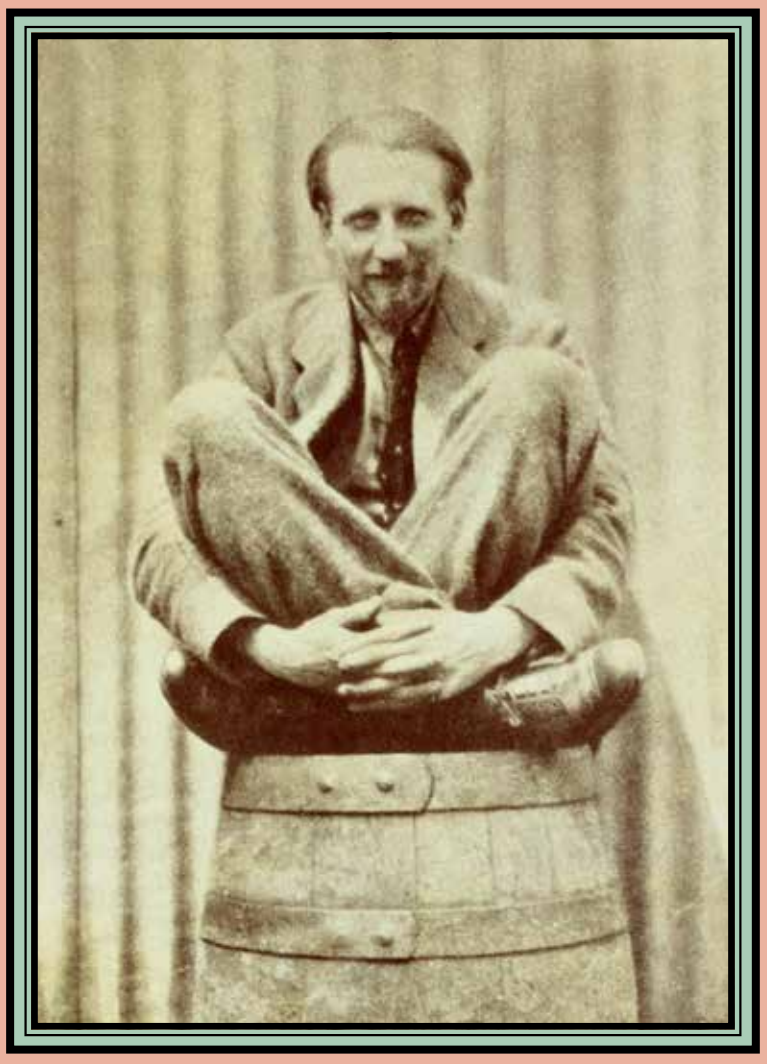
Peter Warlock Society

Newsletter 117

The English Ayre Edition

Spring 2026



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Editorial

Welcome to Newsletter 117

A great deal was happening for Peter Warlock in the late 1920s. For us Warlockians, the next four years will be full of centenaries and this year we are commemorating two contrasting events. The first is the lightning strike that hit the church in Winterton-on-Sea in April 1926. Peter Warlock, along with Augustus John, E. J. Moeran, John Goss and Barbara Peache, visited the church on a travelling jaunt to Norfolk. Augustus John had just suggested that Ms Peache be offered up as a sacrifice on the alter, when a bolt of lightning struck the church! To celebrate the safe deliverance of our composer, we shall be holding the 2026 AGM in Winterton church. See the back pages for more information.

A more important event in 1926 was the publication of Warlock's book *The English Ayre* – see John Mitchell's article on p.28. Warlock researched early music, primarily Elizabethan and Jacobean, and transcribed a significant amount from manuscripts in the British Museum. Warlock described these manuscripts as looking like a series of hieroglyphics, mostly on staves without bar lines, and spent countless hours converting them to a format that modern musicians could understand.

Further to that, Warlock understood the quirky nature of early music and sought to transcribe as accurately as he could. For example, the frequent use of false relations, where a major third is pitched against a minor third at the same time, was something that many Victorian editors had failed to understand, and they often ironed out these aspects of the music believing them to be errors, or simply dissonant and not comfortable for the ear. Warlock, in contrast, had such a sophisticated ear, that he understood all these 'quirks' and retained them to preserve the music's essential character.

This aspect of Warlock's work has been underrepresented and undervalued in the past and we are addressing this now in several ways. Last year we negotiated with the English Music Festival to programme a 'Warlock Day' to include a concert by the Royal Ballet Sinfonia of all Warlock's transcriptions of early music for string orchestra. (see Newsletter 116 p.35). This performance was so delightful that immediately after the concert I approached the orchestra manager, Claire Dersley, to ask if she would be interested in recording these pieces for a CD. Yes! EM Records will produce the CD, which will be a companion to the complete 'Warlock and the Orchestra', devised by David Lane, *Maltworms and Milkmaids* (EMR CD080). The recording sessions took place last November. See pp.4-5.

Warlock's industry didn't stop at early music for strings, however. He transcribed dozens of Elizabethan songs for voice and piano, and for voice and string quartet. Since 'ayres' are specifically songs, we have also commissioned a second CD to be produced by Convivium Records. This will contain all the songs in the three volumes of *Elizabethan Songs, for one voice to sing and four stringed instruments to accompany. Transcribed by Peter Warlock.*

In the last Newsletter, I promised to include in this edition a transcript of the excellent talk on Hubert Foss, given by Simon Wright at the 2025 AGM in Eynsford. Simon is adviser to the Music Department at OUP and has researched extensively the history of OUP's music publishing. The transcript starts on p.6. Simon has also contributed an article, which serves as an introduction to the chapter written by Hubert Foss about Peter Warlock in the 1946 Pelican publication *British Music of Our Time*. I am very grateful to Simon for both these valuable contributions.

Also 'from the archives' is an article by the little known Peter Burra, *The Tragedy of Philip Heseltine*, originally published in *The Monthly Musical Record* of 1934 (p.40-41). This is prefaced by my thumbnail sketch *The Tragedy of Peter Burra* (p.39).

John Mitchell is never idle and in addition to his short piece on *The English Ayre*, he has submitted a fulsome article about Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock (p.30), as well as a review of a CD titled *Gods, Ghosts and Monsters*. Isn't that a great title?

My sincere thanks go, as always, to those who have contributed to this and past editions of the *Newsletter*. Remember, I am happy to receive material for the *Newsletter* at any time, but to guarantee consideration for inclusion in the Autumn edition, **31 August** is the deadline. My full contact details are on the page opposite. I hope you enjoy reading this edition.

Michael

Recording Projects

Peter Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan and Jacobean music

To mark the centenary of the publication, by OUP, of Warlock's book *The English Ayre*, we have initiated two new recording projects, described here by **Michael Graves**.

John Andrews conducting the string section of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia *(photo: Em Marshall-Luck).*

Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan and Jacobean music for strings.

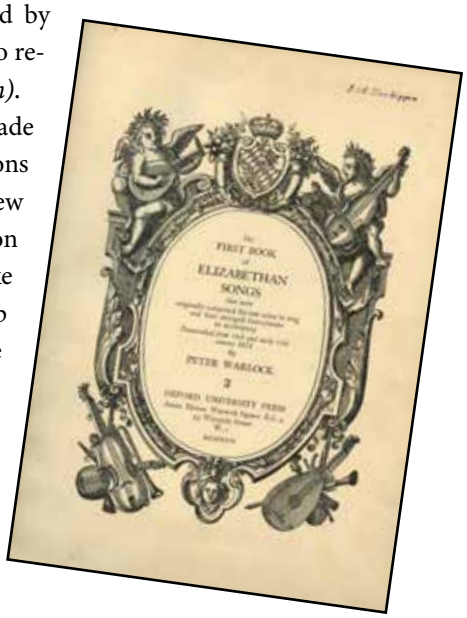
The Royal Ballet Sinfonia gave a delightful concert containing all Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan and Jacobean music for strings at the May 2025 English Music Festival in Dorchester. Those who attended the concert thought that the Peter Warlock Society should initiate a project to record all these rarely heard works for their own sake, but also because they represent an overlooked aspect of Warlock's scholarship. I approached the orchestra and EM Records. Both were enthusiastic. A proposal was then put to the Societiy's trustees. Approval was unanimous.

Members of the committee were privileged to have been invited to attend the recording sessions, which took place on Thursday to Saturday 13-15 November 2025 in the Henry Wood Hall in London. The Royal Ballet Sinfonia and conductor John Andrews gave us a very warm welcome and their fine playing was an absolute delight. I can't wait for the CD to be released, hopefully later this year.

The CD will also include David Lane's *Fantasy on a Theme of Richard Edwards for Oboe and Strings*, which is quintessentially 'English'. I will obviously be reporting on progress in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan songs for voice and string quartet.

The second project we have commissioned to celebrate the centenary of the publication of Warlock's book, *The English Ayre,* is to record all three volumes of Peter Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan songs for voice and string quartet. The fine details of this project have still to be determined, but I can tell you that the CD will be recorded and released by Convivium Records (who re-released *Merry-Go-Down).*



Videos will also be made of the recording sessions and will be available to view on our website and also on YouTube. This will make Warlock's scholarship in this area more visible and hopefully help to make this interesting and beautiful music much better known to a wider public.

Watch this space!

Peter Warlock's transcriptions of Elizabethan and Jacobean music (continued)

Clockwise from top left: Steve Hudson (oboe) with our Vice-Chairman, David Lane*;*
l to r, John Andrews (conductor), Em Marshall-Luck (EM Records) with Tristan,
Rupert Marshall-Luck (producer), Oscar Torres (recording engineer) and James Bell (intern) *(photos: John Mitchell).*
Rupert and Oscar in the control room *(photo: Michael Graves).*

... and don't forget the 3-CD set of all Warlock's original songs for solo voice and piano, to be recorded in July and September 2026, with Roderick Williams (baritone), Robin Tritschler (tenor) and Rebecca Lea (soprano). More on this anon!

Articles

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss: Oxford University Press and music publishing in 1925

Simon Wright delivered a fascinating talk on Hubert Foss and the OUP in 1925 at our 2025 AGM in Eynsford. He has based this article on that address.

Left: Hubert James Foss (1899-1953), first music publisher, Oxford University Press *(courtesy of Diana Sparkes).*
Right: Foss vacated the cottage adjacent to the Eynsford village shop in 1924, moving to nearby Otford. Peter Warlock and E. J. Moeran occupied the cottage from 1925 until 1929 *(colour photos: Giles Davies).*

Inroduction

This article is based on a talk (with the same title) given on 17 May 2025 at the Peter Warlock Society weekend in Eynsford which celebrated the centenary of Peter Warlock's and E. J. Moeran's moves to the cottage there, recently vacated by Hubert Foss (who himself took up residence in Otford). The text remains essentially that of the talk—light annotations and clarifications have been made as necessary in the context of an article, but the original intention of making the talk wholly accessible and non-academic remains. Thus, references and notes have been minimized: in their place a bibliographical note at the end of the article summarizes the main sources and makes some suggestions for further reading. Foss's imagined 'Thursday 21 May 1925', as presented here, is a careful 'holographical' projection of details and facts found in OUP's archives and publications.

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss

If, on Thursday 21 May 1925, Hubert Foss had tuned in to the British Broadcasting Company's early morning news bulletin on his receiving apparatus at Forge House in Otford, near Sevenoaks in Kent, he may have heard that, on that day, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen was leaving Spitsbergen with two seaplanes for the North Pole, which destination he uncharacteristically failed to reach on that occasion. Like Amundsen, Foss that day was also heading north—neither to the Pole nor in a flying-boat, but from Otford Junction station by train to Holborn Viaduct, then the City of London terminus station on the line up from Kent.[1]

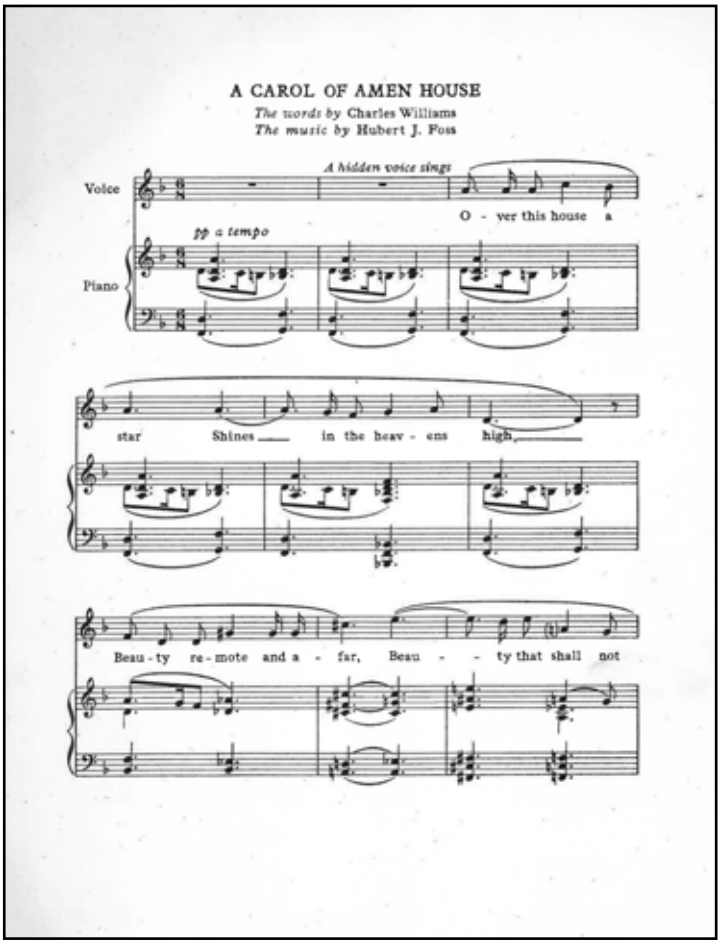
Foss, who had celebrated his twenty-sixth birthday just three weeks previously, was chief music editor at Oxford University Press.[2] OUP's Bible, trade, and educational publishing was traditionally based in London, while

Amen House, Warwick Square, London E.C.,
OUP's London headquarters 1924-1965
(Oxford University Press Archive).

scholarly publishing and printing were handled in Oxford. Until 1924 OUP's London business had been housed in cramped premises at Amen Corner, close to St. Paul's Cathedral. But on 4 March that year the expanding organization moved the short distance to an elegant Restoration building with Adam ceilings, Amen House, in Warwick Square. Amen House was to become not only the busy editorial centre and trade counter for OUP's books published in London, but also the headquarters for a rapidly expanding international business. A new seven-storey extension, with art deco-style concrete cladding, was built at the rear, to accommodate the warehouse—but stock rapidly outgrew the space and, in 1930, tons of books were transported across London to fill a new warehouse built on a 'brownfield site' at what became named 'Press Road', in Neasden. The whole OUP 'London Business' came under the control of the grandiloquently named Publisher to the University of Oxford, Humphrey Milford.[3] Hubert Foss had started publishing music at Amen Corner in 1923 but now, at Amen House, had his own office and department and it was to there, this morning, that he was bound.

So, Foss arrives at Amen House, strides up the steps, through the double swing-doors, into the hallway, and to his day's work. But, first, Foss may well have bumped into the all-seeing Miss Peacock, feeling that strange mix of guilt and panic as he tried to edge past. Despite Humphrey Milford's overall charge on both building and business it was Helen Mary Peacock that seemed to run OUP at Amen House, having been with the Press in London since 1916. Nothing happened without her say so. Miss Peacock was Head of Production, Sales Manager, de facto Office Manager, and a specialist in German. She was an

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss (continued)



Charles Williams and Hubert Foss: *A Carol of Amen House*, privately published edition, no date (author's collection).

intimidating figure. 'Tall, large, with brown hair pinned up on top, gold-rimmed spectacles and a blunt manner' recalled one colleague succinctly. In 1926 the writer Charles Williams, who was also an OUP editor working at Amen House, secretly produced a poem for his colleagues with a Latin-coded title: *Ad Pavonem Iracundum* ('To the Wrathful Peacock'). These colleagues, himself included, were, he wrote, but 'jigging midges and buzzing flies' before this 'proud insulted Bird'. Fourteen years later, on Friday 1 September 1939, as news of the invasion of Poland by Germany emerged, it was Miss Peacock, not Milford, who stood up that morning and said crisply to the assembled staff, 'We'd better pack up', and promptly organized the removal of the whole publishing business to Oxford for the duration of the war. Warwick Square was to be badly bombed, but Amen House itself remained intact—only to fall to the demolisher's ball in 1970. Miss Peacock herself, having steered Oxford University Press through at least two world wars, retired in September 1956 after forty years of service. A grand farewell dinner was held in her honour at, appropriately, the Cock Tavern, Fleet Street.

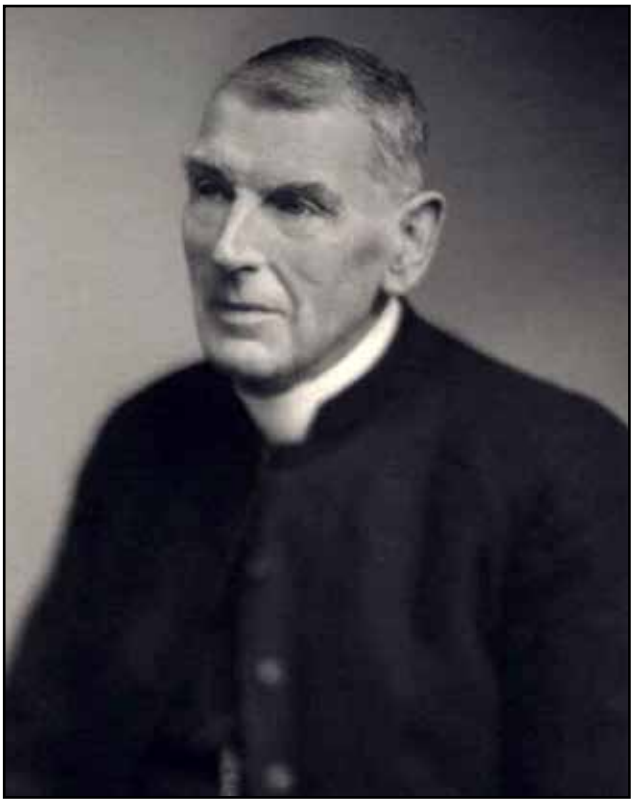
Foss, this morning having successfully avoided an over-long interrogation from the Wrathful Peacock, turns right through the Library Waiting Room, and is immediately in his office, looking out, down onto Warwick Square. In years to come senior staff would park their cars in spaces directly below the range of windows—but there were few private cars on London's streets in 1925. Foss, smartly bow-tied and with dark hair slicked neatly back, flings off his hat and sits at his desk. Amen House, he thinks, looking round ... a good, elegant, and spacious place to work. This is the life! A couple of years later Foss and Charles Williams were to celebrate this building in a short *Carol of Amen House*, Williams writing the words and Foss the music. Foss, an expert typographer, arranged to have the carol privately published through the offices not of OUP itself but Henderson and Spalding Ltd., the company which was in any case his preferred printer for OUP publications, and of which he was the typographical adviser.[4]

First in Foss's in-tray on this May morning in 1925 is the current issue of OUP's house journal *The Periodical*. Established in 1896 and running until 1974, *The Periodical* was essentially a high-quality bi-monthly literary review focussing on the Press's new publications. The issue in Foss's hands in May 1925 was that dated 15 April. Foss would have enjoyed both catching up on news of titles published by his Amen House colleagues, and seeing his own new publications listed there.

Turning the pages Foss immediately sees the main story: an obituary of Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, former Viceroy of India and Chancellor of the University of Oxford since 1907—Curzon had died on 20 March.[5] Some said that Curzon ruled the University as if it were an Indian province. The Chancellor is OUP's ultimate

overlord, so the news of Curzon's death was pertinent, if only in a remote way, to all employees. Aldous Huxley[6] provided a short piece on Oxford's famous wafer-thin but immensely strong 'India paper', used to reduce the volume of bulky books designed for export. Thanking OUP, Huxley wrote, 'one can get a million words of reading matter into a rucksack and hardly feel a difference in its weight'. There were announcements about J. E. Hodgson's *A History of Aeronautics in Great Britain*, and, from OUP's flourishing India branch (established in 1912), *Crime in India* by S. M. Edwardes (which Marquess Curzon of course had just missed reading). And then Foss, regular train traveller that he was, would have delighted in the story of a recent court case at which the judge, Mr. Justice Fraser, decided whether 800 clerks from the Railway Clearing House were entitled to bonuses missed while absent on wartime military service. The case turned on the meaning of the word 'salary' as used in the clerks' contracts, and Fraser called upon the definition from *The Oxford English Dictionary* in order to make his decision, which went in the clerks' favour. *The Oxford English Dictionary* was, in 1925, just three years from completion, the first section of Volume I having been published in 1884. But already its definitions were entering case law. For the railway clerks, it was fortunate that the volume containing 'salary', Volume VIII, had been published in 1914.

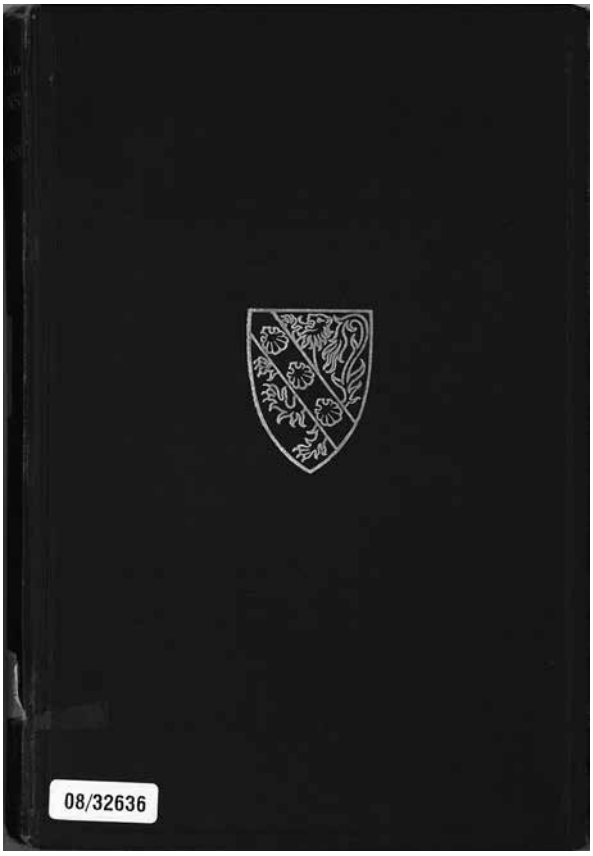
But despite these distracting nuggets Foss's eyes would have been keenest to find the entries for music titles in the 15 April *Periodical*: he had been responsible for most, if not all of these. Herbert Howells's Sonata for Violin and Piano (7s. 6d.) was a new instrumental title; and listed under 'Unison Songs' were E. J. Moeran's *Under the Broom* (4d.) and Foss's own *Auprès de ma Blonde* (5d.).[7] Foss's already extensive 'Oxford Solo Songs' series continued with a new entry that month for Moeran's *The Sailor and Young Nancy*. It was the Oxford Solo Songs that shortly brought the singer Dora Stevens into Foss's life—Foss accompanied her professionally in performances of titles from the series, and in 1927 Dora and Hubert were married. New music books were listed in *The Periodical* too. *Music and Boyhood* by the educator Thomas Wood was announced—its subtitle was 'Some Suggestions on the Possibilities of Music in Public, Preparatory, and Other Schools'.

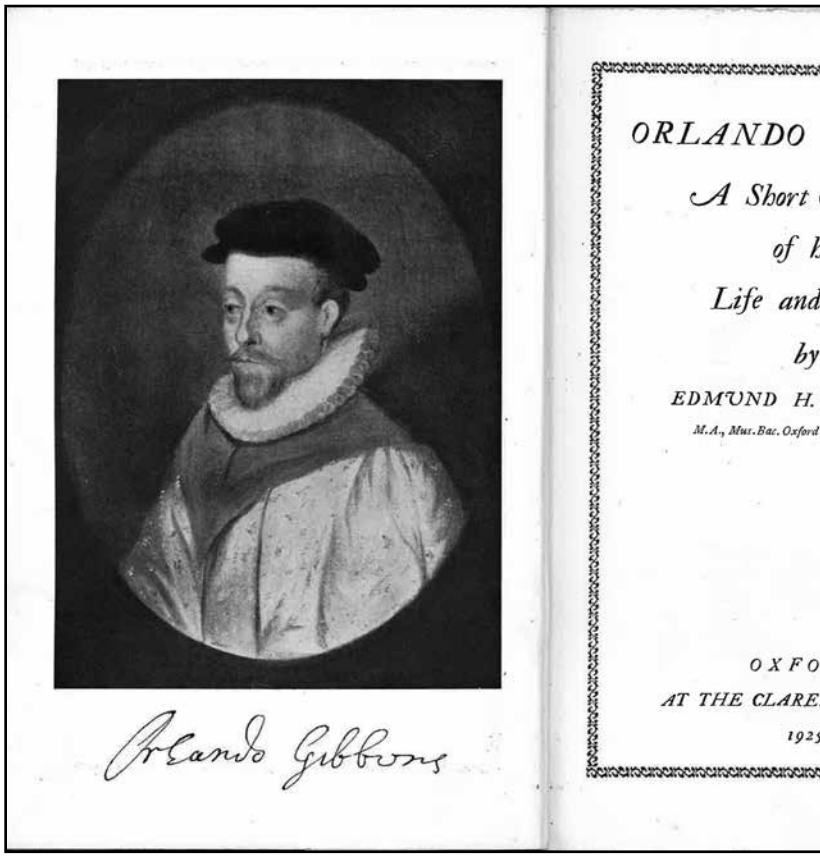


Edmund H. Fellowes (1870 – 1951).

The Periodical listed one further music book that month: *Orlando Gibbons: A Short Account of His Life and Work*, by Edmund H. Fellowes (6s.). The book was published on 21 May 1925, and thus there was a copy in Foss's in-tray that day. This book was in fact a 'spin-off'—although that phrase didn't enter the language until 1959. The year 1925 had seen OUP publishing the fourth volume of the magisterial *Tudor Church Music* series—a pioneering scholarly edition of sacred works by Tallis, Byrd, and others, most of which, in the early twentieth century, lay buried in ecclesiastical libraries, largely forgotten. The series was published on behalf of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, which financed both editing and production. There were to be twenty substantial hardback volumes, under the editorship of Percy Buck, Alexander Ramsbotham, Edmund Fellowes, Richard Runciman Terry, and Sylvia Townsend Warner. But bickering amongst this editorial coterie (except between Percy and Sylvia, who enjoyed a passionate affair as they travelled around unearthing materials in cathedral

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss (continued)



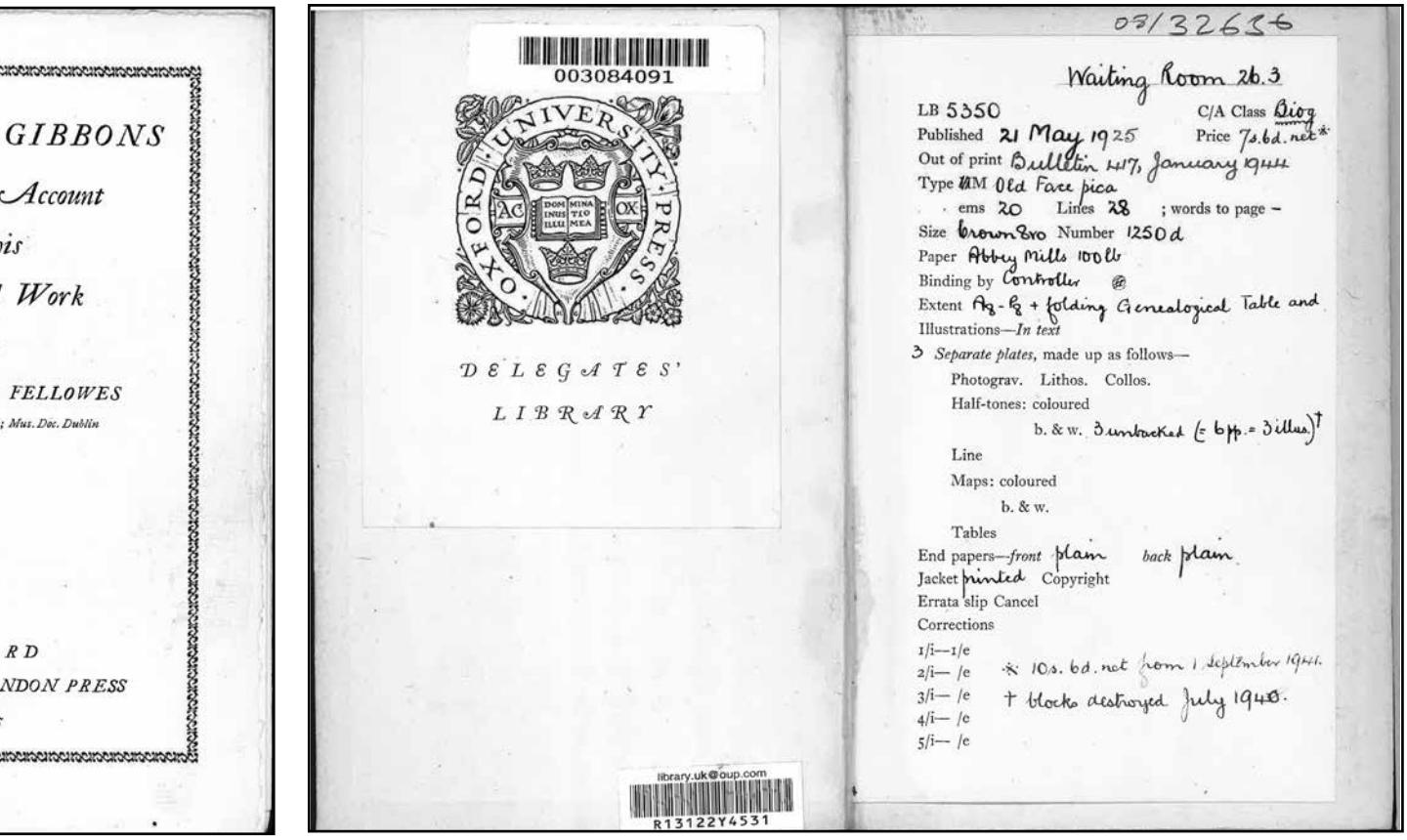


Edmund H. Fellowes: *Orlando Gibbons: A Short Account of His Life and Works* (published 21 May 1925), cover showing Gibbons family coat of arms *(Oxford University Press Archive).*

archives) doomed the project to premature demise—Volume X, 1929, was the last, and covered the music of John Marbeck, the quaintly named Osbert Parsley, and Hugh Aston, who rejoiced in the dates 1485(?)-(?).[8] Despite the unfolding acrimony, the ten published volumes were each respectfully dedicated to King George V, an echo of the dedication to Queen Victoria of the early *Oxford English Dictionary* volumes. Hubert Foss, meanwhile, was busily issuing the individual works from *Tudor Church Music* as cheap and practical choral leaflets, with some in-parallel 'Tonic sol-fa' editions.

That fourth *Tudor Church Music* volume comprised works by Orlando Gibbons, and was edited by Fellowes—so his book, published on 21 May, was effectively a companion to that volume, and in fact subsumed some textual material from it. Fellowes's book was finely produced by the University Press Printing House in Oxford. There were three tipped-in photographic plates, and its maroon front cover bore a gold impress of the Gibbons family arms. Orlando's family was so prolific in all generations that the book's fold-out genealogical table, when fully extended, was four times the width of the book. It had to be, in order to accommodate all Gibbons great and small.

The copy of Fellowes's book in Foss's hands that day was the one in mine, one hundred years later—the Amen House Library copy. The Library was at the heart of both the building itself and its culture. Fifty feet long, parquet-flooring, vases of flowers, and the Librarian's desk at one end, and with high sash-windows looking down on the square, the Library housed one copy of each OUP publication—about 10,000 volumes. Already by 1925 it

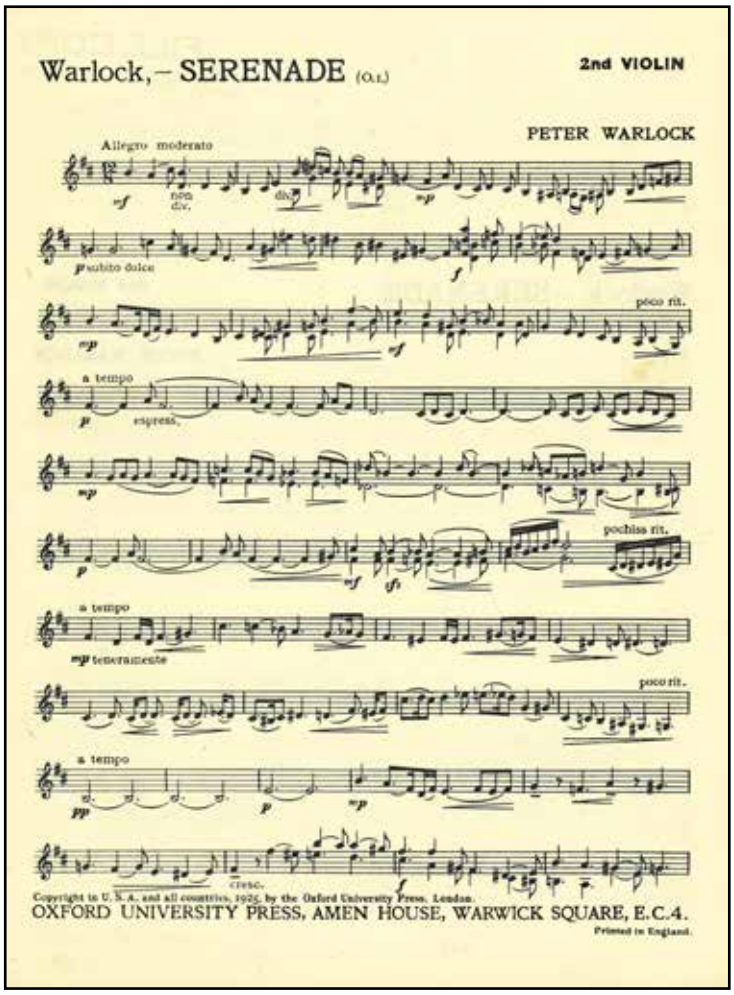


Orlando Gibbons—bookplate sticker in the Amen House Library copy *(Oxford University Press Archive).*

had become the space enjoyed by employees for work, research, and general and wide-ranging conversation. Presiding was the Librarian Phyllis Maude Jones, who had joined OUP on 10 March 1924, aged 22, one week after the building's official opening, following a brusque three-question interview with Milford, who said 'You'll do'. Glamorous, flirty, intelligent, Phyllis quickly became indispensable, particularly in the eyes of certain male staff, and especially for Charles Williams, with whom she shortly commenced an intimate, long-standing romantic relationship—an open secret in the office. Phyllis, Miss Peacock, Milford, and the Library itself were soon to be immortalized in two 'masques', written by Williams and set to music by Foss, performed for the entertainment of staff, in the Library, in 1927 and 1929.[9] The library copy of the Orlando Gibbons book to this day retains the shelf-mark label inserted by Phyllis on 21 May 1925, with details in her elegant handwriting, including a revised published price of 7s. 6d. Phyllis went on, under Charles Williams's supervision, to edit various poetry and essay anthologies for OUP. But he never could cope with her inability to punctuate to his own high standards.

Today, 21 May, was also publication day for an important title that would launch one of Hubert Foss's most successful and enduring series. On 4 November 1924 Foss (giving his address as Forge House, Otford, Kent) had personally witnessed a publishing agreement signed by Humphrey Milford and Peter Warlock enabling OUP to publish Warlock's *Serenade for Strings* in what that contract ambiguously called the 'Small Orchestral Series', but which had already metamorphosed under Foss's canny sense of marketing into 'The Oxford Orchestral Series'. Warlock's

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss (continued)


Warlock,– SERENADE (O.1.)

2nd VIOLIN

PETER WARLOCK

Allegro moderato

subito dolce

poco rit.

a tempo

espress.

pochiss rit.

a tempo

teneramente

poco rit.

a tempo

cresc.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, AMEN HOUSE, WARWICK SQUARE, E.C.4.

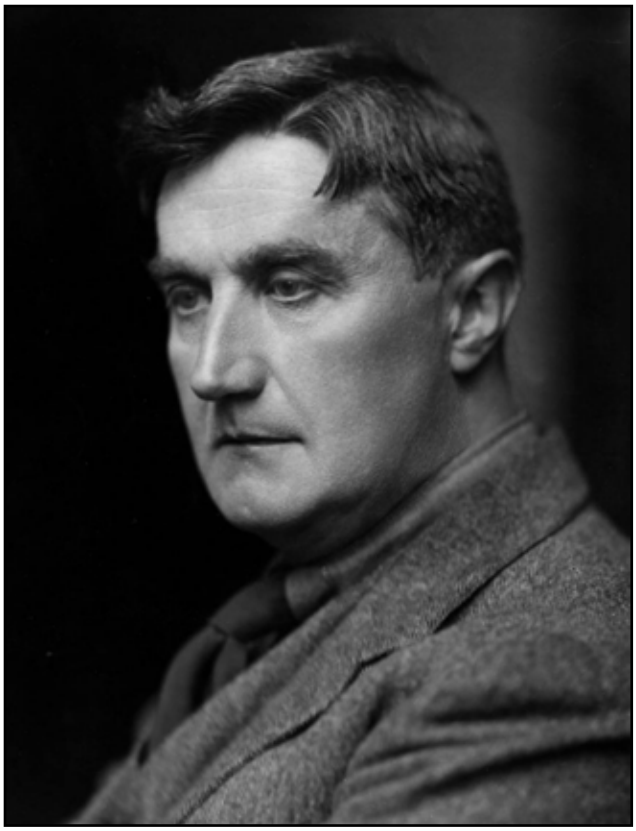
Peter Warlock: *Serenade for Strings*, Violin 2 part—the work was published by OUP on 21 May 1925 (Oxford University Press Archive).

Serenade was designated O1, and the series ultimately came to number about 170 titles. Original compositions and arrangements for all manner of chamber orchestral forces formed the series, with scores and parts available as packages or singly. Warlock had signed that November contract as 'Philip Heseltine ("Peter Warlock")', and his typed address of '6a Bury Street, Chelsea, S.W.3' was deleted and changed by him to his address in Abermule, Montgomeryshire. His contract witness had been G. Judith Wood, giving her address as '113 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.'[10] Foss picked up the advance copies of score and parts on his desk that morning and immediately noticed that the series number O1, although shown on the parts, was missing from the blue paper cover of the full score—he sighed: it would have to be inserted on reprint. Two hundred and fifty copies of the full score, and 250 of each part had been delivered to Amen House that morning: it was to be a while before Foss realized that orchestras needed only one score and fewer cello and double bass parts than violins, allowing reduced print runs for these components. Foss placed a score and set in his briefcase: he would drop them off with Warlock in Eynsford on his way home.

The telephone rang—shrill and rattling, as the call came through from the switchboard. It was Percy Scholes.[11] Amen House was up to date with telephone technology from the outset—there were six lines, and the number was CITY 2604.[12] Percy Scholes was rapidly becoming one of Foss's leading writers. His specialism was the new discipline of 'music appreciation' and a stream of books on composers, musical form, and theory was flowing from his pen. All Scholes's work was eventually to culminate in the 1938 *Oxford Companion to Music*, which became the most popular one-volume music encyclopedia ever written, surviving in essentially its original form almost to the end of the century. But in the mid-1920s Scholes's focus was on producing music guides for listeners using the new technologies of radio, gramophone, and the pianola (or player piano). *The First Book of the Gramophone Record*, published by OUP in 1924, for example, gave guidance on which repertoire, which recordings, and where (in inches from the centre of the disc) to slow down your player to hear passages in more detail, albeit in a lower key.

Today's call from Scholes was to discuss his next book, *The Appreciation of Music by Means of the 'Pianola' and 'Duo-Art'*, to be published later in 1925. The pianola was a remarkable instance of both digital technology and Artificial Intelligence one hundred years before their time. Coded rolls of paper fed through a machine linked to a piano recreated, in real time, not audio recordings but live piano performances by the great composers and pianists, performances that could be replicated over and over again.

Percy Scholes (1877-1958).

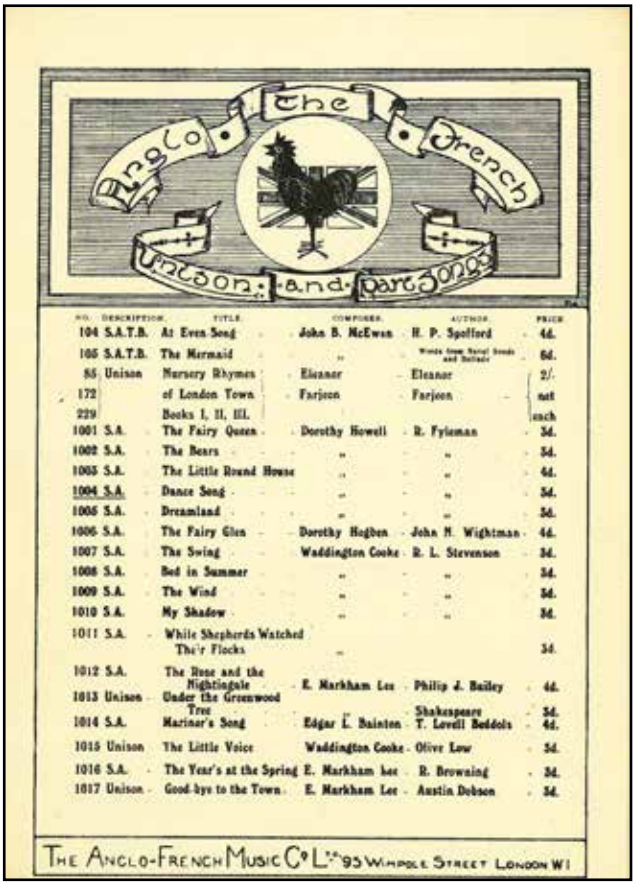


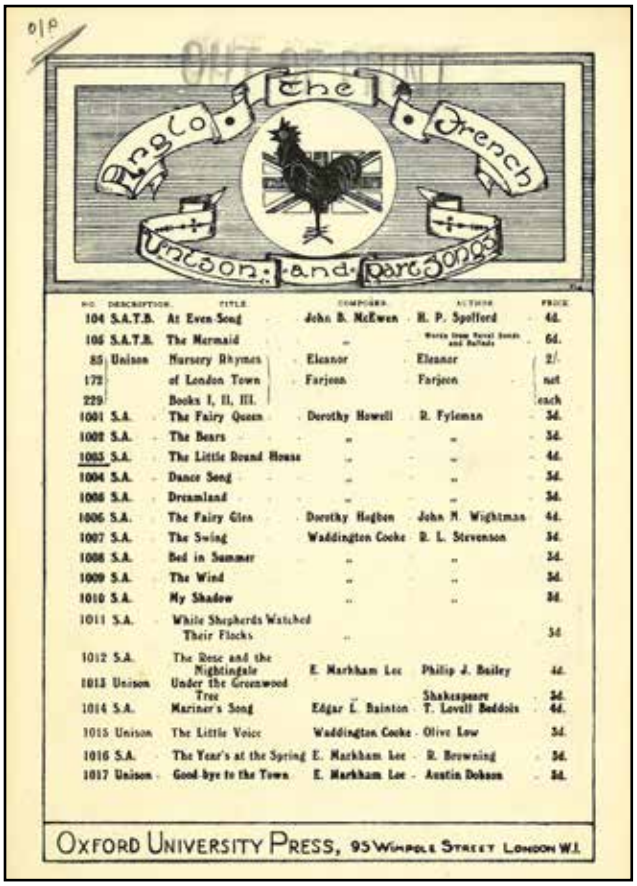
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958).

Ravel, Grainger, Rachmaninov, Horowitz—they all sat and played in your own front room. It was Scholes who suggested to the Aeolian and other pianola companies that their coded piano rolls should be accompanied by written notes about the music, providing these himself. His book was to be an adaptation of these notes. While Scholes was prolix in his writing, in person he was blunt and to the point. 'As a northcountryman I don't gush', he once told Foss. So, the telephone call came quickly to the matter of word length and the need for Foss to negotiate with the Aeolian Company for the copyright in the music notes. Scholes then bade Foss the time of day. This manner, together with Scholes's strongly held opinions, did not endear him to all and, on one occasion, he enraged Peter Warlock so much that they fell out, acrimoniously and permanently.[13]

With Scholes off the telephone, it was time for lunch—with Ralph Vaughan Williams. Humphrey Milford had his own butler at Amen House, and Foss had persuaded him to provide sandwiches for his meeting with Ralph. Vaughan Williams was one of the two Music Editors of a new hymn book, *Songs of Praise*, which OUP was to publish in 1925.[14] There were a few loose ends to tie up. *Songs of Praise* was to be a comprehensive, liberal, socially aware, and egalitarian hymnal, and it became immensely popular, particularly in schools. The Preface proclaimed the book as a hymnal 'of national character'. As with *Tudor Church Music* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, each of which was reviving, recording, and postulating an agenda of national heritage, so also *Songs of Praise*. In all these publications OUP was acting as shaper and arbiter of a firmly national, often specifically English, taste—an obvious post-Great War outcome. The newly formed BBC was to play a similar role and the broadcaster eventually adopted *Songs of Praise* itself as the book for its daily radio services, and finally as the title of a popular television programme. It is indicative, with *Songs of Praise*, that Vaughan Williams should be at the centre of this national 'trend setting'.

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss (continued)





Left: Front cover of the Anglo-French Music Co.'s 'Unison and Part Songs' series, with original branding (1922-1925).
Right: Front cover of the Anglo-French Music Co.'s 'Unison and Part Songs' series, re-branded following acquisition by OUP (1925 onwards).
(Both images from the Oxford University Press Archive.)

Again like *Tudor Church Music* and eventually the *Dictionary*, there were to be multiple *Songs of Praise* spin-offs: *Songs of Praise for Boys and Girls* (1929), *Songs of Praise Enlarged* (1931), *Songs of Praise for Little Children* (1932), *Songs of Praise for Children* (1933), *Songs of Praise Discussed* (1933), and even *Songs of Praise for America*, published by OUP's New York branch in 1938. Oxford University Press had been the publisher of an earlier Vaughan Williams hymn book in 1906, *The English Hymnal*. This, together with *Songs of Praise*, meant that Vaughan Williams was to become the doyen of twentieth-century hymn book music editors—for virtually all new hymnals published in that century's first half his opinions, materials, or both were invariably sought.

But Foss had weightier matters than hymnals to discuss with Vaughan Williams. Realizing that, despite the composer's increasing stature, the composer had never settled with one single music publisher; and that OUP could well benefit from Vaughan Williams's presence in his burgeoning catalogue, Foss had an offer up his sleeve. Discussions turned to three works upon which Vaughan Williams was currently working or had recently completed. By the end of lunch, terms had been agreed, along with an informal agreement that OUP would take further works, as they were written. 'Leave it with me', said Foss. One week later probably one of the most significant publishing contracts in British musical history was signed, between OUP and Vaughan Williams:

First Norfolk Rhapsody, *The Lark Ascending*, and *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*. *The Lark*, single-handedly, was to go on and earn significantly for OUP and would raise Vaughan Williams's profile exponentially. Writing twenty-five years later, Foss noted that *The Lark Ascending* reminds one of Keats, John Clare, Edward Thomas, and Edmund Blunden. 'It is', he said, 'certainly music of a new high level of beauty'. As a footnote to their meeting, Vaughan Williams had also agreed with Foss that day to contribute to the Oxford Orchestral Series with his transcription for strings, jointly made with Arnold Foster, of Bach's *Giant Fugue*, which came out later in 1925 as number O6 in the series.

Foss, always one to be getting on with the next thing, wasted no time following Vaughan Williams's departure. His afternoon was to take him out of Amen House and over to the West End. A short walk and Foss was at Post Office underground station (today St. Paul's). Taking a westbound train on the Central London Railway, he alighted twelve minutes later at Oxford Circus station and from there hurried up Regent Street. His destination was Wimpole Street, number 95, the offices of the Anglo-French Music Company. Foss later wrote in a report to Humphrey Milford that this publishing enterprise was the idea of 'a body of musicians who founded it during the war, with the intention of substituting English music for the German music so predominant in the educational world'. By 1925 the Anglo-French list was substantial—mainly easy piano music, but also songs and choral works. In this, Foss saw an affinity with his own list. The most efficient way of expanding a music publishing catalogue is to acquire another. Foss, for several months, had been negotiating with Anglo-French, not only for its titles but also for the lease of its premises, shared with the Tobias Matthay Pianoforte School—Matthay was an Anglo-French partner and his music featured strongly in their catalogue.[15]

Foss's afternoon's work was to agree on further details, and also to assess space in the building. In short order, 95 Wimpole Street was to become the first of a number of OUP Music Department outstations in London. Amen House would remain as headquarters, but Wimpole Street was, later in 1925, to become the first music showroom and retail outlet. By the end of the year the Anglo-French catalogue itself was fully absorbed into the OUP list, though Foss decided, for expediency, that the printed publications would, where possible, retain their original, rather quaint, Anglo-French branding with just the new owner's name and address shown. It was cheaper that way.

And so, for Foss, home. His day's work had included reviewing new publications, resolving author and composer queries, and making strategic publishing, acquisition, and logistical decisions—not so different, really, from what we, as music publishers, do today. At the heart of it all lay the music itself and the composers that created it—so now an evening with drinks and Peter Warlock (the two were synonymous) in the Five Bells at Eynsford. It could be a late night. ■

Bibliographical note

The standard biography of Peter Warlock is Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: the life of Philip Heseltine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Chapter 11 (pp. 221-252) covers 'The Eynsford Years (1925-1928)'.

A full account of the OUP Music Department's foundation and early years is given in Simon Wright's chapter 'Music Publishing' in Wm. Roger Louis (ed.), *The History of Oxford University Press* (Volume III: 1896-1970) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 507-30. An account of OUP's move from Amen Corner and its establishment at Amen House is given in *Amen House, Warwick Square, E.C., 4 March 1924* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), a souvenir brochure prepared for the grand opening dinner. The various later moves of the Music Department to other London locations, including to Wimpole Street, are described in Simon Wright, 'Identity, Location, and Partnership: Oxford University Press's Music Imprints. Part 1: 1923-1932 (Early Years, Publishing Partners, and Outstations)' in *Brio*, Spring/Summer 2025, Vol. 62, No. 1, pp. 38-59. Hubert Foss's daughter Diana Sparkes (happily present in the audience at the 2025 Warlock Society meeting) has assembled a unique and essential set of memoirs and letters relating to Foss and his work at OUP: Stephen Lloyd, Diana Sparkes, Brian Sparkes (eds.), *Music in Their Time (The Memoirs and Letters of Dora and Hubert Foss)* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019)—many of the characters making cameo appearances in this talk take to the stage more fully in Diana's book. Life at Amen House during the 1920s, including a description (and photographs) of

A Day in the Life of Hubert Foss (continued)

the library, pen portraits of the staff, and a detailed account of Williams and Foss's masques, is covered in Charles Williams (ed. Bernadette Lynn Bosky and David Bratman), *The Masques of Amen House* (Altadena: The Mythopoeic Press, 2000).

Simon Wright's article 'Percy Scholes and *The Oxford Companion to Music*' in *Brio*, Autumn/Winter 2013, Vol. 50. No 2, pp. 19-43 gives an account of Scholes's ofttimes troubled relationship with Foss and OUP. Hubert Foss's own study of Vaughan Williams is *Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1950)—the first full-length book on the composer, it remains delightfully personal and idiosyncratic. Aspects of the publishing relationship with Vaughan Williams are covered in two articles by Simon Wright: 'Vaughan Williams and Oxford University Press', *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal*, February 2013, No. 56, pp. 3-15; and '"Ask Foss to see to it": Vaughan Williams and Oxford University Press', *Brio*, Autumn/Winter 2022, Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 3-27. The standard (and hugely entertaining) history of the *Oxford English Dictionary* was written by Peter Gilliver, one of its current (longstanding and expert) lexicographers: *The Making of* The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

All the OUP contracts, printing and stock records, documents, and publications (including a complete run of *The Periodical*) referred to in this article are held in the Oxford University Press Archive, as are editorial files on the principal publications mentioned. The copy of Fellowes's Orlando Gibbons book annotated by Phyllis Jones remains in the OUP Library at Great Clarendon Street, Oxford. Quotation from and reproduction of OUP materials is made by permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press. ■

Notes

1 The station originally (and currently) named 'Otford' opened in 1882, was renamed 'Otford Junction' in 1904, and reverted to 'Otford' in 1929. Holborn Viaduct station had been opened in 1874 by the London, Chatham and Dover Railway and survived until 1990—the station site is now occupied by City Thameslink station.

2 Hubert Foss (1899-1953) had established a new music publishing department for Oxford University Press in 1923 and rapidly went on, as Manager and Senior Editor, to create a vast and diverse classical music catalogue in all genres, publishing particularly the works of both rising and leading British composers.

3 Humphrey Sumner Milford (1877-1952), publisher. Milford was to be knighted in 1936.

4 *A Carol of Amen House* was performed at the 2025 Peter Warlock Society meeting in Eynsford: Mark Holmes (baritone), Kevin Grafton (piano).

5 George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925).

6 Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), writer and philosopher.

7 Foss's setting of this French folksong pre-dated that by Joseph Canteloube (in his *Chants de France* (1st Series)) by twenty-three years.

8 Hugh Aston's birth and death dates have since been (slightly) more accurately established as c. 1485-buried in 1558.

9 *A Carol of Amen House* was included as the opening number in the first masque, *The Masque of the Manuscript*.

10 Judith Wood was one of Peter Warlock's girlfriends at the time and was (like her namesake, Sir Henry) nicknamed 'Timber'.

11 Percy Scholes (1877-1958), music critic, educator, and writer.

12 Details taken from contemporary Amen House letterhead.

13 Scholes, however, was to provide elegant tribute to Philip Heseltine in the *Oxford Companion to Music* entry (page 442 of the 1938 first edition), praising his editions of Elizabethan lute-songs and other 'early' music, and, too, his 'Peter Warlock' compositions, including *The Curlew*. The concluding sentence, though, was to return to the dark side: 'He united the highest ideals in art with a cynical view of human life and died despairing—apparently by his own hand.'

14 The Editor of *Songs of Praise* was Percy Dearmer, and the two Music Editors were Ralph Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw. The same team was to be responsible for *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928). Included in *The Oxford Book of Carols* were three items by Peter Warlock: 'Tyrley, Tyrlow' (169), 'Adam Lay Ybounden' (180), 'Balulalow' (181)—each had been first published by OUP in 1925.

15 Tobias Matthay (1858-1945), pianist and educator.

Simon Wright: Author biography

Simon Wright read music at University College, Cardiff where, in 1986, he was awarded a PhD for his research on the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. He has since pursued a career in music publishing—for forty years he managed music hire and rights at Oxford University Press and is now an adviser to the Music Department. Simon has researched extensively into the history of OUP's music publishing and has written many articles and papers on this topic.

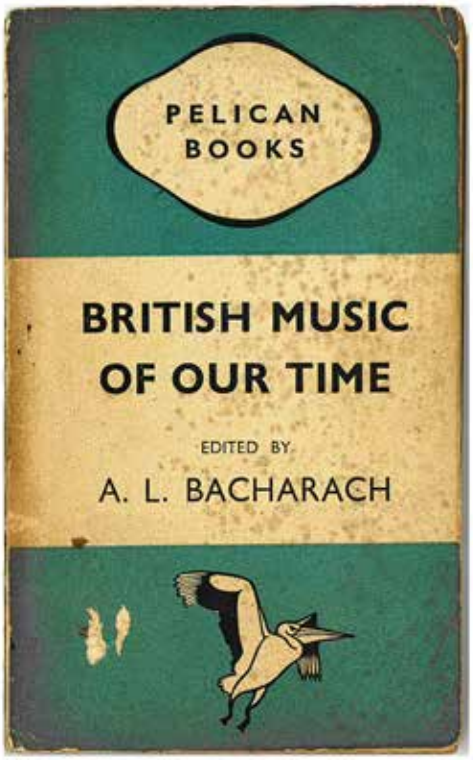
Simon's second article in this edition of the Newsletter, below, is an introduction to Hubert Foss's chapter *"Peter Warlock" (Philip Heseltine)*, which was published in a Pelican paperback, *British Music of Our Time*, (1946).

Simon Wright at the 2025 AGM in Eynsford with Hubert Foss's daughter Diana Sparkes *(photo: John Mitchell).*

'The delicacy of the hothouse plant and the ebullience of the willow-herb': Hubert Foss on Peter Warlock

Introduced and edited by **Simon Wright**

In 1946 Pelican Books published, for popular readership, a multi-author survey of contemporary British music to which Hubert Foss contributed a chapter about the compositions and personality of Peter Warlock. The current article presents an annotated edition of Foss's chapter, preceded by an introduction giving some background and context.



British Music of Our Time (Pelican Books, 1946) front cover (author's collection).

Introduction

That he was Peter Warlock's one-time music publisher, landlord, near-neighbour, drinking companion, and friend put Hubert Foss in a particularly strong position when it came to writing comprehensively about Warlock's life, his mind, and his work—and, to his considerable credit, the eventual falling out between them which ended or irrevocably damaged these relationships never clouded Foss's opinions of Warlock as a person, his musicality and abilities as a composer, and (as Philip Heseltine) his pioneering work as an independent writer, editor, music critic, and musicologist. About Warlock, Hubert Foss remained professional and objective until the end of his own life, writing in a reminiscence for the *London Symphony Observer* six months before he died (and more than twenty years after the composer's death) of the quality of Warlock's songs, which he ranked 'as much a part of the English heritage as the songs of Dowland

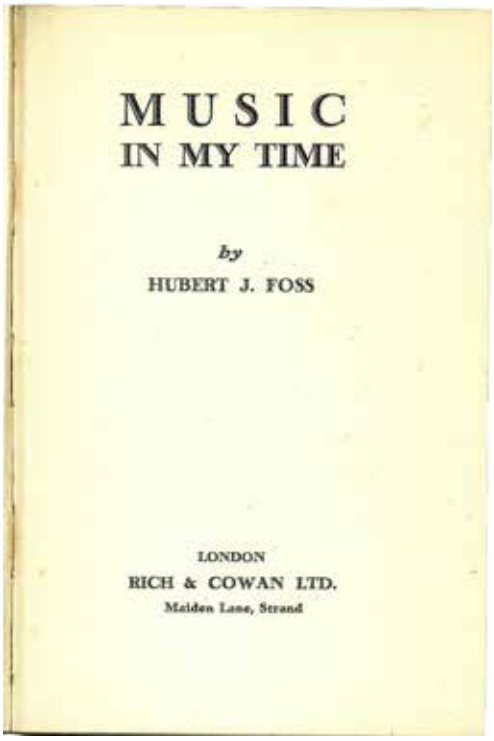
Hubert Foss on Peter Warlock (continued)

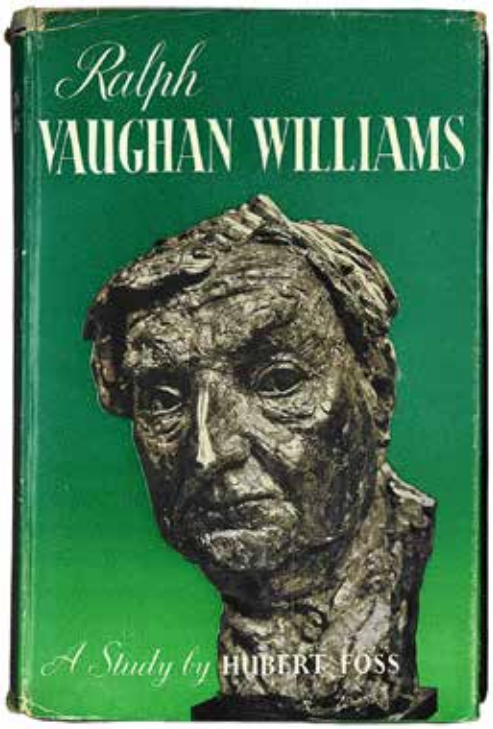
Outside the Eynsford cottage circa 1927/28: *(left to right)* Hal Collins, Judith Wood, E.J. Moeran, Phyl Crocker, Barbara Peache, and Philip Heseltine. Foss opined that 'we shall not look upon their like again'.

and Campion, the madrigals of Byrd and Wilbye'; and of Warlock and those that lived and worked with him at the Eynsford cottage in the mid-nineteen twenties Foss opined quite simply that 'we shall not look upon their like again'.[1]

Hubert Foss (1899-1953) is rightly remembered primarily as the founder and first managing editor of the Music Department at Oxford University Press: he worked at OUP between 1921 and 1941, establishing in 1923 what was to become one of the largest and most diverse classical and educational music lists of any British publisher at the time. Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Walton, Constant Lambert—and Peter Warlock—were all, on Foss's watch, published by the Press. But Foss, a supreme polymath, also followed several parallel careers and continued in these following his rather precipitate departure from OUP in 1941. Typography and printing were, for him, major interests, as was broadcasting (he delivered over 500 'radio talks' on music for the BBC between 1933 and 1953, the year of his death). He was also a composer and a fine pianist. But above all it was as a writer on music that Hubert Foss flourished: articles, criticism, programme notes, and books.

Foss's first book (written while employed by OUP but not published by the Press), *Music in My Time*, appeared in 1933 (Foss was only 34) as part of a small series of books on themes of topical interest (theatre, literature, art, the press, the Navy).[2] But (quite possibly to the publisher's surprise) far from being a standard and straightforward survey of contemporary music that book turned out instead to be a powerful personal manifesto, drawing together Foss's views on and ambitions for music in its many forms. Foss believed that only live music was real music, and that printed scores, gramophone recordings, and broadcast were the subsidiary, but vital, mechanical and analogue means to the ultimate purpose of enjoying music 'in the moment', and for that reason that they required regulation, control, and should be of extraordinarily high quality. Already, in 1933, Foss was thinking hard about the need for the sorts of time-shift and mobile technologies taken for granted almost one hundred years later—as a means





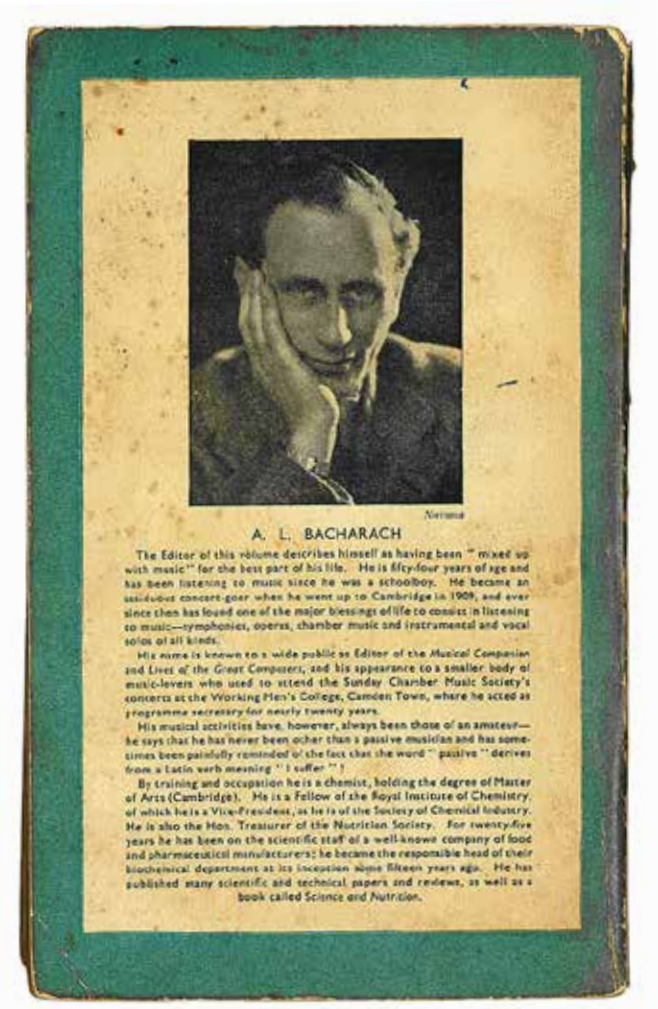
Music in My Time by Hubert Foss, published in 1933, and the dust jacket of Hubert Foss's *Ralph Vaughan Williams: a Study*, published in 1950: Jacob Epstein's striking bronze forms the portrait image used for this cover (author's collection).

of making music accessible to all, in any place, and at any time. Likewise, *Music in My Time* sets out Foss's grand proposal for 'a kind of "clearing house" of MS orchestral works', a large music hire library, in effect, that would 'open up opportunities for the composer of a kind that do not exist today'.[3] Foss was prescient, he was business-aware, and he was visionary. Then, in 1950, at the other end of his writing career, came *Ralph Vaughan Williams: a Study*, the first full-length book to survey the life and compositions of the composer who had, Foss profoundly believed, arrived 'at the right time' for British music.[4]

Foss, at OUP, had worked extensively with Vaughan Williams but, in his general writing, made no preferential distinctions between composers he had published and any others: he was equally happy to provide programme notes, say, on music by both Vaughan Williams himself, and by Brahms, for the same concert. Topics for his pen were wide-ranging, and his knowledge of them far-reaching. Well established as a writer on music, it was thus in 1945 that Foss was approached by A. L. Bacharach to contribute two chapters on composers whose music that he had handled at OUP to a new survey of British contemporary music to be published by Pelican Books: *British Music of Our Time*.[5] Alfred Louis Bacharach (1891-1966) was a distinguished chemist and food scientist, but also a keen and knowledgeable amateur music-lover, responsible for a number of popular books on music, and working as programme secretary for a series of London chamber music concerts.[6] Bacharach had edited already, for Pelican Books, a three-volume *Lives of the Great Composers* (1942-3) which, for British music, ended with Elgar—the volumes' first and last national composer since Purcell.

British Music of Our Time intended, under Bacharach's editorship, to present a survey of specifically British music approaching the twentieth century's midpoint, composer by composer, with chapters by expert contributors (there were also introductory, mid-way, and closing chapters rounding up 'lesser' figures not seeming to warrant, at least yet, their own 'set-piece' chapters). Bacharach's cast of writers and their subjects was wide: Julian Herbage on

Hubert Foss on Peter Warlock (continued)



A. L. BACHARACH

The Editor of this volume describes himself as having been "mixed up with music" for the best part of his life. He is fifty-four years of age and has been listening to music since he was a schoolboy. He became an assiduous concert-goer when he went up to Cambridge in 1909, and ever since then has found one of the major blessings of life to consist in listening to music—symphonies, operas, chamber music and instrumental and vocal solos of all kinds.

His name is known to a wide public as Editor of the *Musical Companion* and *Lives of the Great Composers*, and his appearance to a smaller body of music-lovers who used to attend the Sunday Chamber Music Society's concerts at the Working Men's College, Camden Town, where he acted as programme secretary for nearly twenty years.

His musical activities have, however, always been those of an amateur—he says that he has never been other than a passive musician and has sometimes been painfully reminded of the fact that the word "passive" derives from a Latin verb meaning "I suffer"!

By training and occupation he is a chemist, holding the degree of Master of Arts (Cambridge). He is a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, of which he is a Vice-President, as he is of the Society of Chemical Industry. He is also the Hon. Treasurer of the Nutrition Society. For twenty-five years he has been on the scientific staff of a well-known company of food and pharmaceutical manufacturers; he became the responsible head of their biochemical department at its inception some fifteen years ago. He has published many scientific and technical papers and reviews, as well as a book called *Science and Nutrition*.

British Music of Our Time (Pelican Books, 1946)—rear cover (author's collection).

Arnold Bax, Gerald Abraham on Holst, Ralph Hill on Delius, Scott Goddard on both Vaughan Williams and Britten, for example. The 'round up' chapters corralled figures as diverse as Joseph Holbrooke, Roger Quilter, and Herbert Howells to Gerald Finzi, Alan Rawsthorne, and Michael Tippett. Elgar, though, was absent from the book altogether, remaining confined to the previous Bacharach barracks: for *British Music of Our Time* he was simply dismissed as 'a representative of the Edwardian period' in Goddard's opening scene-setting chapter, pointedly not 'of our time', although Holst and Delius evidently were. Certain composers were accorded whole chapters which for them, in hindsight, might now seem over-generous (Eugene Goosens and Lord Berners). But, through it all, Bacharach was simply acting as the figures on stage appeared to him in 1946.

In response to Bacharach's commission Hubert Foss contributed two chapters: 'Constant Lambert' and '"Peter Warlock" (Philip Heseltine)'. The immediacy of Bacharach's title wording pleasingly echoed that of Foss's own book, but *British Music of Our Time* was a very different product, a helpful survey of national contemporary composers and musical trends, against Foss's own fiercely polemical discourse on music in (but not necessarily of) his time, of thirteen years earlier. Foss, ever the adeptly professional writer, simply provided, for Bacharach, what was required, matching the chapters of his fellow contributors in extent and approach: comprehensive but easily assimilated surveys of the music, and to an extent the personalities, of two British composers whose music was, in 1946, vividly 'on the scene'. *British Music of Our Time* was published in March 1946 and was dedicated to the memories of two long-standing but recently deceased Hubert Foss friends, the critic Edwin Evans (d. 1945) and the conductor Sir Henry Wood (d. 1944), 'for their unsurpassed services to British music of our time'. The book first appeared printed on 'War Economy' paper and bore the standard Penguin Books tripartite horizontally-banded cover design (devised in 1935 for Penguin by Edward Preston Young), in the blue livery of their Pelican Books imprint (the pelican is flying on the cover but stands to attention on the spine).

A full and annotated transcription of Hubert Foss's *British Music of Our Time* chapter on Peter Warlock follows below. Foss clearly attempts here to provide a succinct yet comprehensive account of Warlock's achievements in all areas of his work, while remaining successfully within Bacharach's parameters. Foss takes enormous pains to depict Warlock as essentially a 'miniaturist', reacting against what he pointedly terms the ethos of the 'kolossal' period—and with that 'k' thereby implying Romantic and recent German and Austrian styles in music, rather than anything relating to the Greek derivation of that word. With 'Wagnerian trumpetings and the heavy texture of Brahms' Peter Warlock, says Foss, was 'completely and naturally in revolt', happy enough if he were able to achieve (here quoting Warlock) 'one book of little songs that shall have a lasting fragrance'. Reaction to the 'kolossal' in the context of a national revival in British music following the

British Music of Our Time, published in March 1946, was dedicated to the memories of two long-standing but recently deceased Hubert Foss friends, (*left*) the conductor Sir Henry Wood (d. 1944) and (*right*) the critic Edwin Evans (d. 1945).

First World War is a recurring theme in Foss's writing of the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, and this concept—a pushing against hitherto prevailingly 'German' trends in music—in fact drove much of his work in establishing a distinctly 'British' music list at Oxford University Press, including purchasing for OUP the publishing catalogue of the Anglo-French Music Company in 1925.

Foss's writing in this chapter is clearly enriched with multiple evidential strands from his former personal relationship with Warlock: memories of the 'pint pots' and the love of an exclusively male drinking company, the roaring laughter, the melancholy, the faltering piano playing—all are drawn from Foss's direct, personal experience. Foss's language (typically for him, in both his purely journalistic and his more scholastic writings) is colourful and brimming with a vivid imagery found hardly at all in other writers on music at this time. In this chapter, for instance, we find Foss erecting a peculiar and almost Heath Robinson verbal image of a system of funnels, channels, and nozzles (with chemicals being fed in), a striking diagram of the mechanics of Warlock's mind (and here Foss might well have been describing his own mind also). Most colourful of all, though, is Foss's use of horticultural analogy to fill out the Warlock picture. Warlock, he says, was much given to 'the cultivation of his small plot of land'—we can thus be grateful 'that we are not confronted with acres of musical thistles and bindweed, but can keep within the confines of a comparatively well-ordered garden'; Warlock himself, meanwhile, has 'the delicacy of the hothouse plant and the ebullience of the willow-herb that grows on ruined bomb-sites'. Such botanical imagery runs throughout the piece, and it is this which remains clearly in the reader's mind—the phraseology of an almost Shakespearian eloquence, but the reference to bomb-sites being shockingly topical.

Yet, it is ultimately the reasoning professional voice and the balanced judgement of the experienced music publisher which prevails throughout Foss's chapter. His suggestion (even plea), at the outset, for a 'Collected Edition' of Warlock's songs (and the parallel of these pieces

in the output of Hugo Wolf, who did have a Collected Edition), had been long in Foss's mind. In *Music of My Time*, thirteen years earlier (and just a few years following Warlock's death) Foss, as part of his argument around the neglect, in Britain, of national music in favour of music from 'the Continent', had cited the lack of a Collected Editon of Warlock's songs as typical of the barriers to popularity or even acceptance faced by national composers. Wrote Foss in 1933: 'Peter Warlock provides testimony ... As it is, his songs being scattered among various publishers' catalogues, there is no collected edition of them obtainable. There ought to be. In Austria there would be, and these volumes would be on sale in England.'[7] The passage in the Bacharach book chapter simply recapitulates this entirely reasonable publishing concept. Foss's vision of the Collected Edition was, in the event, realized only decades later, by the Peter Warlock Society, once the majority of the songs had fallen out of copyright and the 'collaboration' (between publishers) which Foss envisioned was therefore no longer necessary. The seasoned music publisher's eye also surveys the 'exquisite precision' of Warlock's music manuscripts and registers the composer's dislike of that hoary publisher shortcut, the 'automatic transposition of his songs'; Warlock, Foss says, much preferred 'to rewrite the accompaniments to suit an altered pitch'. Foss's fundamental tenet that a well-presented manuscript or printed score is an analogue to fine performance is clearly rehearsed in his discussion here.

While Foss was surely right in his chapter's intense focus on Peter Warlock's songs, he certainly does not neglect the work of Philip Heseltine (as an independent scholar) in the recovery and revival of 'early music', giving a fair overview and praising particularly his 'transcriptions of vocal and instrumental works of Jacobean and Elizabethan periods', all displaying high scholarship and fundamental respect for the original composers' intentions. Merging the Warlock and Heseltine personae, Foss claims that ultimately 'Warlock is in the great line of song writers, and certainly he has no rival of English blood since the death of Purcell'. Or, as Foss in *Music in My Time* had earlier crisply expressed it: 'The scholars have helped the composers and the composers the scholars.'[8]

The transcription of Hubert Foss's chapter on Peter Warlock from *British Music of Our Time* reproduces the text exactly as printed, including Foss's punctuation and his style of title citation. Annotations are entirely editorial and have been included only to elucidate matters for an audience reading the chapter exactly eighty years after Foss wrote it.

"PETER WARLOCK" (PHILIP HESELTINE)
1894-1930
by **Hubert Foss**

The act of singing is not confined to the inhabitants of these islands. Yet it is so characteristic of the English (a term I prefer to British, to include the Welsh and the Scots) that unexaggerated truth may say, in general, that the history of English music is found in song. During the darker ages between Purcell and Parry, what trickle there was from the English musical spring flowed either through the dimmer channels of the church or through the brilliantly lit but not much brighter canal of the stage. Singing, as an act, went on. The peoples retained not only a love for singing but a tradition of it, and a thousand candle-lit retiring-rooms sounded to the voice and harp, while a single concert or a forlorn opera was performed before empty benches. To Germany and Naples we look for instrumental music in history: to England we look for song. And (as I have occasionally said elsewhere, in varying words), if you compare them, you will find an instrumental part in Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral* Symphony more vocal in essence than the voice part of, say, Hindemith's song cycle *Marienleben*.[9]

Yet, ever since Handel, who fostered that desire for "music from elsewhere" which still besets us, we have been officially taught that English is an unvocal language, awkward and unmaidenly, clipped in consonants and thin in vowels. The great divorce between "voice and verse," which made Milton acclaim even Lawes[10] as the link between the "twin-born harmonious Sisters,"[11] has been allowed to continue in unnatural severance, largely, I suspect, because of the total ignorance of the English language and the tradition of its verse among many who sing and (later) teach singing. Actually the English language is extremely flexible as a medium for verse, and (in corollary) an admirable medium for song. Who

has done better with other languages than Campion,[12] Dowland,[13] and Purcell with their own?

To English song Peter Warlock devoted his main activities as a composer. He was assailed by doubts whether he would not find more success in writing other kinds of music: he essayed, but he stuck, finally, to song. He was right. It would be impertinent, and in myself incredulous of a fundamental truth, not to assume in this book that there has been a revival of musical composition in England since the 1880's. The release of the mainspring of that revival was caused by the 1914-18 war—that precipitation of physical horrors in reaction to the post-Victorian complacency that succeeded the 'nineties. Warlock came in one way at the right moment. Song was wanted, but unfortunately, not Warlock's kind of song. Twenty-five years afterwards, some of us are still wondering why the lessers, the feeblers, the "let's-go-back-to-ballads," are still standing in the way of Warlock's proper appreciation. Hugo Wolf was ill-heard in his day, but he was a native of a country that commanded musical attention. There is a complete corpus of Wolf songs. No one publisher in English has been so enlightened, thus far, even by collaboration, as to produce a complete Warlock in handy volumes. I commend the idea as a worthy piece of English propaganda.

A national revival in music, if it be alive at all, must take on a giant's robe, and hope that its failures will be condoned by sympathy and by the appeal of its national idiom. The waste spaces in the bibliographies of Glinka and Smetana and Pedrell[14] are sad reading, while of Parry and Stanford today we never hear a major single work. Those major works had to be written, whether in blood and tears or in the complacent joy of achievement. But the question arises whether we do right to assess a country's music by its major works or by its general musical trend and inclination. We are still the victims of the Industrial Revolution in our desire for the magnificent and the magniloquent: the "kolossal" period may have left us, but we are still impressed by statistics of size. A million or two people mishandled and miserable on London's Underground are still to us of greater significance than a man with his wife and child comfortably and punctually arriving at their destination in a brougham. Under this system of critical regimentation, with the sergeant-major's voice shouting "Tallest on the right, shortest on the left," we conceive that a bad symphony cannot avoid being better than a first-class song. We have forgotten the thought behind the Bible story which says "and after the fire a still, small voice."[15] Debussy, almost silent amid the Wagnerian trumpetings and the heavy texture of Brahms, should have taught us. We still have to learn.

Against this conception of grandiloquence as a virtue, Peter Warlock was completely and naturally in revolt. He had far too much sense of humour, far too much sense of art as a confluence of perfect details, to be impressed by Holst's picture of the Universe,[16] or by Bantock's unvarying scene-paintings of Omar Khayyám and the Song of Solomon,[17] or by Holbrooke's and Howard de Walden's Welsh National trilogy (have I got the number right?).[18] He himself wrote in a letter: "When I think of the 'monumental' composers in present-day England alone, I feel that I would rather spend my life trying to achieve one book of little songs that shall have a lasting fragrance, than pile up tome upon tome on the dusty shelves of the British Museum."[19] Warlock saw himself, quite clearly, as neither a Delacroix nor a Rubens. In a picture gallery, we do not always measure beauty by the area of the canvas, and Warlock was piercingly, sometimes even bitterly, clear of the size which he could fill to satisfy himself. The canvases, then, are small. We ourselves must discover, as we have with Wolf, whether the musical material is big or whether it is just rapid and transient. For myself I cannot believe that it is not big in Warlock.

Hubert Parry was a very remarkable man, a great teacher, a personality of importance, a musician of vast and ramifying energy. He made it possible for an Englishman to be a musician without being suspected of not being a gentleman. By far the most enduring of Parry's compositions are his smaller vocal works: and of those his songs form a large part. He brought back fine verse into song for its own sake, and in so doing he created a new tradition of song, where in English voice and verse came together, inevitably, again. It was to this new heritage of English music that Peter Warlock brought his incisive mind, his quick reactions, his passion for detail, and his widely ranging emotional experience. He made it live anew.

Warlock's complete musical output was not very extensive; compared with Purcell's, for example, who died at the same young age of thirty-six, or with Schubert's,

who lived to be only thirty-one, it is small. That Warlock had not the almost universal range of Purcell is not to be wondered at, for Purcell lived in an age when musicians were, first, practitioners and, secondly, composers. Warlock was no executant, and shunned any thought of being a performer: on the other hand, he was a scholar and critic of a most eclectic type, and that quality of mind, apart from his technical limitations, undoubtedly curbed the rein of his musical fancy. He ground out few bars of music to keep the pot (or tankard) boiling: he was no devotee of note-spinning, of blowing up frog-ideas into bull-like proportions. He had little liking for scene-painting, for the vague sweeping line that means so little, even if seen from afar. Therefore, in looking at his works, we who follow him can be thankful that we are not confronted with acres of musical thistles and bindweed, but can keep within the confines of a comparatively well-ordered garden—of somewhat Elizabethan pattern.

The published works of Warlock actually comprise approximately one hundred songs, a few short choral works, three orchestral pieces, and an odd unclassified work or two. Of the transcriptions from and editions of older music, some short mention will be made below.

Within that small space is encompassed a rare and varied mind; not offering, it may be thought, a very large quantity of crotchets and quavers written down by the hand to sound to the ears of listeners. A glance at a Warlock manuscript will give a different opinion. Warlock wrote with exquisite precision: not only had the figured bass ceased to be an idiomatic shorthand, but also the shape of the note-heads, the uprights, the binds and ties, were of enormous interest to him. He wrote his crotchets and quavers in a handwriting exactly as precise as his ear demanded of the singer and player that they should reproduce his sounds. A Warlock manuscript is a joy to see, and to play from. It has some remote personal quality entirely different from the precision of an engraved score. I have often regretted, as a printer, having to submit such a delicate piece of craftsmanship as those MSS. of his to the freehand but comparatively mechanical devices of the punch and the graver. That he could not play what he finally wrote on paper is of concern: there he joined the great company of honest composers who use the piano when composing (for whatever medium). He played over his own songs with great (if inaccurate) pains, and when he came to a difficult passage, he played on, but slower. Others were neither allowed nor expected to follow the composer's lead. As performance by professionals approached, their technical comments and advice were unavailing. The critic part of his mind stepped in, at once. The sounds he wanted were written down, and that is something to say of a composer: they had to be played and sung to please him.

To the cultivation of his small plot of land, Warlock brought quite extraordinary talents. Only in his music, if you, as a reader, become familiar with it, can you cull the flowers. In contrast to his narrow output, Warlock's mind was acutely receptive. He had, as it were, a mind like a funnel—an enormous trough at one end, his mental-receiving end, and a narrow channel for the outlet. Only, there were three channels (at least)—the scholar, the critic, the composer. Each had a nozzle, directed with some force on to the flammable object.

Concerned as we are with Warlock's composer-vent, we must not forget the receiving funnel which supplied the artistic chemicals. While still at Eton, he came under the influence of Delius's music, and thence there sprang up a friendship with the composer which lasted for many years. Elizabethan literature attracted him when he was at Oxford. A little later, Bernard van Dieren, an astonishing person both in himself and in his music, pulled a third way.[20] Evidence of each influence is amply shown in the music—one can even see the elbow of Grieg showing through the mantle of Delius if one looks at the only and early piano work—*Folk-song Preludes*. But these were impacts, and no more, upon a vitally active mind, turning its course for a time here and there, but never impeding the main stream of developing genius. The sense of English literature developed especially, and it is not to be wondered that those three influences awoke in Warlock an endemic feeling for the remote, the macabre, the "romantic" in the Hoffmann sense.[21] Warlock was no calm liver, no philosophic hermit: a hedonist, he went out to explore life's possibilities, and succeeded in doing so. He was, himself, a curious relic of the 'nineties. He combined in one person the characteristics of an Elizabethan like Thomas Nashe[22] and a *fin de siècle* Victorian like Aubrey Beardsley.[23] He had the delicacy of a hothouse plant and

the ebullience of the willow-herb that grows on ruined bomb-sites. Humour in plenty, shyness of an odd kind, a roaring laugh that would give way to a fit of solitude and melancholy—there was Warlock, the man who exquisitely poised the psychologists' requirements of both introvert and extrovert. Add to this an eclectic taste quite out of the common, an almost desperate sense of precision, and a love of male company over pint pots, and you begin to have the man who wrote the music—the hollow end of the funnel.

Sincerity is a misused word in art, because it is applied, in its artistic sense, only to life. That Warlock had an artistic sincerity denied to Hubert Parry I make no doubt: I am not here to criticise their sincerity in morals and life. The fact remains that what Parry lacked in his songs, Warlock was able to put into his own—the quality of "bite," of urgency, or, as I would call it, of single-minded artistic sincerity, the quality that makes the thing, or object, the only consideration at the moment of composing. A recent gramophone review in a distinguished paper gave pause to anyone who knows Warlock's songs: it talked of "boisterous" and "rollicking" as if those were the two characteristic epithets of Warlock's work. Their use shows ignorance. There is no typical Warlock: he will chivy [*sic*] us from *Twelve Oxen* to *Milkmaids* and back again to Arthur Symons in *Saint Anthony of Padua*,[24] and then from Beaumont and Fletcher's ale-wife *Jillian of Berry*[25] over the hills (and the sea) to Yeats's Eireann fastnesses where *The Curlew* calls—very literally—on the cor anglais.[26]

To each song Warlock brings a sense of style that is impeccable, and it can be imputed to no one but the singers and the critics, certainly not to the composer, that Warlock's name should be synonymous with *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, openly wholehearted as that gay tune is.[27] I cannot find, for myself, that "the flowing cups" that "run swiftly round with no allaying Thames" in Parry's song to Althea from the prison-bound lover, have quite that whole-souled appreciation of liquor which informed Captain Stratton.[28]

To look at the three Belloc songs[29] is to find some sense of Warlock's sense of style. They are all, it is true, nostalgic, but all entirely different in conception. As Mr. Ernest Newman pointed out many years ago, the Wolf of the *Italianisches Liederbuch* is a changed man from the Spanish, or Goethe, or Mörike Wolf.[30] You could not exchange one song from one cycle for another from the others without making a musical solecism. Yet all the songs are individual. So with the Belloc songs of Warlock—the passionate sadness over the lost mill and the past splendour in the first, the mystical feeling in the second, the love for home in the third: each emotion is variedly and perfectly expressed.

The one example serves: but the collection of Peter Warlock's songs is before us is before us, and we must seek to find. What shall we look for? Let us leave the rumbustious Warlock to the last.

A critical study of Peter Warlock's songs, in detail, from the point of view of the performers no less than the point of view of the composer and poets, is a task awaiting a sensitive musician. He must be aware of the Nasmyth hammer of good prose style:[31] he must display, not pin down upon a board, the delicate hues of the butterflies' wings. Here there is neither room nor intention to undertake it. Nor can even a rough classification be made of various types of song or emotion or poetry, because the uncomfortable little butterflies escape through our coarse nets into the freedom of life, and will not submit to the burden of types.

But a survey of the chronological list (the only one published) in Mr. Cecil Gray's book by one who knows the scores and their sound is possibly illuminating.[32]

Warlock slips into the outer world of publication with the *Saudades* of 1916-7. They are remote, nostalgic songs, in a manner closely akin to van Dieren's, sensitive, atonal, exploratory. After one poem by Stevenson, the composer's choice of words for the next twelve songs is the sixteenth century or thereabouts. He has found one personal style in *As ever I saw*, and another in *My ghostly Fader*. Already Warlock is setting the same words twice, a practice he never gave up.

Then, with Stevenson as his collaborator again, we find a touch of genius in the little-known song, *Romance*. There is a spring in the step here, a jaunty air of discovery, and a sense of beautiful sounds. Two poems by the contemporary Edward Shanks[33] are followed by the superb lullaby, *Balulalow*, which is immediately followed by four topers' songs.[34] *Piggesnie* is delicious, and in the same mood *Chopcherry*, which comes in *Peterisms* (first set). *Rutterkin*, in the same book, shows the pattern interest in

Hubert Foss on Peter Warlock (continued)

Warlock's mind, and in the next book, *Lillygay*, we have a kind of Warlock epitome in five songs. *Sleep*, for string quartet originally but later transcribed for the piano—a masterpiece of easy movement—gives us a modern equivalent of Dowland.

In the middle of this prolific early period comes *The Curlew*, Warlock's most considerable work in length and general conception. It is a series of four "linked" songs for tenor voice, flute, English horn, and string quartet to poems by W. B. Yeats. In the ecstasy of sadness, no work by a living composer can surpass it. Warlock combines here a positive sense of desolation and the extraordinary negativeness of Yeats's words: "No boughs have withered because of the wintry winds: the boughs have withered because I have told them my dreams." The expression of that sentiment in suitable music is itself an achievement: the exquisite beauty of the entire work is something not to be realised save in the hearing—which is seldom allowed to us to-day.

Rest, sweet Nymphs is a melodic song, *Tyrley, Tyrlow* a rhythmic song: it appears also as one of the *Three Carols* for chorus. In *Autumn Twilight* we find contemplation, the opposite in *Lusty Juventus*, and in *Milkmaids* a delicious strophic tune of a pertness proper to the ladies' petticoats of red.

That (if we include the lovely *Serenade for Strings* in honour of Delius's birthday, in an appropriate Delius-like manner) brings us up to 1923. Even so far, there is enormous variety, enough to show what manner of lyrical mind we are considering. Space does not permit an equally detailed account of the rest of the songs, so one or two must be singled out here.

The Shakespeare settings on the whole get more interesting and richer as Warlock goes on, and the later ones are brilliantly successful though difficult to "bring off." *Consider* (Ford Madox Hueffer) is planned on broader scale than most of its fellows, and seems to demand a different kind of voice. For it is a point of interest that Warlock seems mostly to have designed his songs for a high baritone, or middle voice. He disliked the idea of automatic transposition of his songs, preferring to rewrite the accompaniments to suit an altered pitch. Looking down the list of songs, one observes a predilection for carols, and semi-religious or mystical words, with "jolly shepherds" and "Tom Tylers" cropping up every so often. A particularly beautiful pair of songs are *And wilt thou leave me thus?* (Thomas Wyatt) and *After Two Years* (Richard Aldington). *The Fox* is a song of hair-raising dramatic declamation—the Warlock counterpart of Schubert's *Doppelgänger*. Nor should one forget the little songs, like *Candlelight* (which are nursery jingles) and *The Sick Heart*.

The concerted pieces include one of Warlock's most delicate inventions—the *Corpus Christi Carol* for soprano, baritone, and string quartet: two of his most experimental works, *The Full Heart* and *Sorrow's Lullaby*: and the *Three Carols*. *An old Song*, for small orchestra, is indebted to Delius, but has a delightful clinging fragrance of its own, and then there is the *Capriol* Suite, the one and only piece for full orchestra. Ostensibly based on old French dances from Arbeau's *Orchésographie*, the Suite is really an entirely original conception in which one finds the fullest expression of Warlock's flair for bodily movement and exaggerated gesticulation.

In addition to the composed works, there are many transcriptions of vocal and instrumental works of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, all of them displaying high scholarship and a profound respect for the musical intentions of the original composers (these in addition to a number of piano duet and solo arrangements of Delius's works). As a writer of criticism too, Warlock (under his real name) is responsible for important studies that range from Delius to Gesualdo, embracing the English Lutenists as they pass.

Such, then, is the rather sadly neglected composer, Peter Warlock.

If one looks in these works for a Beethoven, one does not find it—nor, indeed, does one elsewhere with any frequency. One finds another personality, a real one, expressing itself in miniature forms, and accomplishing that expression with something near to perfection. Warlock's is not theoretical music but practical material for singer and pianist. It does not flatter, does not try to persuade the listener with the half-truths of reminiscence. Alert itself, this music requires alertness in hearer as well as performer. Taken all in all, Warlock is in the great line of song writers, and certainly he has no rival of English blood since the death of Purcell. We should learn about this fellow-countryman of our own time, and sing him. ■

Notes

1 Hubert Foss, 'Phases of the Moon—The Warlock Gang', *London Symphony Observer*, November 1952, pp. 98-100, reprinted in Stephen Lloyd, Diana Sparkes, Brian Sparkes (eds.), *Music in Their Time* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), pp. 64-67.

2 Hubert Foss, *Music in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan Ltd., 1933).

3 *Music in My Time*, p. 94.

4 Hubert Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: a Study* (London: George G. Harrap, 1950).

5 A. L. Bacharach (ed.), *British Music of Our Time* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1946).

6 See Pyke, M. (2004, September 23). Bacharach, Alfred Louis (1891–1966), food scientist and musician. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 14 November 2025, from https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30512 .

7 *Music in My Time*, p.166.

8 *Music in My Time*, p. 104.

9 Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral* Symphony was completed in 1922; Paul Hindemith's song cycle for soprano and piano, *Marienleben*, was written in 1923.

10 William Lawes (1602-1645). English composer.

11 Foss's reference is to Milton's ode *At a Solemn Musick* (in which the original-spelling text of Foss's line is 'Sphere-born harmonious Sisters, Voice, and Vers'; Milton's text was set to music by Hubert Parry in 1887 as *Blest Pair of Sirens*.

12 Thomas Campion (1567-1620). English composer and poet.

13 John Dowland (c.1563-1626). English composer and lutenist.

14 Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922). Catalan composer, guitarist, and musicologist.

15 1 Kings 19: 12.

16 Gustav Holst: *The Planets* (1914-17).

17 The two large-scale choral/orchestral works by Granville Bantock (1868-1946) to which Foss alludes are: *Omar Khayyam* (1906-8) and *Song of Songs* (1912-1922).

18 Foss refers to three operas by Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958) which together formed the cycle *The Cauldron of Anwen*: *Dylan, Son of the Wave*, Op. 53 (1909) (No. 2 of the cycle), *The Children of Don*, Op. 56 (1910–12) (No. 1 of the cycle), *Bronwen*, Op. 75 (1915–24, revised 1928) (No. 3 of the cycle). The librettist was Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, 8th Baron Howard de Walden, 4th Baron Seaford (1880 –1946).

19 Foss does not identify the letter from which he quotes.

20 Bernard van Dieren (1887-1936). Dutch composer. Foss had championed van Dieren at Oxford University Press, publishing his instrumental music and songs, and his 1935 book *Down Among the Dead Men*.

21 E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822). German author and composer, one of the major founders of the 'Romantic' movement in literature.

22 Thomas Nashe (1567-c.1601). English poet and playwright.

23 Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898). English illustrator.

24 Arthur William Symons (1865-1945). Critic, poet, translator, and editor born in Wales of Cornish parents. Warlock set 'A Prayer to Saint Anthony of Padua' as no. 1 of *Two Songs* (Arthur Symons) (OUP, 1928).

25 Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. English dramatists writing as a team, *fl.* 1603-25. The 'ale-wife' was a character type typically celebrated (or lampooned) by them.

26 William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). Irish poet, critic, dramatist. Warlock set four poems by Yeats in *The Curlew* (composed 1920-22) (Stainer & Bell, 1924).

27 *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, song by Peter Warlock to words by John Masefield (Augener, 1922).

28 Foss's allusion is to the poem 'To Althea, from Prison' by Richard Lovelace (1617-1657), set by Hubert Parry in his *English Lyrics* (1895).

29 Foss refers to Warlock's Hilaire Belloc settings *Ha'nacker Mill*, *The Night*, and *My Own Country* (all 1927).

30 Ernest Newman (1868-1959). English music critic. See Ernest Newman, *Hugo Wolf* (London: Methuen & Co., 1907)

31 Foss's allusion is to the famously clear and direct writing style of the Scottish engineer James Nasmyth (1808-1890), who was celebrated within his profession for the development of the steam hammer.

32 Cecil Gray (1895-1951). Scottish critic and writer on music. His *Peter Warlock: a Memoir of Philip Heseltine* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934) was the earliest full survey of Warlock's work; in the precision of its wording Gray became the first of many other authors to grapple with the issue of how to name the composer in a title.

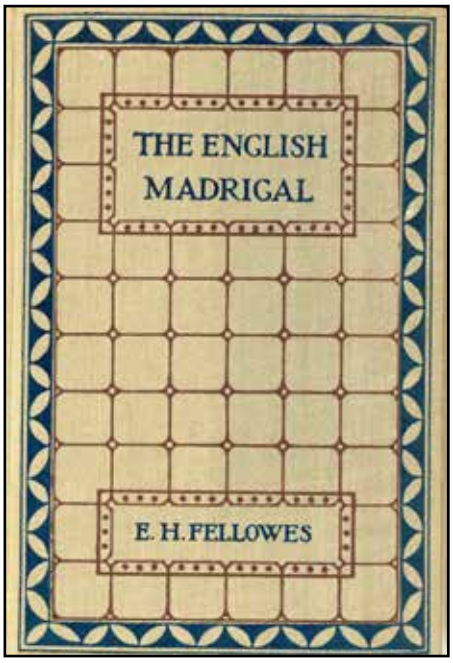
33 Edward Shanks (1892-1953). English poet and critic.

34 A 'toper' is an obsolete term meaning 'heavy drinker'.

Articles

A Companion Volume to Peter Warlock's book The English Ayre*?*

John Mitchell



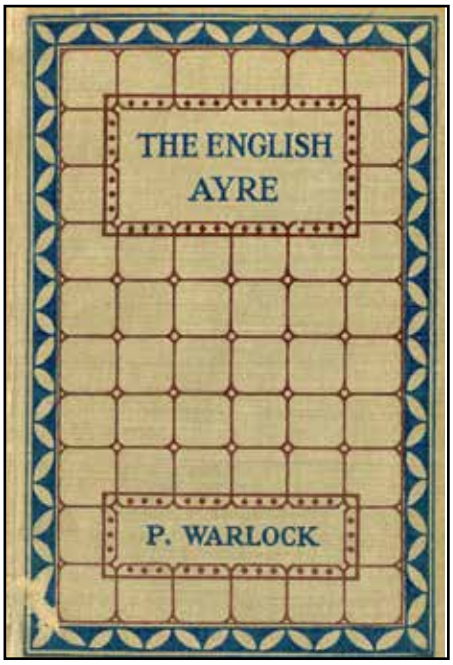
The cover and frontispiece of *The English Madrigal*, published by OUP, 1925.

Edmond Fellowes

2026 marks the centennial of the publication of *The English Ayre*. This 140-page pioneering book by Warlock made it into print during the second year of his sojourn in the West Kent village of Eynsford[1], but he had begun working on it two years earlier[2] when he was then residing at the family home of *Cefn Bryntalch* in mid-Wales. Published by Oxford University Press in 1926, what is probably less well known is that it would appear to be one from a series of *The World's Manuals* that were issued by OUP during the 1920s. The individual titles aimed to be a collection of concise, authoritative books designed to provide accessible yet scholarly introductions to a wide range of subjects for a general audience. The series aimed to make academic topics engaging and understandable, serving as an accessible guide to various fields of study. It is pleasing to reflect that Warlock's volume embraces all these considerations in what must probably be one of the first standard books on the subject.

What is perhaps also less well known is that a year earlier in 1925 OUP had published another book in the series which complemented *The English Ayre*, and in a way, it was an earlier companion volume to it. This was *The English Madrigal*, penned by one of Warlock's bêtes noires (on account of what

A Companion Volume to Peter Warlock's book **The English Ayre***?* (continued)



The cover and frontispiece of *The English Ayre*, published by OUP, 1926.

Warlock considered to be his somewhat cavalier approach to strict accuracy in transcribing early music): the Reverend Edmund H. Fellowes. It had its origins in 1923 when Fellowes recorded that ... *the Oxford Press approached me to write a short book on 'The English Madrigal' for a series called 'The World's Manuals'*.[3] This perhaps prompts the question as to whether *The English Ayre* also came about through Warlock being approached by OUP to write a book on the subject, or alternatively if he may have done so at his own instigation.

Slightly shorter than *The English Ayre* at 111 pages, *The English Madrigal* shared the same format internally and had identical cover artwork. Both books were illustrated with music examples, featuring individual sections on the main composers from the respective musical forms. Warlock's possibly had more of a technical focus, whereas the Fellowes' book benefitted from a more general introductory 19-page chapter on *Music in the Elizabethan Home*.

It would be intriguing to know what Warlock may have thought about this little volume from Fellowes. In 1925 when *The English Madrigal* was published, Warlock was still enjoying[4] a quite close friendship with Hubert Foss, then running OUP's Music Department in London, and it would seem almost certain he would have heard of this new publication via his friend. With his keen scholarly interest in early music, he may have been quite curious to see it – perhaps simply to ascertain whether Fellowes may have redeemed himself from what Warlock had viewed as his earlier transgressions! (alluded to above). Surprisingly there seems to be no commentary about the book in either Warlock's extant letters or published articles, and surely, he would have been a perfect choice as the book's prime reviewer?!

Notes

1 In a 5th September 1926 letter to Colin Taylor, he related how ... *Oxford Press expect to have* [it] *ready by the middle of this month*.

2 A letter to his friend Fritz Hart, dated 10 October 1924, mentions that ... *I am working on a book about English songs of the period 1588–1620*.

3 E.H. Fellowes: *Memoirs of an Amateur Musician* (Methuen & Co. Ltd. London, 1946), page 137.

4 A few years later they had irrevocably fallen out.

Articles

Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock

John Mitchell

Left to right: Unidentified waiter, Jacob Epstein, Philip Heseltine, and the Hon. Evan Morgan outside the Au Petit Savoyard Restaurant, 35 Greek Street, *circa* 1915.

It was during my student days in the mid-1960s that I first encountered the name of Evan Morgan, and this was in the caption to the photograph facing page 94 of Cecil Gray's *Peter Warlock: a Memoir of Philip Heseltine*. The exact wording described him as the *Hon. Evan Morgan (now Lord Tredegar)*, and as it happened the book, published in 1934, coincided with the death of his father on 3 May earlier that year, whereupon he then succeeded to the title of 2nd Viscount and 4th Baron Tredegar. The photograph, believed to have been taken around 1915, and in front of London's *Au Petit Savoyard* restaurant, also included a beardless Heseltine (before the inception of the Warlock alias) and Jacob Epstein (a fourth person has not been identified, but he may well have been the head waiter, judging by his attire). I was naturally curious to know who these other personages were—Jacob Epstein was 'explained' by a couple of mentions of him in the book, but there was no reference at all to Evan Morgan, who thus continued to remain a 'mystery man' for that youthful student during those far-off pre-Google days!

Evan Frederic Morgan was about fifteen months older than Warlock, being born on 13 July 1893 at 33 Cadogan Terrace, Chelsea. Of mixed aristocratic ancestry, his Welsh father was the 1st Viscount Tredegar, and his Scottish mother was Lady Katherine Carnegie. To a significant extent this was a marriage of convenience, his parents not enjoying a close relationship. With his father, a military man indulging in an adulterous lifestyle, and also much focused on hunting and country pursuits, he was often absent during his son's upbringing, which resulted in Evan doting on his mother. The main family home was Tredegar House (near Newport, Wales), with a subsidiary one a few

Tredegar House, near Newport, Wales, and Ruperra Castle.

miles away at Ruperra Castle[1]. The latter was nominally the home of the heir to Tredegar, but Evan always resisted living there. The Morgan family were very comfortably off, with the money deriving from land, coal mines, railways and docks. A consequence of this was that Evan became awash with cash as a young man and beyond, allowing him to pursue a hedonistic lifestyle often bordering on the edges of notoriety. A noted homosexual, he was something of a foppish character, being fictionalised humorously in two novels: as Ivor Lombard in Aldous Huxley's *Chrome Yellow* [1921] and more farcically as the Hon. Eddy Monteith[2] in Ronald Firbank's *The Flower beneath the Foot* [1923]. Evan was a sensitive individual and looked it: tall, gaunt, underweight and consumptive, and perhaps unsurprisingly his interests were directed towards the arts (he probably inherited this from the Carnegie side of the family, with his maternal grandfather being a scholar and published poet). Virginia Woolf, who met Evan at one of Ottoline Morrell's arty weekends at Garsington Manor during World War One, wittily described his appearance

Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock (continued)

Evan and Lois Morgan by Anthony Wysard (1929); portrait photograph (Bassano Ltd. c.1923).

in a diary entry as: *... a little red absurdity, with a beak of a nose, no chin, and a general likeness to a very callow but student Bantam cock, who has run to legs and neck.*

It is not known exactly where and when Evan and Warlock became acquainted, but it almost certainly would have been at Eton College. Evan was a year ahead of Warlock, enrolling in the College for the summer term of 1907 (Warlock followed in the Michaelmas term of 1908), and like Warlock he then went on to Christ Church, Oxford. Warlock only stuck it out there for a year, and similarly Evan's time at Oxford was ultimately unsuccessful in terms of achievement. One of his friends there commented: *I do not know what, if anything, Evan was supposed to be reading at Oxford. I never saw the slightest evidence of work in his rooms, and he did not take a degree. I don't suppose he ever had the slightest intention of doing so.*[3]

Whilst Evan and Warlock at Eton and Oxford shared a mutual interest in the arts, what Evan gained more from Warlock was a developing involvement with the occult. From his earlier boyhood Evan already had an existing curiosity about the supernatural, and Warlock was able to broaden his knowledge and experience in this area. In the 1920s Evan then went on to meet Aleister Crowley several times, and in June 1943 Crowley actually stayed at Tredegar House for a few days when he was quite impressed by the room that Evan had devoted to the pursuit of his Magick interests.

Had Evan followed in the family tradition he would have gone on to reside mainly at Ruperra Castle after leaving Christ Church. However, Oxford seemed to suit him, and he remained in the area, but with regular trips to London to be part of artistic coterie that patronised the *Café Royal*, and later the *Le Tour Eiffel* restaurant and the *Fitzroy Tavern*. Warlock, of course, was often at the *Café Royal*, and it could be that the photo outside of *Au Petit Savoyard* was taken before/after a meal there, with Warlock, Evan

Left: Evan Morgan by Augustus John (c.1925) and (*right*) a painting by Evan Morgan (possibly c.1914).

and Epstein having adjourned earlier from the *Café Royal* (about ten minutes' walk away).

At the time Evan had been focusing his creative talents on both poetry and painting. With the latter he had some success with two of his efforts being exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1913, key influences on his style being Aubrey Beardsley and Gustav Klimt. Poetry and other writings were his principal creative outlet, his first volume of poems, *Fragments*, being published in 1916. It would seem the *Café Royal* crowd didn't view him as being on the same high artistic plateau as themselves but accepted him in the group because he was well off. They probably saw him more as someone they could count on to settle their bills when needed. Evan was quite happy with this, only too pleased to be seen associated with a prominent, forward-looking artistic circle. Perhaps a typical opinion of him was expressed by Virginia Woolf who wryly summed him up as having '*less talent and more pose*'.

Apart from poems—and Evan published six volumes of verse between 1916 and 1929—he also penned a single novel, *Trial by Ordeal*[4]. This was hardly top-notch stuff or ground breaking, with the most positive review at the time delivering the verdict: '*This is a very dull book*'. Skim reading the volume, it struck me that it might, at least in part, be a *roman-à-clef*. The central character is a nearing middle-aged writer called Charles Tancred, and with a special interest in ghosts and psychic phenomena, this is suggestive that he may be partially an Evan Morgan self-portrait. Another main character is a high-profile society painter, Evan Edwards, and he is clearly based on Augustus John. Evidence of this comes from his two residences: the reader is told that Edwards has a country home at Poole in Dorset, and a London studio in Mallory Street, whilst John's family home was Alderney Manor near Poole, with a Kensington studio at 28 Mallord Street. As I read on, it was with a hope that another significant character might

Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock (continued)

Honeywood House, near Dorking, Surrey, the home of Evan Morgan's mother from 1914.

be introduced that could possibly have been a Warlock portrayal, but the anticipation was in vain. However, when I got to the final few pages there was just a hint that Evan was making a nod in Warlock's direction: Tancred's former lover, in a suicidal mood, crosses the Albert Bridge from its Chelsea side and then '*... hesitated before Anhalt Studios where lived a musician friend*[5] *of hers*[6]; —Warlock had resided at 2 Anhalt Studios, Battersea, between August 1916 and June 1917! A little later, not finding her friend at home, she throws herself in the Thames to a watery death. We are then told this happened just as '*... a young musician was returning to Anhalt Studios*' [7]. A possible implication is that had he returned sooner the tragedy may not have occurred[8]. The choice of Anhalt Studios as the home of the musician friend surely suggests Evan's familiarity with the place, and perhaps that he had been a visitor there during Warlock's tenancy?

Evan never really enjoyed ongoing good health, and evidence of this comes in a letter that Warlock wrote to Delius in March 1915. Warlock described how '*... I was suddenly called upon yesterday to escort down here a friend who is on the point of a nervous breakdown. He is suffering from acute mental strain and has lately had several lapses of memory, which makes it quite unsafe for him to go about alone. It has somewhat disorganized my plans, since I may have to stay here with him for a few days.*' The friend in question was Evan, and the letter was addressed from Honeywood House, Oakwood Hill [near Dorking], Surrey (Honeywood House had been recently purchased by Evan's mother, and Evan was often there, especially in his later years). This was not the only occasion when Warlock stayed with Evan, for when writing to his mother on 21 September 1920 he recorded that '*... I have been away for ten days to stay with Evan Morgan in the country near Oxford ... I feel all the better for my Oxford expedition and am still very busy, organizing the first two Sackbut concerts ...*'

It was around this time that Warlock ran into some financial difficulties with *The Sackbut*. Its proprietor, Winthrop Rogers, had concerns over the direction the publication was continually taking by 'rocking the Establishment Boat' under Warlock's editorship, and accordingly withheld his financial backing. Warlock's mother was happy to come to the assistance of her son

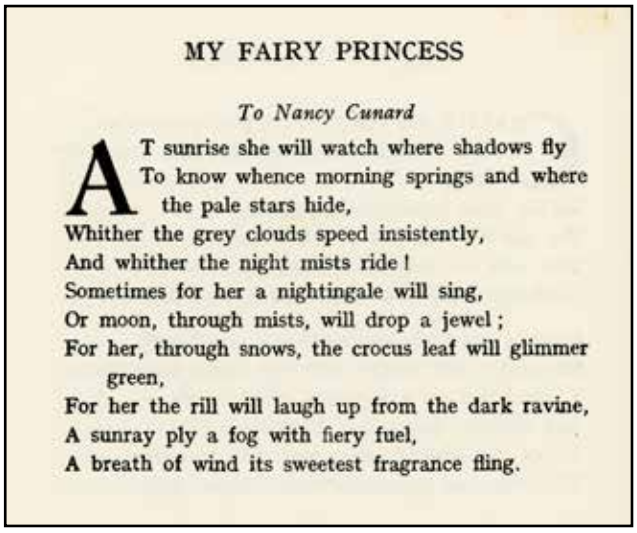
and writing to her in early November (1920) he explained that Evan had pledged to buy out Rogers so that he (PW) would then have the opportunity of issuing *The Sackbut* without any editorial interference or pressure from above. A little later, on 19 November, he wrote to her again in some relief with the news that: *'... only yesterday were negotiations completed by which Evan Morgan has bought out Winthrop Rogers for £200'.* As it turned out Warlock had spoken too soon, in that the negotiations were not actually completed or fulfilled at that point. In his next letter to his mother three months later (15 February 1921) he records that: *'... the Sackbut which during the last two months has been in a state of inanition owing to the non-payment of the promised £200 from Evan Morgan—for reasons I cannot go into here—is about to be resurrected on a very favourable financial basis ....'*

It may be worth reflecting on what might have been those *'reasons I cannot go into here'*. As mentioned earlier, Evan had very substantial personal wealth at the time, and so it would seem very unlikely that the £200 pledge was not honoured because he could no longer afford it. Throughout his life Evan was attracted to good looking young men, and his biographer was of the view this included Warlock, recording how Evan was distracted by *'... his mind wrestling with the idea of receiving Warlock's adoration (and at least of them engaging in sexual relations together)...'* [9]. Could it have been that Warlock's disinclination to get involved with Evan, rejecting any advances that he may have made, was the underlying reason why Evan failed to provide *The Sackbut* cash that he had promised? Interestingly, there is no evidence that, after this non-payment incident, during the last decade of his life that Warlock had any further friendship or dealings with Evan, perhaps feeling both disappointment and resentment that Evan had let him down in his hour of need. On the positive side it seems Evan retained at least some regard and respect for Warlock, as he was one of sponsors of the first PW Memorial Concert in February 1931.

With his father's military connections—he was a Captain in the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers—perhaps it was not too surprising that Evan, with the First World War raging, and maybe with a little paternal prodding, joined the Welsh Guards in June 1915. With his health issues, scrawny physique, and foppish character, he was clearly unsuited for soldiering—and his enlistment occurred only three months after that near nervous breakdown (alluded to above) where Warlock became his 'minder' for a few days. Continuing periods of unwellness prevented Evan from receiving any sustained military training, and apart from anything else this meant that there was little likelihood of him entering active service in the trenches. Often on sick leave and recuperating, by the start of 1917 he had managed to secure a safe Whitehall job in the Ministry of Labour where his duties were not exactly onerous. In the summer of that year, he suffered from a knee injury which finally ruled out active service once and for all. The furthest he got was Algiers when he acted in a small way as a government courier. Later, in North Africa for a short time, he was attached to the HQ staff of the French General Nivelle. The war over, and benefitting from his Whitehall experience, he became part of the British Press Corps during the Treaty of Versailles talks. Somewhat ironically, taking account of the above, Evan's name was included in Eton College's list of Etonians who had **fought**(!) in the Great War[10].

Soon after the War had ended, and to the dismay of his parents, Evan toyed with the notion of either taking Holy Orders or renouncing everything for a monastic life. Although neither came to fruition as such he went on to become a Roman Catholic and involve himself directly with the affairs of the Vatican. This culminated in being appointed by Pope Pius XI as a Papal Chamberlain, his finest hour being when he helped facilitate an audience with the Pope for King George V and Queen Mary in 1923. The following year Evan enrolled as a student at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome, with the purported idea of training for the priesthood. However, as with his time at Christ Church, Oxford, it would seem he had no intention of taking any studying commitment seriously. One commentator noted how *'... Evan Morgan took liberties of a kind that raised doubts as to the worth of his vocation. He maintained a luxury suite at the Bernini Hotel not far from the seminary and there he entertained his friends in the style to which he was accustomed. He rarely attended the Gregorian University. Instead, he would send one of his servants in his place, dressed in a cassock, to sit through lectures and take notes ...'*[11]. Matters came to a head in 1925 when the Rector of Beda

Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock (continued)



MY FAIRY PRINCESS

To Nancy Cunard

AT sunrise she will watch where shadows fly
To know whence morning springs and where
the pale stars hide,
Whither the grey clouds speed insistently,
And whither the night mists ride!
Sometimes for her a nightingale will sing,
Or moon, through mists, will drop a jewel;
For her, through snows, the crocus leaf will glimmer
green,
For her the rill will laugh up from the dark ravine,
A sunray ply a fog with fiery fuel,
A breath of wind its sweetest fragrance fling.

Evan Morgan's poem to Nancy Cunard (from *At Dawn*, 1924).

Lois Sturt by Ambrose McEvoy (1920).

instructed Evan, who was supposedly aspiring to a life of celibacy, to leave the College as he had fallen in love with an Italian youth.

Despite his sexual leanings, Evan was attractive to women, one of these being the writer and heiress Nancy Cunard, and although having countless male admirers[12] elsewhere, she developed something of a passion[13] for him. Whilst this wasn't reciprocated, Evan was at least moved to write and dedicate one of his verses to her. At a later point he must have been aware that his ongoing homosexual forays made him quite susceptible to prosecution by the law, which probably accounts for him making two sham marriages to provide a façade and veneer of supposed respectable heterosexuality. The first of these was to the Hon. Lois Sturt (1900–1937) in April 1928. As with Evan, she was both from an aristocratic background, and one of the Bright Young Things that enlivened the Roaring Twenties. To quote Evan's biographer in an earlier book: the pairing between them '*... was arranged to prevent scandals from overwhelming both parties as a result of their affairs with men*'[14]. With Evan having become a Roman Catholic, and his bride-to-be converting to the faith, the wedding was held at Brompton Oratory, and unusually the reception took place on the day before, with Evan ignoring tradition by having two best men! Whilst like Evan in not needing to earn a living, Lois Sturt had been trained as a painter and later went on to be an actress on both stage and in film[15]. Her married life with Evan began at their new home in Mayfair, but expectations from the union were low on both sides. They just about managed to rub along together, but arguments and rows were quite frequent, a friend of Evan's later recalling how Lois was '*... a boisterous, life-loving, large-hearted person, who tended to do everything to excess. The marriage with E. was stormy from the first, and Lois was wildly unfaithful to him, and each was always coming home and finding the other in bed with someone else ...*'[16]. Things reached a crisis in 1933 when Lois petitioned for divorce, but this fizzled out, and in any event when Evan became Viscount Tredegar the following year, she was probably not too displeased to then become a viscountess. Leading increasingly separate lives, their relationship came to a sudden end on 18 September 1937 when Lois, holidaying with a female friend in Budapest, died quite unexpectedly from a heart attack, aged only 37.

Later that year one of Evan's guests at Tredegar House was the recently divorced Russian Princess

Princess Olga (1939).

Olga Dolgorouky (1915–1998), then in exile from her homeland. Having had the experience of marriage with Lois, and aware of the limitations and drawbacks that came with it, Evan clearly also believed a continuance of the married state would be expedient and serve him well (for the already stated reason). The following year Evan's engagement to Princess Olga was announced, and on 13 March 1939 the couple were married in Singapore. In stark contrast to Lois, Olga expected more from the marriage, and as the new Viscountess Tredegar she took more of an interest in the Morgan family affairs. She had also hoped there may possibly have been children from the union, but as with Lois, she and Evan gradually drifted apart with them eventually sleeping separately at the opposite ends of Tredegar House. The marriage was finally annulled in 1943, the reason cited being Evan's "Incapacity", and Princess Olga went on to outlive him by almost fifty years.

From his earliest years Evan both took an interest in and had an affinity with animals, especially birds (there are several photos of him with birds perched on his shoulder). One of his friends commented on the marked avian aspect of Evan's appearance: '*There was something extremely bird-like about the way he held his head and would cock it to one side when listening to one or when about to ask a question. His eyelids were hooded, and he gave me, indeed, very much the impression of some wild bird of prey, caged perhaps, certainly never tamed; his way with birds was fantastic.*'[17]. It was Evan's love of birds that led indirectly to one of the most extraordinary episodes of his life. With his previous military connections, but too old for active service, he secured an unusual position with the army during the Second World War. This was with a Special Section of the Royal Corps of Signals that dealt with carrier pigeons used in undercover operations in enemy territory. Evan was appointed as the commanding officer of the unit, with his responsibility being to ensure that pigeons were bred and available for use by MI 14[18]. On 15 March 1943 he disclosed to a couple of Girl Guide leaders in his office—they were there for some sort of publicity purposes—some sensitive information about the operations of his carrier pigeon unit which had some potentially serious security implications. The consequence was that Evan was court marshalled a month later, but luckily, he got off with a severe reprimand for his carelessness.

The years following the war were increasingly dominated for Evan by declining health, but even so his outré lifestyle continued almost to the end. Indeed, with his funds now at a low ebb, he was actually contemplating a third marriage to a rich heiress. However, holidaying in Rome early in 1949 he was taken seriously ill, and returning for hospital treatment he later died at Honeywood House[19] on 27 April, aged just 55. The cause of death was acute broncho pneumonia and pancreatic cancer. As his biographer ruefully commented, his final illness '*... brought his colourful, and scandalous but altogether unaccomplished life to a sad and bitter end*'[20]. I had wondered, particularly from their friendship after Oxford, whether there may have been any surviving letters from Warlock to Evan. Unfortunately, but quite understandably, Evan's papers were destroyed after his death for fear of any detail concerning the homosexual side of his life leaking out, and which might adversely affect the family's reputation.

To end on a lighter note there is an amusing link that might be worth recording, and this relates to one of

Evan Morgan and Peter Warlock (continued)

Warlock's most popular songs: *Captain Stratton's Fancy*, where the end of each verse refers to '*... the old bold mate of Henry Morgan*'. The latter was a Welsh privateer in the seventeenth century, and who eventually was knighted and appointed as the Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica. On several occasions Evan was a visitor to this island and was seemingly quite proud of the fact that he was distantly related to this buccaneering ancestor—and appropriately he named his private motor-yacht *Henry Morgan*!

Acknowledgment and further reading:
I am much indebted to William Cross whose several books[21] on Evan Morgan have been a fine source of detailed material upon which to draw. They provide a wealth of information on Evan's colourful life and include generous quantities of end notes. The present article should only be deemed as an introduction to this fascinating character, and for those who are interested further, these books are worth delving into. ■

Notes

1 Now a ruin following a fire in 1941 (having been requisitioned by the British Army), and in danger of collapse.

2 Around this time Evan and Firbank had had a falling-out, and a vengeful Firbank originally intended the Monteith character to be named the *Hon. Heaven Organ*—but his publisher wouldn't allow it, deeming it too risqué or lewd, and potentially libellous!

3 On page 166 of the unpublished memoirs of the writer/historian Cyril Hughes Hartmann (1896–1967)

4 Virginia Woolf rejected its publication by her Hogarth Press, with it eventually making it into print via John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, in 1921.

5 Who was subsequently named simply as 'Alan'.

6 *Trial by Ordeal*, page 301

7 Ibid page 304

8 It struck me there was a resonance here with the circumstances of Warlock's death—in that had Barbara Peache returned to the Tite Street flat earlier that December morning, the fatal effects of coal gas poisoning may have been curtailed.

9 William Cross: *Not behind lace curtains–The Hidden World of Evan, Viscount Tredegar* (Book Midden Publishing, Newport, Gwent, 2013, page 174)

10 *List of Etonians who fought in the Great War MCMXIV–MCMXIX* (privately printed, Eton College, 1921, page 181)

11 A quote from Andrew Boyle's *Poor, dear Brendan: the quest for Brendan Bracken* (Hutchinson 1974)

12 Including the writers Aldous Huxley, Michael Arlen, Ezra Pound and the surrealist poet Louis Aragon.

13 But describing him as '*... a fantasy who could be most charming and most bitchy*.'

14 William Cross and Monty Dart: *Aspects of Evan, the Last Viscount Tredegar* (Book Midden Publishing, Newport, Gwent, 2012, page 76)

15 She appeared in several films, including the silent movie *The Glorious Adventure* (1922) in which she played the role of 'Nell Gwyn'.

16 Included in a letter from the writer Henry Maxwell (1909–1996) on 9th February 1979 to the Assistant Curator at Tredegar House

17 Ibid.

18 Now no longer existing as such, but at the time part of the Ministry of Intelligence

19 Which was then still the home of Evan's mother—she outlived him just by a few months. Eventually Honeywood House became a nursing home, and in 1995 a Christmas Special of the TV series *One foot in the grave* was filmed there.

20 Opus cit. (*Aspects of Evan*) page 9

21 Details of two of these are given in Notes 9 and 14 above.

Articles

The Tragedy of Peter Burra

Michael Graves provides a thumbnail sketch of this little known author and critic. Burra's article, *The Tragedy of Philip Heseltine*, follows.

Peter Burra (1909-1937) was a British writer and critic, probably best known for his book *The Novels of E. M. Forster (1934)*. He was the first to highlight E. M. Forster's highly musical technique of employing textual leitmotifs, which he referred to as 'rhythm'. E.M.Forster said of him that he was 'the best critic of his generation'.

Peter Burra and Peter Pears were at school together at Lancing College and later at Oxford University. They became close friends. Both were members of the Lancing College Chamber Music Society where Burra played violin and Pears the piano (see photograph below). Whilst at Oxford, Burra edited the quarterly undergraduate periodical, *Farrago* (1930-31), which had a strong emphasis on music.

Burra was a special correspondent for *The Times*, and whilst in Barcelona to cover the ISCM Music Festival he met Benjamin Britten.

Tragically Burra was killed on 27 April 1937, aged 28, when a light aircraft crashed near Bucklebury Common, Berkshire. It had been his first flying lesson. After visiting Spain, and a few days before the bombing of Guernica, he was hoping to help provide air-cover to Republicans. ■

The Lancing Chamber Music Society.
Left to right: J.F. Rivers-Moore; Reginald James; Michael Richardson; Peter Burra; Peter Pears *(photo: A.R. & A. Page).*

Article from the Archives

The Tragedy of Philip Heseltine – *The Monthly Musical Record*, December, 1934, pp. 225-226.

Peter Burra

When an artist dies the usual order of events is for his friends first to secure the reputation of his work, and later to care for his memory as a man. It is not at once easy to review the one aspect in terms of the other, though the new sciences are opening up great possibilities in such connexions. In making this memorial[1] of his dead friend Mr. Cecil Gray has added an enthralling document to the evidences of the creative process, and if he omits – what must come sooner or later – a fuller survey of Peter Warlock's music, at least we have here some interesting explanations of its general manner in the light of his life. But Mr. Gray believes that Heseltine was one of those artists 'whose personalities are bigger than their works,' and his conclusion is that, whatever immortality may be in store for the songs, 'Philip Heseltine's greatest achievement was probably the creation of Peter Warlock. To realise such a legend, such a personality, which will assuredly endure, is itself nothing short of genius.' The analysis of that creation is therefore the matter of this book.

Needless to say it is not complete, and we can only trust that Mr. Gray's conclusions are consistent with evidence which he has found it expedient to suppress. So long as life continues to order itself discreetly, we must rest content with such a book as this is, and indeed under the circumstances we cannot have too many of them. Far more direct a help to us than the exposition of a system is the relation of the lives of other men. For that relation the value of contemporary evidence is inestimable, and one of the major reasons for desiring the early acknowledgment of an artist in his own life is that much evidence as possible may come to be preserved. Yet here we pause to reflect upon an irony; for does not the whole business of biography appear somewhat futile when we observe that no living man can be sure that he possesses the truth about any other man, and that on simple questions closest friends may receive different impressions?

Mr. Gray draws our attention to two such discrepancies. He himself gathered that Heseltine was profoundly unhappy at Eton, and traces to the 'miseries and humiliations' of public-school life various aspects of his character – briefly, the inferiority-complex, and his ingenious method of getting over it through the invention of Warlock. (It is equally possible that his mind was of an innately tragic tendency, which would have suffered anywhere; and for this reason the complete omission of information regarding his first nine years is disappointing.) Mr. Robert Nichols, who contributes a delightful chapter on Heseltine at Oxford, formed an entirely different impression. Mr. Gray's suggestion that he expressed himself differently in the violent alterations of mood is acceptable – but then the biographer is up against the fact that if a man cannot be certain of knowing himself, the chance which his friends have of knowing him is very small indeed. And when we come to a simple matter of taste – Nichols says that Heseltine admired Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Gray says that he did not – we may well despair of obtaining a unanimous verdict on his life and death. So we have Sir Richard Terry neatly saying, 'Music for him was not a career to be made, but a life to be lived'; while Warlock himself, it is clear, went through 'moods,' which were too frequent to be dismissed merely as such, in which he would write that if only he had a job he would never have anything more to do with music in any shape or form. Mr. Gray is ingenious but very fair in his attempt to reconcile differences. The truth is that with so complex a character an autobiographer himself (unless Herr Freud had had the opportunity of supplying him with the sheets of his own 'case-history') would be in little a better position than the biographer. Mr. Gray does make some good use of psychology, regarding such things as the early death of Heseltine's father, and he even touches on biological matters in mentioning a nervous stricture. The biographer must, however reluctantly, accept biological circumstances as conditioning to a large extent character and behaviour. This might lead to a fatalistic view of life, but true heroism will defeat it. Heseltine's own attempt was heroic, but, tragically, the result was nothing like a hero. Perhaps one motive for his suicide was the growing knowledge that the Peter Warlock he invented, however successful in ways where Heseltine had failed, was simply not so good a man as the first had been.

The story in outline is that Philip Heseltine was a boy of late development, of exceptional gentleness and sensibility, whose will seemed to be met with constant frustration, as a result of which he came to indulge in morbid introspection. To all this the early death of his father (interrupting the normal means of development) and his unhappiness at school may have contributed, though, as we have seen, the latter might as well have been a symptom as a cause, though its improper treatment would have aggravated the disease. The absorbing interest of his youth was the music of Delius, and far the most beautiful part of this book – the

most beautiful part, too of his life – is the correspondence which he exchanged with the elder composer. Incidentally Heseltine's letters are extraordinarily polished; one would suspect they had been drafted before fair-copying. One written in 1913 is among the most illuminating confessions of an introspective mind I know;

> ... I am, virtually, but three or four years old: my first fifteen years might almost as well never have been lived: and I find this lack of experience and accomplishments of living quite appalling. ... I have often felt myself to be a mere spectator of the game of life: this, I know to my sorrow, has led me to a positively morbid self-consciousness and an introspectiveness that almost amounts to insincerity, breeding as it does a kind of detachment from real life. Lately I have tried passionately, to plunge into life, and live myself, forgetfully if possible of this horrible aloofness ... I was formerly lonely, and shunned the healthy animalism of private and public schools, holding aloof, clinging to the atmosphere of home. ... I can no longer endure that ... Though I loathe athleticism, a mild proficiency in the elements of certain of these games is of great use to one, in helping one to opportunities of intercourse with others. ... I am absolutely ravenous for life: what I do, matters not so very much, so long as I live.

The book is worth possessing for the sake of this letter alone. Nearly three years later he is still craving to find a way into real life, when he writes: 'I am going away, to the uttermost parts of the earth, to live.' (He is referring to the abortive plan for joining up with Lawrence.) It was not till more than two years later that he decided that in order to enter into life he must abandon his existence as Heseltine altogether; and he grew the beard which was the simple means of this extraordinary change. He writes:

> The fungus is cultivated for a purely talismanic purpose: as such it works, and this is more important to me than mere appearance. ... Quite seriously, it does have a certain psychological effect on me; and seeing that now for nearly ten years all my best strength and energy has been used up negatively in keeping out the tide of the world which wants to swamp me and prevent me from doing the only kind of work I can do with any success ... it is necessary for me to make use of any little magical energy-saving devices that suggest themselves – and this is one of them.'

Thus Peter Warlock was gradually evolved, the complete contradiction in habits and beliefs of what Heseltine had been. Warlock's hatred of children whom Heseltine had loved is perhaps the most acute indication of how desperate the remedy was.

This acquisition by practice of another personality sounds like a play by *Pirandillo*; but where, we may ask, did the idea of Warlock come from? Was he a mere fiction, the reverse aspect of an obverse Heseltine; or was he some aspect of life, observed among his friends, which Heseltine had admired? In looking for an answer we find the book's disadvantage of having Mr. Gray for its narrator. For it is the story of *Hamlet* told by Horatio; or, as he puts it, of Pécuchet told by Bouvard. But what is very remarkable (and we believe it has escaped Mr. Gray's notice) is that this invention of Warlock, this living of a life not of his own, was undertaken in flagrant disregard of advice given to him by Delius, who was, after all his best friend. 'Try to be yourself and live up to your own nature,' he wrote to him in early days; 'whatever one's nature one ought to develop to its utmost limits, and not be constantly trying to become someone else. This leads to continual dissatisfaction and failure.'

His art, Delius implies, should have been sufficient to complete himself in. But he was a Goethe, who failed to save himself from the death of Werther by the creation of Faust. Instead he made a monster of himself, and even if by those means he achieved for himself the illusion of 'living,' it is equally clear that he had failed to accept life in its most simple terms. The problem for an artist would indeed seem to be most insoluble; and if as the by-product of his agony he can cast away from himself works of beauty, that is the most that he, or we, can ask for. Lawrence (about whom Mr. Gray has some extraordinarily interesting things to say) once wrote of Van Gogh: 'If he could only have set the angel of himself clear in relation to the animal of himself ... he need not have cut his ear off and gone mad.' And if Heseltine could have done it he need not have invented Warlock to kill himself with. But how? Only, as Lawrence goes on, 'if he could have known a great humanity ... where ... some men would end in artistic utterance and some wouldn't. But each one would create the work of art, the living man, achieve that piece of supreme art, a man's life.' As it is, his suicide seems to be more than a condemnation of our civilization in this moment of time. More terribly, it condemns the whole folly of looking for a humanity which might be named great at all. ■

1 *Peter Warlock, A Memoir of Philip Heseltine* by Cecil Gray, published Cape, 10s 6d.

Reviews

Gods, Ghosts and Monsters, Cenceptus; Divine Art DDX 21133

John Mitchell

This CD, released earlier in 2024, caught my attention as it contained an unusual, and indeed unexpected, arrangement of Warlock's *The Curlew*, which may well be something of a 'first' (in the sense that Our composer's masterpiece, to my knowledge, has never been tampered with previously). The greater part of the album consists of arrangements of vocal works by Frank Bridge, Butterworth, Holst and Warlock performed by the group Conceptus. The latter, which had its origins in that difficult period when restrictions were imposed by the Covid pandemic, was the brainchild of two Australian musicians, Scott Robert Shaw *(above)*, the tenor soloist for the recordings, and Timothy Collins, who created the arrangements, all of which have the accompaniments adapted for piano trio, i.e., violin, cello and piano.

The opening piece is the only completely original one, in the sense that it not an arrangement of something else. *Sea Song*, a setting of a Kathleen Mansfield poem by Timothy Collins (b. 1967), deals with the subject of ageing and loss. Here this rather bleak verse gets a surprisingly upbeat and easy-on-the-ear musical treatment, which many might deem at odds with the words. Whilst a pleasant listen, the present writer found it somewhat bland, and not particularly compelling.

Apart from *The Curlew*, all the other arranged works originally had accompaniments for piano, and presumably the idea of adding violin and cello was to enhance and give more body to the overall sound (albeit without any implication that the originals were inadequate in this respect). In the main the exercise has been a successful one. First heard is George Butterworth's classic *Six Songs* from *A Shropshire Lad*, where the ground breaking piano parts are often a bit sparse. The addition of the strings here is sensitively done and is quite telling in places. For example, the unharmonized descending piano phrase that opens the first song (*Loveliest of trees*) is rendered most effectively on the cello, and in the second verse of the fourth song (*Think no more, lad*) the offbeat piano chords benefit from the addition of pizzicato strings. In the final *Is my team ploughing?* the contrast between the verses of the dead man and his living friend is made more pointed by having the pianissimo chords of the former just played by double-stopped strings, with the piano only joining them for the latter to provide a greater presence for the living man. The closing phrase, which tends to 'evaporate' too soon on the piano alone, is sustained to the end by the violin.

Next up is *The Curlew*, and I must record that I continue to find it quite extraordinary that Timothy Collins viewed

Gods, Ghosts and Monsters, (continued)

Warlock's amazingly original conception suitable for having the six instrumental parts reduced to just three. The loss of both flute and cor anglais, which give the work such a memorable individual character, struck me as an arranging tactic taken too far. As best as I could judge, most of the notes were there in this version for violin, cello and piano, with the big problem being that the piano was just too intrusive in the accompanying texture, sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb. When it rendered some of the solo woodwind lines, the piano simply lost the subtle evocative power of the original, and when it substituted for trills on the strings it dominated the chordal structure in a way that would have been unintended by Warlock. I also picked up on a possible tuning issue early on: when the so-called 'gloom' motive first appears at letter A, the piano takes on the viola line a tenth below the violin, and to my ears it sounded slightly 'out'. It occurred to me that this might be an issue relating to the equal temperament tuning of the piano perhaps?

Maybe it might be going too far to accord the arrangement as veering towards a disastrous misjudgement (I hesitated over labelling it a travesty!). As to the performance itself, on the positive side Scott Robert Shaw's account of the vocal part I found very acceptable and satisfactory. His voice is a pleasing lightish tenor with a slight vibrato (admittedly not too all tastes, but it found favour with me). It is hoped that eventually we might one day hear Mr. Shaw in an original 'Curlew'! As implied above, I felt a great deal of the instrumentation didn't work convincingly, but oddly enough one part where I thought it may have gone seriously wrong actually went rather well. This was in the second verse of the third song (*The Withering of the Boughs*)—the 'witches' ride'—where the tumbling-down scramble near the end is given more definition and welly by the piano's contribution.

The remaining works are Holst's *Hymns from the Rig Veda, Opus 24* and three songs by Frank Bridge. The former were composed between 1907 and 1908 at a time when Holst was much interested in ancient Sanskrit, and indeed the translations of these old philosophical/religious texts were made by Holst himself. Whilst the nine songs are mainly reverential in content, there is one where some humour creeps in, this being the *Song of the Frogs* with its catchy 7/4 time signature. These rarely performed songs deserve to be heard more often, and as with the Butterworth above, the arranged violin and cello additions to the piano accompaniments tend to enhance the original, rather than detract. In particular, for instance, the pedal notes in the piano's lower region, receive beneficial boosts when held on further by the cello.

The CD concludes with three songs by Bridge: *Come to me in my dreams*; *When you are old*; and *Love went a-riding* – settings of Matthew Arnold, Yeats, and Mary E. Coleridge respectively. As with the earlier arrangements, the string parts are discreetly applied with welcome results. The Bridge 'warhorse' *Love went a-riding* is a good one to end any recital, and the notorious, not-exactly-easy, piano part gets a generous fillip from the strings. However, it has to be said that this performance lacked some of the fire and passion, heard for example in that classic rendition from Pears and Britten.

In the few previous reviews I have produced for the Newsletter, at this point I would usually wrap things up with a firm recommendation. As will be surmised perhaps, this CD is something of a curate's egg in its content: good marks go to Scott Robert Shaw for the generally fine quality of his singing, and to the arrangements of the Butterworth, Holst and Bridge songs. The reservations are with the Collins *Sea Song* (minor) and *The Curlew* (major). On balance, a significant plus goes for the positives that outgun the negatives, but committed and perfectionist Warlock aficionados may well be advised to consider skipping *The Curlew* track! ■

Forthcoming Events

Bryn Philpott provides the details

Sunday 12 April 2026, 3.00PM

Benjamin Hulett (tenor) Anna Markland (piano)

Warlock: *Chopcherry* from *Peterisms, Set I*
Rest sweet nymphs; Sleep;
Pretty Ring Time

Gurney: *Desire in Spring*
Down by the Salley Gardens
An epitaph; Black Stitchel

Plus songs by Finzi and Rebecca Clarke

Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP

www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Tel: 020 79352141 – Tickets £18 (concessions £16)

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Tuesday 28 April 2026, 1.00PM

University of Cambridge Showcase

A showcase of some of the exceptional young musicians currently studying at the University of Cambridge.

The programme includes:

Warlock: *The Night*

Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP

www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Tel: 020 79352141 – Tickets £18 (concessions £16)

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Saturday & Sunday 9-10 May 2026

The Peter Warlock Society Annual General Meeting

Holy Trinity and All Saints Church,
Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk.

Meet for lunch at noon – AGM will start at 2pm approx.

See back and inside back cover for full details.

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Monday 18 May 2026, 1.00 PM

Ian Tracey (Organ)

Recital includes:

Warlock: *Capriol* (arr. Tracey)

Plus other works by Bach (JS & CPE), Franck, Elmore, Bourgeois, Dubois

Philharmonic Hall, Hope St, Liverpool L19BP

Tickets £16/£12

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Friday to Monday 22-25 May 2026

The English Music Festival

The English Music Festival has a new venue for 2026 – Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon.

As always there is plenty of interest for lovers of British music.

www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk

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Saturday 13 June 2026 at 1.30PM

and Sunday 14 June 2026 at 5.00PM

Music for Strings

Collegium musicum Schwerin, cond. Volker Reinhold

Warlock: *Capriol*

Three songs by Peter Warlock, arr. Volker Reinhold
Rest sweet nymphs
Have you seen a white lily grow?
Fair and True

Schwerin Castle Church (Saturday), and St. George's Church, Kirch Stück, northern Germany (Sunday).

https://www.collegium-musicum-schwerin.de/

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Sunday 5 July 2026, 7.30PM

Sir Simon Keenlyside (baritone) Malcolm Martineau (piano)

The programme includes:

Warlock: *The Night*

Wigmore Hall, 36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP

www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Tel: 020 79352141 – Tickets £40 £37 £33 £27 £18

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If you know of any concerts or events that include Warlock, or have a Warlock related interest, then please email details to pwsnewsletter@yahoo.com, or phone 07794 699221.

A performance of Peter Warlock's song cycle *The Curlew* is planned in Yorkshire to help raise awareness of this critically endangered bird.

St Thomas a Becket Church, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate HG3 2HB

Sunday 5 July 2026 at 4.00pm

Concert includes:

Peter Warlock: *The Curlew, The Countryman*, The Fairest May, Walking the Woods*, Chopcherry.*

* These songs, arranged for voice, string quartet and instruments, will be premiere performances.

Alex Kyle (tenor); Simeon Wood (flute); Gillian Hart (coranglais/oboe); String Quartet – Chloe Fletcher (violin 1), Alison Williams (violin 2), Fiona Allinson (viola), Helen Dawson (cello).

Tickets: £10 – available from ghartahart@googlemail.com or on the door.

This project has been initiated by Gillian Hart for her masters degree in music performance at Leeds University. Gill lives in Nidderdale, one of the few strongholds now left in England for these beautiful, critically endangered birds. She has organised a concert to promote public awareness about the curlew which will include a performance of Warlock's *The Curlew*, with other more light-hearted songs by Peter Warlock, poetry and readings about the curlew and local folk music from the Yorkshire Dales. Curlew Action and Nidderdale National Landscape will also be giving brief talks about their work and giant curlew puppets Cathy & Heathcliff Curlews will also be making an appearance!

This concert has received sponsorship from the Peter Warlock Society and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, which funds projects to help protect and enhance the Yorkshire Dales landscape and wildlife. The national charity Curlew Action, whose aims are curlew conservation and nature education, has also given valuable assistance as has the Nidderdale National Landscape – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty who work to protect and enhance the beauty of the Nidderdale landscape.

Publications

Songs of Peter Warlock, arranged for Solo Guitar by Adam Soper, is now available from Goodmusic Publishing.

Michael Graves

You may recall that Adam Soper gave a guitar recital, *Lightning Lullaby*, at Holy Trinity and All Saints Church, Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk in 2023 (see Newsletter 113, pp 42-44) which was inspired by the lightning strike that nearly did for Heseltine and his companions (Augustus John, E. J Moeran, John Goss and Barbara Peache) in 1926.

To mark the centenary of this event, our AGM this year will be held in Winterton and Adam will be performing some of his Warlock guitar arrangements, as well as some Warlock inspired improvisations. He will also be giving a talk about his work. (See opposite for more details.)

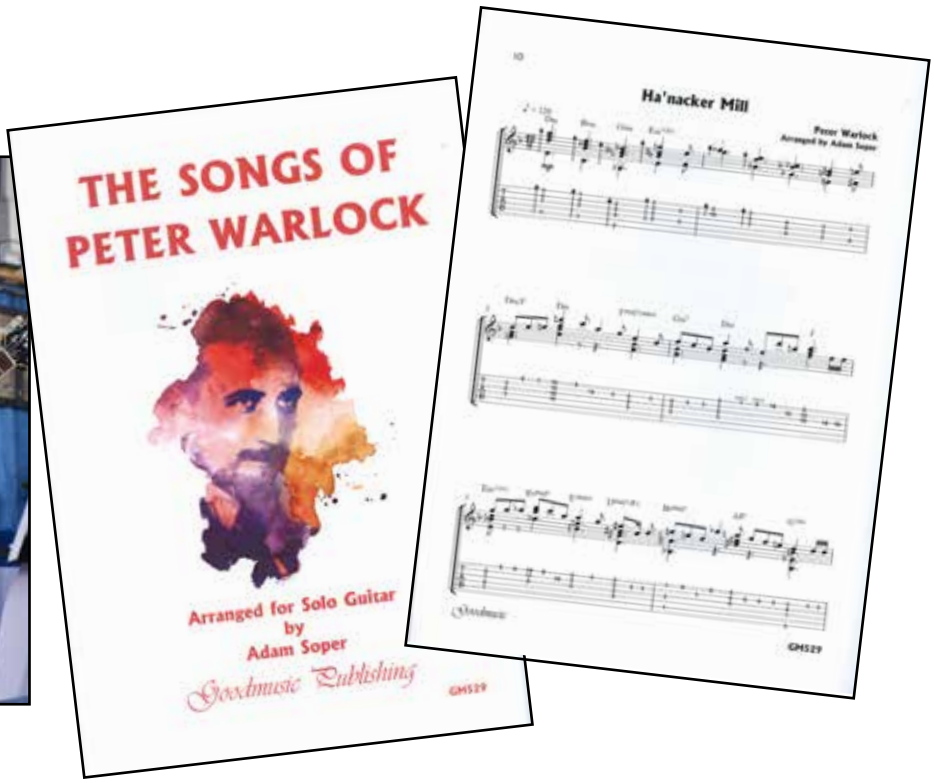
We are delighted to advise that Adam's arrangements of Warlock's songs for solo guitar are now available from Goodmusic Publishing.

The music is laid out in conventional notation and guitar tablature. The volume contents are:

Adam lay ybounden
Bethlehem Down
Ha'nacker Mill
Lullaby
My gostly fader
A Prayer to St Anthony of Padua
The Sick Heart
Yarmouth Fair/the Magpie

There is a detailed introduction with comprehensive notes on the arrangements, notation and tablature.

Adam Soper



The Songs of Peter Warlock **Arranged for Solo Guitar, GM529, is available directly from Goodmusic Publishing, price £6.50 plus p&p, as follows:**

Website: www.goodmusicpublishing.co.uk, Email: sales@goodmusicpublishing.co.uk, Post (please note new address): Goodmusic Publishing Ltd, 5 Kay Brow Yard, Kay Brow, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 9AY, UK Telephone: 01684 773883

Notice of the Peter Warlock Society Annual General Meeting Weekend, 9/10 May 2026.

Holy Trinity and All Saints Church, Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk, NR29 4AW
to mark the centenary of the lightning strike that hit the church in April 1926

Itinerary – Saturday 9 May

12:00 Meet for lunch at the *Fishermans Return*, Winterton-on-Sea.

14:00 Annual General Meeting in Holy Trinity and All Saints Church, Winterton-on-Sea.

15:00 Introductory talk and guitar recital – Adam Soper.

15:50 Short break

16:00 Recital of Warlock songs and Warlock's piano duet music – Giles Davies (baritone), Anthony Ingle (piano), Eleanor Meynell (piano).

16:45 Toast to Peter Warlock for his safe deliverance from the lightning strike of 1926, followed by a complimentary afternoon tea.

18:30 Members free to socialise by arrangement

Itinerary – Sunday 10 May

10:00 Meet for a walk to Somerton Church, or across the sand dunes of Winterton-on-Sea.

12:00 Depart (or meet for a brief lunch).

Clockwise from top left: The Winterton Church organ (although this is unlikely to be the one that Warlock played on the day of the lightning strike in 1926); one of the pinnacles on the tower, now equipped with a lightning conductor!; Somerton Church – possible destination for a walk on Sunday morning; The *Fishermans Return*, where we will meet for lunch on Saturday.

RSVP to Claire Beach – secretary@peterwarlock.org

Notice of the Peter Warlock Society

Annual General Meeting

9 May 2026

Holy Trinity and All Saints Church, Winterton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, NR29 4AW,

to mark the centenary of the lightning strike that hit the church in April 1926

In April 1926, Peter Warlock, E.J. Moeran, John Goss, Augustus John and Barbara Peache, were enjoying a motoring trip in Norfolk. In his Foreword to Gray's memoir, Augustus John describes a startling event that occurred one evening during that trip. "Philip, his girl friend, John Goss and I were visiting the parish church – a fine example of Perpendicular. Philip had just given a rendering of Harry Cox's beautiful but profane song *Down by the Riverside* upon the organ, and we were about to leave the building, when, moved by a perverse whim, I proposed to revive the rites of a more ancient cult by there and then offering up Miss Peache on the alter. My ill-timed pleasantry had hardly been uttered when, with a deafening crash, a thunderbolt struck the building, instantly filling the interior of the church with smoke and dust, and with electric cracklings on every metal surface and the screeches of a distraught charwoman adding to the general confusion, one received a vivid impression of Hell being opened and all its devils loose! Philip with his peculiar beliefs in 'Principalities and Powers' was the most shaken, especially as he was about to mount the tower of which a pinnacle now lay shattered on the ground outside. I believe he composed, at the vicar's request, a hymn tune for the church 'as a thanks-offering for our providential escape'."

The format for the day will be similar to recent AGMs. Members will have an opportunity to meet for lunch, after which the Annual General Meeting will take place. This will be followed by a recital of music by Warlock and Moeran, plus some unusual related music. There will also be a talk, and on Sunday, a walk.

See inside back page for more details.

Photo courtesy of Pixabay