs: 'At the close Herr Fuchs was enthusiastically recalled no less than three times. The evident desire of the audience for an encore was wisely ignored ... M. Brodsky played Beethoven's Romance in G major, one feature of which distinguishing it from the other three items – it was short ...'.

Then there is Elgar's frustration at having to listen to Alan Gray rehearsing his *A Song of Redemption*: 'it makes me, an artist, sick to see that fool Gray allowed as long to rehearse his blasted rot as I am who produce – with all its many faults – an attempt at something like a "work"! (*Caractacus*). There are some wonderful moments of amusement too. Hans Richter's diary entry of 3 October 1900 is quoted: 'The chorus in *Gerontius* very bad, the poor composer was in great despair; but the solo performance and the orchestra were excellent. In the evening conducted that rubbish Hiawatha. It was well received, Oh!' With this in mind, it is interesting to note Elgar's development as a conductor and the works he conducted such as Spohr's *The Last Judgement* (1899) and Phillip Wolfrum's *Weihnachtsmysterium* (1901). It was not just forgettable works by English composers that Worcester audiences had to tolerate!

What would we have given to sit in the same compartment of the train that conveyed Elgar and Frederic Cowen back to London after their award of honorary degrees by Cambridge University in November 1899? Cowen recalls the only time he collaborated with Elgar in a composition on a postcard to a mutual friend. 'This consisted of a ground bass founded on my initials F.H.C. (H being B natural in German notation) to which Elgar put a counterpoint beginning with his initials E.E. The words were something like this: "We are two Mus. Docs. newly made, returning to our homes", and we signed ourselves "Yours by degrees".'

The book ends with Alice Elgar's diary entry for 31 December 1901. This recorded the Elgars leaving Mainz after attending the first German performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Dusseldorf on 21 December: 'Rough crossing, after very rough train'. The road to recognition had not been smooth but Elgar's genius had now been recognised in Britain and Germany: clearly 'recognition' indeed.

Inevitably, in a book of this complexity there are a few errors such as

in the indexing. These are but small niggles and future generations will be grateful to Martin Bird for his scholarship and the enterprise of Elgar Works in publishing this and the volumes we have and those to come.

Andrew Neill

CD REVIEWS

The Dream of Gerontius

Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), Paul Groves (tenor), John Relyea (bass), Staatsoperchor Dresden, Staatskapelle Dresden, conducted by Sir Colin Davis



Hanssler
PH12017

I have never been a whole-hearted admirer of Colin Davis's Elgar, mainly because his tempi often seem too variable for my taste. But there is no denying the great service he did for Elgar's music with the foreign orchestras that he conducted regularly, chiefly the Boston Symphony, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Dresden Staatskapelle. This new recording comes from a live performance on Palm Sunday 2010 in Dresden, and, despite one or two caveats, is a welcome addition to the burgeoning *Gerontius* discography.

The soloists are excellent. The American tenor Paul Groves sings with great intelligence, colouring his words to great effect when necessary. His 'Novissima hora est' really sounds like an exhausted, dying man, but he has the necessary heft to safely encompass Elgar's more extreme demands. Sarah Connolly's Angel is well-known for her identification with the part. She was the alto soloist in the recent Andrew Davis/Chandos CD, and here again she is the calm, consoling presence at the heart of the work, her voice beautifully produced and even throughout its range. John Relyea was new to me, but he brings a commanding presence to the role of the Priest in Part One, and pleads with sincere emotion as the Angel of the Agony in Part Two. A marvellously rich-toned bass voice.

The Dresden State Opera Chorus is one of the oldest in Europe, founded by Carl Maria von Weber in 1817. Their English diction is excellent and they sing with total assurance in what must have been an unfamiliar work. The actual sound is slightly recessed in the recording, so although the big moments blaze as they should, the overall sound does not have the immediacy of some of the other recent recordings.

My greatest pleasure came in listening to the playing of the Dresden Staatskapelle, which is, after all, one of Europe's finest orchestras. The recording quality really highlights the warmth, clarity and brilliance of the playing, and they obviously relished Elgar's wonderfully radiant scoring.

What of Colin Davis's interpretation? The rich orchestral sound is evident from the start, but it hardly notices the marking *mistico*. Davis also keeps the bass drum rolling through those sudden cut-offs between Figs.9 and 10. So did Britten in his recording, but most cut the sound off completely. Looking at the full score it's an arguable point, but I'm still surprised when it happens! Although I sometimes find Davis's tempi too lethargic, here he surprised me at Fig.12, when I thought the *Andantino* too fast. Part Two also opens rather briskly (again *Andantino*) and I think some of the rapt stillness goes missing

here. But he keeps the 'Praise to the Holiest' chorus moving, and adopts sensible speeds for the Demons' Chorus – wonderful orchestral playing here. The clarity of the orchestral recording never fails to catch the ear – the gong stroke before Fig.17 is clearly audible, the few notes for first horn before Fig.116 delight the ear, and the start of the Angelicals section at Fig.60 (high woodwind and strings, harps and organ) works its usual magic. Davis's love for the music enables him to make some heartfelt *ritenutos* to ease into a new key, or to start a new phrase (as at Fig.123 for example) but I did not like his slamming on the brakes just before Fig.120 – the great crash. In any case the score demands *stringendo* – an increase of speed and tension. But my biggest disappointment comes at Fig.126, the 'Angel's Farewell' marked *Andante* but here a more lugubrious *Adagio*. He did the same in his previous recording, the 2005 LSO version, and although the singers – Anne Sofie von Otter in the earlier version and Sarah Connolly in this – sing it beautifully, I do find the tempo and tension sag at this pace.

As a live recording an audience must have been present, but they are totally and wonderfully silent, unlike the professional Russian coughers on the recent Svetlanov CD. The discs come with a lavish booklet in German and English, with articles, interviews and photos galore.

So, not my first choice, but there is much to admire in this recording and it is very good to have another recording of this great work from overseas.

Barry Collett



Somm *Céleste*
SOMMCD 0145

Elgar: String Quartet (arr. Matthews)
Arnold: String Quartet No.2 (arr. Matthews)
Simpson: Allegro Deciso (arr. Simpson)
Orchestra of St Paul's, conducted by Ben Palmer

The question that must be asked whenever an arrangement for one combination of instruments is made of a work originally written for another is, 'Why bother?' Some arrangements undoubtedly add something to surprise and delight the listener, taking the original to fresh and exhilarating levels. The arrangements of Johann Strauss waltzes by Schoenberg, Webern and Berg come into this category, as do Liszt's transcriptions for piano of Schubert songs. Alternatively, the impetus may come from the performers themselves, wishing either simply to have some fun or, as here, to expand the repertoire of music available to them. Substantial works for string orchestra are few in number, so the temptation to press works for string quartet into service is understandable.

But why pick on Elgar, whose only quartet is clearly the gift of an accomplished chamber musician to other chamber musicians? The arranger, David Matthews, has a light, almost undetectable touch; little is added other than some reinforcement of the cello part by the double basses and some strengthening of block harmonies, making the climaxes more than usually

fulsome. But at what cost? So much of what is important in Elgar's quartet is communicated not through the notes alone but through the mechanics of string playing: the attack of the bow stroke; its position relative to the bridge; the use of *portamento*; the timing, speed and amplitude of vibrato. All such stamps of the players' personality are inevitably averaged out when the piece is played three or four to a part. The Orchestra of St Paul's is a first class ensemble, and each section does its best to sound like a soloist. Their pianissimos are truly magical. Every player is having fun, and I suppose it is possible that some members of their audience may not know the original. But for me they need not have bothered.

I felt happier about the Malcolm Arnold. The quartet in question is his second, a piece previously unknown to me, and the arranger is again David Matthews. Arnold was not by training a string player, and this quartet at least does not lose in transcription some of the subtleties sacrificed in the Elgar. Indeed, much of the writing being on a symphonic scale, it sounds as if it was conceived for performance in a large hall. I thought it was wonderful – exciting and abrasive at times, melodic, almost kitsch at others, with some hauntingly beautiful chorale-like passages. The second movement, beginning with a violin cadenza played solo and dissolving into a Scottish-ish jig, is astonishing. The orchestra's virtuosity is admirable throughout. Having not heard the original version, I suspect it would be a disappointment.

Robert Simpson made his own arrangement of the *Allegro deciso* from his third string quartet. It's a relentless piece, aggressively rhythmic, and defiantly discordant until the final E major chord – the sort of thing you might like, if you like that sort of thing.

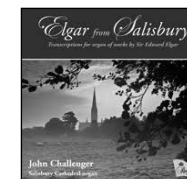
I suppose the test of this CD is would I return to it to hear these performances in preference to the originals. No, yes, and no, in that order.

Roger Neighbour

The Kingdom (Prelude); Une Idylle; Imperial March; Lux Christi (Meditation); Coronation March; Serenade for Strings (Larghetto); For the Fallen; Empire March; The Dream of Gerontius (Prelude and Angel's Farewell)

John Challenger (organ)

This new CD from Salisbury Cathedral is a masterpiece. The Assistant Director of Music, John Challenger, performs transcriptions of Elgar's orchestral music on the grand 1870 Willis organ, using the huge resources of this beautiful instrument to the utmost effect. From the confident opening bars of the Prelude to *The Kingdom* to the final diminuendo of the 'Angel's Farewell' from *The Dream of Gerontius*, the musicianship and organ management displayed throughout this 77-minute programme are beyond



Regent Records
REGCD463

praise. The production and recording quality are also of a high order. Perfect balance has been achieved between the physically separated divisions of the organ, something that listeners in the building (including the organist) do not easily experience.

Challenger makes it clear in his excellent notes that his intention is to show that organ transcriptions should not simply be imitations of orchestral sound. Rather they should stand as satisfying musical entities on their own, using whatever resources a particular instrument has to offer. He certainly achieves this aim at Salisbury – every piece on the CD is as enjoyable as the orchestral original, and many seem to shed new light on the music. There is an underlying feeling of energy, with wide and frequent extremes of volume and tone colour in the big pieces. Elgar, who reputedly thought that English performances tended to be insipid, would surely approve.

The choice of music has been carefully planned to show many facets of Elgar's complex character, from introverted sadness to exuberant panache. Two pieces are skilful transcriptions by Challenger himself (*The Kingdom Prelude*, Op.51, and the 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*, Op.29). A colleague, Tom Winpenny, transcribed the exhilarating *Empire March*. The rest are the work of several Edwardian musicians, including Harvey Grace and Herbert Brewer. There are three markedly contrasted marches – the *Imperial*, Op.32, the *Coronation*, Op.65, and the *Empire* from 1924. Between these are quieter pieces including *Une Idylle*, Op.4, and the well-known Larghetto from the *Serenade for Strings*, Op.20. In these the organ's superbly rich string stops are frequently highlighted, often as a backing to a wide selection of solo stops, but sometimes on their own – a lush tone-colour to which few organists are privileged to have access these days. The performance of the heart-searching and tragic *For the Fallen*, Op.80, is intensely moving, demonstrating one of many perfectly controlled gradual crescendos, right up to the entry of the magnificent Salisbury Tuba. The final pieces are the 'Prelude' and the 'Angel's Farewell' from *The Dream of Gerontius*, arranged by Herbert Brewer. Challenger gives this transcendent music a spellbinding performance, letting the music evolve effortlessly and unhurriedly towards its utterly peaceful conclusion. The disc would be well worth buying for these last pieces alone.

In conclusion this CD represents an important addition to the oeuvre of Elgar performance. It will appeal to Elgar specialists, but also to anyone who enjoys the sound of a great Cathedral organ being put through its paces in an utterly masterful manner.

Richard Godfrey

Richard Godfrey, formerly a consultant chest surgeon, now works with the Director of Music, David Halls, as an organ consultant to the Diocese of Salisbury.

I could find myself in a quandary: being brother to David Halls might lead me to eulogise unthinkingly this product of Salisbury Cathedral; yet my being a colleague of that sternest of critics, Barry Collett, might lead me to dismiss out of hand any deviation of scoring from that decreed by Elgar, one of music's finest orchestrators.

Happily, I can simply echo Richard Godfrey's encomium and state how much I enjoyed this CD. Each piece is superbly played, the notes are informative for the Elgar novice and expert alike (be she an organist or not), and the arrangements are an exhibition of the expertise of each practitioner. If I had to choose a favourite, it would be the 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*, for the transcription adds a depth to the music that, for me, the original orchestration has never quite managed. Harshly, on the other hand, I would criticise the *Empire March* as successful in making the Willis jig like a Wurlitzer, though it is the weakest work on the disc anyway: I wasn't impressed when I premiered the Piano Trio arrangement of the March in 2007 and Tom Winpenny fails, alas, to improve on Elgar.

But all this is minor cavilling. This is a CD that will give any listener great pleasure, and I hope will lead to more organists featuring such highlights in their own recitals.

Steven Halls

Elgar: *Pleading; In moonlight; Speak music!*
Bridge: Mary Coleridge settings
Britten (arr.): *The last rose of summer*
Denis Browne: *To Gratiana dancing & singing*
Coates: *Bird songs at eventide; I heard you singing*
Gurney: *By a bierside*
Molloy: *Love's old sweet song*
Murray: *I'll walk beside you*
Novello: *We'll gather lilacs; My life belongs to you*
Quilter: *Seven Elizabethan Lyrics; Love's philosophy*
Haydn Wood: *Roses of Picardy; A brown bird singing*
Kathryn Rudge (mezzo-soprano), James Baillieu (piano)



Champs Hill Records
CHRDD092

Many readers may well wonder why the *Journal* should publish a review of a recording that contains only three songs by Elgar (*Speak Music!*, *Pleading* and *In Moonlight*). The performances can be recommended without qualification, and the fact that only a little of Elgar's music is recorded here is no reason to pass over this wonderful debut disc. It is the recorded unveiling of the voice of a young singer who has the potential to become one of the best loved and respected of her generation.

'Katie' Rudge won the *Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award for the Singing of Strauss* in 2009. For those of us at this event, it was obvious that

a remarkable personality had offered her talent to a wider world beyond the walls of the Royal Northern College. Quite simply she electrified the evening as excellent diction, musicality and intelligence stole the show. Miss Rudge hails from Liverpool and her singing of *You'll never walk alone* is something to be heard. Indeed, this alone, has the ability to reduce even an audience of four to tears! Kathryn Rudge has been endowed with a remarkable talent; one that is on show on this disc even without the benefit of her presence. She has a personality that infuses and lights up her live performances and much of this and her commitment to phrasing and the line of a song comes through in this recital.

The selection of songs ranges from the sentimental (Ivor Novello's *We'll gather lilacs*) to the profound (Ivor Gurney's *By a Bierside* and the Quilter settings). For each song Rudge brings a seriousness and honesty aided by her sympathetic accompanist, James Baillieu, another young musician of prodigious talent. In recital, both artists have the ability to grab the attention of the audience from the beginning and often a recital will end with Britten's arrangement of *The last rose of summer* that in Rudge's hands is a masterly display of controlled emotion. Perhaps that is her secret and, through this, she has the ability to make all the songs recorded here sound as if they mean something very personal to her. Both Rudge and Baillieu are as one in W. Denis Browne's poignant *Gratiana Dancing & Singing*, briefly joining with the poet who gazes on a beautiful woman. Browne died in the dust, flies and heat of Gallipoli in June 1915. In this song 'the Graces [truly] danced' and these artists spoke for 'Apollo [as he] play'd'.

The three Elgar songs are well known, *In Moonlight* being one of those examples where the words fit an already composed melody, seemingly with little contrivance. In this performance we are beguiled by Miss Rudge's clarity of words and her interpretation of Elgar's tune which can seem over-sentimental in lesser hands. *Pleading* similarly benefits from this approach. Some other highlights are the two Gurney settings and Wood's *Roses of Picardy* which is interpreted without artifice. Of course Rudge, only thirty in 2016, would be the first to agree she has much to learn, but if you want to hear a singer as she takes her first steps into the limelight and who has the potential of a distinguished and, I hope, great career ahead of her then do not hesitate and buy this record.

Andrew Neill

LETTERS

'And the Bridge is Love' – English Music for Strings

From Andrew Keener

I agree with Richard Wiley (April *Journal*, page 50) that it's a pity that nobody thought to name the excellent solo quartet players in Julian Lloyd Webber's ECO recording of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* (in fact I did, but no-one at Naxos seemed to agree, if their omission is any guide!). They were the violinists Stephanie Gonley and Annabelle Meare, the violist Daisy Spears and the 'cellist Tim Lowe, all of whom occupied the front desks throughout these sessions.

The demise of King Olaf

From Barry Collett

Martin Bird's excellent article in the last *Journal* about the neglect of the marvellous *King Olaf* also had me pondering why such an exciting and dramatic work exists only on the very periphery of the choral societies' repertoire. One of the reasons, I'm sorry to say, is that a great many choral society conductors have a very limited view of what they should be delivering. Looking at choral programmes over a great number of years, the vast majority are centred around religious works, which presumably is deemed to be good and wholesome for the British concert-goer. So the same tired round of two or three Requiems or a few Masses is repeated year after year, and the repertoire of secular cantatas seems to be largely ignored. We are lucky these days to get a Bach cantata, but the whole range of Romantic period works in this form is hugely neglected. There are fine works by Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Grieg, Saint-Saëns, Dvořák, Rimsky-Korsakov ... the list goes on. And that is without the acreage of cantatas by British composers that used to be found, page after page, in the old Novello vocal scores. Surely there must be some jewels amongst the dross?

Elgar's cantatas, from *The Black Knight* to *Caractacus* fall into this category, in spite of their worth. Personal experience of all of them, in live performances as well as on CD, proves that they are popular with both singers and instrumentalists once they have the chance to perform them, and audience reaction is always enthusiastic. I only disagree with Martin in his final sentence 'we may just have to accept that ... *Olaf's* day is done'. I do not believe that. It's not that long ago when one was extremely lucky to catch a rare performance of *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom* or *The Music Makers*. Now, and thanks in part to sponsorship by Elgar in Performance, these works are regularly performed, and not just in this country. Perhaps it is time for the Elgar Society to take up the challenge of seeing that his early cantatas are performed. There are now good CD recordings of all of them, so at least timid choral conductors can hear them before taking up the challenge.

... and in response to my statement that 'I'd be interested to know if any member of the Elgar Society has ever knowingly read a word of Longfellow other than in a musical setting', Lynn Richmond writes:

... As children, we North American members not only read Longfellow but also memorized Longfellow!

Arthur

From Andrew Neill

John Edwards's letter (April 2015) concerning the SOMM recording of the music of *Arthur* is important. Mr. Edwards makes the point that he was at the 2012 performance of the music in Dorchester on Thames when the great actor Robert Hardy read excerpts from the play together with a brief linking narration. I was responsible for the 'editing' of the play into the excerpts Mr. Hardy read and the writing of the linking narration. This meant that what Mr. Edwards heard was based on my decision as an editor and I would be the first to admit that this could probably have been done better.

Now to the disc. I had some involvement in the recording and must first of all confirm that there was no question that '*Arthur* was crudely fitted to accommodate the other works on the disc when it should have been the most important' as Mr. Edwards suggests. The original conception was to see if a recording of all Elgar's setting of Binyon's words could be made with the *Arthur* music at its heart. Originally we had hoped sufficient funds would be available to make a version similar to that performed in 2012. Unfortunately this would have meant a two CD production. This, in itself, was not prohibitive. However, serious consideration was given by (in particular) the Society's Council to including a version with words. After all the Society supported this part of the CD. In the end, and this a matter of opinion, it was felt that what worked in a live performance where the audience had no knowledge of the music probably would not have worked on disc. I think this was right. That is why I went to substantial lengths to give a detailed synopsis of the action in the notes to the CD. I would be the first to admit that some of the brief excerpts in the recording make little sense unless the context is understood (hence my notes). However, had these been omitted, then I would expect to be explaining in another version of this letter why some of Elgar's music was ignored!

Mr. Edwards goes on to imply that the music for *Arthur* 'was ... chopped up and omitted as in the new recording'. Actually the opposite is the case: All the music for *Arthur* was recorded and was neither 'chopped up nor omitted'. The order of the music was also adhered to precisely and more music was recorded than performed in 2012. I do not believe the play would work on the stage nowadays (it has a cast of at least twenty-nine). The best solution would be a radio broadcast with Elgar's music being played in context. I have tried, without success, to interest the BBC in this idea. If any member would like to take on this challenge then please do so!

Variation XIII

From Don O'Connor (percussionist)

Re the snare-drum sticks vs. pennies dropped on the tympani head to get a certain effect. Much as I liked & admired Norman Del Mar, I must side with Sir Edward Elgar for snare-drum sticks. Regardless of the pennies' size – and as a kid in London, I grew up with the big ones – dropping pennies is simply too unreliable. With snare-drum sticks, you can sustain that hollow roll for as long as the composer likes. Your society puts out a fine *Journal*.

100 YEARS AGO ...

Back from the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon on 1 May, Elgar was 'turning to his music. On the 7th the *Lusitania* was torpedoed off the Irish coast, with the loss of 1,198 lives: a 'truly German deed', thought Alice. On the 13th Albert Sammons and Elgar performed the Violin Concerto together for the first time at the Festival of British Music at Queen's Hall. Peter Warlock was there for the *Daily Mail*, and thought that the 'mingled strength and tenderness of his tone, coupled with brilliance of execution and flawless intonation, made of his performance a miracle of beauty'.

The Elgars hosted a concert at Severn House on 18 May in aid of the 'Music in War time Society. Really a great success – nice attentive audience only wishing to be pleased E. very kind & good – Result £26'. The 24th was 'Empire Day. E. put up the Flag'. Now composition took precedence over the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve: Elgar skipped 'the sham fight day', and was 'at work at 4 a.m.' on *Polonia*, which he completed on 1 June. He then went to The Hut, and on to Stoke Prior to stay with Pollie, returning on 10 June: 'Such joy', thought Alice.

Henry Embleton came on the 14th, a 'delightful visit. Said he had just the same intentions about 3rd Part of the 'Apostles' when the war should be happily over'. Two days later the vocal score of *For the Fallen* was completed, and Alice began to set out the orchestral score while Elgar again went to Stoke. He returned on the 19th, having been to Worcester and seen 'almost all old friends – Hydes, Munns, Norburys &c', and the Leicesters. On the 26th he was in Bournemouth, to conduct *Carillon*, with Lalla Vandervelde, and *The Wand of Youth*.

Polonia received its first performance, at Queen's Hall, on 5 July: 'The first notes seemed to open out a new world – the work magnificent & enormous enthusiasm, the real roar there is for E. his own roar'. On the 7th he 'took his darling score of the Voix dans le Désert to be copied [at] Goodwin & Tabb'.

On the 20th they visited 'Hookland', a house in Liphook, Hampshire, where Rosa Burley worked as a finishing governess. Next day Elgar was 'raser worried over his music & wanting change – Started for Stoke about 2 – Decided to take Hookland for possible dates in Augt. A. so delighted. Felt we must go there'. From Stoke Elgar went again to The Hut, returning to Severn House on the 26th where he was 'turning to the Binyon Poems again' and 'writing much'.

On 1 August Alice's poem, 'August 4th 1914 – A Retrospect', was published in *The Bookman*, and next day Elgar commenced a fortnight's engagement at the Coliseum conducting *Carillon* twice daily with the Belgian actor Carlo Liten. They shared the bill with 'Campbell & Barer Comedy Cyclists' and the 'Five Petleys Aerial Trapezialists'. During the run he saw 'Clara Butt about conducting Gerontius': the start of her plans for a week of performances at the Albert Hall.

The Coliseum commitment finished, they 'Started for Hookland', which Elgar 'thought lovely – A. much relieved', especially the resident dog, Ship. They returned to Severn House on 30 August: next day Elgar was 'restless & wanting to go away again'.

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