



AGS News

11 Summer 2009



Welcome to the latest edition of AGS News, the forum of The Armstrong Gibbs Society, which covers events, people and music.

Walter de la Mare Society

Following contacts made at a concert in November 2008, the Armstrong Gibbs Society has been made an honorary member of the Walter de la Mare Society. The Secretary now receives copies of the magazine and newsletter at regular intervals and reciprocates by sending a copy of the Armstrong Gibbs Society newsletter.

Angela Aries



Memory Lane

From the Vice-President of the Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama:

My memories of Armstrong Gibbs begin with happy days at Chelmsford County High School where Miss Phyllis Wright was Head of Music. I sang in the Choir, my first choral experience, and I still have a copy of *Except the Lord build the house*, a three part song for female voices by Armstrong Gibbs which we performed at the 1952 Commemoration Service in Chelmsford Cathedral. Miss Wright was accompanist of Danbury Choral Society and many were the tales she told us of the joys of choir practices under the baton of Armstrong Gibbs. I had piano lessons with a colleague of Phyllis Wright and recall the challenge of trying to play the piano part of Armstrong Gibbs' *Concertino for Piano and String Orchestra*. Many years later I was given the honour of playing the organ for Phyllis Wright's funeral at Chelmsford Crematorium. Before the Service I played a version of *A Song of Shadows* in order to pay tribute to her long association with Armstrong Gibbs.

Because of these memories I was particularly pleased that the Armstrong Gibbs Society generously decided to award cash prizes for a special class in the Singing Section of the Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama. Arrangements are now in hand for the 2009 Festival which will take place in November. We hope that several singers will take advantage of this encouragement to perform the delightful songs by Armstrong Gibbs.

Marjorie Nunn

Please note that the closing date for this year's festival is 25th September. Details from James Dace & Son 01245 352133, www.JamesDace.co.uk

An evacuee writes:(1)

In September 1939 I was an evacuee from Tottenham North London to Little Baddow in Essex.

We were sitting in the school playground when a distinctive looking gentleman arrived.

He spoke to our teacher and Jean Parker and myself were selected to go with him. I was 11 years old and very frightened: I had not been away from my parents before. We got into the back of a large car, not knowing where we were going; the gentleman was Dr Armstrong Gibbs. We were taken to his house where Mrs Gibbs met us. We were made very welcome and I count myself very fortunate to have stayed at 'Crossings' their home. It was a beautiful house with a very long garden reaching down to Lingwood Common, a field on one side of the garden housed Ann's pony and a field on the other side was full of daffodils. Ann was at Boarding School, I went into the field to feed the pony one day, and inadvertently left the gate open, the pony trotted straight across the tennis court, which left deep hoof marks. I had to go to the study to explain to Dr Gibbs what I had done, I was terrified, but Dr Gibbs was very understanding.

The first Sunday we were there we went to Danbury church with Mrs Gibbs and David who was home on leave. David used his small sports car; Mrs Gibbs, Jean and I walked. Whilst we were in church War was declared and the Vicar advised the congregation to return home as soon as possible. Mrs Gibbs sat next to David in the car, Jean and I sat on the hood with Mrs Gibbs holding on to our legs so that we did not fall off.

Dr Gibbs conducted the choir at Danbury church, every Friday evening the choristers came to the house to rehearse the Hymns for the following Sunday, it was lovely to listen to them.

Doreen Gray



First performance of the Ballade in D flat

At the December meeting of the Great Baddow & Galleywood U3A, Armstrong Gibbs' *Ballade in D flat for solo piano* received its 1st public performance, given by Lorna Burroughs, who said that, having played in Gibbs' last concert in 1960 shortly before he died, she was especially interested to hear that a hitherto unknown manuscript had been received by the A G society, of which she is a member.

A computerised copy of the Ballade was made by Michael Pilkington and given to Lorna. Before playing she asked the audience for comments on the music which she would then pass on, via the Society, to Gibbs' surviving daughter, Mrs Ann Rust, & his grandchildren. The audience were clearly very pleased with the music, even the middle section which to Lorna had seemed controversial, was seen as part of the whole; the left hand, marked Pesante & Accented, providing a contrast to the right hand which, based on the flowing opening theme, gave continuity to the whole. Thank You to Armstrong Gibbs --- Are there any more manuscripts lying undiscovered?

Lorna Burroughs

From the Records

In a letter to her daughter in April 1950, Honor Gibbs describes the festival at Oundle:

"So much of humour and interest happened at Oundle. I longed to have time to write you a long account – from the old lady of 82 who had been Queen Mary's Lady in Waiting and a good old battleaxe too who gave away the prizes with great vigour and aplomb – to the old granny of nearly the same age who sang with her contemporaries in the WI choir; and the excellent male choir of Latvian d.ps from Corby steel works who won a cup amid great applause and cheering and gave us an encore in their own language. All dressed alike in smart navy suits provided by the British government."

"And then the church choirs – whose competition took part in the really lovely old church – and

Dad's opening speech in which he said he wished all choirs could be judged in the churches for music was for the greater glory of God."

"Then there was the enthusiastic and v. stout secretary who came running to greet us, tripped and fell heavily – I rushed to help her up – 'all right dear, always doing it – never hurt. I bounce – so beautifully fat.'"



NEWS AND VIEWS

2008

Walter de la Mare in Song

Three of the Trustees of the Armstrong Gibbs Society attended this concert last year. It made a delightful evening at St Olave's Church in London on 19th November 2008, with superb singing by Adèle Paxton (soprano) and Korby Myrick (mezzo-soprano), who were accompanied sensitively on the piano by Richard Hereld. Gibbs' songs were well represented in the recital.

First performance

Lorna Burroughs gave the first performance of Gibbs' Ballade in D flat at Galleywood U3A in December.

2010 Celebrations

7th February 2010

Armstrong Gibbs event at the Budworth Hall Ongar

8th May 2010

Armstrong Gibbs Society AGM

9th May 2010

Choral Evensong to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death

12th May 2010

Fiftieth anniversary of the death of Armstrong Gibbs

10th -12th September 2010

Second Armstrong Gibbs music festival

For regular updates on events please visit the Armstrong Gibbs website at www.armstronggibbs.com

See Next Issue for **CAG Soundbites**, **From the Records**, **Memory Lane**, and **News and Views**. Please send contributions to the editor:

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