

# Peter Warlock Society

## Newsletter 96

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The Journal of the Peter Warlock Society – Spring 2015

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## Editorial

Welcome to *Newsletter 96* and once again we thank Music Sales for their generous support in printing it for us. My sincere thanks also go to those who have contributed to this and past editions of the Newsletter.

We have two major articles in this edition, both of which are of particular interest to me as they are, in modern parlance, 'game changers'. It can so often be the case that we gain impressions of people and events that may not be wholly accurate. These two articles, *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* by John Alabaster and *Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* by John Mitchell, both challenged my former perceptions of these people and their significance in relation to the world of Warlock. I wonder if they will yours?

Reviews include some unusual events: a summer boat trip, a performance of arrangements from *Capriol* for four flutes and an arrangement of *Bethlehem Down* for women's voices. The main series of reviews are of the *Peter Warlock 120th Birthday Celebrations* held at the British Library last

October. There is also a review of the *Peter Warlock 120th Birthday Concert* given by students at the Birmingham Conservatoire and a review of an excellent performance of *The Curlew* in Canterbury earlier in March.

We were saddened to hear of the death of John P Evans last November and we have included an obituary consisting of words taken from the eulogy that was read at John's funeral.

Please do write and send me an account, however brief, of any Warlock related events you may attend, or, indeed, anything at all relating to the world of Warlock that you think might be of interest to members.

Remember, I am happy to receive material for the Newsletter at any time, but to guarantee consideration for inclusion in the Autumn edition, **31 July 2015** is the deadline. My full contact details are on the front cover. I do hope you enjoy this edition of the Newsletter!

Michael Graves  
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*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family*

John Alabaster



Elizabeth Poston

Robert Nichols, writing to Cecil Gray in 1933, thought that their friend, Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock), could not be understood if the ‘girls’ in his life were ‘indicated only in the most shadowy way’<sup>1</sup>. By the same token, we cannot fully understand Elizabeth without knowing more of her relationship with Heseltine and his family.

Whilst a number of ‘the girls in his life’ feature in the correspondence of the Heseltine family<sup>2</sup>, Elizabeth is conspicuously absent, that is, until a couple of months after Warlock’s death on 17 December 1930 when, on 13 February, after the inquest and the burial, she wrote to his mother, Mrs. Edith Buckley Jones and, two weeks later – following the Memorial Concert to Warlock on 23 February – to his friend, the poet Robert Nichols<sup>3</sup>.

The small fragment of her letter to his mother published to date offer only a glimpse of Elizabeth’s involvement with the Heseltines, whereas the entire letter<sup>4</sup> sheds much more light on the character of all parties concerned. We read of her compassion and are able to recognise her unique place in Warlock’s life, and to gain an understanding of her later

public assessment of him and his music. In particular, we can assess some of her attitudes: her criticism of some of his friends; her unwillingness to be drawn about the character of her friendship; and her lack of enthusiasm for the enquiries later made to her by the Peter Warlock Society.

Above all, her long letter focuses primarily on offering sympathy and comfort and understanding to Mrs. Buckley Jones and also suggesting a meeting while, at the same time, giving some indication of the depth of her feeling for Warlock, as well as gently hinting at the reason for his suicide.

I have had to wait to write to you all these weeks since Christmas. I shall never be able to tell you how you have lived in my thoughts all this time – and I feel almost too diffident to write.[...] There can surely be no grief in this whole world greater than your own – & I feel silent before it and unable to find words. I only beg to give you my whole sympathy & sorrow, from the depths of all I have felt for you through it all, & to speak of him to this one person who is always his own – his mother.

[...] Surely, surely there can be nothing for him but the ultimate Beauty, & the serenity and happiness, which he seemed unable to find here.

His restlessness & the dissatisfaction of the artist in him seemed part of his life’s seeking & striving after loveliness. He was so touchingly & amazingly humble about his music – and he did get dreadfully depressed about it, & it is so terrible to think of him having such intense suffering over it.

[...] the realization has to be faced every day as life goes on, that the dear person we loved is gone from our sight.

[...] I hope very much to be able to come to the [Memorial] concert on the 23rd [February]. As I expect to be staying in Town over it, I wonder if it would be possible to see you, in the event of you coming up – even for just a little while? I should love to very much. I suggest it most diffidently, and should of course understand if you did not feel inclined. But if you can find the chance, & would care to, perhaps you would have tea with me quietly somewhere the day following the concert, – or any day or time which suits you. It is my constant thought of his mother, more than anyone in the world, which prompts me to ask you, & to write – & I do hope you will forgive me. I simply don’t know how to tell you what I have felt for you over this. All my life I shall never cease to think of you & hope that you will be comforted & that Nigel [Edith’s grandson] will be a joy to you.

## Articles

### *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

Elizabeth also sought to explain the beginning and the nature of her friendship with Philip and her understanding as well as her appreciation of his music:

I knew Philip very well, though not for a great many years. I first became acquainted with him in the musical world, through musical associations & friends in common, at a time when I was still studying, & on the threshold of my own career (though this was later arrested by a serious illness).

By what is, I suppose, the accident of birth and circumstances, I was never dependent on having to work, & music has always been to me work, simply for the great love of it. Partly for this reason, & also because I have always loved my country home rather than town life, I was not a habitual member of Chelsea circles, like many of our friends – & perhaps this was why my friendship with Philip was rather un-associated & apart from the rest, & how I came to know him well & in rather a different way from a good many other people who knew him.

His music, of course, had always attracted me very deeply since I came to know it – as much by the perception of the keen literary mind behind it as for the worth of the musical talent itself; & as I got to know him, we found that we shared many views in common on art.

He was kind & interested in the few things of mine already published, & I was deeply interested in all his work – his Elizabethan researches & his great work he did on Delius, & we used to discuss & study all sorts of artistic questions, & go together to concerts – days which I shall always look back upon as some of the most delightful & stimulating of my life.

It was impossible to be near him & grow in knowledge of his whole personality, without the realization of how much fuller life became for contact with his radiant & vital mind & spirit, & all that was so beautiful in him. His affectionate friendship was always the most delightful & happy thing for me: – one which brought so much joy & fullness of interest to life & the particular aspects of art which we most cared for – & which now seems to have taken with him the joy & light which his life gave to the people who loved him.

Elizabeth had been only about 19 and just at the threshold of a promising musical career when, in 1924 she first met Warlock<sup>5</sup>. At 17 she had written *Song of Innocence*<sup>6</sup> and the moving setting of Thomas Vautor's text of 1619, *Sweet Suffolk Owl*<sup>7</sup>. She had then had her *Carol* for two sopranos and piano published by Joseph Williams Ltd<sup>8</sup>. Warlock

by contrast, who was eleven years older, was already an established composer and author, having just peaked in his output of songs<sup>9</sup> which had been well reviewed in the press<sup>10</sup>. He had published a book on Delius<sup>11</sup>, had his *The Curlew* selected for publication by the Carnegie Trust and also chosen as one of the works representative of British works at a festival in Salzburg in June 1924. He was included in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*<sup>12</sup>, was a critic, scholar and music editor and was widely travelled in Europe and North Africa. He was recollected by Blunt<sup>13</sup> as;

That vivid creature with the handsome face, fair hair and pointed beard, [who] was bound to attract attention [...] No one was quicker at melting barriers than Philip. He was perfectly at ease with all kinds of people, and so were they with him [...] He had that rarest quality in human beings, that when you were with him you were never dull. But what was the secret of that affection which he inspired. He had great charm and a brilliant mind but [...] he was very modest. He never put on airs. And his was a most generous spirit.

Other acquaintances mentioned his splendid command of words and his way of looking people full in the eye when addressing them<sup>14</sup>, his eyes, 'piercing but friendly'<sup>15</sup>.

At a *tête à tête* with her friend, Joan Littlejohn in 1979 – and, as it happened, on the anniversary of Warlock's death – Elizabeth confided that she had been determined to get to know Warlock and had therefore made a point of getting to know the people he knew. What drew her to him we do not know exactly but Elizabeth later explained<sup>16</sup> that, as the child of a comparatively old man, she had never since childhood really turned to her contemporaries but almost invariably to older people, 'I was only just about grown up when I met Warlock, yet he seemed to be there, only in his thirties, of a far removed generation, and all his lot too.' She had told Mrs. Buckley Jones, and repeated to Nichols, that they 'met first over music and through musical association & mutual friends'<sup>17</sup>. One who may well have been influential in this rôle was her tutor Ralph Vaughan Williams who had been impressed by five Warlock songs published by OUP in 1922 and had then commissioned a set of three carols for solo, chorus and orchestra for the Bach Choir Christmas concerts<sup>18</sup>.

It has been suggested<sup>19</sup> that, on her side, there may have been signs of 'an almost adolescent infatuation' but there can be little doubt about the depth of her understanding

*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

and respect for his qualities. This was demonstrated later, for example in her various broadcasts, particularly her *Dispelling the Jackals*<sup>20</sup> which has been described as ‘a wonderfully revealing character study’<sup>21</sup>. Joan was convinced that Elizabeth adored him<sup>22</sup>, an opinion shared by another close friend, Gunvor Stallybrass<sup>23</sup>. And towards the end of her life, she told Simon Champion that she had been Phil’s girlfriend<sup>24</sup>. Ursula Vaughan Williams, in a broadcast, went much further, saying she felt that Elizabeth’s meeting Warlock was ‘the most important thing in her life that had happened to her when she was too young to be able to manage it, as she would have done in later life’, adding, ‘it was a great shame because it probably made other relationships impossible by comparison. It coloured the whole of her life’<sup>25</sup>. Included in that broadcast were the few words that Elizabeth was prepared to say on the subject: ‘as a lover, he was gentle; that’s all I am going to say.’

While music was probably the most important of their shared passions, love of the English countryside was another, which played a significant part in the development of their relationship, as she explained to Mrs. Buckley Jones;

I got to know him most well, perhaps, through his fondness for the country. I got ill & had often to be away, but there were times when I was at home & he was busy in Town & felt a longing to get into the country. When I realised that he felt tired or restless, I used to drive him in the car down into the heart of the country for the day, where he seemed to get rested & happy again, & liked to walk & wander about the woods & fields.

It is the Philip that I most like to look back upon now – so simple & carefree, & so much a boy, in spite of the brilliant mind of the man and artist, – delighting in all the simple country things & people, & their manners & sayings, & in the flowers & birds & moods of nature. I remember his love of honeysuckle. It will always make me think of him.

Once in early summer, when he was feeling depressed about his work he said he was going down to Kent [to the cottage in Eynesford occupied since 1924] to smell the honeysuckle – and I recollect how vividly he told me of the ecstasy of his early recollections as a boy, of honeysuckle near his home.

I always thought that he had the greatest capacity in himself for Beauty which any man could possibly possess – Perhaps, it would seem, always too great & too intense a beauty.

One can only look in awe & the utmost reverence upon such rare spirits, which are like meteors in the world. By their very nature & being they seem fundamentally apart from all men, and are themselves mysteries which no one may penetrate, with heights & depths of suffering & spiritual states at which, I imagine scarcely anyone, even their nearest & dearest people, may guess.

Ordinary standards of life & civilization do not seem to be applicable to them – One is only conscious of something great & mysterious, defying comprehension, & demanding the greatest & widest love & understanding on the part of those who belong to them.

Elizabeth in her letter to Nichols<sup>27</sup> expanded on her own interest in the countryside and how that affected their relationship:

Partly, I think, because I love the country and have happened never to be dependent upon having to work, or be in the midst of things in Town for longer at any time than my inclination bade, and perhaps because of a predisposition to be at times a recluse where a garden, my books & my piano are concerned, I knew Phil also rather more independently, in that there were many occasions when we met apart from the general crowd of everyone else one knew – and it is these times which stand out in my mind as the ones in which the knowledge & realisation of him grew, as he admitted me by degrees to his extraordinary mind & spirit. As I came to know him better, the association became as much a literary as a musical one. I saw & knew a good deal of his work & we discussed many projects together.’

Elizabeth, encouraged, as she said, by Phil, composed some dozen solo songs and two choral works, which were published by Boosey & Hawkes in 1928. Several of the songs were set to words by 16th and 17th century poets and others were also identified<sup>28</sup> as having already been set by Warlock<sup>29</sup>.

Elizabeth, in some ways had an advantage over Warlock, having had a formal musical education and already become an accomplished pianist. He, on the other hand, had ‘learned little of the practice of music in its practical application, and this was a cause of a fundamental problem in his technique. He never solved it.’<sup>30</sup> So she was able to act, not only as his amanuensis<sup>31</sup> but to play over his piano accompaniments to him when he was composing<sup>32</sup> or as soon as they were written<sup>33</sup>. (Being so involved, one wonders whether she

## Articles

### *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

had a hand in pruning the piano part of his *Mr. Bellock's Fancy*, composed in 1920, and revised in 1930.) She said that, 'The devastating jangle when several of us stood round him, trying through a new song on the ancient upright which was his mobile companion, simply had to be heard to be believed'<sup>34</sup> and also that his accompaniments could be fiendishly difficult; 'they even foxed such masters as Ernest Lush'<sup>35</sup>. Incidentally, her own mastery of them, was well demonstrated later, in 1945, at a Warlock Memorial concert at Lancaster with René Soames, when E. Arnold Dowbiggin persuaded her to play some 30 song accompaniments from memory<sup>36</sup>, what he later described as 'a remarkable feat and proof of dedicated perception and devotion'<sup>37</sup>.

Elizabeth's second concern at the time of the inquest, as she told Mrs. Buckley Jones, seems to have been, not so much her own ill health at the time, or her own grief, but the need to look after Philip's partner Barbara Peache<sup>38</sup> in London because he had been fond of her & she had been loyal & devoted to him. She wanted to establish good relations between her and Mrs. Buckley Jones, and it was also necessary to deal with Barbara's difficult mother as well as prepare for the formalities on 23 December. Elizabeth's health failed again immediately afterwards but she was later able to write again to Mrs. Buckley Jones and evidently went down to her home at *Cefyn-Bryntalch* in Wales to look after her, as she explained at length in her letter to Nichols:

'...there was so much to see to before the concert that life became a rush which I could only cope rather less quickly than usual and an attempt to write to you from Cefn Bryntalch the other day had to be abandoned, as the days & more than half the nights were taken up with Mrs. Buckley-Jones. I had to give myself up to her & it left little or no time in which to write letters.'

Returning to attend the Memorial Concert, she brought Edith's son, Nigel, aged 13½ from Shrewsbury School on 23 February and made a point of sitting by Barbara and introducing her to everyone. The meeting with Mrs. Buckley Jones must have gone well, for Barbara was first invited to tea and then to stay with her for a week (and there was at least one further visit a few years later<sup>39</sup>).

Although Barbara had been close to Warlock since the time they had lived at Eynesford, she was only one of a dozen or so 'girls in his life' and Elizabeth confided to Nichols, that this caused her to hesitate before turning up at the inquest:

[...] when he died, I felt that I could help in some ways as perhaps no one else could in quite the same manner.

But the difficulty of approaching it all, and my natural feeling of diffidence was considerable, as you may imagine – & it struck me ironically at first, that the position might lead to hindrances and misapprehensions instead of help. At a time when I expected that anyone & anything might crop up, and in particular, no small number of females, each a claimant on the past & shrouded in her own possessive woe and mystery, it seemed to me that to appear at the head of such a band, whether they should happen to come forward or not, would be a very doubtful help – & a fantastic situation which Phil would have been the first to appreciate!

At all events, I could not find it possible to treat what had to be dealt with of Phil's life with anything but very particular reserve & respect after his death. It was entirely unnecessary in my opinion, to explain positions – whether they might concern myself or anyone else – but to deal with them as quietly & wisely as possible, – for when all the world was ready to become spectacular, & the press ravening for chance crumbs which might be dropped unwisely anywhere, anything of the spectacular was the first thing to be avoided.

It is clear that by using the phrase, 'at the head of such a band', she considered herself, in some way, different from, if not superior to the others. Certainly some of the others were of passing sexual interest to Warlock, either discarded by him (as was his wife 'Puma') or prudently discarding him or keeping their distance. One exception, Winifred Baker, present at the inquest, but not mentioned by Elizabeth, had been known to him since 1919 but she was described as 'a lump of a woman [...] she was completely dumb and never uttered a word; she just used to sit' and had 'no mental or spiritual attraction'<sup>40</sup>, never drank and was ridiculed by his friends. Yet she was able to express her love and faith in him in her letters and, towards the end of his life (on 7 June 1930)<sup>41</sup> after a period of agonizing soul-searching, he seems to have realised how cruelly he had treated her, apologized at length and avowed that she had been his first true love. Subsequently, in the small hours before his death (having seen her the previous Friday), he made out a penciled Will in her favour, not that it could replace the extant legal Will leaving everything to his composer friend, Bernard van Dieren. She was described by Barry Smith as 'a significant yet curious emotional anchor in his turbulent life'.<sup>42</sup>

*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

The other exception, Barbara, was described as a 'very quiet, attractive girl, quite different from Phil's usual type'<sup>43</sup> but devoid of *éclat*.<sup>44</sup> She had known him since December 1924 and, having an allowance of £200 a year, contributed to their household expenses. She said they were happy together, though on the Sunday before his death he had talked of separation in January and of then committing suicide.

What seems to have distinguished Elizabeth from all the others were the interests she shared with Warlock, apart from a mutual love of the English countryside. These were mainly musical – particularly composition, especially of songs and other small-scale works, and drawing on medieval and Elizabethan literature for lyrics – all of which made for intellectual compatibility. They loved and spent time together in the English countryside. Furthermore, she was well versed in foreign languages, especially French, a *lingua franca*. He commented on the 'real musical quality' of the Cornish-English dialect<sup>45</sup> and he must also have appreciated the refined quality of Elizabeth's voice as others have done in listening to her later broadcasts. He too, incidentally, is reported to have had 'a beautiful speaking voice'<sup>46</sup>. He had the gift of composing songs described as, 'equal in every way of the poems which he always chose with such perfect taste'<sup>47</sup>. We do not have a record of what she felt at the time about words and song but, later, she spoke of 'the priceless heritage of language [...] We need, as a composer needs, the music of the words themselves'<sup>48</sup> and she believed strongly in the essential linkage between literature and music: 'the two are an essential pairing and I can't think of any country in the world that has a greater heritage of either'.<sup>49</sup> She admired Warlock's scholarship, describing him as the complete Renaissance Man and was scholarly herself as she showed later in her many books, as for example in the *Penguin Books of Christmas Carols*.

Another important factor in their relationship was Elizabeth's ability to live her life in separate compartments and to recognize that he too had 'more sides to him [...] His refusal to suppress one side of himself in favour of any other was accepted by those who really knew him'<sup>50</sup>. Maybe she felt that she really knew him and his music better than any of the other 'girls in his life' or, indeed, anyone else.

In her letter to his mother, Elizabeth had touched only lightly on Phil's depression about his music but was much

more forthright with Nichols about the consequences:

It happened that I was alone with him once before, at a time of horror which I shall never be able to forget, when he had been having DTs very badly & made one of his previous attempts to do the same sort of thing [suicide]. I have never spoken of this to anyone who knew him well, so please keep it absolutely in confidence – There are still things which are best saved from people who belong to him [for example, Mrs. Buckley Jones].

I did all I could – it was very difficult alone – and looked after him till he was through it. But I am afraid that since then, more than ever, I could not doubt that the end which came would be the logical outcome to his life.

In her BBC broadcast of 1964, *Dispelling the Jackals*, she did allude to his talking, in the last year of his life, about 'snuffing out' and said:

The pivotal point of his [Warlock's] musical life, which came with his attraction to the music of Delius, was an obsession that coincided with the disturbances of his adolescence. It finally proved fatal, because by the time he repudiated it in his later years its stranglehold admitted of no escape. He could see no way ahead of him.

Much later in life, she repeated: 'it was the Delius influence that led Warlock up a blind alley'<sup>51</sup> and, in an earlier draft of the article by Joan Littlejohn, had added, but later deleted:

... from which there was ultimately no escape. He knew he was writing another man's music in the final analysis, and this led to his inevitable decision of taking his own life. He knew there was no other way out for him.<sup>52</sup>

In 1930, in the countryside with Elizabeth he had had a conversation with her too about 'snuffing out'.<sup>53</sup>

There is no known extant correspondence between Elizabeth and Warlock to tell us more of their relationship, though he did write to her about his songs<sup>54</sup> and, as late as 1979, she is known to have kept, in a drawer in her drawing room, at least one of his letters, referred to as the 'Shell Letter'; it was mentioned by Elizabeth in the context of her discussing depression with Joan Littlejohn. These and probably others must have been among the papers destroyed after her death, at her request, by her nephew Jim Poston.

During the decade following Warlock's death, Elizabeth composed relatively little; there is a song, *Sussex Ale* dated

## Articles

### *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

1931 and *Five Traditional Tuscan Songs* of 1935. She had settled in to a privileged life at home with her mother – riding, attending hunt balls, shooting parties, garden croquet, the Chelsea Flower Show, touring the English counties and visiting Saxon churches and country houses, etc – and also travelling extensively abroad with her mother to Europe and beyond, including Burma and to her brother, a diplomat in the Middle East. The journey to Burma in 1934 seems to have finally restored her health, which had been poor just before and after Warlock's death and caused her mother to dread ...

... her just settling down to a sort of delicate feeling & lack of interest from the shock to her supersensitive nerves, of that illness' [...] She looks better (*unberufen [und unbeschrien = touch wood]*) than I've seen her for years & so receptive & full of interest in everything & so gay & cheerful. I love to hear her old laughter ring out! You'll see what I mean. When I noticed when we began our voyage, she expressed herself entirely in complete beautiful black, day & evening! She looked extraordinarily striking of course, but very aloof, & as the voyage went on, the black gave way to the lovely colours that express her, I think best of all.<sup>55</sup>

But then, on returning to England in May 1934 she would find that Cecil Gray, controversial Scottish critic and composer friend of Warlock, had published his biography of Warlock<sup>56</sup>, which enraged Mrs. Buckley Jones and other members of the family<sup>57</sup>. Elizabeth later reported that she had found that there were 'a good many' errors in the book to which she had refused to contribute, 'mistrusting Gray and his outlook then as I still do'<sup>58</sup>.

Soon after, some further contact seems to have been maintained with the Heseltine family, at least in April 1935, as accounted by Nigel<sup>59</sup> who had returned home after perfecting his French in Paris and was on leave at Easter from the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and eager to learn more of his father from the biography. At the time, 'Katherine', as he called her, who his mother affirmed was a concert pianist and had been a friend of his father was also at *Cefn-Bryntalch*, as was Barbara Peache. He well remembered 'Katherine' from four years earlier when, in his mid-teens, he had been given special leave from school to travel to London to hear the Memorial Concert for his father at the Wigmore Hall but he doubted whether she had been his father's mistress, as she claimed. He described

her as taller than himself, pale and having 'her dark hair pulled straight back to a bun' and how, after a walk in 'the wet April fields' she played a Noel Coward song and a few bars of Bach. 'She was 29'.<sup>60</sup>

That evening he entered her room and ...

... melted into a first kiss that was my gateway and my entrance. [...] I fell violently in love [...] Our conversation was very largely concerned with my father. Though I think she was glad of my love and certainly enjoyed the sensation of being adored with an adolescent passion, she talked constantly of him who would appear to have been my predecessor. There were those in later years who assured me that although Katherine had indeed pursued my father, whatever had occurred had been of brief duration; but her version gave the affair the proportion of great and classic love. I am now inclined to believe that she was a girl who naturally wished to make her career in the world of music, and saw in my father a celebrity who was not only agreeable but also useful.[...]

I doubt if she ever saw me as anything but an echo. Philip had been a step to aid her limited capabilities. I was no more than a pastime, perhaps to an unconscious gratitude to one who had helped her make her *entrée* into a *milieu* she thought important.

During May he wrote almost every day to 'Katherine' and noticed that the handwriting of her replies 'curiously resembled' his father's. They 'escaped for weekends in her car, driving into the setting sun across the Cotswold's; we wandered through Gloucester Cathedral on a sunny morning.'

He said that she could not prevent herself from describing extensive manuscripts in her possession, including a toilet roll of libelous limericks on musical personalities of the 1920s. Warlock was well known for his scurrilous limericks, some plastered on the inside of the lavatory door at Eynesford, and his friend, Jack Lindsay recalled how Warlock had also typed out a large number onto an unrolled toilet roll which was then rewound.<sup>61</sup> Gerald Cockshott, the first Chairman of the Peter Warlock Society, believed that Elizabeth possessed the MSS of all the limericks, reputed to be on a toilet roll given to her for safekeeping by Warlock's composer friend, E. J. Moeran when he was in hospital<sup>62</sup>. At any rate, she still had at least some of them when she was in her 70s and enjoyed reading or reciting them to some of her visitors.<sup>63</sup> However, they have not been found among



*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

her private papers<sup>64</sup> and may well have been included in the material destroyed after her death.

There was some further contact with Nigel because he is said to have 'tracked his father's friends quite deliberately in their haunts: the composers Gray, Bax, Moeran, Elizabeth Poston and Denis ap Iwer'<sup>65</sup>. Her *Pocket Diaries* (which are available from only 1936 onwards) contain an entry on 20 September that year, 'Nigel to lunch', though the name appears nowhere else in the remaining diaries, which continue up to 1983.

In the early 1940s when Elizabeth returned to more active music composition and was also much involved in the BBC, particularly with music<sup>66</sup> she had some further correspondence with Warlock's friend Robert Nichols. This was the result of derogatory remarks broadcast by Stephen Williams about Warlock being a 'mediocracy' and destroyed by 'intelligence' to which Nichols had protested robustly<sup>67</sup>:

Dear Mr. Nichols,

One of the greatest ironies of Phil's life is the legacy of cheap publicity to lesser men who could never, in thought or word, approach the fringe of his being. Your letter to the *Radio Times* was a challenge & a defence, which must have gladdened all of the few left who knew him & those who believe in his work.

I, particularly, want to thank you, with thanks of long standing. It seemed part of his fate that he should have had about him people who were no good to him. In life as in death he was surrounded by the 'jackal things'<sup>68</sup>. Among his friends you stand alone & did not fail him. There is one other. I should like to talk to you of these things. It is many years since we met. After Philip's death I left England & did not return except for brief, occasional visits, until I found myself in charge of a musical job on Arthur Bliss's staff. From him & from other mutual acquaintances I have heard of you from time to time, read you, seen you, even, in the pre-war illustrated press!

Do you remember Don Juan (yet young) on the stairs in the small hours at *Yew Tree House*<sup>69</sup>, when I had Barbara Peache under my wing, in those unforgettable, sorrowful days after Philip's going? It is you who stand out to me as the bulwark of that terrible fantasy – the one presence of whole & comforting understanding.

Yours

Elizabeth Poston.

I enclose from my advance press copy of the *Radio Times* of April 30th the revealingly inadequate reply, in case it has not yet reached you, of Stephen Williams.

Can't you kill him?

As Director of Music for the European Service, Elizabeth was always on the lookout for new works and in touch with many up-and-coming performers, including the composer William Busch with whom she had a voluminous correspondence and a close friendship. In one of her letters<sup>70</sup>, she remarked that she always regarded Cecil Gray as 'fundamentally alien to one's life'. She continued:

It was with Philip Heseltine that I knew Gray, who used to come and join us at the Van Dieren's but like you I found no means of communication with him. Nor, I confess did I wish for any. I will talk to you more about him when we meet. There was always something excessively repulsive about him. I ran into him the other day, for the first time in many years (at the Augustus John private view) and felt it as strongly as ever – he has got obese and even more like a white slug<sup>71</sup>.

Her strong antipathy was no doubt fuelled by what she felt was a distorted picture of Warlock in his article about him in 1924<sup>72</sup> and again in the book published in 1934 in which he treated him as 'two entirely different and separate personalities' plus a 'third person' noted for producing the disreputable limericks. Although the press and some of Warlock's colleagues<sup>73</sup> repeated the Jeckel and Hyde interpretation, she was not alone in discounting such a simplistic portrayal or in not being on the same wavelength as Gray. Indeed, it has been said that many in the Warlock circle never hit it off with Gray who admitted to being 'not necessarily in tune with the others'<sup>74</sup>.

Her antipathy also appears to have been strengthened by her opinion of him as a composer, judging from another letter to Busch<sup>75</sup> in which she railed generally against the incompetent:

And why, in God's name, do these extraordinary mortals, whether pianist, critic or ordinary *dilettante*, appoint themselves 'composers' and even get a hearing for their rubbish? There have been one or two astounding instances lately, most outstanding, the C. G[ray] 'Opera'<sup>76</sup> which you so beautifully describe. I could not hear it, but can imagine – And when I tell you the story behind it, you'll be even more astounded than to credit it, unless you had some cause to know the BBC a bit by this time!

## Articles

### *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

This great opera I have known about for years; it was a standing joke in Philip's time when Grey was writing it in and out of Philip's house and has been a bee buzzing in his bonnet ever since. A few weeks ago the wife of Julian Herbage<sup>77</sup> (bearded nonentity, no 3 of the hierarchy of Music Home Service) left him and eloped with Gray. A preferable liaison one would have thought would have been with the large white slug which he so resembles, whereupon the infuriated husband: Give me back my wife and I'll put on your opera. But the laugh's on the slug – The world heard the opera, but he has kept the wife! NOW go out and drown yourself! NO!! For they ain't worth it and perhaps they won't always have to control the musical destiny of Britain (Not if I can help prevent it anyway). [...]. Why, my dear William, there is enough here to put me in a perjurer's cell for life. Be a discreet friend, won't you and realise I don't talk to everyone like this!

Elizabeth was a perfectionist and did not suffer fools gladly, a trait she shared with Warlock who suffered them 'in fact not at all'<sup>78</sup>.

While Elizabeth could express her strong dislike of certain aspects of Gray, she was also able to acknowledge any merit she recognized in him, as in another letter to Busch<sup>79</sup>, having in mind, perhaps, his regret that most of the great music of Europe was then unknown to the concert-going public<sup>80</sup>.

Your Christmas present celebrated its advent with a most amusing and potent article by Cecil Gray in his series called *Contingencies*<sup>81</sup> which hit various nails on the head with reverberating bangs. So much so that I had to lend my copy to a number of people who, having heard of the article, were anxious to read it, but hadn't been able to procure the issue – so you see you were a public as well as a private benefactor!

She even acknowledged that he had performed a valuable service in the bibliography of his article on Warlock.<sup>82</sup>

Established in her career as a musician, her compositions again included more examples of source material common to Warlock<sup>83</sup>: and she arranged several works after him, including one of the movements (*Tyrley Tyrlow*) in her *The Wakefield Second Shepherd's Play* (1947) and *I Saw a Fair Maiden* (1963). She also arranged for choir and piano/organ two traditional Basque carols, *Two Carols: Praise our Lord and O Bethlehem* and dedicated them 'In memory of Peter Warlock for George C. Gray' (not Cecil Gray but a cathedral organist and an admirer of Elizabeth's work!).

Among her collection of manuscripts, an arrangement for Cello and Piano of three movements from *Capriol* dated 1965 is of uncertain provenance<sup>84</sup> but she certainly quoted part of Movement No. 5 in her descant to *Behold a Silly Tender Babe*, one of many carols that she arranged<sup>85</sup>. Warlock's *Capriol* was published for various combinations of instruments in 1928 and presumably it was the full orchestral version of the suite that he conducted, much against his will, at a BBC Henry Wood Promenade Concert in Queen's Hall in August 1929. The idea had been that each composer should conduct his own work but Warlock, unprepared, had to borrow evening dress – trousers from Constant Lambert and tailcoat from John Ireland – with amusing results, as described by Elizabeth in her inimical way:

Constant had got revoltingly fat, and [Philip,] safety-pinned up with reefs taken in, the lower half was alright. But John Ireland was rather a minge little man and P[hilip] couldn't move his arms. His conducting was a disaster, his chuckles audible to the players. The orchestra, going it alone, played like angels and the audience was not aware of anything unusual.<sup>86</sup>

Throughout her life, Elizabeth noted, in her *Pocket Diary*, the BBC broadcasts of Warlock's music and continued to promote him and his work, introducing concerts of his songs (e.g. at the Festival Hall in 1961), arranging his transcriptions (e.g. at the Wigmore Hall in 1950), directing performances (e.g. at the BBC in May 1947 and the recording of *The Curlew* in 1952), often performing his music and, recording it, writing criticism and, above all, broadcasting about him herself – most notably in her series in 5-parts in 1947 and another in 12 parts in 1964-65. In the latter, Elizabeth was, as always, extremely thorough and directly involved in all aspects: choosing the music and the performers (more than a score); arranging umpteen rehearsals, extra coaching and recording sessions; and, of course, writing and reading the scripts. Her friends congratulated her on the first broadcast and 'her simply lovely Warlock arrangements'<sup>87</sup> but the programme on 12 December 1964, *Dispelling the Jackals* touched a few nerves, in particular those of the music critic, Ernest Bradbury. On the 14th, defending Cecil Gray's book as a masterpiece, he wrote to Ian Copley, a founder member of the Peter Warlock Society which had been established the previous May.

*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

Did you ever hear anything worse than E.P. [Elizabeth Poston] on Saturday night [12 December]. Prim, prudish, arrogant, non-informative, secretive and near hysterical... What does she want? A monopoly on him? [...]. 'If the full story is yet to be told' [quoting Elizabeth] what prevented Miss Poston from telling it? She had 34 years to do so?<sup>88</sup>

Elizabeth had been most forthright, speaking of a generation who accepted Warlock 'at second hand through the second rate'. And yes, I think she did want a monopoly on him since she felt she knew him and his work so well, probably better than anyone else. But, as she said, she had lifted only 'a corner of the veil' for she was a very private person and not yet ready to reveal more.

Elizabeth was prepared to be only an honorary member of the Peter Warlock Society<sup>89</sup> but had apparently been pestered for years by Ian Copely who was studying Warlock and had published part of his thesis in 1964; her friend Norman Peterkin promised he would 'fob [him] off'<sup>90</sup>.

In May 1967 she bought the correspondence between Warlock and both Delius and his wife that belonged to van Dieren, bidding at Sotheby's, unwittingly against the Delius Trust. Subsequently the British Museum urged her to undertake the work of editing it for publication<sup>91</sup> and later the Trust made available the Delius letters to her for editing.<sup>92</sup> Naturally, with the project in mind, she repeatedly refused anyone any access to them though she never actually completed the work and it was not until May 1993, after her death, that her nephew James Poston sold them to the British Library. Enquiries for information or talks on Warlock were again turned down<sup>93</sup> and even when approached by the theatre director and author, Basil Ashmore, she still felt 'unable for the present to discuss what is still too near'<sup>94</sup>.

In 1969, however, she gave a slight hint of her future autobiographical plans, perhaps influenced by what had been written by others in the last decade. She had, for example, in reviewing Dr. William L. Smoldon's *History of Music* noted the absence of a mention of Warlock and suggested the addition of lute tunings.<sup>95</sup> Writing to her friend, the singer Jim Christiansen<sup>96</sup> she said:

Warlock seems to be put and buried once again – like R[ip] van Winkle, destined to emerge every century or so. People try and write books about him but become bogged down without the facts. By the time mine is ready (if I live long enough) it may be more printable than in the past.'

She continued to repeat her warnings about Gray's 'misleading and inaccurate' book<sup>97</sup> and complained in private about 'the Myth created by others who were self-seeking and self-aggrandizing' and of Warlock songs, 're-issued with nothing but misleading prefaces by people who did not know Warlock whereas I KNEW HIM'<sup>98</sup>. She declined a further request to join the Peter Warlock Society, though sending a donation of 3 guineas, stating, 'I stand in a rather special position as regards [him]' and also saying, in response to an enquiry about the Warlock/Delius correspondence, that she was 'undertaking no further work for the time being'<sup>99</sup>.

What she did not say was that conditions at home with her mother, aged 99, bedridden and in dreadfully poor health, were far from ideal for any kind of work at all. Elizabeth's letters to her close friend, the musician Jean Coulthard in Canada tell the story in depressing detail – deafness, cataracts, falls, hospital visits, etc. When her mother finally died on 2 January 1971 her grief was profound and she soon turned to Jean<sup>100</sup>, telling her how her mother:

... went unconscious, paralysed and died soon after 3 o'clock in the morning in freeze & snow and the icy hand of undertakers. I haven't left her bedside for the past months. Have quite temporally broken down very trembly, can't get down the stairs, but quite all right, no worry. A sweet woman doctor [Sylvia Watkins] has been a wonderfully kind help.

And two months later in a letter written over two days (14-15 March 1971):

It is a dark & confusing time... I'm slow & shaky' [...] Grief is so exhausting. If only someone, something would wash it all away, swallow it up, & the last ten years... a large part of a lifetime gone so unfathomably, in a struggle that leaves silence behind. I have learned that it is possible to face & to be prepared for everything about death except what actually happens.

Nevertheless, she resumed her active and productive life and, following an approach from the BBC to record something of her reminiscences for their Sound Archive, she broached with the Bodley Head, probably in June 1972, the possibility of publishing a series of 'slimmish volumes' of her *autobiographia*. Included would be recollections of Peter Warlock and his friends, Arnold Bax, John Ireland and E. J. Moeran as well as the Delius/Heseltine letters<sup>101</sup> but nothing seems to have come of it.

## Articles

### *Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

In the meantime she continued to promote Warlock's music and make recordings<sup>102</sup> but declined offers to write about him<sup>103</sup> and in May, 1974, she suffered a serious setback to her health which curtailed her activity significantly<sup>104</sup>.

Then, in August 1977 Elizabeth's friend, George H. Thomson, the noted E. M. Forster scholar, recognizing her writing talent, tried to interest her in writing about Forster<sup>105</sup>;

... you write like an angel [...] It would be splendid if you could find time to set down some of the past. With your very busy schedule, I suspect the ideal form would be 'stories', units of limited length that could be approached one at a time.

She had misgivings:

As for writing: I would believe indeed what you say, if with a rather aghast feeling. (Forster had the same thought. Once stopping to talk about it as we were walking down Regent Street, he nearly got us run over). But oh! – and you will know it – it's different writing letters about shared loves and daring cold print (frighteningly cold – I'd like the page warmed).

But you are warming it. If only out of gratitude, I might try.

And, as a result, she gathered a large amount of autobiographical information in a folder under the title, *Living Memory* but, unfortunately, it included nothing explicitly about Peter Warlock or Delius<sup>106</sup>; there were, however, several chapter headings including: *Two Houses*; *Two Childhoods*; and *Two Loves* but as to who the 'two loves' were, we can only speculate. She was very fond of Morgan Forster through his link with *Rooks Nest House*. She was close to her mother who was clearly of great moral and practical support throughout her life. She also said that, in her rather odd and varied life, she had not passed through the experience of Warlock for nothing<sup>107</sup>. And, of her many subsequent close friends, one can mention people like: William Bush, receiving letters about twice a month over a two-year period until his untimely death; Joan Littlejohn, writing once a month over a period of 14 years; and Diana Sparkes (the daughter of Hubert Foss), Marylin Wailes, Madeau Stewart, and Suzanne Rose who all knew her for more than 20 years – the list goes on. Perhaps the closest was Jean Coulthard whose sister-like friendship started when Elizabeth visited North America in 1948, to make up for the strain of broadcasting during the Second World War, and continued for more than 30 years with several return visits to England by Jean, holidays together abroad

and an exchange of letters at an average rate of 18 per year. We can only guess.

A few years before her death Elizabeth wrote to Marylin Wailes, saying she was still trying very hard to put together some of her writing that she 'counted of any value & leave it tidily' while she was 'still alive and not forgetting or gaga'<sup>108</sup>. But, again, nothing came of it.

Whoever she had in mind for the *Two Loves*, Warlock must be considered one of the favourites. She weighed her words when she pronounced that she 'didn't pass through the experience of Warlock for nothing'. As Ursula Vaughan Williams said in the broadcast, *Harvest at Howards End*, the relationship, 'coloured the whole of her life and yet it had nourished her: nourished her imagination, nourished her heart, nourished her very truly'. Elizabeth still resisted further overtures from Warlock enthusiasts<sup>109</sup> and never told the story; it was, perhaps, just too personal, just too private. ■



Elizabeth Poston  
(Photo: Courtesy Margaret Ashby)

*Elizabeth Poston and the Heseltine Family* (Continued)

## Notes

- 1 Quoted by Smith, Barry (2005) *The Collected Letters of Peter Warlock*. Vols. I-IV. Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge Surrey. Vol. 1. p. 1.
- 2 See Smith, Barry (2005) (*loc. cit.*).
- 3 *Ibid.* Vol. IV, p. 312, Letter No.996 Elizabeth Poston to Robert Nichols (already quoted in full in Alabaster, John S. (2008) *Elizabeth Poston: Her Own Words*. The Friends of the Forster Country. 91 pp
- 4 British Library, BL Add. 57964, dated 13 February, 1931; reprinted in Alabaster, John S. (2012) *Elizabeth Poston Papers: 4 Miscellaneous Letters, etc. List and Partial Extracts*. The Friends of the Forster Country. 12 pp.
- 5 Bartlett, Jamie Clare (1996) *Beyond the Apple Tree: The Published Music of Elizabeth Poston*. Doctorate Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.
- 6 See Alabaster, John S. & Julia Busch (2009) *Elizabeth Poston: Letters to William and Sheila Busch*. The Friends of the Forster Country, 132 pp. Letter (No. 20) from Elizabeth Poston to William Busch, September 1943.
- 7 Littlejohn, Joan (1975) *Senior British Composers – I Elizabeth Poston*, 'Composer Magazine', Winter, 1975, No. 56, p. 18; The piece is dated 1925 so may have been revised with Warlock's help since his influence was obvious to the musicologist, Denis Stevens in his *A History of Song* 1960, W. W. Norton & Co., New York & London. p. 174.
- 8 Simon Campion Archive. Simon Campion is Elizabeth Poston's literary and musical executor and copyright holder; he holds all her music but has deposited her letters, etc. in 100 Box Files with the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall Hertfordshire
- 9 As shown in Appendix B: Songs in Marchman, Judy O. (2013) *Peter Warlock (1894-1930) A Contextual Analysis of his Art Songs Related to Symptoms of Mental Illness*. Open Access Dissertations Paper 1018. University of Miami, USA. And also in *A Peter Warlock Handbook*, Vol. 1, Revised Edition, 2008, The Peter Warlock Society..
- 10 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) *Peter Warlock, a Centenary Celebration: The Man – His music – His World*. Thames Publishing, London. 264 pp: *Peter Warlock's Reception by the Press* by Lewis Foreman, pp. 228-231.
- 11 Warlock, Peter (1923) *Frederick Delius*. The Bodley Head.
- 12 Eaglefield-Hull, A. (Ed.) (1924) *Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*. A. J.M. Dent, p. 323.
- 13 Bruce Blunt (1899-1967) who used to go walking with Warlock said in a BBC broadcast, 16 December 1944 that 'the country was in his blood. He seemed part of the English scene' (See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*), p. 245.
- 14 Smith, Barry (1994) *Peter Warlock: The life of Philip Heseltine*. Oxford, p. 260.
- 15 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*): *Warlock and a Tite Street Party* by Arthur Hutchings, p. 55.
- 16 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) *Elizabeth Poston Papers: 4, Contents of Box Files*. The Friends of the Forster Country, 210 pp. Letter from Elizabeth Poston to Norman Peterkin, April 1970, Box No. 45.
- 17 See Smith, Barry (2005) (*loc. cit.*) Letter No.996, Elizabeth Poston to Robert Nichols, p. 312.
- 18 See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*) pp. 209-210.
- 19 *Ibid.* p. 97.
- 20 Poston, Elizabeth (1964) *Dispelling the Jackals*, BBC 1964, reprinted in Alabaster, John S. (2007) *Elizabeth Poston: Post-Centenary 2005 Appreciation*. The Friends of the Forster Country. pp. 121-128.
- 21 Cox, D. & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) *Introduction*, p. 5.
- 22 Joan Littlejohn, personal communication, 29 August 2008.
- 23 Gunvor Stallybrass, personal conversation. She and her husband, Oliver (who edited E. M. Forster's novel, *Howards End*) were close friends of Elizabeth.
- 24 Simon Campion, personal communication.
- 25 Radio 4 Broadcast, *Harvest at Howards End* by Andrew Green. Tape kindly provided by Roger Ely
- 26 Bruce Blunt (1899-1967) who used to go walking with Warlock said in a BBC broadcast, 16 December 1944 that 'the country was in his blood. He seemed part of the English scene' (See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*), p. 245.
- 27 See Smith, Barry (2003) (*loc. cit.*) Letter No. 996, dated 28 February, 1931.
- 28 See Bartlett, Jamie Clare (1996) (*loc. cit.*).
- 29 Four published in 1928 were: *In Youth is Pleasure*, using Robert Weaver's *Lusty Juvenatus*, 1555; *Be Still my Sweet Sweeting*, using John Philip's poem of, 1565; *Call for the Robin-Redbreast*, using John Webster's poem of 1612; and *Balulalow* from an anonymous *Cradle Song*. These correspond to Warlock's: *In an Arbour Green* (Feb. 1922); *Cradle Song* (Aug. 1927); *Call for the Robin-Redbreast* (1926); and *Balulalow* (1919), respectively.
- 30 Poston, Elizabeth (1964) (*loc. cit.*) See also the testimony in Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) of: Trevor Hold, pp. 104-5; Brian Hammond, p. 107; Andrew Plant, pp. 122-4; and Anthony Payne, p. 180.
- 31 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*), Autobiographical Notes, 26 June 1960, Box No. 42.
- 32 Littlejohn, Joan (1975) *Senior British Composers – I Elizabeth Poston*. *Composer Magazine*, Winter, 1975, No. 56, p. 17.
- 33 Letter from Joan Littlejohn to John Alabaster, 31 May 2014.
- 34 Poston, Elizabeth (1964) (*loc. cit.*).
- 35 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*) Letter from Elizabeth to William Pasfield, 1 February 1965, Box No. 17; Earnest Lush (1908-1988) was a classical pianist, best known as an accompanist.
- 36 *Ibid.* Letter from E. Arnold Dowbiggin to Philip F. Craggs, 30 April, 1968. Box No. 13.

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- 37 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) *Peter Warlock Remembered*, by Arnold Dowbiggin, p. 23.
- 38 Barbara Peache lived with Peter Warlock and Jack Moeran from 1925 in a cottage at Eynesford, Kent.
- 39 Heseltine Nigel (1992) *Capriol for Mother: A Memoir of Peter Warlock and his Family* Thames Publishing, London, 176 pp.
- 40 See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc.cit.*) Bruce Blunt's comments p. 271.
- 41 See Smith, Barry (2005) (*loc.cit.*) Letter No. 964, 7 June 1930.
- 42 See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*) p. 214.
- 43 Comment by Eric Fenby, see *Ibid.* p. 221.
- 44 Heseltine, Nigel (1992) (*loc. cit.*).
- 45 See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*) p. 135. Letter to Cecil Gray, 7 April 1917.
- 46 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) *Warlock as I knew Him* by Eric Fenby, p. 28.
- 47 See Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*) p. 289. Constant Lambert in the *Radio Times*, 1938.
- 48 See Alabaster, John S. (2006) *Elizabeth Poston Centenary, 2005: Contributed Articles and Personal Letters*. The Friends of the Forster Country. *The Great Prayer*. BBC Radio Three, 4 April 1981, p. 56.
- 49 *Ibid.*. Letter RL16 from Elizabeth Poston to Richard Lambert, 15 May 1985
- 50 Poston, Elizabeth (1984) (*loc. cit.*).
- 51 Littlejohn, Joan (1975) (*loc. cit.*).
- 52 Littlejohn, Joan (personal communication).
- 53 Poston, Elizabeth (1964) (*loc. cit.*).
- 54 *Ibid.*.
- 55 See Alabaster, John S. (2008) *Elizabeth Poston: Her Own Words*. The Friends of the Forster Country. p. 38. Letter to Geoffrey from Clementine Poston, 19 March 1934.
- 56 Gray, Cecil (1934) *Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine*, Jonathan Cape, London.
- 57 Davies, Rhian (2007-2007) *Scarred Background: Nigel Heseltine (1916-1995), A Biographical Introduction and a Bibliography*. Welsh Writing in English, A Yearbook of Critical Essays, Vol. 11 (2006-2007), pp.69-101. See p. 75.
- 58 See Alabaster, John S. (2006) (*loc. cit.*) Letter from Elizabeth to Diane Sharpe, D28, 23 October 1984. She was the daughter of Hubert Foss who had written favourably of Warlock. See Bacharach, A. L. (1946) *British Music of Our Time*. Pelican Books, London, pp. 64-74.
- 59 Heseltine, Nigel (1992) (*loc. cit.*). .
- 60 Nigel's description of Katherine fits Elizabeth Poston, a *nom-de-plume* being used presumably because his book was published only five years after Elizabeth's death. No Katherine, fitting the description, is mentioned in any of the correspondence edited by Barry Smith (2005) (*loc. cit.*).
- 61 Smith, Barry (1994) (*loc. cit.*) p., 233.
- 62 Rudland, Malcolm (2008) Peter Warlock Society News Letter No. 83, pp. 6-7.
- 63 Margaret Ashby, personal communication 2014.
- 64 Now deposited by her literary executor and copyright holder, Simon Campion at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford (Accession No. 5495) together with extracts by John S. Alabaster (Hard copy – Accession No. 5494 – and on CD).
- 65 Davies, Rhian (2006-2007) (*loc. cit.*) p. 81.
- 66 She was Director of Music for the European Service and after the War was asked to return on a year's special contract to establish the new BBC Third Programme.
- 67 Nichols, Robert (1943) *Radio Times* 16 April 1943, Vol. 78, No. 1020, reprinted together with Stephen Williams' reply and Elizabeth's letter to Nichols in Peter Warlock Society News Letter 81 Autumn 2007. pp.4-5.
- 68 Elizabeth used the term again in her BBC broadcast on Warlock in 1964; See Poston (1964) (*loc. cit.*).
- 69 This was Nichols' home in Winchelsea.
- 70 See Alabaster, John S. (2009) (*loc. cit.*) Letter from Elizabeth to William Busch, 31 May 1943.
- 71 White 'Ghost' slugs, carnivorous on worms, do occur in Turkey and Georgia, of which Elizabeth may have been aware. Nigel Heseltine said that 'In appearance, my grandmother's description of Gray as resembling a fat white slug stands uncorrected.' See Heseltine, Nigel (1992) (*loc. cit.*) p. 11.
- 72 Gray, Cecil (1924) *The Chesterian*, New Series No. 40, June 1924.
- 73 For example, Constant Lambert in *Contemporary English Music*, Queen's Hall Promenade Concert Programme, 24 August 1929, pp. 25-6.
- 74 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) *Notes from an American on the 1950s Warlock Odessey* by Robert Beckhard, p.204.
- 75 See Alabaster, John S. (2009) (*loc. cit.*) Letter from Elizabeth to William Busch, No. 33, 12 April 1944.
- 76 Cecil Gray (1895-1951), wrote an opera, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* which has been described as containing 'desperate confused morality' (John Purser, BBC broadcast 11 November 2007, Programme 44): 'Heaven and Hell are confounded as the Queen of Sheba, in a Vision, attempts to seduce St Anthony'.
- 77 Julian Herbage, at the BBC, had received and rejected the first two movements of William Busch's Cello Concerto in 1941; the complete work was premiered at the Proms under Sir Adrian Boult in 1943.
- 78 See Cox, D & John Bishop (1994) (*loc. cit.*) *Peter Warlock Remembered* by Arnold Dowbiggin, p.24.
- 79 See Alabaster, John S. (2009) (*loc. cit.*) Letter No. 49 from Elizabeth Poston to William Busch, 24 January 1945.
- 80 This was pointed out by a reviewer (W. H. M.) in *Musical Letters*, Vol. 29, No. 2, April 1948, pp. 202-204, although he also said that Gray's 'aggressively held opinions are largely

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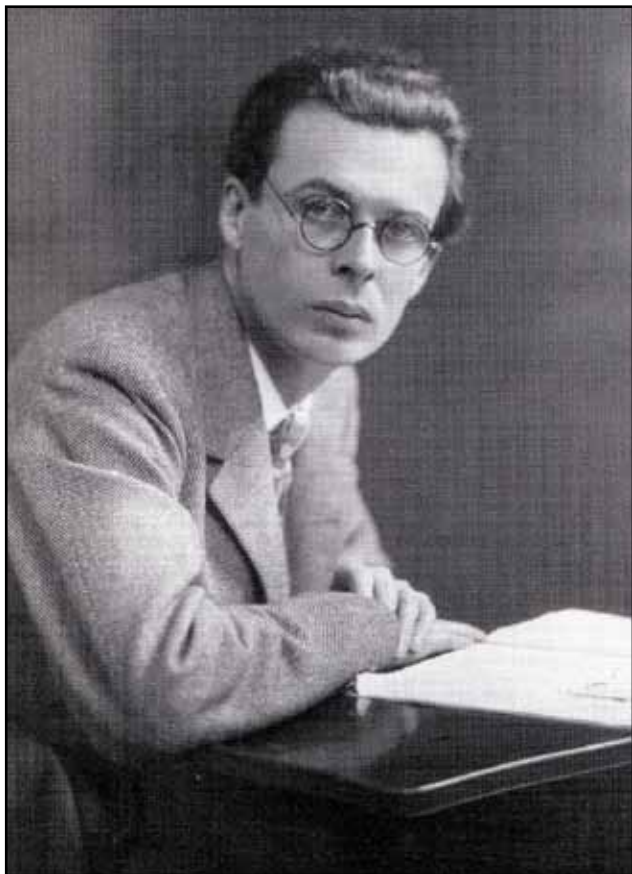
- invalidated by his wilful irresponsibility'!
- 81 Cecil Gray's *Contingencies and Other Essays* was subsequently published by OUP in 1947.
- 82 See Poston, Elizabeth (1964) (*loc. cit.*).
- 83 Thomas Dekker's *Lullaby* is used in her *May Fair* (in *Songs of Times and Seasons*, 1968) and already by Warlock in August 1918; and Bishop John Still's *Maltworms* (1575) is included in her incidental music to a Radio Production of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1954) which was composed by Warlock (with E. Moeran) in 1926; and in 1957 John Clare's *Little Trotty Wagtail*, used by Warlock in 1922, was one of five songs she dedicated to the Hertfordshire Singers.
- 84 In the opinion of Simon Campion, it does not have the form and style of Elizabeth Poston's calligraphy, although it is clear that she worked on it, and probably played it, because there are pencil markings in her own hand on the copy. The arranger might yet be identified and EP herself is a strong contender
- 85 Number 13 in *The Penguin Book of Christmas Carols* (1977) Compiled and edited by Elizabeth Poston. Penguin Books 153 pp.
- 86 See Smith (1994) (*loc. cit.*), p. 263, quotation from a letter from Elizabeth to George Findley, 8 December 1977.
- 87 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*): Letter from Norman Peterkin 4 January 1965, Box No. 17 and card from William Varcoe, Box No. 52, respectively.
- 88 Peter Warlock Society *Newsletter* No. 94 p. 22.
- 89 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*) Box No. 31
- 90 *Ibid.* Letter from Norman Peterkin to Elizabeth Poston 24 April 1964. Box No. 36.
- 91 *Ibid.* Letters from Elizabeth Poston to Harry Stanton, 21 October 1968, Box No. 46.
- 92 *Ibid.* Letter from Elizabeth Poston to Norman Peterkin, 1 July 1972. Box No. 80.
- 93 *Ibid.* Letters from John D. Naylor and Dr. R. G. Hodder, July 1967 Box No. 39; see also letter from John D. Naylor, 13 April 1968 Box No. 13.
- 94 *Ibid.* Letter from Elizabeth Poston to Basil Ashmore, 27 June 1969. Box No. 53
- 95 *Ibid.* Review in *The Musical Times* by Elizabeth Poston 1967 Box No. 39, Bundle No. 6.
- 96 *Ibid.* Letter from Elizabeth Poston to Jim Christiansen 26 August 1969. Box No. 45.
- 97 *Ibid.* Letter from Elizabeth Poston to the pianist Therese Muckleston. 15 September 1970. Box No. 34.
- 98 *Ibid.* Draft MS of interview between Elizabeth Poston and an interviewer, 16 February 1971. Box No. 28.
- 99 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*) Letters from Elizabeth Poston to the Peter Warlock Society, 25 May – 8 June 1970. Box No. 45
- 100 See Alabaster, John S. (2012; Revised August 2013) *Elizabeth Poston Papers: 1 Coulthard Letters 1984-1979*. List and Partial Extracts. The Friends of the Forster Country. 59 pp.
- 101 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*) undated draft letter from Elizabeth Poston to Max Reinhardt & Judy Taylor, Box No. 80 (April-October 1972).
- 102 *Ibid.* John Barlow recording of Warlock songs, 1973-74, Box No. 48.
- 103 *Ibid.* Correspondence with David Higham, author's agent for book on Warlock. 1973-74 Box No. 48.
- 104 Elizabeth Pocket Diary entry 18 May 1974 'Saturday - operation - aneurism of hepatic artery'
- 105 See Alabaster, John S. (2008) (*loc. cit.*) Letter from George H. Thomson, August 1977 and Elizabeth's very full reply. pp. 2-6; he had written *The Fiction of E. M. Forster*. Detroit Wayne, State University Press. 1967, 304 pp.
- 106 See Alabaster, John S. (2013) (*loc. cit.*) Folder dated 1977, Box No. 80; see edited material in Alabaster, John S. (2008) (*loc. cit.*).
- 107 *Ibid.* Letter from Elizabeth Poston to Norman Peterkin, April 1970, Box No. 45.
- 108 *Ibid.* Draft letters from Elizabeth Poston to Marylin Wailes, 6 & 8 August 1985, Box No. 94.
- 109 Letter from Joan Littlejohn to John Alabaster, 31 May 2014, referring to a letter from Elizabeth Poston to Joan Littlejohn, 27 March 1979 in which Graham Fitch asked about Peter Warlock '[...] the answer is as it has always been and as it remains, an unqualified negative'.



Articles

*Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley*

John Mitchell



Aldous Huxley, in his twenties

With the combination he possessed of an enquiring mind and an acute intelligence Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) was one of the major English men of letters of his time. To the general public he is probably most associated with his dystopian satire, *Brave New World*, and for self-experimenting with the psychedelic drugs mescaline and LSD in the 1950s, a decade before their usage in 'pop' culture became more widespread. To us, with our Peter Warlock Hats on, he is likely to be thought of first and foremost as the creator of the ultra-Warlockian character 'Coleman' who appears in his 1923 satirical novel *Antic Hay*. One of the main purposes of this article is to take a fresh look at what has come to be the generally accepted idea that Coleman is a portrayal of Warlock, albeit an exaggerated one.

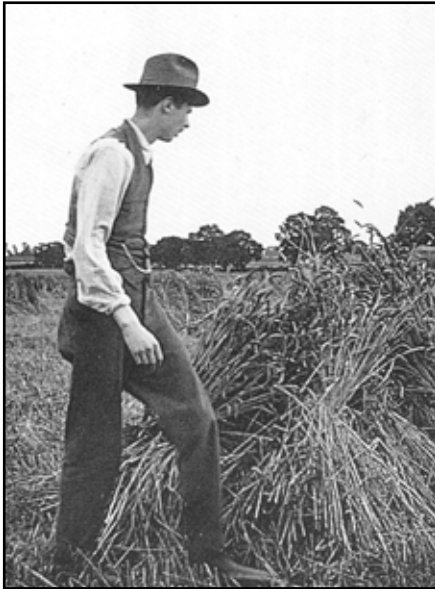
We begin with a coincidence of geography: Aldous Huxley was born in a Victorian villa called *Laleham* in Peperharow Road, Godalming – about a mile (as the crow flies) from the cemetery in Nightingale Road where Peter

Warlock came to rest 36½ years later. Huxley (born on 26th July) was about three months older than Warlock, and at the time of his birth his father was an assistant master at the nearby Charterhouse School. Having both won scholarships to Eton<sup>1</sup> the two teenage boys arrived there at the same time in September 1908. Whether they got to know each other then to any extent has not been recorded, but Barry Smith in his Warlock biography has drawn attention to their sharing Colin Taylor as a piano teacher<sup>2</sup>. Warlock remained at Eton for three years, but Huxley had his studies there curtailed by the onset of a disabling eye condition which rendered him nearly blind for about eighteen months. Fortunately he regained some of his sight, but good vision was to remain an issue for him for the rest of his life.

Having some restoration of sight, Huxley entered Balliol College, Oxford in October 1913, the same month that Warlock began his year at Christ Church College. Again, whether the two young men had any dealings with each other during that period at Oxford has not been established. Where it is fairly certain they did come into contact was at Philip and Lady Ottoline Morrell's house at Garsington (Oxfordshire) two years later. There in the visitors book for 29 November 1915 the names of Aldous Huxley and Philip Heseltine both appear for the first time<sup>3</sup>. Warlock's introduction to Garsington came via D.H. Lawrence, but how Huxley became acquainted with the Morrells has not been precisely identified. Huxley got to know Lawrence shortly afterwards, and as we shall see later, it was through the Lawrence connection that Warlock and Huxley met for the last time in 1930. It would seem that Warlock and Lady Ottoline did not exactly hit it off (she wrote in her diary that he '...seemed to pollute the atmosphere...,' whilst he referred to her as 'The Ott!'), and he seemingly only stayed at Garsington for a few weekends. Huxley, however, was very much more to the Morrells' liking and he became a regular visitor, eventually working on Philip Morrell's farm for seven months.

After Garsington, it is problematic to establish just how often Warlock and Huxley may have encountered each other. It is known that they met by chance at a Promenade concert in 1922, and this is described by Cecil Gray in his *Memoir*<sup>4</sup> as the occasion associated with the origin of the literary link between Warlock and 'Coleman'. Apart from this, and the above mentioned meeting again near the end





Aldous Huxley, haymaking on the farm at Garsington in 1916  
(Photo: Lady Ottoline Morrell)



Garsington Manor, Oxfordshire.  
If they had not already encountered each other previously at either Eton or Oxford, Warlock and Huxley would have met here for the first time.

of Warlock's life, the only other time I have discovered that Warlock and Huxley may have had an encounter was on 21 January 1921<sup>5</sup>. This was recorded in Siegfried Sassoon's diary entry for that day, where he lists some of those present at a farewell party given by the writer Arnold Bennett at the Reform Club for Warlock's poet friend Roberts Nichols, prior to the latter's departure for Japan – the names included those of Aldous Huxley and Philip Heseltine<sup>6</sup>. Whether any letters passed between Warlock and Huxley is questionable; there are none extant. Particularly unfortunate here was the loss of much valuable material in a disastrous fire that occurred in May 1961 at Huxley's home in the Hollywood Hills. In that conflagration it is known that Huxley lost letters from, amongst others, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and H.G. Wells. If Warlock had written any letters to Huxley, perhaps it is likely they would have met the same fate. Lacking further evidence, the impression of the relationship between the two men is one veering more towards casual acquaintanceship than firm friendship. This is an aspect worth taking into account when assessing the Coleman 'portrayal'.

It is also interesting and relevant here to take note of how often, and the contexts in which Warlock and Huxley mentioned each other in correspondence to their respective

friends – just twice each! Huxley's name first appears in one of Warlock's letters written to Cecil Gray on 6 December 1921. That year had seen the publication of Huxley's first novel, *Chrome Yellow*, and this is how Warlock relates it to Gray:

Huxley has produced a really admirable book *Chrome Yellow* – as usual, about Ottoline Morrell, Mark Gertler, Evan Morgan and the rest but very pleasantly satirical. He just misses, somehow or other – but only just – being very good. Too negative I think. But there's a good deal of veritable Tibet<sup>7</sup> in the book.

Warlock was quite correct in his assumption that the book, taking the form of a Country House Weekend novel, was a thinly disguised portrait of Garsington and its various arty visitors. Apart from the names Warlock lists, also depicted are Bertrand Russell (who had previously had an affair with Lady Ottoline), and the painters Dora Carrington and Dorothy Brett. Warlock, however, does not make an appearance, and one can only assume that Huxley did not find him 'Significant' enough during their stays together at Garsington. However, there is an intriguing link in the book with something that was to feature later in Warlock's life. One of the novel's characters, Lord Wimbush, the master of Chrome (clearly a fictionalised Garsington), is passionately



The interior of Verrey's Restaurant (c.1935), where Warlock and Huxley enjoyed some post-Prom refreshments in 1922.

interested in the history of his home, and during the novel he tells stories about his researches to entertain his guests. One of his ancestors was a certain Sir Ferdinando Lapith, and we are told that

...Sanitation was the one great interest in his life. In 1573 he even published, on this subject, a little book, – now extremely scarce – called *Certain Priuy Counsels* by 'One of Her Maiestie's Most Honourable Priuy Counsels, F.L. Knight' in which the whole matter is treated with great learning and elegance.<sup>8</sup>

The book transpires to be a treatise on Elizabethan toilets – a subject which might be ringing a familiar bell! Warlock, of course, a few years later, collaborated with Jack Lindsay on the republication of a book (via the Fanfrolico Press in 1927) on this very topic: Sir John Harrington's *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*<sup>9</sup> of 1596. That Warlock would have come to involve himself with such esoteric subject matter independently, having read the Huxley novel earlier, does slightly stretch the bounds of coincidence perhaps!

Warlock's second letter that mentions Huxley pertains directly to *Antic Hay*, but before considering this, it is appropriate first to examine closely the prime source of the Huxley/Coleman/Warlock story, namely those four pages in Gray's biography.<sup>10</sup> The tendency now is to view

somewhat critically much of what Gray has written about Warlock, and in this instance it is relevant to ask whether what we read in the pages concerned is clear-cut fact, as opposed to Gray's personal opinion, or a fabrication that fuelled his controversial 'Dual Personality Theory'. What happened occurred in the summer of 1922, following a Promenade concert. Warlock and Gray had a chance encounter with Huxley and Eugene Goossens during the concert, and afterwards they all adjourned to Verrey's Café<sup>11</sup>. Either Huxley or Goossens asked Warlock why he had grown a beard<sup>12</sup>, and the latter responded with:

...a witty and brilliant speech of which the essence is reproduced in the book [*Antic Hay*]. His inveterate propensity, moreover, for making outrageous puns and plays

on words has undoubtedly suggested to Huxley many of the most entertaining witticisms in his book. 'Where the hormones, there moan I, 'I long for progeny, I live in hopes. I stope against Stopes,' and many similar others, are in the authentic Philippic tradition.<sup>13</sup>

[As a digression here I have often wondered whether Gray intended his readers to infer that Warlock was actually the author of those two quoted 'entertaining witticisms', ie, that Gray had in fact recalled Warlock uttering them at that meeting with Huxley, who then cribbed them, and with their subsequent resurfacing in *Antic Hay*. Or was it more a case of Gray trying to imply it was this type of deft play on words, typically part of Warlock's conversational brilliance, that had impressed Huxley during the Verrey's Café episode, and which later inspired in a more general way some of the dialogue he gave to Coleman in the novel? It is worth noting however that pun and parody were already part of Huxley's writing style, and an earlier pre-*Antic Hay* example – that on 'privy counsels/councils' in *Chrome Yellow* – has already been referred to above.]

It has struck me that last quote from Gray is possibly the most factual part of his account. In the previous paragraph he provides us with that fairly well known description of Coleman arriving on the scene:

*Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)

...Coleman, with a blond fan-shaped beard and bright blue eyes, "smiling equivocally and disquietingly as though his mind were full of some nameless and fantastic malice", who enters the Soho restaurant in Chapter IV with a peal of diabolical laughter – **this is none other than Philip.** [my emphasis].

I would question whether the assertion in that last phrase, intended to be taken as fact, is merely Gray's own opinion. He then goes on to assert that Coleman is the most important character in the book, because of the major theme of the Talismanic Beard, and through his being vividly portrayed. I would contend that he is not, that distinction going to Theodore Gumbriel (who, on the following page, Gray actually credits as being '...the hero or central figure...').

Gray then suggests, with some justification, that Gumbriel matches up well with the 'mild and melancholy' side of Warlock, and there has been some speculation that Gumbriel might have been a second Warlockian incarnation within the same novel. However, although there is an overlap with certain character traits, this notion should be viewed with caution, as Huxley aficionados tend to see Gumbriel as a self portrait of the author. The first giveaway occurs in the very opening scene, which is set in the chapel of a public school (fairly obviously Eton), where the reader is introduced to a very disgruntled Gumbriel, who is a junior master there. A few years earlier Huxley had been a master at Eton<sup>14</sup>, leaving after about eighteen months to pursue his literary career. Another principal theme in the book is Gumbriel's obsession with the *femme fatale* character Myra Viveash<sup>15</sup>, who has been described as 'an archetype of the despairing, pleasure-seeking, sexually promiscuous post-war flapper'<sup>16</sup>. She is based on the minor poet and society heiress Nancy Cunard, who, at the time, was moving in artistic circles and frequenting such places as the Café Royal and Eiffel Tower restaurant. Her life had been blighted by the death of the love of her life in the First World War, and this is mirrored by what has befallen Myra Viveash in the novel. Although details are sketchy, it would seem Huxley had a short-lived affair with Ms. Cunard in 1922, and there is a sense he was exorcising his infatuation through the writing of *Antic Hay*. For these two reasons alone Gumbriel is much more likely to have been a portrait of Huxley himself, rather than Warlock.

I first read *Antic Hay* over forty years ago, and thinking

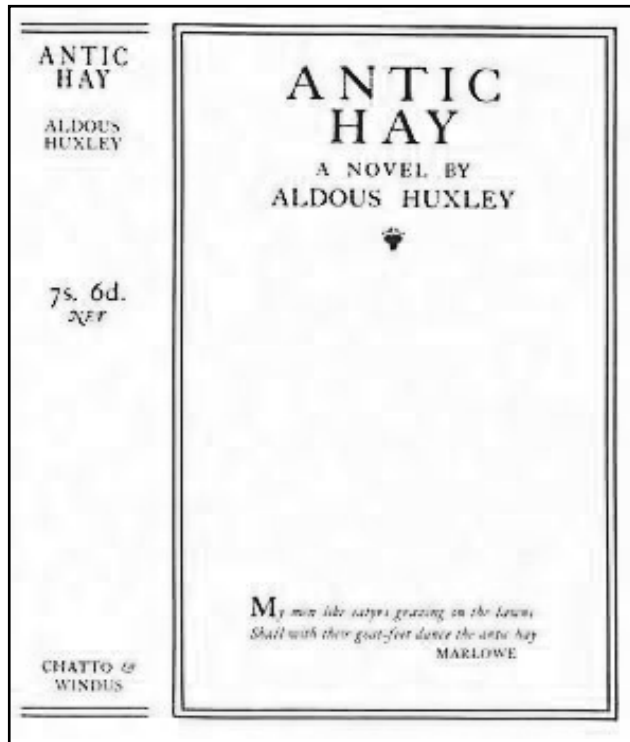
back to my impressions then, I recall that at the time there was something about Coleman that did not quite tally with Peter Warlock as I had imagined him. Recognising this was a gut reaction rather than reasoned, I have since tried to analyse why I may have had this impression, and I think it comes down to an essential difference in a character trait between the fictional Coleman and the real life Peter Warlock. Whereas, from the evidence available, I have always viewed Warlock as industrious by temperament and inclination, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Coleman was something of a wastrel. In the novel, to begin with we never find out his Christian name (perhaps implying that Huxley viewed the Coleman character as some sort of *ne'er-do-well*), and there is no hint of what he actually does in life, other than just turn up on the scene and dominate the conversation with a diverse mixture of wit, *bon mots*, erudition, contempt, blasphemy, cynicism, jokey malevolence, and vileness (to name but some of the characteristics). Rereading the book recently I found myself asking such basic questions as to how Coleman earned his living; was he a 'sponger', or did he exist on a small private income? Unlike the other members of the small circle of friends in the novel, who all (apart from the well-heeled Myra) have a career or are engaged in some sort of productive work, Coleman seems to be without a profession. He lives with his girlfriend, Zoe, in what one imagines is a seedy flat in Pimlico, and if he ever does anything useful between the bouts of carousing, womanising and socialising, the reader never really finds out. His high spirited bumptiousness and debauched lifestyle conceals an underlying purposelessness, and Coleman even admits this:

The real charm about debauchery...is its total pointlessness, futility, and above all its incredible tediousness. If it really were all roses and exhilaration,...it would be no better than going to church or studying higher mathematics. I should never touch a drop of wine or another harlot again.<sup>17</sup>

From a Warlockian perspective the major plot element in *Antic Hay* concerns The Importance of being Bearded, as it is this which allows Gumbriel's life to move in new directions, and which provides one of the main storylines. Coleman has an important role in that it is he who expounds on the advantages of having a beard, and Huxley obviously needed a character to perform this function so that Gumbriel could take up the idea and follow suit.

Articles

*Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)



The spine and front cover from the dust jacket of the first edition of *Antic Hay* (1923). The quotation, from Marlowe's 1593 *Edward II*, reads: 'My men like satyrs grazing on the lawns / Shall with their goat-feet dance the Antic Hay.'

Interestingly, the initial reason that Coleman gives Gumbriel for having grown a beard is supposedly a religious one, and he utters a humorous little ditty:

Christlike is my behaviour,  
Like very good believer,  
I imitate the Saviour,  
And cultivate a beaver.<sup>18</sup>

Coleman then goes on to explain he also had '...less holy reasons for this change of face.' In the early 1920s there was a craze that was seemingly all the rage, where, if you spotted someone sporting a beard – especially if you suspected it might be a false one – you would exclaim 'Beaver!!' Whenever this happened to Coleman, and the exclamer was a woman, he soon discovered this presented a marvellous opportunity/excuse to go over to her and follow things up with a chat-up line<sup>19</sup>. Gumbriel responds to Coleman's explanation with: 'Magnificent...I shall stop shaving at once.' In actual fact he doesn't, but instead goes and buys a false beard, which he finds just as effective as

a seduction aid. The parallel, or otherwise, with Warlock might be examined by comparing the above with that oft quoted postscript in a letter Warlock wrote to Colin Taylor<sup>20</sup> in which he sets down his reason for growing 'the fungus'. What is immediately apparent is that, unlike Coleman, Warlock's motive was neither religious nor for attracting women, but for '...a certain psychological effect on me'. The context here was the lack of success up till then of all his musical endeavours, and presumably he saw wearing a beard as a good confidence-boosting strategy – or, as he put it: '...it is necessary for me to make use of any little magical energy-saving devices that suggest themselves – and this is one of them.' Now whether the gist of this is what he recounted to Huxley in Verrey's Café is another matter, of course!

For the sake of completeness, her name having been mentioned already, a brief glance might be taken at Coleman's resident girlfriend, Zoe, as there has been a suggestion that she may have been a portrayal of Warlock's wife, Puma. Again, as with Gumbriel/Warlock, one can see a certain rationale in the notion. Huxley describes Zoe as follows:

She was dark-haired, had a pale skin and eyes like round blackberries. Her mouth was small and floridly curved. She was dressed, rather depressingly, like a picture by Augustus John, in blue and orange. Her expression was sullen and ferocious, and she looked about her with an air of profound contempt.<sup>21</sup>

She seemed to be in a love/hate relationship with Coleman, with elements of sadomasochism thrown in, for when she is last mentioned, and prior to storming off, she has just stuck a penknife into Coleman's arm, with such assaults (which Coleman appears to relish!) being not irregular occurrences. Recalling Puma's dusky complexion and being of fiery temperament, it is tempting to link her name with Zoe's. However, there is no evidence to suggest Huxley had ever met Puma. Warlock, as far as we know, never brought her along to Garsington (where, if he had, she might have been introduced to Huxley). Moreover, by the time of the Prom concert in 1922 Warlock and Puma had been separated for quite a while.

The second Warlock letter in which Huxley is mentioned is dated 25 June 1925, and in it he writes to Colin Taylor as follows:

*Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)

Aldous Huxley is a very clever and amusing writer. The last time I met him we had a conversation which I was amused to discover, very much touched up, in a book called *Antic Hay*. You should read it and see if you recognise me! I've not read the book you mention, but there is another excellently funny novel of his called *Chrome Yellow*.

It strikes me the important disclosure here is that what had been recycled in *Antic Hay* was simply the conversation about beard-growing that Warlock had with Huxley three years earlier. Warlock's wording strongly suggests a chance discovery on his part when he happened to read the book, i.e., Huxley had not told him about it beforehand. I believe great care is needed on how 'read it and see if you recognise me!' should be interpreted. I don't think Warlock was trying to imply he was actually being portrayed as a character as such in the novel, but rather that he was inviting Colin Taylor to see if he could spot the conversation that was based on the one ('very much touched up') he had had with Huxley. It was, of course, Taylor to whom Warlock had given earlier his reasons for growing a beard. I think if Warlock had really thought that Coleman was a serious representation of himself, the wording of that part of the letter to Taylor would have been different, and more specific.

Perhaps the most crucial factor in the 'was he/wasn't he?' question apropos Warlock/Coleman is the opinion of the author himself. Unfortunately, Huxley was apparently uncommunicative about this, and interestingly in the Warlock Archive of the late Ian Copley there is no correspondence from Huxley, which is surprising in the circumstances. Copley was involved in the major part of his Warlock researches in the late 1950s/early 1960s and, judging by the sizeable number of replies he received, during this period he must have written to a wide range of persons who had once had connections with the composer. Copley had obviously read Gray's biography of Warlock, and with his thoroughness as a researcher, I believe it highly unlikely he would not have attempted to contact Huxley via his publisher. It is relevant to note that at this time Huxley was still alive and active as a letter-writer. It is difficult to resist the tentative conclusion that Huxley may have preferred not to answer an enquiry from a complete stranger who, in all probability, had quizzed him on, amongst other things, the validity of Coleman as a Warlock portrayal.

A few years after Huxley died in 1963 Ian Copley was

contacted by Grover C. Smith, who at the time was compiling a broad selection of Huxley's letters for publication<sup>22</sup>. Smith enquired whether Copley knew of any Huxley/Warlock letters, and the response he got from Copley would seem to be much as he had expected, i.e., that presumably there were no known letters in existence. Copley then received a second letter from him (dated 16 August 1967), which in part reiterated the sentiments of Gray's book regarding Coleman/Warlock, but also referred to an intriguing comment concerning Colin Taylor:

Colin Taylor once wrote to Huxley, apparently in an effort to re-establish communications, but Huxley just wrote him a polite note and that was the end of it.

The most obvious interpretation of Taylor's reason for writing is that he was doing so in a 'remember me' sort of way at a point when Huxley had become a very famous author, but might it have been possible also that Taylor referred to Warlock, recalling that he (PW) and Huxley were his piano pupils around the same time? Again, it is easy to imagine Taylor mentioning *Antic Hay*, even if only in passing, and perhaps the 'polite note' he received back suggested that Huxley preferred to keep his own counsel on any link between Coleman and Warlock.

With no answer forthcoming from Huxley himself, I decided to seek the view of a respected Huxley expert, and subsequently contacted Professor David Bradshaw of Worcester College, Oxford. His response was 'I do not know of any letter, etc., where Huxley concedes that Coleman was based on PH<sup>23</sup>. So whilst still not quite conclusive, it does prompt the question of whether Cecil Gray had been assuming too much when he imposed his ideas on his readers.

Going back to those pages in Gray's book, there are two other aspects worth commenting on, one of these being a misleading juxtaposition, and the other a case of misplaced wisdom after the event. The first of these is where Gray, at some length, makes comparisons between Coleman and the portrayal of Warlock as 'Halliday' in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. With the way that Coleman and Halliday are mentioned in the same breath, it seems Gray expected his readers to infer the two were of equal significance and importance. What he appears not to have taken into account is that the two authors had completely different types of relationship with Warlock. The key point is that although Lawrence's fictionalising of Warlock may have been

## Articles

### *Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)

distorted and malicious, at least he knew his subject well<sup>24</sup>, and indeed, he and Warlock had been very close friends for a short time before they subsequently fell out. From that point of view Lawrence could hardly be accused of having limited familiarity with the person he was portraying. By contrast, and as recorded earlier, it is highly likely Huxley's knowledge of Warlock was merely cursory, and as we shall see shortly, this was confirmed by Brian Lunn<sup>25</sup>. For me it raised the question of whether Huxley would have known Warlock well enough to have penned a portrait of him that equated to that provided by Lawrence.

Secondly, there is the question of whether Gray, in the 1930s when he was writing his memoir of Warlock, had overlooked the fact that in 1922, when the Warlock/Huxley beard conversation had occurred, much of the 'Warlock of Legend', as it were, was still to come. In 1922 Warlock was living relatively quietly in Wales, and most commentators seem to concur that it was during the ensuing Eynsford Period (1925-28) that the more outré side of the Warlock persona developed and took off. Unless he had been blessed with the gift of clairvoyance, Huxley would not have known of this when he was writing *Antic Hay* in 1923! It is almost as if Gray, penning those pages retrospectively, had lost sight of this. As an aside here, in a strange way I almost found myself wondering whether it may even have been a case of Life imitating Art – a situation where Warlock, having read the book, aspired to 'become' the Coleman who had delivered 'his' exposition on growing a beard!

Returning also to the earlier point that Huxley mentions Heseltine in only two of his letters, information about this is summarised in the Grover C. Smith letter<sup>26</sup> to Ian Copley:

There are only two references to Heseltine in the letters of Huxley I have seen – one at the time of his death and one in a letter to a man who was writing on Delius and who asked Huxley for information about Lawrence's Florida colony. Huxley seemed not to know anything about the part played by Heseltine in that episode, or at least not anything at first hand. (In fact, Lawrence's arrangements were under way before Huxley ever heard about the Florida scheme.)

It may be added here that Huxley was a prolific letter writer, and it has been estimated he may have penned as many as ten thousand during the course of his life. I am not clear whether every single one of them has been searched for references to Warlock!

The mention of Lawrence's Florida colony leads conveniently to the subject of Huxley's friendship with his fellow author. Like Warlock, Huxley became friends with Lawrence (whom he met shortly after Warlock did). Unlike Warlock's friendship with Lawrence that ended suddenly and acrimoniously, with Huxley it was more a case of a drifting apart that occurred during the years that followed. As the 1920s progressed, however, Huxley was spending an increasing proportion of his time on the Continent (which could be one reason why he saw little, if anything, of Warlock), and after Lawrence moved to northern Italy later in that decade, it was not too long before the two writers re-established their friendship. The depth of this renewed relationship can be judged by the fact that it was Huxley who was chosen to compile and edit Lawrence's letters for publication after his death in March 1930; moreover, Lawrence had died in the arms of Huxley's wife, Maria. This may all seem rather peripheral, but it was Huxley's involvement in the publication of the Lawrence letters that led to his final meeting with Peter Warlock.

We should never have known of this meeting had it not been written about in the autobiography<sup>27</sup> of Brian Lunn, a friend of Warlock's from his year at Oxford. Lunn had heard from a friend of Lawrence's death, and that Huxley was going to deal with Lawrence's letters. Lunn continued:

I was seeing Heseltine at this time and told him what I had heard. As he was bitterly hostile to Lawrence he gave his full-throated laugh, but then said he wished Huxley would do a short book on Lawrence with him as they had abundant material between them.

...this suggestion [was put] to Huxley, who was interested, but Heseltine could not be brought to North London, and so it was left to me to arrange a meeting between Huxley and Heseltine in the back parlour of *The Antelope* off Eaton Square, which Heseltine, now the bearded Peter Warlock, used to frequent in the evenings.

Aldous Huxley came punctually, peering about him, for alcoholic surroundings were not congenial to him. I came from a committee meeting of the Alpine Ski Club...[and]... at last Heseltine arrived. As his biographer Cecil Gray has pointed out, Heseltine had inspired more than one character in Huxley's novels, but they had not met often or ever been intimate, and the prospective collaborators greeted each other rather shyly. Heseltine suggested moving to another

*Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)

pub, but although his beard wagged sardonically as they exchanged comic anecdotes of Lawrence, they failed to get to grips with the projected enterprise.

I have quoted this extract almost in full as it provides a vivid vignette of Warlock at a point in the final year of his life. Unfortunately Lunn does not give a date for the meeting, but as it is known that Huxley returned to Britain for a few weeks in May 1930 in connection with the Lawrence letters, it is probable it took place during that month. It is relevant because of Lunn's observations about the Warlock/Huxley relationship – the initial awkwardness when meeting each other again, how they had rarely met previously, and that they had never enjoyed a close friendship.



Aldous Huxley with D.H. Lawrence (c.1929).

The final quote comes from Huxley himself, a month after Warlock's death, in the other letter where he mentions him. Written on 18 January 1931 to his and Warlock's mutual friend Robert Nichols, he refers to that last meeting with Warlock at *The Antelope*:

A bad business about Heseltine – tho' I confess that when I saw him this spring he rather gave me the goose-flesh.

What is so telling is the implication there had been some change in or about Warlock since Huxley had last seen him (in all probability eight years earlier at that 1922 Prom concert). That phrase 'rather gave me the goose-flesh' implies there was something different and disquieting (maybe even slightly disturbing) about Warlock, whether it be appearance, manner of speech, or general behaviour. One has to take into account the effect of hindsight, with Huxley writing so soon after Warlock's death, but what is clear is that Huxley found the experience of meeting Warlock again unsettling, and perhaps it is not surprising that a joint book on D.H. Lawrence by the pair of them never materialised.

I round off this article with my own conclusions about Huxley/'Coleman'/Warlock, which, by going against the present perceived wisdom, may prove to be controversial.

I think the prime thing that interested Huxley was not Warlock himself<sup>28</sup>, but the story he (PW) had told him of how it was he came to grow a beard. It must have struck Huxley there was a nice tie-in with the then current 'Beaver-Shouting' craze, and how the two might combine to form a distinctive and topical storyline for his next novel. He appears to have been impressed by Warlock's sparkling conversation, dotted with brilliant puns, and although something of its essence is delivered by Coleman, it does not automatically follow that Huxley intended the character to be a deliberate portrayal of Warlock. For myself, as stated above, Coleman as Warlock does not quite ring true, and even Gray had to admit that Coleman was so outrageous a creation that he was 'Peter Warlock raised to the *n*th power'<sup>29</sup> ■

Grateful acknowledgment is given to the Estate of Aldous Huxley for the text quoted from *Chrome Yellow* and *Antic Hay*. Similarly, Brian Lunn's Estate is acknowledged for the section in *Switchback* that deals with Aldous Huxley's last meeting with Peter Warlock. I am also grateful for Jennifer Bastable's services in proofreading the text.

## Articles

### *Peter Warlock and Aldous Huxley* (Continued)

#### Notes

- 1 Although, in fact, Warlock never took advantage of this as his mother had been advised he would do better as a fee-paying pupil.
- 2 Barry Smith: *Peter Warlock – The Life of Philip Heseltine* (OUP 1994), page 233.
- 3 Nicholas Murray: *Aldous Huxley* (Abacus, London, 2002), page 52.
- 4 *Peter Warlock* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1934), pages 226 to 229.
- 5 Anne & William Charlton: *Putting Poetry First – A Life of Robert Nichols* (Michael Russell Publishing, Norwich, 2003), page 111.
- 6 Had Warlock not been stranded, stony-broke in Paris on 11 July later in the year, doubtless he would have been at the marriage of Robert Nichols to Roger Quilter's niece, Norah Denny, on that day at St. Martin's in the Fields, when Sassoon's diary records that Huxley was one of the guests in attendance (and amusingly that the service '...was enlivened by some sketchy organ-playing by Eugène Goossens – a Wagner pot-pourri). *Ibid.*, page 114.
- 7 The mention of Tibet in this context is curious, and somewhat inexplicable. Intriguingly, in the score of Warlock's *A Chinese Ballet* that he composed a few years earlier, there appears twice the similarly puzzling exclamation of 'Why, it's Tibet!', which, apart from the oriental connection, makes little sense within the scenario/narrative. One wonders whether the word had some special private meaning for Warlock – perhaps something along the lines of 'poppycock'?
- 8 *Chrome Yellow* (Penguin Modern Classics edition, 1971), page 56.
- 9 One wonders whether Huxley knew of this volume when he was writing *Chrome Yellow*, or was it more that he wanted to weave that paragraph into the story so that he could slip in that clever pun on 'privy counsels'?
- 10 *Op. cit.*, pages 226 to 229.
- 11 located at 233 Regent Street. At one time a leading Victorian restaurant, the premises are now a Lacoste fashionable sportswear shop.
- 12 and if – very likely – it was Huxley, this is surely suggestive that Huxley may not have seen Warlock bearded on an earlier occasion. According to Gray (*op. cit.*, page 228) Warlock was permanently bearded from 23 October 1921; prior to that he had grown three beards previously.
- 13 *Op. cit.*, page 226.
- 14 from September 1917 to February 1919.
- 15 a cunningly contrived surname by Huxley to imply someone trapped in a 'living death', the character being overwhelmed by a perpetual ennui.
- 16 by Jake Poller in an internet article.
- 17 *Antic Hay* (Penguin Modern Classics edition, 1969), page 186.
- 18 *Ibid.*, page 49.
- 19 The former Poet Laureate, Cecil Day Lewis (writing as Nicholas Blake) took note of this aspect from *Antic Hay*, for in his novel *The Beast Must Die* [1938] the main character adopts a similar strategy. The latter records in his diary: '...one of Huxley's characters advertises the aphrodisiac virtues of beards – I'll see if he's correct'.
- 20 from Dublin, 19 July 1918.
- 21 *Op.cit.*, page 53.
- 22 Amounting to 943 letters, this appeared in print in 1969; Grover Smith was Professor of English at Duke University, North Carolina.
- 23 in an e-mail message sent to the present writer, 22 November 2012.
- 24 It will be recalled that Warlock had stayed with the Lawrences for some time in Cornwall.
- 25 Brian Holdsworth Lunn (1893-1956), youngest son of Henry Lunn, founder of the travel agency business that eventually merged with another company in 1965 to become Lunn Poly.
- 26 *Op. cit.*
- 27 Brian Lunn: *Switchback* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1948), pages 218-9.
- 28 and, as has been noted, Huxley seemingly did not consider Warlock worthy of portrayal in his 'Garsingtonian' *Chrome Yellow*.
- 29 Peter Warlock (Jonathan Cape, London, 1934), page 227.



*The Delius Society Summer Boat Trip on the Thames* – Tuesday 16 September 2014

The Delius Society warmly invited members of the Peter Warlock Society to this summer boat trip and as Digby Fairweather's *Digby's Half Dozen* would be playing, **Michael Graves** decided to join the party.

It was very kind of the Delius Society to invite members of the Peter Warlock Society to join them for their Summer Boat Trip on the River Thames. The atmosphere was relaxed and there was plenty of lively conversation. Once underway, *Digby's Half Dozen* started their first set, which consisted of jazz numbers that the band most liked to play. Then,

as the *Golden Jubilee* turned about at the Thames Barrier, the second set began. This featured the premiere live performance of Digby's jazz suite *To Frederick with Affection*, which was very well received. A sumptuous afternoon tea of sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, cakes and fresh fruit rounded off a most enjoyable afternoon. ■



## Reviews

*A Demi-Capriol for Flutes* – The Kühlau Flute Quartet, 12 October, Brickendon Church, Hertfordshire.

John Mitchell happened across this unusual performance of *Capriol*, arranged for four flutes, whilst visiting PWS members Michael and Wendy Walshe.



Above: The Kühlau Flute Quartet. Left to right: Geraldine Marshall; Charlie Kisby; PWS member Wendy Walshe, John Matthews and Michael Walshe who can just be seen behind the candles!

Below right: Brickendon Church, Hertfordshire

(Photos: John Mitchell)

For Warlock Nutters (the present writer very much included here!) a performance of PW turning up in an unexpected place is often a welcome experience, and it was thus in a state of such ‘Warlockian unexpectancy’ (as it were) that I attended a Sunday afternoon concert in the depths of rural Hertfordshire on 12 October last year. It was given at the church, beautifully built in the Arts & Crafts style during the 1930s, in the village of Brickendon. The players were the Kühlau Flute Quartet, ably assisted in some of the numbers by PWS member Michael Walshe on basset horn.

The programme was a very popular one in that the great majority of the music played would have been familiar to a typical village audience. It was also quite wide ranging, with a classically orientated first half (including excerpts from Handel, Bach, Mozart and Tchaikovsky) leading on after the interval to what might loosely be called ‘middle-of-the-road’ fare: Vivian Ellis, George Gershwin, *Over the Rainbow*, and a selection from *Mary Poppins*. The programme ended, eliciting amused chuckles from the audience, with Frank Loesser’s *The Ugly Duckling* (from the Hans Christian Andersen film) – the programme had announced that Michael Walshe would also be ‘playing’ the duck, and his inserted ‘quacks’ at appropriate moments from a most convincingly sounding toy, helped to round off a most enjoyable concert with both laughter and applause!

The surprise item was that which opened the second

half: three movements from *Capriol*, arranged by Mel Orriss for flute quartet. Surprisingly perhaps, the ‘Pavane’ was not one of the six movements included, the three chosen by the arranger being ‘Basse-dance’, ‘Pieds en l’air’ and ‘Mattachins’. The quartet gave a very spirited performance, even if the tempi were generally slightly faster than those we are used to. Of the three arrangements it was possibly the ‘Basse-dance’ that was most satisfactory and convincing in this new guise. ‘Pieds en l’air’, although given a suitably expressive performance by the quartet, suffered from the arranger not being able to place the secondary ‘above’ counter melody (that occurs at letter

A in the score) in a way that gave it sufficient prominence. As it was, it largely disappeared within the rest of the ‘fluty’ texture. It was probably ‘Mattachins’ that was least effective as an arrangement, when in particular the opening section sounded a bit thin (where only three flutes were in action some of the time, and when four would have allowed a better stab at Warlock’s intricate harmony). Especially impressive was the Kühlau Quartet’s accurate handling of the closing section, with its harmonic scrunches and that easily-to-be-put-off-by rhythm of the final bars. Congratulations must go to them for including one of the lesser known *Capriol* arrangements in their programme. I now wonder if any future arranger will take up the undoubted challenge of attempting to adapt for flute quartet the remaining three movements – ‘Pavane’, ‘Tordion’ and ‘Bransles’ – so the that a demi-Capriol becomes a complete one?! ■



***The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration of Warlock's Birth***

Saturday 25 October, The Foyle Suite, Centre for Conservation, The British Library

John Mitchell provides an overview of the day's events

Because 2014 marked the 120th anniversary of Warlock's birth, in addition to the regular annual Birthday Concert held at one of the colleges of music, an extra event was put on in London to celebrate the occasion. Held in the comfort of the British Library's Foyle Suite, this most recent Warlock Day consisted of three lectures, the showing of a film, and a session of hearing some of Warlock's music recorded on 78 rpm shellac discs played on a wind-up gramophone.

The day was well attended, not only by a bevy of familiar Warlockian faces, but also quite a few members of the public. The audience included the Society's President (Dr Barry Smith); Founder (Patrick Mills); current Chairman (Michael Graves), and Warlock's granddaughter, Philippa Heseltine. Onlooking the events of the day with its wily eye was the original fox's mask that had inspired one of Warlock's last songs. Now in the Society's possession, and making more and more appearances, 'The Fox's Head' is increasingly becoming its unofficial mascot!

After coffee on arrival, the proceedings began at 10.30 with a welcoming introduction from Michael Graves, who went on to act as MC throughout the day. First on was Dr Brian Collins (familiar to many of us as a former Chairman and Newsletter Editor of the Society) who gave an excellent talk, delivered in his usual inimitable and engaging style, on the three song cycles Warlock had worked on during those years in the early 1920s when he was largely resident in Wales at *Cefn Bryntalch*. Generously illustrated with music recordings, it was the longest of the three lectures, divided into two parts and interspersed with a short interval. The content was at times thought provoking, perhaps not more so than right at the end when Brian proposed a challenging new take on the often cited notion of Warlock's *Sleep* being simply a Dowland-esque song with twentieth century knobs on!

Following a lunch break, when many attendees took advantage of the fine catering facilities within the BL, the afternoon session commenced with a film showing. When the announcement had been made earlier in the year it had been uncertain as to which one it would be, but in the end the original Plan A came to fruition when we were able to view Alan Torjussen's *Peter Warlock – Dewin Cerdd*. In



'Warlockians' and 'civilians' gather in The Foyle Suite at the British Library  
(Photo: Bryn Philpott)

Welsh, with English subtitles, it very appositely followed the morning lecture that had focused on Warlock's 'Welsh Period'. Some of us there (myself included) had only seen the film once before: at the Society's AGM weekend at Great Warley, Essex, in May 1999, fairly soon after the film had been made. With memories of a favourable first impression, it was rewarding to view it again, especially as it was so completely different from the more recent *Some Little Joy*.

Upon the lights going up, Michael Graves then went on to introduce Richard Chesser, Head of Music at the BL. Richard's talk was in the form of a most interesting resumé of the various Warlock, and Warlock related materials that were held in the Library, and how they came to be acquired. These holdings included both music manuscripts and letters. Especially exciting to learn of was a list of very recent acquisitions by the BL that pertained to Warlock, one item being a cache of five letters he had written to John Ireland. I imagine many of us have been somewhat puzzled by what seemed to be Ireland's largely unaccountable involvement at the inquest into Warlock's death, where he gave evidence, and maybe the content of these letters, when it becomes known, may just throw some light on this. Richard concluded his account by inviting the audience to inspect some of the Library's 'Warlockiana' during the tea break – with the proviso that liquid refreshment was kept well away from the exhibits!

Thanking Richard Chesser for his presentation, Michael then invited our President, over here on a short visit from his home in South Africa, to say a few words whilst Richard

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### *The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

#### Overview (Continued)

was still at the lectern. For those members of the public not conversant with how he came to get acquainted with Colin Taylor (Warlock's music teacher at Eton), Barry Smith recounted a remarkable and amusing story, prior to handing over to Richard a reel of ¼" tape he was donating to the BL. This was of a recorded conversation from the 1960s when Barry had asked Colin Taylor, then well into his eighties, to reminisce on his memories of Warlock.

Having centred around Warlock's creative period in Wales during the morning, a shift was then made to his Eynsford Years, when Michael gave a warm welcome to Barry Marsh who had travelled up from Devon to speak about EJ Moeran. Barry was in the final stages of writing a book about the composer, and in his talk he homed in on those years that Moeran and Warlock had shared a cottage together in that west Kent village. Much of the story of the Eynsford Period is already quite well known, but the speaker did provide some enlightening snippets, such as how it would seem the two composers first got to know each other. We shall await Barry's new book with much interest!

A short break for tea allowed the audience to view the BL's 'Warlockiana' and to prepare their ears for the final aural experience. Michael's last introduction was to Giles Davies, noting that he had studied singing at the RCM with Norman Bailey, and just to emphasise the point Michael waved around the Norman Bailey/Geoffrey Parsons

Warlock LP, waggishly commenting that he thought he had bought it before Giles was born! (He hadn't of course, but let's not get churlish over detail!!). Aside from a busy singing career, Giles is a great aficionado of the 78rpm shellac disc and the wind-up gramophone. Fortunately his collection contains many vintage Warlock recordings, and he played some of these to us on a wind-up machine dating from the 1930s, remarking that this would have been the type of recorded sound Warlock would have been familiar with. Outstanding of these old recordings for me was Constant Lambert's conducting of 'Bransles' from *Capriol* – a very fine, well articulated and energetic performance. As a bonus at the end Giles talked briefly about John Goss, enthusing the audience about a singer, once almost a household name that has now been largely overshadowed by the passage of time.

Rounding things up around 5pm, Michael thanked the various speakers for their contributions, and the audience for attending. Special thanks were given to Richard Chesser and Rupert Ridgewell of the British Library for their friendly cooperation and for facilitating what turned out to be a very enjoyable and successful day. Finally Michael Walshe, a long standing PWS member in the audience, concluded by proposing a vote of thanks to all of those involved in the organisation of a most outstanding event to celebrate Warlock's 120th birthday. ■

### Lecture 1: *Y cyswllt Cymreig* The Welsh connection – Dr Brian Collins

Reviewer: **Claire Beach**

Brian Collins began his interesting and informative talk by reassuring his audience that, despite the title, he would not be delivering it in Welsh! He pointed out how important the British Library, in its former home at the British Museum, had been to Warlock, who found there so many of the early manuscripts that he transcribed. Brian had wondered, when looking at the manuscript of 'Out of the Orient Crystal Skies', if Warlock had been the last to touch it.

The 'Welsh connection' of the title derived from Brian's observation that, despite being celebrated as a London and indeed a Chelsea composer, Warlock wasn't particularly

productive there. His most successful composition periods occurred when he had retreated to his mother and stepfather's Montgomeryshire home, Cefn Bryntalch. In Wales, Warlock seems to have found an element of quiet that he was unable to achieve in London, where his imaginative and unconventional thinking led to scrapes with authority. He needed to go somewhere different to 'find himself' and to recover physically from the pressures of London. In Wales, where he could walk and hear real curlews, Warlock managed to complete projects that he'd struggled with in London. In 1922 these included



*The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

**Lecture 1: *Y cyswllt Cymreig* The Welsh connection (Continued)**



Dr Brian Collins delivers his lecture *The Welsh Connection*  
(Photo: Bryn Philpott)

The first stanza imitates Delius and the second van Dieren, who had been something of a musical saviour to Warlock when he was trying to find his own musical voice rather than copying Delius. Warlock had been delighted to meet a composer influenced by Schoenberg, the subject of his own first published music journalism at the age of 17. The intense musical writing beneath the futuristic, other-world scenario about witches recalls the Scherzo from Schoenberg's 2nd quartet and exposes another layer of Warlock's musical makeup. But then in the third stanza, the mood of the words

the rewrite of *The Curlew*; his book on Delius; and his masterpiece, *Lillygay*. To illustrate this, Brian talked about Warlock's three song cycles and what each one reveals about the composer.

Brian played excerpts from John Mark Ainsley's recording of *The Curlew* with the Nash Ensemble to support his intriguing theory that the work is a catalogue of Warlock's compositional achievement. In rewriting *The Curlew*, Warlock discarded two songs and replaced them with a setting of 'The Withering of the Boughs', which expresses feelings of anguish in a pastoral environment. This song becomes the centre of the work, and the restructure itself becomes part of the catalogue, as is Warlock's choice of Yeats' nihilistic poems about lost love, little known at that time. Brian demonstrated that the second song in *The Curlew*, 'Pale Hands', was probably the earliest to be written, being stylistically Delian, with its tight setting and limited chordal vocabulary, whereas the outer sections of the cycle - 'O Curlew' and the soliloquy - more linear and horizontal in style, show van Dieren's influence. The central song 'The Withering of the Boughs' displays Warlock's development as a composer as he sets the three stanzas in different styles.

changes, and we hear Warlock's own voice. Two pentatonic modes are linked to make a hexatonic mode to signify an idyllic state which, however, can't last and the hopeless mood returns for the final reiteration of 'No boughs have withered because of the wintry wind; The boughs have withered because I have told them my dreams', spoken this time and surely influenced by Schoenberg's *Sprechgesang*? Although Warlock is not thought of as a modernist, his musical vocabulary here is English Expressionism, years before Bridge's 3rd Quartet, concentrated and ultra modern. Everything, says Brian, has an autobiographical element, and this is strong and deliberate in *The Curlew* - saying 'this is my musical background; this has made me what I am'. Is this why Warlock stuck with *The Curlew* rather than abandoning it as he did with other songs?

It took Warlock six or seven years to write *The Curlew*. Some months later he wrote *Lillygay* in four or five weeks, and in this cycle Warlock's usual self-consciousness is not evident. Brian played excerpts from Sarah Leonard's recording to illustrate his points and posed the question: is *Lillygay*, like *The Curlew*, about lost love? No, it's about abandoned women. Despite Warlock's few lasting

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#### Lecture 1: *Y cyswllt Cymreig* The Welsh connection (Continued)

relationships with intriguing women about whom we know little - Barbara Peache, Winifred Baker - most were fleeting. Warlock's attitude was generally 'love them and leave them' and that's the theme of *Lillygay*, which sets poems from an anthology of the same name collected by Victor Neuberg and published in 1920 by his Vine Press. Most of the texts are old ballads, but the last in the cycle, 'Rantum Tantum', is by Neuberg himself. In *Lillygay*, a woman's cycle (dedicated to his cousin Irene, who had visited from the Orange Free State) Warlock deliberately makes a woman sing about abandoned women. 'The Distracted Maid' is a 'maid in Bedlam' text and Warlock sets it like a folk song, the constant quaver motion suggesting pacing up and down in chains, or obsession with the lost love. This motion only stops on the word 'know' - where in fact the words suggest an element of doubt. At the end it's unclear, from the cynical chords under the last four notes, whether it is the maid or the observer who doubts the love? Is this Warlock the cynic suggesting that real love is unachievable? 'The Shoemaker' is a long poem but Warlock only sets the first three verses, ending with a double entendre accompanied by a wink from the piano: this figure recurs in later songs. 'Burd Ellen' is left holding the baby; is that why the maid was in Bedlam? In the final song, 'Rantum Tantum', Brian suggested that Warlock is telling us what to think. In the first four songs, the note centre is constant despite changing harmonies: this last song only works as the end of the cycle in context of the other songs as it constantly modulates: a symbol of sexual infidelity. Warlock leaves out the more sexual verses from Neuberg's poem, thus retaining the female point of view.

Candlelight is often dismissed as mere nursery songs. It was not actually written in Wales but in London: the Stichvorlage in the British Library is labelled 'Philip Heseltine, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea'. This cycle is totally different from the other two. Warlock's principal method for setting verses was to use the same melodic material from verse to verse and play with the harmonies, but what about songs with one verse? *Candlelight* consists of 12 songs and lasts about 6 minutes, so needs to be more focused and condensed. Brian explained that although it

can't be termed 'late Warlock' - there are early works and a middle period, but no mature works - towards the end of his life there is a concentrated use of motif, a limited palette of notes along with the limited palette of harmonies. So 'Candlelight' has almost a Weberian tightness and is over as soon as it's started, even though you expect another verse or two. Both 'I won't be my father's Jack' and 'Robin and Richard' show the influence of Bartók. 'O my kitten' is simple and trite, but contrasts with later songs. 'Suky you will be my wife' uses a circle of fifths as an ironic coupling of harmonic complexity with a naive children's song. The final song 'Arthur O'Bower' is full of arpeggios, and uses Messiaen's fourth mode long before Messiaen himself. *Candlelight*, suggests Brian, is, like the other song cycles, a catalogue of devices which crop up later on, like a stock-book. It's a miracle that Warlock dares to write so much different material in the context of monostrophic songs; there is enough material for more songs. There's a story that Warlock wrote *Candlelight* for Nigel, who would have been a bit old for it by this time - but then, Warlock was out of touch with his son. Maybe it shows a father with a conscience?

Brian summed up by suggesting that each of these three cycles tells us something different about Warlock's attitudes and lifestyle. As there was a little time left, he left us with one more thought about Warlock

#### **Breaking a Warlockian myth**

Studies of Warlock (excepting the major works) continue the 'Elizabethan born out of his time' myth. Brian refutes this: Warlock, he declares, was a modernist with an enquiring mind. Early music interested him because the establishment didn't understand it - he wanted people to be able to hear it, so he arranged it so it could be played and heard. Brian reminded us that 'Sleep' is often used as proof of the myth: it starts with a mini-fantasia, has a verse with long lines, a fantasia in the middle and a final fantasia which adds a dimension to what we understand from the words. We then listened to van Dieren's 'Ich wanderte unter den Bäumen', which is written in exactly the same form. So, Brian asked: is 'Sleep' Elizabethan or Modernist? ■

***The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration***

Screening of the film *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd (Musical Wizard)*, an S4C film in Welsh, originally broadcast in 1998 with English sub-titles.

**Rebecca Brooke**



PWS Chairman, Michael Graves, introduces the film *Dewin Cerdd*  
(Photo: Bryn Philpott)

first seen on S4C in 1998. S4C is the only Welsh language television channel in the world. Sixteen years on, sighs and murmurs of delight could be heard among the audience, many of them PWS members, as the film was shown. I can only assume that they, like me, were delighted and moved by it.

The most extraordinary thing about this TV film is that it is officially 'lost'. When contacted, S4C declared that the original tapes of the film were no longer in their archive. The current DVD was copied from a VHS video tape, itself a copy from the original broadcast standard tapes. It is down to actions on the part of Michael Graves, who digitised and processed the film to create a usable DVD, that it is preserved in a more accessible form. He deserves our sincere thanks. Thanks must also go to S4C and

Why do some really good actors seem to be out of sight while lesser actors abound on the screen? One good actor is Ceris Jones, a Cardiff-based Welsh-speaking actor, born 1964, most famous for a part in the Johnny Vegas film *Sex Lives of the Potato Men* (2004), and for playing a policeman in the Doctor Who story *Aliens of London* (2005). Earlier in his career, in *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd*, he created the most attractive Peter Warlock character, sometimes darkly sinister, then a predatory male, at other times showing the wonder and sincerity of a young boy, or revealing an acute sense of the absurd. In this role, most of his acting is gesture, in a series of *mise-en-scenes* placed over a musical sound-track. When he speaks, it is not in English. The performance is all the more attractive and superior, perhaps on this account, and that is strange.

If sub-titled Welsh-language television films could somehow be more accessible to wider British audiences, more critical appreciation, subject interest and praise would have been bestowed on the TV film *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd*, an independently commissioned production,

the film's director/producer Alan Torjussen, for granting the PWS permission to create this DVD, and particularly for their permission to screen the film at this symposium without any conditions being imposed. It is sad to hear that the original high quality tapes are no longer extant, simply because it is a terribly good film. In my opinion it deserves 'masterpiece' status among the offerings constituting 'Warlock on Film'.

The genre is documentary combined with dramatised sequences. The edit crosses between current day interviews and the 'period' scenes with Ceris Jones, often filmed over a sound-track of spoken or narrated words from letters, or to subtle changes of music. I wanted to point out that skill is needed in the choice of what words to cut from the letters. Bearing in mind that subtitles require something entirely economic, this is a very clever feature of the film. To mention the bounty of music, there are recorded performances by Roger Vignoles, Geoffrey Buckley, John McCabe, and songs sung by John Mark Ainsley, Tim Clode, Gareth Long, Iona Jones, Elizabeth Stevens, and

## Reviews

### *The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

#### The film *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd (Musical Wizard)* (Continued)

Benjamin Luxon. It is very useful to know what the song is, and the subtitle never fails to tell us, which is good. Examples I would say listen out for, are *Lullaby*, *Folk-song prelude III* and *An Old Song*, but there are many more fine works and performances.

At intervals, presenter Sian James, with her professional demeanour, leads us back to current times and also places the subject in a Welsh context. Wales and Montgomeryshire feature centrally. We hear: "there is a huge gulf between this place and its inhabitants. I love being here and enjoy the long summer days to the full. The feeling of complete detachment from these other people even when they are present, makes me feel nearer and more akin to those who are different" as the PW character appears to speak to himself, or directly to us. He does this often, but does so always without self-consciousness. It works very nicely. Later we hear how the extremely fit Warlock sought his Wild Wales from Pumlumon, Bugeilyn and Dylife.

Frequently we see the tiny neat handwriting familiar to many of us, as the camera trails over yellowed school notebooks. We feel close to him whether he is conjugating verbs in Welsh, studying Cornish grammar or marking the *Sephiroth* in three columns on the *Kabbalistic Tree of Life*. Indeed, the thrust of the documentary is Warlock's dilettante side, his skill in learning languages along with his encompassing interests in nature and supernature. *Peter Warlock - Dewin Cerdd* is a serious document, valuable to the viewer who wants to learn about this composer's music, intellect, life, and motivations.

Who made this film? Dr Rhiann Davies is Cynhyrchydd Cysylltiol (Associate Producer) along with Eiry Palfrey. Alan Torjussen is Director/ Co-Producer. Now prominent in the Genesis Media Group, he has had a long career, having had work shown on the BBC, ITV and Channel 4. Alan Jones is responsible for sound. I have given my round of applause for these filmmakers, who strongly emphasize the intellectual side of PW, a side not always conveyed so successfully by others who reveal him.

A very important part of the Dewin Cerdd documentary concerns PW's Celtic studies and his time in Ireland. A commentator tells us that Cornish was hardly spoken in 1917 and that there was just one textbook available to

learn it (by Gwas Mighal, an arch-druid). The Irish section begins with a map with Ynys Achill, one of the Islands off Clew Bay, Co. Mayo (the mid west coast on the Ireland map), a place of such barrenness that "reflects into one's very soul until one becomes chill and numb." We are told this was a period of mental and physical transformation. Warlock's 'full' beard in this section looks a bit false but it doesn't matter as you only see a glimpse of this. Sian, the narrator makes the point that the normally precise PH is very vague and cryptic about what he is doing on the island. He lived with a 'master' An Paorach (born Francis Power) to help teach him the Celtic languages. We see a photo from around 1908, of An Paorach wearing a kilt. He was involved in summer schools to foster traditional Irish culture, riskily encouraging people to learn Irish rather than English. He was also a champion bagpiper. Sian interviews a current resident, Tomas Macshain, who lives 50 yards from Achill Beg across the Sound and interviews An Paorach's daughter - an elderly lady at the time of filming in 1998. These interviews are a scoop in terms of research, recorded just before the end of the twentieth century, and unique documentary material.

This production manages to reveal glimpses of the mind of a man searching for something, seeking something mysterious, sometimes in vain. This is another big success. At times, in such an entirely unconscious way, you feel as if you are on the point of a breakthrough sharing Warlock's journey, with Ceris Jones's clear-eyed and occasionally painful head-on gaze, helping provoke those thoughts. This is filmmaking at its most contemplative. The narrator tells us about Warlock's detachment from people in the crowd and that he was attracted to people who were different. In a scene in Cornwall, with one hand on a dolman, the Hamlet-like actor beholds: "To adopt, as a pure ritual, a speech, a nationality that no longer exists. To have a private language - what a luxury!"

The film also light-heartedly attracts the viewers who enjoy seeing bizarre and uncanny mystery unfold. The theme of Warlock's intellectual side returns to the *Dewin Cerdd* ('music wizard') theme played out fairly heavily, perhaps a little annoyingly. The multitude of occult images in the opening sequence would make someone new to the composer think this was the most important influence in



***The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration***The film *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd (Musical Wizard)* (Continued)

his life, which is misleading. I imagine this is what they call the 'hook' in order to reveal the other main ideas explored.

Then again, it is quite interesting seeing symbols of the 'Celestial Alphabet', and how 'A' is repeated thirty times in a neat little Abracadabra triangle on page 210 of a book *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual* by Eliphas Levi (with a preface by Arthur Edward Waite). Was this Warlock's own book? Eliphas Levi, whose real name was Alphonse Louis Constant, had turned to magic after the damsel fair he married left him for another man. Like Eliphas, Warlock's occult study emerged at a time when he was at a low ebb. I am not aware his occultism was there before, say, the age of 22 but I'm prepared to stand corrected. There are not many musical wizards out there in the classical music world, so garnering interest in this side of the subject is justified by the film's producers.

Another extraordinary thing about this TV film is the quality of the camera work, and the landscape photography. It is BAFTA award winning cameraman Joss Lowe who achieves this. He brings the very best to this production. It is a plain and sad comment on these times that you seldom see such grandeur of cinematography in TV documentaries. Too often today, it is 'all about' the journalist and artistic freedom seems to be held in check where photography is concerned. Not in *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd* I assure you. Through the scenes of the 1920s, there is always a moving camera shot – always different angles to create interest. Joss Lowe is the real McCoy. Even someone who hated PW's music would be seduced by the mesmerizing photography, which juxtaposes natural world with symbols of the inner mind. A curlew is photographed close up with its chicks. A changing depth of field of fluttering grass or thistle is pure indulgence. Images of the sedge, lilies, reeds in the water follow, then dissolve to an image of a music manuscript. Many sweeping panoramas and shots that zoom out are beheld, including one of a stunning waterfall in Montgomery. This capturing of the landscape – taken on beautiful clear days or even in total atmospheric changes, is something else. We can feel how 'stark and elemental' are the surroundings which Warlock experiences "... essentially a country for deliberation at a turning-point." Suddenly, we zoom to small figures on a Cornish cliff

outcrop. As the camera pans around lush green meadows before moving to St Michael's Mount, the actor turns again to speak to us directly: "In this wonderful country ... I feel a real regeneration, I feel the Spring in me. This is a real new beginning. The stupendous Spring is going to blow my head clean off." Later we see light on a Dublin windowpane fade to a reflective surface – a crystal ball or silver candlestick in the séance scene. Later still an image of fox's fur dissolves to one of lyrics, or a shot of recently emptied pint glass floats over a manuscript.

A flapper dances her eurythmic dance in the summertime. This is the 1920s stated unequivocally. We see the 'white love and dark love' when PW and one girl walk in a dreamlike garden with blue hydrangeas, while another girl sits neglected. Which shy hand will he take in his, as they walk in a wood? It's a subtle device conveying the power Warlock has over some of the girls in his life. Ceri Clutterbuck is the actress with doleful eyes. Casting is good. The uncredited actress who plays Hester Dowden looks the double of her actual photo. The director succeeds in conveying different seasons and times, with correct cues. Colour is used inventively for dramatic effect, for instance, a bright red open-topped car against lush green fields. The use of props to enrich the context, together with subtle costuming, helps the period come to life and isn't afraid of boldness where appropriate: the privileged Rolls Royce with its Spirit of Ecstasy in one scene, and that Holmesian cape of Warlock's in another, are examples.

The transitions are well achieved on the whole. Woodcuts from the limericks with their air of mischief are followed by shots of the actor riotously rolling down a hill, or surprising someone as his hands appear through the holes of a stone. A shot of the moon dissolves to a candle at PW's desk. To the disquieting music of *The full heart*, we are plunged into darkness with a scene on the beach at night. Then tarot cards make it all quite 'Tales of the Unexpected'. The 'fit for the gas chamber' line is uttered and a descending shot of white smoke, dancing beautifully, leads us to a red box with gilt lacquering, and then on to the tarot. Touch is a good bridge to signify influences of the Occult, but sometimes direction falls down. They might as well have tied a screaming PW to a rail-track, instead of having those weird looking stones as a metaphor for Van

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### *The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

The film *Peter Warlock ~ Dewin Cerdd (Musical Wizard)* (Continued)

Dieren's pernicious influence. A scene showing our actor marvelling at a perfect ring stone, his arms flying around as he walks backwards, is slightly laughable.

There are many unpublished photographs shown at the beginning, which themselves give useful cues for dramatization. What can we infer from photographs? Against a comment about the unnaturally close relationship with his mother, and how, at age nine, his mother remarried, we see the touching photo of the small boy looking through the bannister stanchions. There is a photo possibly of a family group – with Phyllis Crocker. There are several photos of PW in a beret. We see an interesting one taken outside the front door at Eynsford. A thin-looking PW wears a ragged sweater – his hand on the shoulder of a man I can't identify, who has a large black hat on. You get a sense of the family's privilege in the 1930s photo of Nigel and Covie happily standing outside *Cefn Bryntalch* with, what might be, the full staff of the mansion or a party of visitors. From appearances it would appear that little had changed from the days of hunting parties, which Nigel's father fought shy of, preferring to read Borrow and Giraldus Cambrensis. At the point when Dr Rhian Davies says that 'the spirit of the moorland pervades his music' there is an interesting photo of a figure, who might be the composer, on a beach, near a large rock formation, a location unknown to me.

A 'Valentino' image of Warlock with slicked-back Brilliantine hair gazing up obediently, a smitten look in his eyes heralds the section about Puma, with *The Fairest May*

as music choice here. Puma is seated between two other girls on the ground and is looking rather bored. She looks dowdy. A similar one has her holding what might be some letters, while possessively guarding someone's hat and stick beside her. I am not altogether sure these ones are Puma, unless she is the cheeky girl on the last mentioned one's left. She is definitely in the one wearing an early Channel style coat next to a pond. It looks rather like Hampstead Ponds. In another she wears a Mabel Normand hat. In another sulky one, she has a velvet choker. There are two super Puma portraits: In hazy 'Baron de Meyer' style, she is decked in oriental coat and pointed hat and holds plum blossom in *contrapposto* pose. This one has the signature 'Bobbie'. In another portrait she stuns us with her silver turban and kohl-rimmed eyes.

Images on film make you look at a set of events in a fresh way. Certainly I did, during the section about Warlock's strange journey to faraway lands, which he began in March 1921. What a tour! It was such a personal one. The *denouement* is curious and thoughtful – transmitting lines of a philosophy, namely the freedom to be yourself. A final shot of PW in yellow waistcoat speaking to us directly in front of a window: "All art of any value must be sought and found in the inner kingdom. We should try to acquire some knowledge of its geography. Creative success is only when the real self has been drawn out of its slumber and into consciousness... If you are a law unto yourself you will steer your own course." ■

### *The holdings in the British Library:* Talk by Richard Chesser, Head of Music at the British Library

#### Richard Packer

Richard Chesser studied Music at Cambridge University and joined the British Library as a Music Curator in 1984, becoming Head of Music in 2007. He is the Immediate Past President of the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Document Centres (United Kingdom and Ireland Branch). His special interests include musicology, archiving, collection development and digitisation, including the management of digital libraries, and his personal areas of research include (as an oboist)

18th century music for oboe, and British composers of the 20th century. The collection for which he is responsible has over 100,000 pieces of manuscript music, 1.6 million items of printed music, and around 2 million recordings.

As well as hosting our day at the Library, Richard gave us a most informative and encouraging insight into the collection of Peter Warlock material held there. It was, of course, at the predecessor institution, the British Museum, that Warlock conducted his own research into early music,

*The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration**The holdings in the British Library* (Continued)

and earlier in the proceedings Brian Collins had mused on the possibility that the previous handler of some items of interest to current researchers might have been Warlock himself.

Richard began by outlining the scale of the Warlock collection – for example there are over 1,000 letters – and characterised Peter Warlock as being at the centre of British musical life in the 20th century, which was remarkable, given that he was self-taught, studied Classics rather than music at Oxford, and, though studying piano at Eton, received no formal musical education. He learned from the pieces of early music he studied, and was inspired by them.

Richard described the British Library's holdings as 'beyond compare', having been supported over the years by generous donations, for example by Colin Taylor, Nigel Heseltine, the Delius archive, letters from Olivia Smith, Cecil Gray's papers, the Galliard papers, those of Edward Clark (by Elizabeth Lutyens), and letters bought by Elizabeth Poston in 1967 at Sothebys, which were made public when she died. Some had fortuitous origins, as in the case of Nigel Heseltine writing 'out of the blue' in 1967, offering material by way of the Diplomatic Bag from Madagascar, which Richard considered just as well, as the material might have been seized by HM Customs in view of its contents!

Richard then showed us illustrations of examples from the collection, those of Warlock's own music including *Cod Pieces* (1917), *The Old Codger* (1917) (with quotations from Cesar Franck's symphony annotated in red), *The Curlew* (1922), which Richard described as 'wonderful writing', *Serenade for Strings* (1922), as well as an arrangement for piano by Barbirolli, *One More River* (1925), *Capriol*, arranged for piano duet (1928), and Matthew Locke's Viol Music.

Richard then concentrated on Warlock's relationship with Delius, showing us his first letter to Delius (1911), and the autograph inscription on the score of Margot la Rouge by Delius 'To my friend Philip Heseltine' (28 March 1913). We then saw the manuscript of Warlock's arrangement of *Brigg Fair* for piano duet (1911), which Delius, uncharacteristically critical, thought could have been 'fuller' (with which Richard agreed, considering



Richard Chesser, Head of Music at the British Library  
(Photo: Bryn Philpott)

it 'rather bare'. In a letter to Colin Taylor dating from 1912, Warlock quotes a passage from *Sea Drift*, which he was studying at the time. Then we were shown Warlock's letter to Viva Smith (1913) in which he says he had 'decided to give Oxford the sack'. We saw the manuscripts of the *Violin Concerto* arranged for violin and piano, and the *Double Concerto* arranged for cello and piano, acquired from the Galliard papers, and the autograph score of the *Cello Concerto*, which Richard considered of particular interest, as it was written in 1922 and therefore one of the last in Delius's hand, given that he was blind and incapacitated by 1925.

Warlock's limericks were not overlooked, and we saw those on Shelley, Swinburne, and Theodore Rousseau (with alternative endings). Other material included documents relating to Warlock's death, with some from the Ladmirault papers, including a transcription of Warlock's last letter to Ladmirault dated 20 November 1930, which, as Richard pointed out, gives no inkling of Warlock's intentions or forebodings as regards his end. There was also a copy of a letter from Van Dieren to Ladmirault dated 27 March 1931, in which he said Warlock had been in 'the best of health', but referred to his 'terrible depression'. Finally, there was a telegram from Van Dieren to Arnold Dowbiggin about the arrangements for Warlock's funeral, and a letter from him to Edward Clark concerning his memorial concert.

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### *The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

#### *The holdings in the British Library* (Continued)

Richard told us that acquisitions are ongoing, recent ones including the manuscript of *The Cloths of Heaven* and an uncomplimentary letter (from *Cefn Bryntalch*) about a performance of *The Curlew* in 1922. A novelty item, from the Hubert Foss Collection, was entitled *A Brochure of the Scottish Kings*, showing Cecil Gray in the guise of various Scottish monarchs.

Richard was brave enough to put on display, during the tea interval, several manuscripts to which he had referred,

imploping us to keep our refreshments well away from them! I felt this to be an otiose request, as to Warlockians the documents are, as someone once said, as sacred as the holy bones of Saint John, and we ensured that no harm befell them.

It was altogether a fascinating presentation, and we were reassured that the Library is doing sterling work to preserve and protect the legacy and reputation of one of its pre-eminent former clients. ■

Lecture: *Warlock and Moeran* by Barry Marsh

#### **Silvester Mazzarella**

This stimulating talk by an acknowledged expert on the life and music of E.J.Moeran naturally concentrated on the three-year period when he and Warlock shared a cottage in Eynsford, Kent (1925-28). Warlock seems to have first seen Moeran in about 1923 holding up a placard as part of a performance of Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, after which he went to see Moeran to express appreciation of his music. Moeran, for his part, claimed that Warlock's *Curlew* made him weep. The two later visited East Anglia together with friends. On moving into the Eynsford cottage in 1925, Warlock seems to have planned to use it as a sort of come-and-go centre within easy reach of London for like-minded people of artistic bent. Many did indeed come and go in this spirit, but Moeran settled in permanently, remaining until the tenancy was ended by financial problems in 1928; an important motive for Moeran perhaps being a chance to escape from living with his strait-laced parents.

While Warlock produced some of his best work during the Eynsford years, Moeran seemed unable to compose at all, though he played a full part in other aspects of local life, including amateur dramatics at the nearby village of Shoreham, and generally riotous living at Eynsford. With regard to the alleged 'riotous living', Barry referred to a statement made by Munn the grocer, who ran the shop next door to the cottage Warlock and Moeran rented. Apparently Munn maintained that the tales of revelry were much exaggerated. Barry entertainingly recounted Munn's views in a most colourful manner by the adoption of an authentic Kent accent.

Moeran was also known to be ready with a wheelbarrow to help Warlock home when he arrived from London by train the worse for drink and, less happily, unintentionally



Barry Marsh  
(Photo: John Mitchell)

ran over 'Satan', one of Warlock's beloved cats – though presumably not with the wheelbarrow. Herbert Howells believed it was Warlock's influence at Eynsford that made Moeran an alcoholic. It was Warlock who first called Moeran 'Monsieur Framboise' or 'raspberry', for his red face.

Barry Marsh firmly believes that Warlock and Moeran remained life-long friends, even if the effect of Warlock's more powerful personality on Moeran at Eynsford was not entirely beneficial. As for the composition they wrote together for a pub at Shoreham, *Maltworms*, Marsh states that Moeran was responsible for the chorus and Warlock for the verse. ■

*The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

*And finally ... Giles Davies winds us up!*

Bryn Philpott



Giles Davies with his 1930s Decca Salon Gramophone  
(Photos: Bryn Philpott)

We live in an age where we have become accustomed to music being widely (and occasionally freely) available in all manner of audio mediums. It is therefore good to be reminded now and again that it was not always so. How astonishing the invention of recorded music and broadcasting must have seemed to people living in the early part of the last century, even though it would be some time before this would be widely available; the costs associated with the early equipment making it unaffordable for most people.

In the final session of the symposium we were given a rare opportunity for an authentic contemporary listening experience of recorded music as it might have been heard in Warlock's day. We welcomed Giles Davies, who had brought with him a 1930s Decca Salon Gramophone along with a selection of shellac discs of a variety of Warlock related recorded music from the early 20th century. Giles has a collection of five gramophones, including a Columbia box, a bigger HMV portable as well as a not so portable HMV 511 large box cabinet (needing two people to move it).

We were given a brief explanation of the workings of the apparatus, including the stylus and amplification system and how the various elements impacted on the sound production. This gramophone was fitted with a steel stylus which though enhancing the sound volume, did increase the wear on the discs when compared to a wooden stylus. The amplification in this case was via a stylus hub, rather than the sound horn made famous by the dog listening to his master's voice in the HMV logo.

The gramophone was then wound and we started off with the lively 1937 recording of *Capriol* with Constant Lambert

conducting his orchestra. This provided a fitting overture to the works that followed, leading us to the main feature and continued the theme of Brian Collins fascinating lecture on Warlock's Welsh connections: a recording of *The Curlew*. Giles selected the 1931 National Gramophonic Society version, sung by John Armstrong with Andre Mangeot's International String Quartet. Giles explained that the N.G.S. discs were generally considered better pressings than H.M.V. releases, having less background noise. This recording was also conducted by Lambert and involved other performers who knew Warlock well, which clearly gives it a certain degree of authority and authenticity and it is perhaps the closest we have to an understanding of how Warlock might have expected to hear the work.

This piece was recorded over five disc sides and it was interesting to see Giles skilfully winding up the player and changing discs regularly to provide a near seamless transition between each side. One was immediately struck by the warmth and clarity of sound, with little of the thinness sometimes experienced listening to some digitally re-mastered discs.

Giles is a great admirer of the singer John Goss (who was a good friend of Warlock's) and played him in Tony Britten's film *Some Little Joy*. Both Goss and Warlock were interested in the preservation of Elizabethan and Jacobean songs and Warlock transcribed a number especially for him. In a letter to Goss on 20 July 1920, Warlock encloses seven transcriptions and writes 'may all success attend your recitals: if I can be of further use in transcribing or suggesting songs please command me ... No, I don't think

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### *The Life and Music of Peter Warlock: 120th Anniversary Celebration*

*And finally ... Giles Davies winds us up!* (Continued)

you will see me in Glastonbury ... unless the committee invite me to come and lecture them on the history or function of music, which seems unlikely!

Giles then played us a selection from the Goss recordings, including several lute songs accompanied by Diana Poulton in the original keys. The songs – *Flow not so fast ye fountains*, *There is a garden in her face*, *O eyes*, *O mortal stars* and *Come, my Celia* – are included on the Historic Recordings CD (divine-art ddh 27811) and Giles contributed to the informative sleeve notes for this release. The session concluded in lighter mood with a ballad, drinking song and sea shanty, sung by Goss with the Cathedral Quartet in *Sally Brown*, *Whiskey Johnny* and a rather amusing *Hanging*

*Johnny* where the Shanty man chants about all manner of characters he has hanged, including his Granny. One can imagine the ship sails being raised to the chorus ‘away boys, away’ and ‘and its hang boys, hang’ – wonderful stuff!

This session proved a unique and truly fascinating conclusion to a remarkable symposium, very much an authentic experience. Giles left us with the interesting final thought that the discs we had just been listening to were from John Goss’s personal collection, given to Giles by the singer’s grandson. It is therefore quite possible that Peter Warlock may well have had the pleasure of hearing these very records one evening, sitting with his friend over a bottle of beer. ■

***Peter Warlock: A celebration to mark his 120th birthday*** A concert devised by Robert Allan  
Thursday 30 October, The Adrian Boult Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire.

**Michael Graves** reports on the Birmingham Conservatoire’s celebratory concert, which took place on Warlock’s actual birthday date.



A small party of Warlockians entered the Birmingham Conservatoire’s Recital Hall at 7.20pm, only to discover that there was standing room only. Considering that there were more than 30 students involved in the evening’s concert, many having brought attendant families and friends, it was hardly surprising that there was a healthy audience. Two welcoming and helpful students deftly found some chairs for us and, together with a complimentary glass of wine, we

relaxed within the warm and vibrant atmosphere ready for the ‘show’.

Julian Pike, Head of Vocal Studies introduced the concert, which opened with the final two movements of *Capriol* arranged for piano duet. The performance was competently handled by the two pianists, but we and Julian were amused to see in the printed programme that the *Capriol* movement ‘Pieds en l’air’ written as ‘Pied-a-terre’!



*Peter Warlock: A celebration to mark his 120th birthday* (Continued)  
and *Canterbury Voices*

The format of the evening allowed a large number of students to participate, many performing only one song. The exception to this was the Klee Quartet [Naoko Senda (violin) Emi Otogao (violin) Jun Ohta (viola) and Ruri Kuroda (cello)], who first accompanied three songs for voice and SQ – *Sleep, Mourn no moe* and *Corpus Christi*, and then went on to play *The Curlew*. Vocalists changed between each song, the chosen tenor for *The Curlew* being Christopher Griksaitis, who delivered a very competent and impassioned account. David Westcombe (flute) and Jennifer Wood (cor anglais) drew full rich tones from their instruments and the whole ensemble played with accurate intonation and natural phrasing. It was a very impressive performance in every respect and full marks go, particularly, to the Klee Quartet.

*The Curlew* brought a rather serious first half to a close. The second half contained many of Warlock's more boisterous songs and kicked off with *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, sung with great panache by Andrew Wilson. Other rollicking songs included *Jillian of Berry*, *Away to Twiver*, and *Yarmouth Fair*, with *Pretty Ring Time* bringing the concert to a close. However, within the set, *Lullaby* and *Balulalow* provided a suitable break from all the exuberant songs and a dramatic contrast came with *The Fox*. This was sung with great sensitivity by Daniel Wyman, who was able to bring the difficult melody line together in a way that sounded wholly musical and natural, not always the case even with seasoned professionals.

The whole evening saw some very accomplished performances. Thank you Birmingham Conservatoire! ■

*Canterbury Voices – Bethlehem Down, arranged for women's voices*  
Sunday 30 November, St John's Methodist Church, Whitstable, Kent.



Kerry Boyle (MD, back row, far left) and the ladies of Canterbury Voices who gave the first performance of John Mitchell's arrangement for women's voices (SSAA) of Warlock's *Bethlehem Down* at an Advent Concert given on 30 November 2014 at St. John's Methodist Church, Whitstable.

Student PWS member Laura Hobbs, who sang at last year's AGM concert in Margate, is on the front row, far left.  
(Photo: John Mitchell)

[Ed. According to observers, the arrangement was very effective, and didn't lose too much compared with PW's original. It was certainly well received by the Canterbury Voices, as they have commissioned John to arrange another piece of Warlock's music for SSAA. John will be publishing his arrangement of *Bethlehem Down* in *Modus Music* later this year.]



## Reviews

*Songs of Vain Glory* includes Warlock's *My Own Country*

Thursday 14 December 2014, Wigmore Hall – Sophie Bevan (soprano) and Sebastian Wybrew (piano)

Bryn Philpott



Sophie Bevan (soprano)  
(Photo: Sussie Ahlberg)

In their commemoration of the start of the Great War, the soprano Sophie Bevan, accompanied by Sebastian Wybrew at the piano, set out to present the range of emotions felt by those who lived through the times. As the title suggests this was not intended to be a celebration of the patriotic glories of war and the songs were grouped to reflect the human experience: A call to Arms, Home Front, The Sea, Bereavement and After the Armistice. The recital was prefaced with Finzi's setting of Thomas Hardy's *At a lunar eclipse* as if to show how even such tumultuous world events made not the slightest impact on the shadow of the earth, as it moves slowly and surely across the surface of the moon; Wybrew's sombre opening chords capturing the sense of timelessness in the music.

Songs usually heard on these occasions such as Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* cycle, for instance, were avoided in favour of some rarer ones, like Charles Ives poignant setting of his own text *Tom Sails Away* written at the time of the United States' entrance into the war and Liza Lehmann's heartfelt portrayal of bereavement in *When I am dead, my dearest*, written not long before her own death in 1918. Many of the songs were indeed composed during

the First World War and I was impressed by Elgar's setting of Kipling's *Submarines* with a piano line that seemed to plumb the darkest depths of the ocean. To supplement the programme, a number of songs were included that are more normally associated with other conflicts such as Britten's arrangement of Charles Dibden's *Tom Bowling* (perhaps best known in Henry Wood's own arrangement in *Fantasy on British Sea Songs* heard annually at the last night of the Proms) and a robust performance of Haydn's *Sailor's song*, from 6 original *Canzonettas*, which pre-date Nelson's victory at Trafalgar by some 10 years.

By way of an interlude, we were given a selection of popular melodies of the time, such as Haydn Wood's *Roses of Picardy*, Weston & Lee's *Goodbye-ee* and Nat D. Ayer's *If I were the only girl* and in these songs Bevan showed her versatility. I particularly enjoyed their rather wonderful *We'll gather Lillacs* by Ivor Novello, composed at the end of the second world war.

Composers such as Stanford, Bridge, Somervell, Ireland and Holst were also represented in this recital, but perhaps the one most directly associated with the conflict is Ivor Gurney who, as a signaller in the Gloucester Regiment, was both shot and gassed in the trenches. We heard his sombre and subdued *The Ship* which emphasised the hardships at sea, along with his setting of Belloc's *Most Holy Night*; its flowing lyricism is quite different from Warlock's soft and chant-like setting under the title *The Night*. Warlock though seems to capture better that prayer like quality; that yearning for the safety and security that the night and sleep brings.

I have to admit that I would not normally have associated Warlock within a W.W.I. commemoration recital but the inclusion of his setting of Belloc's *My Own country* did, on reflection, seem highly appropriate within the 'After the armistice' grouping. One could imagine soldiers on their way home to their pleasant land, having passed through many places they could not understand. Bevan's performance genuinely caught the feelings of longing for home and peace.

This interesting and enjoyable programme with Sophie Bevan's beautiful voice supported by Sebastian Wybrew's thoughtful and sensitive accompaniment, proved a fitting tribute. To conclude the evening, those of us of sentimental disposition were rewarded with a repeat of *We'll gather Lillacs* as an encore. ■

*Music for a Sunday Afternoon in Canterbury*, a concert including Warlock's *The Curlew*  
Sunday 1 March, The International Study Centre in The Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral

Jean Collingsworth



Left: Canterbury Cathedral

Above: left to right, Paul Young (tenor), Jeremy Ovendon (violin), Elina Hakanen (violin), Rosemary Rathbone (flute), Ian Crowther (cor anglais), Anthony Halstead (conductor), Adrian Smith (viola), Rachel Waltham (cello).

(Photos: Michael Graves)

I was fortunate enough to attend a concert on Sunday 1 March 2015 at the International Study Centre in the Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral given by members of the Canterbury Festival Chamber Orchestra with their director and harpsichordist Anthony Halstead. They were joined on this occasion by the tenor Paul Young.

The programme was well chosen to demonstrate the expertise and versatility of these musicians. Mozart's Flute Quartet in D (K285) with soloist Rosemary Rathbone was crisply articulated and it was a pleasure to watch the players engaging in their ensemble conversation with obvious enjoyment. The limpid eloquence of Ian Crowther's oboe playing was foregrounded in the Trio Sonata in G Minor by J.S. Bach; while the first movement of Dvorak's String Quartet Opus 96 (American), with its lovely folk-like viola themes played by Adrian Smith above dancing violins, made an effective contrast. Two movements from the Sonata in C Minor by the renowned eighteenth century flautist J. J. Quantz, scored for flute, oboe and continuo, were coolly mysterious.

As a singer myself I was particularly interested in Vaughan Williams' treatment of three lyrics by William Blake for voice and oboe, and in Peter Warlock's setting

of four poems by W. B. Yeats, which has an instrumental interlude before the final item. Harry Plunket Greene, the Irish baritone, described the art song as the distillation of drama when he published *The Interpretation of Song* in 1912, and this is certainly the case with the Blake pieces. 'A Poison Tree'; 'London' and 'The Piper' are very short indeed; only the first item lasts more than two minutes and the performer must reach the heart of the matter immediately.

The opening lines of 'A Poison Tree' are deceptively simple: "I was angry with my friend; I told my wrath, my wrath did end". What begins as a statement about the destructive consequences of repressed anger, however, becomes a subtly oblique reference to that apple from the Tree of Knowledge, which precipitates the Fall of Adam and of all humankind. The sinuous oboe weaves its snaky way through the syllabically set regrets of the singer and the result is a disturbing tension. More declamatory is 'London', a piece whose lack of accompaniment makes perfect sense because the sighs, cries and curses of the urban dispossessed are powerfully expressed through the forceful consonants of an exposed performer who has no companion. Finally 'The Piper' exploits the cheerfully mimetic oboe. Paul Young and Ian Crowther caught very well the intensity of

## Reviews

### *Music for a Sunday Afternoon in Canterbury* (Continued)

feeling and stylistic subtlety which each of these contrasting pieces demands.

However, *The Curlew* by Peter Warlock is a richer experience. His fine setting of four poems by W. B. Yeats, which was composed between 1920-1922 and scored for the tenor voice with chamber orchestra, is an unforgettable study of love, loss and loneliness. Strings initially evoke a panorama of bleak, watery wasteland: a mysterious and hostile place into which the cor anglais brings the desolate sound of the curlew. But with the entry of the voice and its harsh, anguished imperative, "O, curlew, cry no more in the air", it is clear that there is a correlate with the bleak internal landscape of the poet/singer's soul. The cry of the curlew recalls painful memories of past love, lost love, regret and the impossibility of forgetting.

Yet though the mood throughout is bleak, there is stylistic variation within the cycle. In the second item, 'Pale brows, still hands', the lover mourns the destructive effect of an indelible passion for another woman on a present companion. Gone are the wind instruments, which earlier located the yearning protagonist in an immense metaphorical landscape. This is an intimate narrative of frustrated desire and disappointment distilled into one direct statement above keening strings. One does not need to be aware of Yeats' long-standing and unreciprocated love for Maud Gonne to appreciate Warlock's intense response to this sad lyric.

'I cried when the moon' is the longest poem in the cycle and describes a disturbing convergence of the natural and the supernatural. The eerie curlew and pewit are present once more with the wanderer who dreams of witches and the dancers of ancient Irish mythology. Yet there is a brief hint of sweetness in the third verse when he envisions a 'sleepy country' where flying swans sing; perhaps this is an oblique reference to the children of Lir in Irish legend who were turned into swans by their stepmother and were linked by chains of precious metal until the spell was eventually lifted. Here a 'king and queen' wander through life in happy oblivion. For just a few phrases the tenor's voice soars into lyricism and one's heart lifts, not least because of this contrast to all the previous desolation. Hope is soon quenched, however, and the couplet at the end of each verse is surely the most shattering statement of the whole cycle: "No boughs have withered because of the wintry

wind/The boughs have withered because I told them my dreams". Warlock's genius is to have the concluding words of the piece whispered by the singer in desiccated despair. Wonderful!

The final lyric makes great demands on the singer's ability to pitch because most of it is unaccompanied until the strings return for the last sad statement: "Your breast will not lie by the breast of your beloved in sleep"; at which point the cycle ends abruptly. But surely there is no more to be said.

Is all this so depressing? No. The lack of sentimentality is exhilarating because the words and the music are unfailingly congruent in this sustained study of personal desolation. However, so much also depends on the performer who must engage with a paradox. His persona is helpless in the grip of unrequited love. Yet the realization of his anguish in the concert hall requires the most precise and flexible vocal control so that each phrase can be given an authentic intensity. Constant word painting is needed if this cool, dim landscape and the intense sufferings of the archetypal wanderer within it are to engage us. Furthermore, the silence between the pieces is important if the atmosphere is to be maintained. Thus sustained concentration and a passionate intensity are required from all concerned if the magical integration of various parts into an expressive whole is to happen. And it did happen here!

Paul Young's singing was spellbinding. This performance should be heard again. ■

[Ed: Having also been to this superb concert, I should like to add that this was the first time Paul Young had sung *The Curlew*, which makes his performance of it all the more remarkable. Intonation and diction were absolutely spot on, the phrasing natural and organic. Indeed the whole ensemble was highly articulate and Anthony Halstead's direction kept everything tight and controlled. The wind instruments both displayed a rich tone, although the much sought after full and creamy timbre from the cor anglais was, in my view, a shade too mellow for this work. A slightly sharper edge to the tone would have suited the angst of the work better, but that is a personal opinion and a very minor point. The overall performance from all players was exemplary and it was certainly one of the better accounts of *The Curlew* that I have heard. I agree with Jean. This performance should definitely be heard again.]

**John Pritchard Evans: 6 June 1932 – 15 November 2014**

We were saddened to hear of the death of John P Evans last November. John had always been a very supportive member of the Peter Warlock Society, occasionally contributing to the Newsletter and frequently sending letters to the editor. His final letter to the Newsletter arrived last October, shortly before his death, and can be found on page 45 at the end of this obituary. The words below are taken from the eulogy that was read at John's funeral in Aberystwyth, which was held at Aberystwyth Crematorium on Thursday 27 November 2014.



John Pritchard Evans, John Trombone, John X-Ray, or simply JP, was a man of many talents, many interests, and above all many friends. Those who were privileged to have known him remember him as a dear kinsman, a great teacher, a wonderful colleague, an inspirational speaker, and a calm and steady influence in all of his endeavours. Quick witted and generous, he had a wry, and sometimes cynical sense of humour and lived life to the full.

John was born in 1932, the son of Ethel Caroline Pritchard from a Gloucester publican family and Vincent Evans of Swansea, an electrician and Chairman of the joint unions. The many facets of John's character were forged during his youth growing up in a traditional Welsh community. He came from a strong socialist background and was a Labour party member all his life.

During his early years, Wales was plunged into a great depression. His father organised soup kitchens during the General Strike where John learned charity, community, and generosity, qualities that would stay with him throughout his life.

One of John's earliest memories was watching the bombing of Swansea with his older friend Russell, from down the street, and seeing the town aflame. As they stared at the scene, his older friend recognised the sound of a German bomber overhead and shouted to him to dive into a ditch. They felt an enormous blast nearby and finally crept out once everything had settled, to see a huge crater. A bomb had been jettisoned by a German plane as it returned from its mission and luckily had not gone off. The two young boys had seen firsthand the ravages of war and luckily been spared.

John learnt to swim in the hazardous currents of the Loughor Estuary. A strong swimmer, he remembered being carried on his mother's and father's backs as a youngster when they swam out far into Swansea Bay. In his twenties, when swimming with a friend in Limeslade Bay, they witnessed a ship catch fire about half a mile out to sea. John swam out and rescued a baby for which he was later presented with a bravery award from the Royal Humane Society by the Lord Mayor of Swansea.

As a youngster he bought himself a plastic whistle and taught himself popular tunes of the day, driving his parents mad. His father saw that Gorseinon Band was advertising to teach youngsters brass instruments and suggested that John learn a proper instrument. He wanted to play the trumpet but was given a tuba as it was all they had left. It was nearly the size of himself and he struggled with it for a while before requesting something more portable. He was given an ancient 'G' trombone, plucked from the band room wall, a narrow-bore bass trombone with a handle, which launched his life-long passion for music of all sorts.

He attended Gowerton Grammar School where he played trombone in the symphony orchestra. Some of John's earliest memories of performing were with the school orchestra where they would play a movement from

## Obituary

### John Pritchard Evans (Continued)

a symphony and accompany the hymns for assembly. John became a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, on trombone and on tuba.

In school he studied sciences but his passion was for the arts. He enjoyed playing Falstaff in the school production of *Henry IV Part One*. Padded out substantially to suit the character, and turning in a compelling performance, his mother didn't recognize him and is said to have asked 'When's our John coming on?'

After finishing school John worked as a metallurgist in Trostre Steelworks, often swapping his shifts to fit around dance band gigs. He was conscripted for National Service in 1952, and signed up to be trained in radiography, as he liked radios...(!) Although he was surprised to learn that radiography was unrelated to radios, as with most endeavours in his life, he tackled it with aplomb and excelled, establishing the career that would stay with him throughout his life. He spent a year in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency in a field hospital with the Royal Army Medical Corps. With his field experience, he returned to Wales as a skilled radiographer and worked in Swansea General Hospital, where he quickly established himself as an affable and unflappable colleague. He enjoyed the camaraderie, Italian coffee, and ice cream in Joe's Cafe across the road. During it all, he continued to play local gigs as well.

His love of music and playing gigs frequently took him out of town. In 1961 after a trip to London, he re-joined the military in the Band of the Irish Guards where he served for 3 years on the 'G' Trombone. He had many happy stories from this time including the time he swapped places, during a march, with a civilian gentleman who regularly liked to march along with the band. John continued playing from the pavement.

Bandsmen at that time worked part time jobs to supplement their military wages. John found work delivering ladies' lingerie, for which he had use of a van with 'Jean Radford's High Class Lingerie' painted in large letters on the side. Under John's steady hand, the van doubled for troop transport as well. John would squeeze up the rack of nighties in the back to make room for several guardsmen flatmates who would travel to barracks in this van and the gate guards would salute as he drove in to report for duty. John was honoured, of course, but perhaps they were saluting the lingerie.

He travelled to Argentina with the Irish Guards Band where he caught the eye of the Marquesa Bettina who was part of the welcoming committee. The Marquesa took John and two of his band mates on a personally guided tour around the capital city, Buenos Aires, and through her connections, John and his bandmates were given a guided tour of the Presidential palace, the Casa Rosada, by the Vice-President, during which he nearly ushered in the Falklands War two decades early when he "misidentified" the Malvinas as the Falkland islands on a map that was hanging in the palace. He also managed to appear on the front page of several Argentinian newspapers in full ceremonial dress, but unfortunately with the top button of his tunic awry, which earned him a week confined to barracks.

After completing his service with the Irish Guards Band he was drawn to live in Shrewsbury by the fine pork pies and Bass ale where he returned to radiography, this time at the Royal Salop Infirmary. John also taught the trombone at Shrewsbury School and continued to play in his spare time.

He was persuaded to join the Shrewsbury Orchestral Society as a trombonist where he met the Higgs sisters, Joyce and Mary, both accomplished musicians as well. One excursion was planned with Joyce to see the Hallé Orchestra, but Joyce arranged to send her niece, Cecilia, instead. Whether by luck or design, it was a serendipitous turn of events, for this was the lady who would become his wife.

John learnt to ring church bells and did a 'very severe' roped climb up Pontsford Rocks during their courtship. Celia and John were married at St Mary's church, Shrewsbury in March 1966. In 1969 they moved to Aberystwyth when John accepted a radiography position at Bronglais Hospital. Here he attended Bangor College and became Clinical Tutor of Radiography. John enjoyed his work and his wonderful colleagues at Bronglais Hospital for the next 25 years.

Now settled with his beloved wife in Ponterwyd, John joined the Aberystwyth Silver Band and played in many different bands from regular dance bands at the Kings Hall, to the Crystal Temperance Footwarmers, The Belgrano Banjo Band, a German band-style ensemble called 'Die Ausfarten Stompers' and others. John was also blessed with a rich and sonorous bass baritone singing voice, and appeared on the stage with the Showtime Singers in Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* as Chief of Police and as Mr. Bumble in *Oliver*.

John's two children, Victoria, and Alexander, were born in the 1970s, and he embraced fatherhood with the same loving spirit, firm hand, and wry humour that characterized all of his endeavours throughout his life.

During the 1980s, John discovered a love of wine, nurtured during the Silver Band's first visits to our twin town St Brieuc, in Brittany. John became quite the wine connoisseur, and there followed tours with Chris Samuel's Wine Club over several years which covered most of the wine regions of France.

John's interests extended to sports as well. He was a member of Glamorgan Cricket Club and attended many matches. He also enjoyed many rugby tours to Scotland, France, England and Ireland with AberJazz. In his later years, Test Match Special would be on everywhere in the house during a test match.

He was an avid reader, enjoyed history, particularly local history, politics and stamp collecting. He was an enthusiastic supporter of several organisations and particularly the Peter Warlock Society. He also served as Liaison Officer to the Ceredigion NHS Retirement Fellowship. He enjoyed travel, and was particularly fascinated with his first of several trips to Russia studying the language for many years. He also

took up the cello in his sixties, beginning, typically, not with 'Tune for a Day Cello,' but with the Bach Cello Suites which he used to play on the trombone.

John's other pursuits included pub quizzes and cryptic prize crosswords, and more recently he also enjoyed Chris Packham's 'Tweet of the Day,' 'Flog It,' 'Bargain Hunt,' and 'Family Guy' on TV as well as visiting antique fairs.

He saw his beloved sisters Hilda and Julia often and was delighted when his son, Alex, and his wife, Ellie, settled near Aberystwyth and had grandson Ozzy just last year. Ozzy brought him a huge amount of joy! He thought he had done OK for 82 years.

Although John was poorly in the last few weeks of his life he remained active, continuing with many of his interests and commitments as best he could. He died peacefully surrounded by his wife, Celia, and his two children.

A multi-faceted man, John lived life with vigour, accomplished much, and was active until the day he died. He had a keen intellect, an innate curiosity, and a *joie de vivre* that stayed with him throughout his life. He had no regrets, he was good to his family and friends, straightforward, kind and generous. Thank you John. You were loved, admired and respected by many and you will be missed. ■

## Letters

Dear Michael,

Ref: *Elgar. An Anniversary Portrait* (Multi-authored)  
Continuum HB2007 PB 2008.

I was idly reading (that's the best method) the above when a name jumped out at me. It was off page 185 – I'd nearly got to the end of this one and it jolted me awake – the name Bernard van Dieren. It must be him, I thought, what's the date? He'd been appointed to the Elgar Birthplace Trust by Elgar's daughter as a fund-raiser in 1966. A glance at Fred Tomlinson's *Warlock and van Dieren* confirmed BvD had died in 1936 but had a son BJvD who could well be our chap?

He made an unsuccessful money-raising trip to the USA with Carice Elgar Blake, but after she died in 1970, he got on the wrong side with the existing Elgar Society partly by starting a new UK Elgar Society. There may also have been some problems with the Trust funds. It all meant he was forced to resign in 1971.

I wonder if this BvD is actually BJvD, son of the main benefactor of PH's last will? Perhaps I'm reading too much into the unusual name and van Dieren in the low Countries is the equivalent to Smith or Jones here.

Or is the curse of the ill-luck never too far away from 'our' van Dierens?

P.S. BJvD's full name – Bernard Hans Jean Jules Maximilian Navarre Benvenuto van Dieren.

Yours sincerely

**John P E van S**

[Ed: John was right to identify this BvD as being the son of 'our' Bernard van Dieren, who so influenced Warlock. Indeed, Bernard van Dieren Jnr. was Hon. Secretary of the Peter Warlock Society in the early days prior to John Bishop taking on the rôle. It is also characteristic of John Evans that he signed himself off, rather waggishly, as John P E van S!]



### Moldovan Capriol

Just a very quick one-liner. John Allison (a former student of mine) who edits *Opera* magazine and is the music-critic for the *Sunday Telegraph* writes as follows:

'I was interested to see in the programme of this autumn's Bucharest Festival that the National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova (!) is playing *Capriol*. The programme spells the composer as Worlok, but still at least they are doing him ...'

Warm regards  
**Barry (Smith)**

### Ian and Jennifer Partridge on YouTube

Newly posted onto YouTube is series of short films of songs sung by Ian and accompanied by his sister Jennifer. The songs were recorded for the close-down at Thames

Television during the week surrounding Valentine's day in 1982. Ian writes:

'The days of television putting out classical songs are long gone, but a very nice Thames Television producer Marjorie Baker thought it would be nice to close down Valentine's week with some English love songs.

Two of the songs are by Warlock, *Pretty Ring Time* and *Sweet and Twenty*, others are by Thomas Dunhill (*Cloths of Heaven*), Armstrong Gibbs (*The Fields Are Full*) and Roger Quilter (*Damask Roses*). There are also other short films of recitals given by us in a number of venues from the 1970s and 1980s.'

**Ian Partridge**

Follow the link to the new YouTube channel on Ian's website at [www.ianpartridge.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.ianpartridge.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

## News

**On Friday 20 March in Cape Town, PWS President Barry Smith devised, directed and played piano duets in a concert entitled *The music of Peter Warlock***



PWS President Barry Smith  
(Photo: John Mitchell)

The concert was part of *The Music Academy of St Andrew's First Semester 2015 Concert Series* at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cape Town. The St George's Singers were joined by George Stevens (baritone) and Tertia Visser-Downie (piano) with the Orchestra of the Academy of St Andrew directed by Barry Smith. Barry also performed two piano duets with John Woodland.

The publicity for the concert explained 'This is a rare and fitting opportunity to experience some of Warlock's music and share with Barry in the intrigue of this fascinating composer whose life is so shrouded in mystery.'

The programme was as follows:

***Capriol*** for String orchestra

Four choral pieces: ***Milkmaids, Lullaby, The bailey berith the bell away, The first mercy***

***Five folk song preludes*** for piano (Tertia Visser-Downie)

***Serenade for strings***

Four songs: ***My gostly fader, Captain Stratton's Fancy, Sleep, Yarmouth Fair***

***Cod-piece*** for piano, arr. Fred Tomlinson 'Beethoven's Binge'

Five choral pieces: ***The Birds, Balulalow, Bethlehem Down, Benedicamus Domine, One more river.***

Well done, Barry!



**Saturday 9 May: Whitney-on-Wye, Herefordshire**

***Peter Warlock Society AGM and associated Events***

**11am:** The Village Hall, Whitney-on-Wye  
*What everybody should know about Peter Warlock*

Lecture by Dr Brian Collins

**2pm:** The 2015 Annual General Meeting

**3pm:** St Peter and St Paul Church, Whitney-on-Wye

Warlock concert to include the Quebb Quire singing *Twelve Oxen, Good Ale, Balulalow, Yarmouth Fair, Queen Anne* and *I have a garden*.

Gary Higginson (tenor) will sing *The jolly shepherd* as its dedicatee G T Leigh Spencer lived in Clifford, just over the River Wye. He will also sing Hal Collins's song *Forget not yet* that Warlock arranged for OUP to publish, Collins being Warlock's factotum at Eynsford.

Also Tony Urbainczyk (violin) will play David Cox's *Warlock Suite* with John Merrick (piano), and Malcolm Rudland will accompany Tony in Szigeti's arrangement of three movements from *Capriol*.

**Sunday 31 May, 6pm Holy Trinity, Sloane Street SW1**

***2015 Spring Celebrity Recitals:***

***Organ Music with local connections and music for soprano connected with London SW1***

Malcolm Rudland (organ and piano)

Emily Jennings (soprano)

The recital will include works by John Ireland, Cyril Jenkins, Tibor Pikethy, Mozart, Béla Bartók and four of Warlock's songs: *And wilt thou leave me thus, The fox, Fair and true* and *Jillian of Berry*.

There will also be organ pieces based on these songs by Betty Roe, Eric Wetherell, and Brian Collins from *A Paean for Peter Warlock* (available from Music Sales). All three composers will be present at the performance.

A forthcoming volume of Warlock's Songs for Soprano, published by Music Sales, is scheduled for launch at this concert.

**Admission £10 on the door (concessions £5).**

**Tuesday 27 October 6pm The Carole Nash Recital Hall, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester**

***Warlock's 121st Birthday Concert***

Details of the programme will follow.

In addition to the concert, there are plans to organise an afternoon tour of the facilities at the Royal Northern College of Music specially for Warlockians. After the concert we shall be able to meet the performers and staff over drinks and nibbles. Those staying on in Manchester may then wish to meet for supper at an agreed venue.

For more information, contact Malcolm Rudland whose contact details are on the front cover of this Newsletter.

**A Special Offer for members of the Peter Warlock Society from EM Records**

EM Records is a ground-breaking new label from the highly successful English Music Festival (EMF). In under three years, the label has developed a catalogue of twenty-three recordings, all of which have received great acclaim in the national and international musical press. Like its parent organisation, the label is committed to celebrating the music of British composers from mediaeval times to the present day, with a strong focus on the early twentieth century.

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Email: [em.marshall-luck@em-records.com](mailto:em.marshall-luck@em-records.com)

**And finally ... another big 'Thank You' to Music Sales**

The Peter Warlock Society once again wishes to express its gratitude to Music Sales ([www.musicroom.com](http://www.musicroom.com)) for the printing of this Newsletter free of charge to us.

As Warlock's main publisher, we appreciate the generous support they have given to the Society. Their music and also those of other publishers can easily be bought on-line at [www.musicroom.com](http://www.musicroom.com).



# Notice of the 2015 Annual General Meeting

14:00 on Saturday 9 May 2015 in the Function Room at  
*The Boat Inn, Whitney-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR3 6EH.*



There will be a programme of activities throughout the day:

- 11:00 Lecture by Dr Brian Collins: *What everybody should know about Peter Warlock*  
The Village Hall, Whitney-on-Wye.
- 13:00 Lunch at *The Boat Inn*
- 14:00 The Peter Warlock Society 2015 Annual General Meeting: The Function Room of *The Boat Inn*
- 15:00 *Warlock Concert: St Peter and St Paul Church, Whitney-on-Wye*  
[with Gary Higginson (tenor), Tony Urbainczyk (violin), John Merrick (piano), Malcolm Rudland (piano and organ) and the Quebb Quire. See Page 47 for more details of the concert.]
- 16:30 Afternoon Tea at a venue to be decided in Whitney-on-Wye
- 19:00 General socialising for those staying on and ...

on Sunday 10 May:

- 09.30 Rehearsal for Warlockian volunteer singers, St Mary's Church, Almeley (the largest church in the Benefice) for 11am Matins to include Warlock chants, *The birds* and Brian Collins' *Toccata on 'Jillian of Berry'*. (Please tell Malcolm if you can volunteer, and he will send you the music.)
- 12.30 Lunch at the local *The Bell* (or just a drink for those who have had a 'Full English'!!)

Warlockians wishing to arrive on Friday and/or leave on Sunday may find accommodation in Whitney-on-Wye at *The Boat Inn* (01497 831223), or at *The Pound B&B* next door to the inn (01497 831391). Some members have elected to base themselves in Hay-on-Wye (just 5 miles away) where there should be ample accommodation. Members and friends will be able to meet for evening meals and general conviviality and those in Hay will also be able to visit the book shops before moving to Whitney-on-Wye on Saturday morning. Transport to and from Hay and Whitney will be provided for those travelling by public transport. It may also be possible to arrange transport from Hereford for those travelling by train. Please contact us for advice on this and for any further information.

I look forward to seeing you there. **Michael Graves – Chairman**

Enquiries and RSVP to The Hon. Secretary Malcolm Rudland  
on 020 7589 9595 or [mrudland2@gmail.com](mailto:mrudland2@gmail.com).)