



Chairman's Message

Issue 55

February 2017

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2017 has got off to a hectic start at the Museum. After a shortened closed period over the Christmas holiday we reopened on 3rd January, with the 'Official Reopening' on the 27th, when those who contributed both financially and practically to the refurbishment following the flood were invited to come and see the redecorated rooms. We were delighted that the Mayor of Cheltenham was able to attend and officially declare that the Museum was back in business. Following the formalities John Wright gave a recital on the Holst piano for which we are very grateful. We then decamped to the Sudeley Arms to enjoy some fizz and wonderful canapés. It was a very enjoyable evening and a pleasure to be able to recognise and thank those who had done so much to enable the Museum to be repaired and reopened. It was particularly pleasing to see so many Volunteers at the event and to acknowledge their continuing support through a difficult period.

Another very pleasant event was held on 17th February when the portrait of Isobel Holst, painted by Millicent Woodforde and acquired by auction in April last year, was unveiled in its position in the Music Room. Philippa Tudor, a great supporter of Holst and the Museum, performed the unveiling and we were joined by Cheltenham's MP Alex Chalk, who has taken a keen interest in the Museum and its repair. The event was again well supported by Volunteers and once more involved fizz and canapés, this time served downstairs at the Museum and on a rather more modest scale than the food provided by the Sudeley Arms.

In-between the Events Committee staged a talk at St Luke's Church Hall titled '*Meanwhile back at home...*'. This was a double-act in which Curator Laura Kinnear and RVW Trust Chairman Hugh Cobbe talked about the family lives of Holst and Vaughan Williams respectively. The challenges faced by Holst in his early life following the death of his mother - and then the supportive environment later provided by Isobel and Imogen - provided an interesting contrast to RVW, who came from a well-to-do family and lived in a succession of grand houses. A sizeable audience enjoyed informative and entertaining presentations and we are grateful to Laura and Hugh. See page 4 for what's coming next.

Whilst the repairs to the display rooms have been completed, the water drainage work to reduce the risk of further rainwater damage remains outstanding. This will require scaffolding in the rear courtyard which - it has been suggested - will afford the opportunity to repair the rendering on the rear walls of the building and selected windows, some of which need significant attention. We are currently seeking funding for this work. Inevitably in a building such as the Museum, some repair and maintenance work is always necessary and the search for funds is never-ending.

Something else never-ending is the need to recruit additional Volunteers. We are launching a campaign to try to attract new Volunteers, without whom the Museum literally cannot operate. I would encourage all Friends to try and think of someone they know who might like to volunteer at the Museum or, if you don't already, to think about volunteering yourself.

Following six months of closure in 2016, it is great to see visitors in the Museum again and I am looking forward to a busy and successful 2017.

Steve Wood

New Interpretation at the Museum

Telling Holst's story at 4 Pittville Terrace - now 4 Clarence Road - is more complicated than you might think. Yes, we have the house where he was born in 1874, but the composer left it when he was only 7 years old. This means that his later life - lived in London and Thaxted - is not easily explained in the rooms he inhabited as a child. However, we still need to tell this story, albeit imaginatively and relating to the objects we have in the collection.

Fortunately we have many objects from his later life: notably his piano, pieces of furniture such as his music chest, and chairs he sat on in Thaxted and the St Paul's Girls' School. We also have a wealth of smaller possessions such as his Mozart engraving, wristwatch and even his butter knife! With these disparate items we can piece together Holst the man; and this is where interpretation comes in. Interpretation can mean many things: text panels, labels, interactives, film and audio, as well as things which might not immediately come to mind such as children's trails and dressing up clothes. They all enhance the visitor experience and help to guide them through the story.

Recently, museum professionals have stressed the **importance of experience** as opposed to lots of 'cradle to grave' information; or as someone from SS Great Britain remarked "the chronological trudge". I am sure most museum visitors have been faced with line upon line of dull text which they could have read elsewhere, whether in a book or these days on their phone. In fact, do we even need things like text panels with biographical information when we can access it so easily on Wikipedia?

Well, Yes and No. The approach we have taken with our **new text panels** is to relate the information directly to the objects in the room. The basic information is still there, but we no longer write about his music in great detail. This can be done better by musicologists in books and on the Internet. If visitors want to discover more about his composing methods and development, we have an interactive in the Holst Discovery Space, where manuscripts can be 'turned' digitally as the music plays. It has become an experience rather than a chronological trudge through his compositions.

The 3 new text panels will be unveiled in the Music Room in April. This is just the start of a programme of new interpretation throughout the house, which will focus on the life of the house when Holst was a child as well. We envisage not just text, but things such as 'fake food' in the basement and Regency Room. So that, maybe, the visitors can imagine the past inhabitants of 4 Pittville Terrace taking tea, their early 19th century tea cups set out with delicate sandwiches; or perhaps the remains of the von Holst's dinner emptied into the pig swill bucket by the maid in the Scullery.

We are looking forward to visitor responses to these new ways of telling the story of Holst's house.

Laura Kinnear

Farewell

The Holst Birthplace Trust regrets to announce the passing of 3 Friends who have variously supported the Museum over the years. Some thoughts from Sue Adlard, Marjorie Imlah and Graham Lockwood:

Tony Checkfield was instrumental in starting the Friends group which supported the Museum in a number of ways: fundraising, publicity, staging events such as music workshops, and conceiving the idea of the Gustav Holst Way. However, he would probably best like to be remembered for negotiating with the Borough Council on the design and placement of brown tourist signs in the town centre.

Ann Hookey will be synonymous with all things musical in Cheltenham. She carried her knowledge and love of classical music very lightly and was a loyal and supportive friend to the Museum where she was a long-standing and enthusiastic Volunteer.

Roger Jones was well known in the local community for his interests in local history, music and drama. He led guided walking tours around the town and wherever possible included reference to Holst and the Birthplace Museum where he was a Friend for several years. His concert reviews for the local press invariably included our annual Birthday Concert.

Gloucestershire's Curriculum Fair

The 'final hurrah' of the Museum's Arts Council-funded Resilience Project will be a Curriculum Fair, which although a Holst Birthplace Museum event, will be hosted by Nature in Art in Gloucester on **22nd April (10am - 3pm)**. The three strands of the project have been to redesign the Museum's website, improve Volunteer recruitment and support, and redevelop the Museum's Learning Programme.

The **New Curriculum for Primary Schools** was first published in September 2013. The Primary History Curriculum focuses on a period ending with 1066 although allows the study of local people, places and events of significance outside that period, as well as an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066. This is a lifeline for museums and heritage sites whose subject matter is firmly placed post 1066.

Some teachers are concerned that the National Curriculum focuses on the learning of facts rather than the acquiring of skills needed for independent learning. Subjects such as Art and Design are non-statutory and yet apart from the obvious personal development encouraged by creative subjects, pupils may have a greater chance of employment in the creative industries than in any other. In fact, according to new official statistics (*Creative Industries 2016: Focus on Employment*) the creative economy added new jobs at more than twice the UK economy average.

Schools are looking for opportunities for pupils to explore their **creativity** and also to gain **skills for independent learning**. A cross-curricular approach where pupils are learning about topics through more than one subject is a way of addressing the former issue. Good teaching in History thrives on investigation and enquiry and this can help to address the latter.

Gloucestershire has a rich heritage and its museums and heritage sites have a record of successful, collaborative partnerships. The Fair will capitalise on this to enable our organisations to showcase not only how to teach History well but also Gloucestershire's heritage as a rich cross-curricular resource.

Simon Trapnell of **Nature in Art** has kindly offered its Education Centre free of charge as the venue for the Fair. Attendees and their families will be given free admission to both the magnificent Georgian mansion, which houses the galleries dedicated to art inspired by nature, and its attractive grounds. Thirteen stands will showcase Gloucestershire's museums and heritage sites. Slimbridge Wetland Centre will provide activities for children in a marquee. Drop-in sessions for teachers will show how heritage learning resources can answer their curriculum needs in a fun and exciting way.

Sara Salvidge

Britten-Pears Library Grant

Our thanks to regular contributor Raymond Head who has passed on the following from **Judith Ratcliffe**, an archivist at the Britten-Pears Library in Aldeburgh:

"We have this year received a National Cataloguing Grant to catalogue our Holst collections. The project will be completed in March 2017 and the completed catalogue and many digital resources will be made available then."

Editor

Change to Friends' Benefits

The National Trust is in the process of taking over the running of the **Elgar Birthplace Museum** near Worcester for the next five years. It will reopen in the spring of this year, but until further notice we will regard the reciprocal admission we share with the Elgar as suspended. This concession was one free entry for one paying admission. We will look into renegotiating this arrangement if at all possible.

Tom Clarke

Events

Friday 7th April, 7.30pm at Bishop's Cleeve Tithe Barn: 'Lovers' Season'. An evening of Medieval Music by Waites of Gloucester

Waites are modelled on a band of musicians run by the City in the 16th and 17th centuries. They will give us their instrumental version of Renaissance songs on traditional instruments such as the sackbutt, hurdy gurdy, crumhorn and gemshornes. We can look forward to an entertaining evening!

Saturday 24th June: Guided Walk along the Gustav Holst Way

Following the success of our 2015 walk - and Laura & Sara's epic trek along the full length for 'Help Holst' - we will be tackling another stretch of the Holst Way. Further details will be provided shortly.

August or September: Car Boot Sale

Last year's sale was both enjoyable and lucrative so we are having another go. In the meantime please don't discard those unwanted items!

Saturday 23rd September, 7.30pm at All Saints' Church: The Birthday Concert: The Holst Singers
This is a date for your diary. Details of the concert will be provided in the next Newsletter.

Sue Walker

Membership of the Friends

We welcome new members **Andrew & Kate Morgan, Philip & Annie Daws** and **Daniel Jaffe**, who is a writer on Holst's music. Due to infirmity **Sir Peter & Lady Marychurch** have ended their association with the Museum and we thank them for their long-standing support.

We are grateful to those members who topped up their subscriptions once it was realised they had paid at the old rate. If you pay by Standing Order, do double check before 1 October to ensure your bank remits to us the correct amount as detailed below.

If you are not already a subscribing Friend of the Trust, please do consider joining and also tell your friends. Not only would you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum, but you would enjoy many other benefits. The Museum leaflet contains an application form.

Annual Membership rates are:

Single £20, Joint/Family £30, Young £5, Single Benefactor £60, Joint/Family Benefactor £100, Single Life £300, Joint Life £400, Gift Membership £20.

For further details email membership@holstmuseum.org.uk or contact Tom Clarke on 01242 227720.

If you would like to become a **Volunteer** at the Museum, and thus a Volunteer Friend, please contact the Learning Coordinator, Sara Salvidge, at the Museum (see below left for contact details).

We would like to be able to deliver this newsletter exclusively by email where possible, which would save us both postage costs and effort. If **any readers** (whether already on our mailing list or not) would like to take up this option, please email membership@holstmuseum.org.uk.

Tom Clarke



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Registered Charity No. 1078599

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