

perspectives

CHELTENHAM ARTS CULTURE

Cheltenham Arts Council: awards_funding_publicity_events listings

October 2022 – January 2023

*Choirs • What's new at The Wilson • Short Story
New Audio Plays • Leckhampton Local History*

SRI LANKA

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Please contact editor@cheltenhamartscouncil.co.uk for more information.

Submissions must be with us by the following dates for consideration

for the next issue:

End of November deadline for Feb/May Issue

End of March deadline for June/Sept Issue

End of July deadline for Oct/Jan Issue

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COCONUT TREE
CHELTENHAM PAINT FESTIVAL 2022

*Perspectives is produced three times a year.
The next issue will span February - May 2023.*

**SUBMISSION (ADS AND EVENTS) MUST BE WITH US BY THE END OF NOVEMBER
FOR CONSIDERATION FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. PLEASE EMAIL EVENT DETAILS TO
PERSPECTIVES.LISTINGS@GMAIL.COM**



PERSPECTIVES TEAM

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LISTINGS ALICE HODSDON ART CONSULTANT NIKI WHITFIELD

Dear Readers

Welcome to the Autumn / Winter edition of Perspectives. I hope you have had a great summer break despite (or perhaps because of) the heatwaves and are enjoying the return to rehearsals, gatherings, concerts, exhibitions and the like.

For me, the summer has been a mixed bag, holding both delight at the long evenings and sunshine and despair at the state of things in the world. One of the things that puts life back on a more even keel for me is music, so I am really looking forward to getting back to singing with my choir. The positive effects of music and the arts in general on mental health are often overlooked, but each and every one of CAC's 50-odd organisations is doing sterling work in ensuring that we are not only living but thriving.

This edition is a bumper one, so pull up an armchair and settle in for a good read! We have news about new audio plays from Lou Beckett & David Elder of Parrot Productions, a progress report about a concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams (RVW150), and the latest from two youth choirs –the Gloucestershire Boys' Choir

(CAC's newest member society), and Cheltenham Children's Choir. We also have two "Meet the Members" articles from Cheltenham Film Society and Leckhampton Local History Society.

CAC is always keen to support young people in their artistic endeavours, and we have two articles in this issue that show how grants from the Trafford Memorial Fund have been used for just this purpose. All this, plus news from Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra, Cheltenham Poetry Society, the Christian Arts Festival, Gotherington Singers, the Cheltenham Trust and a short story by Phil Jones – what a variety!

As this edition goes to press, we are still looking for an editor to take over from me after the next issue of Perspectives. It's not an onerous job, it requires only basic IT skills, and is fun to do, so do get in touch with me if you would like more information.

Rachel Tedd

PERSPECTIVES EDITOR

editor@cheltenhamartscouncil.co.uk

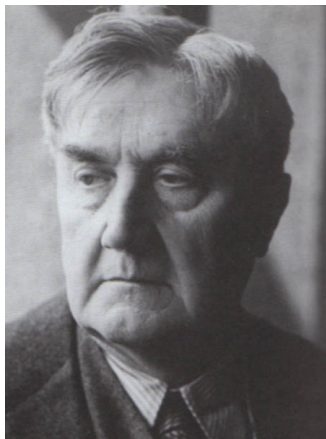
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS 150TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT

SUPPORTED BY THE TRAFFORD MEMORIAL FUND

Ever since I can remember, the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams has been central to my personal love of music.

One of the first pieces of his that I really connected with was his Oboe Concerto (the oboe was my first-study instrument at University), and alongside that one of his most-loved works, 'Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis'. I had the pleasure of playing Cor Anglais in a performance of the 'London' Symphony, as well as the English Folk Songs Suite and the evocative 'Ten Blake Songs' for oboe and voice. I was also inspired by my Uncle, a long-serving violinist in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra who played on all of Vernon Handley's seminal recordings of RVW's orchestral works. And that's all before we get to his choral output!

Earlier this year I was thinking about how I could mark Vaughan Williams's 150th birthday. I have held a special regard for 'Serenade to Music' ever since I first sang it in my early twenties, and have been fortunate to have performed it in various capacities over the years. I even share a birthday with the work, first performed in the Royal Albert Hall on 5th October 1938 (the date, not the year!). The circumstances of this performance were a celebration of Sir Henry Wood, marking 50 years of being at the forefront of music in our country. The work is written for sixteen solo voices and orchestra. Vaughan Williams wrote for sixteen specific voices, superstars of their day. My idea was to select sixteen singers all with links to Gloucestershire, and for each of them to take a small solo part as well as singing together in chorus at various points in the work.



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Vaughan Williams realised early on that for repeat performances of the 'Serenade' he would need to compromise on this initial framework, something of which he was continually aware in his music. He made various reductions from the original solo voices and full orchestra to solo piano and choir with four soloists, strings and piano, and various other permutations. A group I have the pleasure of working with through my teaching is the Carducci Quartet, so it made perfect sense to put the sixteen voices with this premier string quartet, and piano. Following some research, I discovered an authorised arrangement by Elizabeth Bowden, owner of Nymet Music Publications in Devon, that suited the forces available, and another piece of the jigsaw fell into place.

This seed of an idea then grew and is, at the time of writing, starting to blossom. Selecting a group of some of the 'best singers in Gloucestershire' threw up some obvious choices, and James Gilchrist was one such choice. With the Carducci Quartet



BEN SAWYER

and Cheltenham-based pianist James Willshire on board, it made perfect sense to ask James to sing, and put Vaughan Williams's song cycle 'On Wenlock Edge' alongside the 'Serenade'.

The question of venue was also one that needed addressing early on. The obvious choice for a 'chamber' performance was the Pittville Pump Rooms, and as fortune would have it, on Wednesday 12th October, Vaughan Williams's birthday itself, they were available.

The programme has continued to take shape: 'Five Mystical Songs' in Vaughan Williams's own version for choir, piano, string quartet and baritone soloist Quentin Hayes will conclude the concert. The consort of singers, now with the name 'Cheltenham Chamber Choir', will sing the rarely performed 'Sun, Moon, Stars and Man' for unison voices and orchestra (piano in this case). Alongside that, they will sing 'Three Elizabethan Part Songs' and 'A Hymne to Christ' by Imogen Holst, one time pupil of Vaughan Williams. The Carducci Quartet will play 'Poem' by Rebecca Clarke, who also worked with RVW in her formative years.

With an idea in place, as well as singers and instrumentalists, the job is now to fill the Pump Room with an audience. One aspect of the concert not mentioned thus far is that 'On Wenlock Edge' is currently a set work for A Level Music, so I am in the process of contacting schools to enable young musicians to attend the concert as well as observe an open rehearsal of the piece.

I am grateful to Alexis Paterson, Executive Director of the Three Choirs Festivals, for her practical help in putting together the concert. It has also led to a 'Come and Sing' event to be held at St. Mary de Crypt in Gloucester on Thursday 13th October as a part of two days of celebrations across the county. The 'Come and Sing' event will run between 11am and 5pm and singers will work through the 'Five Mystical Songs' and 'Sun, Moon, Stars and Man' as well as Tallis's 'Tune Three', the inspiration for the 'Fantasia'. This event is open to all, so please consider yourself invited.

Tickets for both events are available on the Three Choirs website: <https://www.3choirs.org/celebrate-vaughan-williams-150th-birthday-with-us>

You can also buy tickets for the Birthday concert here: <https://www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk/event/vaughan-williams-150th-birthday-concert-405357/>

I am enormously grateful to the Cheltenham Arts Council for their financial support through the Trafford Memorial Fund.

Ben Sawyer
Conductor, Countertenor and Educator

THE MAN IN THE GREY COAT

A NEW THRILLER FROM PARROT PRODUCTIONS

Although Cheltenham is not usually associated with the thriller genre, a new audio play by Parrot Productions found inspiration in the real-life story of the poet Cecil Day-Lewis, who, during the 1930s, while working as a master at Cheltenham College, was suspected of being an active member of the Communist Party.



The play, called *The Man in the Grey Coat*, is written and directed by David Elder. The three characters - Cecil, Mary (Cecil's wife), and Charlie (a police-man assigned on the secret surveillance mission to monitor Cecil) - are played by Gloucestershire-based actors James Reynard, Claire Tucker and Edward Derbyshire respectively. Will this be the big career breakthrough Charlie's been looking for? And will Cecil be tempted to start some sort of revolutionary activity in the town?

Visit

[www.https://davidelder.net/podcasts](https://davidelder.net/podcasts)

The play was produced to coincide with this year's Heritage Open Day events on 9-18 September. It can be freely accessed via Spotify and Apple podcast services and also via the following web sites: Cheltenham Civic Society (see <https://cheltcivicsoc.org/events/heritage-open-days/>); and David Elder (see <https://davidelder.net/podcasts>).

Parrot Productions are grateful to the following: Cheltenham Arts Council for their generous financial support; Sarah Harvey of Art Works for designing the publicity poster; The Cotswold Listener for the use of their recording studio; and David Holland for the sound production.

CHELTENHAM CHILDREN'S CHOIR

A SUMMER JUBILEE CELEBRATION, SUNDAY 3RD JULY 2022

To introduce ourselves... Cheltenham Children's Choir (CCC) is an open-to-all children's community choir, who aim to offer singing opportunities to all children and young people in a friendly, welcoming environment.

We run weekly sessions, learn songs, fun vocal warmups and games and aim to promote positive wellbeing through the joy of music! Our choirs develop a love of singing and build self-confidence, whilst creating magical memories such as our summer concert, held on Sunday 3rd July 2022 at the beautiful Pittville Pump Room. These important 'days to remember' are so valuable and it is safe to say we had a wonderful day!

Sunday 3rd July was a hot summer day. The excitement through the morning rehearsals was fantastic – our amazing parent volunteers did a brilliant job, and we worked closely with Pittville Pump Rooms and our sound technician to ensure that the event ran smoothly – thank you! Our special guests this year were Musicality Community Choir and Gloucestershire Music's Gloucestershire Youth Wind Orchestra (who have just completed a tour of Palencia, Spain). The additional performances made for a sensational afternoon of music.



LITTLE LYRICS CHOIR AT THE PUMP ROOM, SUMMER 2022



VOCALISE CHOIR, AT THE PUMP ROOM, SUMMER 2022

Once the concert was over, we enjoyed a community picnic in the park, with outdoor games, live music (by our young people) and Pimm's for the parents.

Thank you so much to Cheltenham Arts Council for their kind support of our Jubilee Celebration, for which we are continually grateful. We are now looking forward to the autumn term at choir, and our next musical adventure!

MEET THE MEMBERS

CHELTENHAM FILM SOCIETY

Would you like to see recent, high quality, predominantly foreign language films shown live in Cheltenham?

You might want to join Cheltenham Film Society (CFS). We offer a programme of 18 films shown at Dean Close School (The Bacon) at 19.45 on Tuesdays with a big screen with excellent sound. In addition, you will be able to see six specially selected on-line films FREE and be entitled to attend a FREE pre-Xmas wine and cheese

evening AND make new friends. All this for just £36.

Limited new full season memberships are available now. The first film will be shown on September 13. Please see our website for further details: The best of foreign-language and independent cinema in Gloucestershire (cheltenhamfilmsociety.com) and for details of how to join online.



<https://cheltenhamfilmsociety.com>



THE WORK OF
URSULA JEAKINS -
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GUILD OF CRAFTSMEN
AT GARDENS
GALLERY DURING
THE CHELTENHAM
LITERATURE FESTIVAL

CHELTENHAM ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS

ENABLING YOUNG TALENT TO ATTEND PRESTIGIOUS CHOIR COURSES

From the age of eleven I have been a member of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain (NYCGB) community, working my way up from National Youth Girls' Choir to Training Choir when I was 16, and finally the National Youth Choir, which I joined in September 2021.

I have absolutely loved my time in this organisation, but the courses with the prestigious National Youth Choir (NYC) have been particularly beneficial for my social skills and musicianship.



GRACE PERFORMING WITH THE SWINGLES

The second programme was Christmas carols at the Royal Albert Hall in London to celebrate its 150th anniversary. I had previously sung in this venue with the National Youth Girls' Choir, however there was nothing quite like singing Christmas carols alongside the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

In April, I attended my first residential course with NYC and had the joy of singing a variety of works including 'Earth Song' by Rachel Portman and 'Until It's Gone', a new commission written by The Swingles specifically for NYC. The choir performed alongside The Swingles at Woolwich Works in London, and it was one of the most rewarding concerts I have ever had the chance to perform in.

I am very much looking forward to the second residential this year which will take place in North Yorkshire, as I want to continue developing my musical skills and spending time with other like-minded young people.

Grace Towle, 19



GRACE TOWLE - CONCERT AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

The first programme of the academic year was a three day recording session, giving us the opportunity to record a number of choral pieces written by composers from the NYCGB Young Composers programme.

CHELTENHAM ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS

A WELCOME RETURN FOR THE GOTHERINGTON SINGERS

Gotherington Singers were very grateful to the Cheltenham Arts Council for our grant allocation last year. Having returned to singing together again in September, the grant enabled us to hold our Christmas Concert in St. Michaels & All Angels, Bishops Cleeve.

We were joined by two young musicians - Alex Fishburn was our accompanist and played a solo on the organ, and Judith Scholes, a flautist, performed several

pieces and also sang with the choir. Our musical director Maddie Kirby had chosen some lovely pieces which were well received by our audience.

The choir will be resuming rehearsals on 12 September at Gotherington Village Hall at 7.45 pm - new members welcome.

Sally Newbury, Secretary Gotherington Singers, 01242 317276, email sall.newbury@gmail.com.



CHELTENHAM POETS' AWAYDAY

A CREATIVE RETREAT FOR CHELTENHAM POETRY SOCIETY

Cheltenham Poetry Society members and associates were very pleased to be able to attend a full-day writing retreat at Dumbleton Hall near the Glos/Worcs border in mid-May.

This was the Society's eighth Awayday, and followed a hiatus since May 2019. CPS Chairman Roger Turner and Sharon Larkin co-led the event, sharing the workshops on the theme of the Four Elements, with projected images, recordings of poems and wordlists to stimulate ideas for new poems.

All the poets ended the day with promising draft poems and will now be working further towards an anthology for publication later in the year. The poets attending agreed that it was good to be back 'writing away' at the superb venue.

As well as the workshops, the poets enjoyed lunch and refreshments at the Hall, and the opportunity for a walk round the splendid grounds. A provisional booking for May 2023 has already been made.

Sharon Larkin



AWAYDAY POETS, LEFT TO RIGHT: GILL GARRETT, PENELOPE HOWARTH, CHRISTINE GRIFFIN, IRIS ANNE LEWIS, ANNIE ELLIS, FRANCES MARCH, DAVID ASHBEE, MICHAEL NEWMAN, ALICE ROSS, ROBIN GILBERT, PENNY LAMPOR, SHEILA SPENCE, GILL WYATT, ROGER TURNER, CATHERINE BAKER, BELINDA RIMMER AND SHARON LARKIN. KATHRYN ALDERMAN, NOT IN THE PHOTO, ALSO ATTENDED THE AWAYDAY.

WHAT'S CHANGED AT THE WILSON?

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE CHELTENHAM TRUST

The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum re-opened on 23 July 2022 with a busy two-day programme of live music, dance, workshops, talks, children's activities, exhibitions and refurbished galleries for all the community to enjoy.

The museum collection upstairs makes its appearance downstairs through life-size faithful reproductions of images and objects throughout the new cafe spaces, bringing the collection to life. The pieces engage visitors with a wealth of historical figures and narratives from Cheltenham and across the region including Edward Wilson and Mr Whittern, the well-known Cheltenham grocer.

is designed to inspire story-telling and creative expression; younger visitors have taken part in music, drawing, puppetry workshops and performances, and explored some of the toys in the museum's collection.

The Wilson has been hosting events and activities for everyone and the Creative Explorers sessions have been a real hit. There are more creative activities coming for all ages this autumn, so follow us on Facebook and Instagram (see below) to keep up with what's happening, or sign up to our database to have information sent directly to your inbox. You can do this at www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/sign-up/



The vibrant Wilson Kitchen arts café, on the ground floor, showcases local producers and provides zoned areas to meet, socialise and even work. At the weekends, enjoy the popular Honeymoon Swing Band, The Wilson's first resident band, appearing monthly.

The new WOW space for the under-fives is proving popular with families. The space

National Museums Scotland's nationally acclaimed touring exhibition, Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk has prompted conversation about how bodies are depicted in fashion and how attitudes are changing rapidly, particularly through today's highly visual world of social media. Body Beautiful features costumes from leading designers including Jean Paul Gaultier and Vivienne Westwood, who have designed fabulous clothing for people of



all ages, shapes and sizes.

Young people in Cheltenham and Gloucester helped challenge the damage fast fashion can do to our confidence and to our environment by reworking discarded denim clothes destined for landfill into creative new designs. The “Break the Cycle” exhibition showcased the young people’s work in the new Sir Charles Irving Community Art Gallery, including students from National Star College, and Gloucestershire Carers.

The refurbishment has included the creation of new artists’ studios on the third floor. The first artists are in situ as part of the We Are Creators programme to support local creatives through studios, networking, sharing skills and experience, and exhibition - an interactive space



dedicated to displaying the artists’ work in progress with opportunities to try out some of their techniques. The resident artists pay nothing for their place for 12 months, and in return they share their practice with visitors and the community through demonstrations, workshops and creative events. Visit our website to find out more www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/we-are-creators/

The collection is on display in newly designed exhibitions in the Open Archive, Arts and Crafts and Friends Gallery which have been central to this first phase of redevelopment. Phase two is underway with a fundraising effort to refurbish and redisplay the Victorian wing so the collections can be housed and exhibited safely, and visitors welcomed to a fully accessible museum space that meets modern standards.

Cheltenham Untold, the new exhibition on the first floor, invites visitors to comment and to vote on the artwork and objects they would like to see on display revealing the forgotten stories and characters of Cheltenham throughout history.

We look forward to welcoming you. The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum is open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 6pm and entry is free.

  [thewilsonchelt](https://www.facebook.com/thewilsonchelt)

LISTINGS: EVENTS DIRECTORY JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2021

VISUAL ARTS

Gothic Window Decorations, Tue 25 Oct, 11am-3pm, Holst Victorian House, children's craft activity, holstvictorianhouse.org.uk
Wreath Making, Sun 11 Dec, Holst Victorian House, details tbc, holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

THE GARDENS GALLERY, MONTPPELLIER GARDENS:
Opening times vary.

The Gloucestershire Guild, Fri 7- Sun 16 Oct, 10am-6pm (8pm Fri/Sat), contemporary crafts, exhibited as part of the Literature Festival
Circle of Friends, Wed 26 Oct- Tue 1 Nov, 10am-5.30pm, six Cheltenham artists, various subjects and styles

Sophie Beckett, Wed 2- Tue 8 Nov, CT Scan Art
Abigail Waddell, Wed 9- Tue 15 Nov
Wendy McKenzie & Jilly Cobbe: Exploring Nature, Wed 16- Tue 22 Nov
Carrie Lister, Wed 23- Tue 29 Nov
Rosemary Frith, Wed 30 Nov- Tue 6 Dec



ABIGAIL WADDELL APPEARING AT THE GARDENS GALLERY

Jill Hamilton & Molly Abbott: Inspired by Blue, Wed 7- Tue 13 Dec
Barbara Skingle: Angels, Wed 14- Tue 20 Dec

MUSIC

Cheltenham Choral Society Rehearsals, Wednesdays, 7.30-9.30pm, St Andrew's Church, Montpellier, a friendly, amateur choir with a long-standing reputation for providing a top-quality experience for both audiences and singers. Further details on the choir and its activities:

cheltchoral.org.uk/
Cleeve Harmony A Cappella Chorus Rehearsals, Wednesdays, 7.30-10pm, Bishop's Cleeve Tithe Barn, new members welcome! See cleeve-harmony.org.uk or enquiries to md@cleeve-harmony.org.uk
Musica Vera rehearsals, Wednesdays, 7.30-9.30pm, St Mary's Prestbury, we have vacancies in all voice parts. Please contact the secretary, Lesley Nicholls, 01242 222853 or email nicholls186@yahoo.com. See musicavera.org

Cheltenham Music Festival Society Lunchtime Concerts, Fridays, 1pm, free, after five glorious years at Chapel Arts, CMFS lunchtime concerts will resume at Pittville Pump Room from October, further details tba

Music in a Victorian House with Holst, Sun 2 Oct, 2-3pm & 5-6pm, Holst Victorian House, music and a short talk by Gary Branch and Laura Kinnear, inc. refreshments, tickets on sale soon, holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

Cheltenham Music Society: Guy Johnston (cello) & Tom Poster (piano), Thu 6 Oct, 7.30pm, Pittville Pump Room, two wonderful musicians open the Cheltenham Chamber Music season. Beethoven: Variations on "See the conquering hero comes" from Handel's Judas Maccabeus, Poulenc: Sonata for cello and piano, Joseph Phibbs: Cello Sonata (2021), Brahms: Cello Sonata no.2 in F major op.99. cheltmusicsoc.co.uk

Holst Victorian House Recital, Wed 12 Oct, recital on Holst's piano to celebrate RVW150 - Ralph Vaughan Williams' 150th birthday, holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

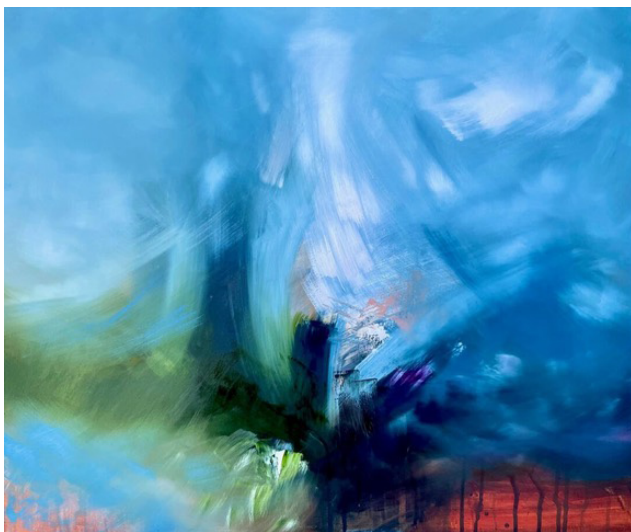
Cheltenham Opera Society, Handel: Ottone, Agrippina, Tamerlano, Thu 20, Fri 21, Sat 22 Oct, 7.30pm, Festival Theatre, Malvern, pre-performance talks at 6.30 or supper beforehand. Non-members welcome at additional cost of £5, see cheltenhamoperasociety.org.uk

Cheltenham Bach Choir, Sat 29 Oct, 7.30pm, Tewkesbury Abbey, Mozart: Requiem, Ola Gjeilo: Sunrise Mass, with the Göttinger Stadtkantorei and the Regency Sinfonia, directed by David Crown and Bernd Eberhardt

Cheltenham Philharmonic Orchestra: A Nordic Autumn, Sun 6 Nov, 3pm, Pittville Pump Room, Grieg: Overture 'In Autumn', Sibelius: Violin Concerto, soloist Diana Galvydyte, Nielsen: Symphony no.3. Tickets 01242 528764 or cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk

The Oriel Singers: Remembrance, Sat 12 Nov, 6pm, Bethesda Methodist Church

Cheltenham Choral Society, Sat 12 Nov, 7.30pm, St Philip and St James, Leckhampton, Rossini: Petite Messe solonnelle, Schubert: Mass in G



JESSICA BLEASBY, MEMBER OF CHELTENHAM OPEN STUDIOS

Cheltenham Music Society: Elias String Quartet, Tue 15 Nov, 7.30pm, Pittville Pump Room, former BBC3 New Generation Artists and one of the most intense and vibrant quartets of their generation. Haydn: String Quartet in F sharp minor op.50 no.4, Florence Price: String Quartet no.2 in A minor, Beethoven: String Quartet in E minor op.59 No.2 "Razumovsky". cheltmusicsoc.co.uk

Musica Vera Autumn Concert, Sat 19 Nov, 7.30pm, £12, NHS £9, children £6, St Mary's Prestbury, come with us as we fly "on the wings of a dove" and sing more great anthems from German composers Bach, Brahms, Bruckner, Handel and Mendelssohn. Tickets at the door, from members of the choir or from Cheltenham Playhouse, musicavera.org

Cheltenham Bach Choir: Come and Sing, Sat 26 Nov, 10am, Holy Apostles Church, Charlton Kings, English Anthems - Parry, Stanford, Holst etc - see cheltbachchoir.com for details

Charlton Kings Choral Society Autumn Concert, Sat 26 Nov, 7.30pm, St Philip and St James, Leckhampton, marking the 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams' birth, the choir will perform his Dona Nobis Pacem, Fantasia on Christmas Carols and Five Mystical Songs, with soloists Hannah Davey and David Smith, and the Regency Sinfonia. Conductor: John Wright

Cleeve Chorale Christmas Concert, Sat 3 Dec, 7.30pm, £10, free to 16 year olds and under, St Michael & All Angels, Bishop's Cleeve, featuring Britten's Ceremony of Carols and carols for choir and audience, see CleeveChorale.co.uk.

Cheltenham Opera Society Festive Evening, Sun 4 Dec, 6.30pm, St Andrew's Church, Montpellier, with wine, mince pies and dvd of La Cenerentola (Rossini) or similar, guests welcome at cost of £5, see chelttenhamoperasociety.org.uk

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society Cheltenham: Christmas Ceilidh, Mon 5 Dec, 7.30pm, St Luke's Church Hall, further details: rscdscheltenham.org

Cheltenham Music Society: Eblana String Trio, Thu 8 Dec, 7.30pm, Pittville Pump Room, a chance to savour less familiar chamber music repertoire. Boccherini: String Trio op.14 no.4 in D major, Finzi: Prelude and Fugue op.24, Beethoven: String Trio in G major op.9 no.1, William Alwyn: String Trio, Dohnányi: Serenade in C major for String Trio op.10. cheltmusicsoc.co.uk

Cheltenham Choral Society: A Tapestry of Christmas Music, Tue 13 Dec, 7pm, Pittville Pump Room, with the Beauregard Choirs and Prestbury St Mary's Junior School

Cheltenham Bach Choir: Handel's Messiah, Tue 20 Dec, 7.30pm, Town Hall, with the Regency Sinfonia, directed by David Crown

Cheltenham Christian Arts: Brass by Candlelight, Wed 21 Dec, 4pm, tickets on door, Christ Church, sparkling seasonal favourites from Cotswold Brass Quintet followed by mulled wine and mince pies, christianartsfestival.org

The Oriel Singers: Carols by Candlelight, Thu 22

Dec, 6pm, Holy Apostles Church, Charlton Kings,

Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra, Sat 7 Jan,

7.30pm, St Andrew's Church, Montpellier, Cond. Peter Hunt, Prokofiev:

Classical Symphony, Stravinsky: Pulcinella Suite, Mozart: Symphony no.40

Royal Scottish Country Dance Society**Cheltenham: Sapphire Ball**, Sat 14 Jan, 7pm,

Town Hall, further details: rsdsccheltenham.org

Cheltenham Philharmonic Orchestra Winter Concert: Around Britain, Sun 22

Jan, 3pm, Pittville Pump Room, Maconchy: Proud Thames Overture, Arnold: Scottish Dances, Jacob: Viola Concerto, soloist Richard Crabtree, Vaughan Williams: Symphony no.2. Tickets 01242 528764 or cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk

Cheltenham Music Society: Magnard Ensemble, Tue 24 Jan,

7.30pm, Pittville Pump Room, a wind quintet who play with infectious enthusiasm, originally booked to close our 2019-20 season. Shostakovich arr. Shiner: Prelude in F sharp major op.87 no.13, Martin Butler: Down-Hollow Winds, Byrd arr.

McDermid: Vigilate, Klughardt: Quintet op.79, Dodgson: Sonata, Mendelssohn arr. Shiner: Songs without Words op.67 no.5 in B minor and op.30 no.2 in B flat, Françaix: Wind Quintet no.1. cheltnmusicsoc.co.uk

STAGE & SCREEN**Cheltenham Operatic and Dramatic Society:**

Evita, Fri 14- Sat 22 Oct, 7.30pm, 2pm Sat matinee, Cheltenham Playhouse, box office 01242 522852 or cheltnplayhouse.org.uk

Meet Tommy Atkins, Thu 3 Nov, 7.30pm, Holst Victorian House, an abridged version of Peter Gill's WW1 play opens an autumn/winter series of story-telling evenings in the elegant Victorian Drawing Room on the first Thursday of the month. holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

A Dickensian Christmas, Thu 1 Dec, 7.30pm, Holst Victorian House, with storyteller Andy Mellor, tickets on sale soon

The Wit and Songs of Noel Coward, Thu 5 Jan, 7.30pm, Holst Victorian House, with Peter Gill, tickets on sale soon



PETER GARRARD'S CERAMIC BIRDHOUSES - 'THE CHALKER'

Promenade Productions:

Cinderella, Wed 25- Sat 28 Jan, 7pm Wed/Thu/Fri, 12pm & 4.30pm Sat, £16/£12, Cheltenham Playhouse, traditional family panto, box office 01242 522852 or cheltnplayhouse.org.uk. Please see promenadeproductions.co.uk

LECTURES & MEETINGS

Hidden in a Drawer: Gustav Holst's Lost Manuscripts, until 21 Dec, Holst Victorian House, Folk Songs from Somerset and Two Songs Without Words on public display for the very first time

Cercle Français: Promenade en Auvergne, Mon 3 Oct, 7.30pm, St Luke's Church Hall, with Mme Maryse Wright, cheltenhamfrenchcircle.co.uk

Cheltenham Local History Society, Tue 4 Oct, 10am, St Luke's Church Hall, Cheltenham's East India Company Physicians, with Jim Markland

Knit Your Bit, Tue 4 Oct, 2pm, Holst Victorian House, knitting and cake by the range

Holst Victorian House Unlocked: fundraising reception, Wed 5 Oct, 6-8.30pm, Wellington Square, tickets available at holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

The Arts Society, Cheltenham: The Sahara as Palimpsest, Tue 11 Oct, 7.15pm, members free, visitors £7, The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane, A cultural history of the world's greatest desert, with Edward Gearon. From rock art and myth to the desert fathers and sons of the desert, Klee and Matisse, Schultz and Lucas. theartsocietycheltenham.org.uk

Victorian Book Group: Bodies of Light, Sarah Moss, Wed 12 Oct, 10am, Holst Victorian House, book group with a vintage twist! Revisit old favourites and discover forgotten classics in this monthly meet-up. holstvictorianhouse.org.uk

Cheltenham German Club: Berlin, Fri 14 Oct, 7 for 7.30pm, The New Club, Montpellier Parade, talk in German by Eddie Vickers. For details see www.cheltgesell.uk or email club@cheltgesell.uk

Cercle Français: Rosa Bonheur, une artiste hors du commun, Mon 17 Oct, 7.30pm, St Luke's Church Hall, with Dr Catherine Greensmith

Cheltenham Local History Society, Wed 19 Oct, 7.30pm, St Luke's Church Hall, Growing up in the Savoy Hotel, Cheltenham, 1945-1960s, with Helen Wallimann

Prestbury Local History Society: The Old Map of Gloucestershire, Mon 24 Oct, 7.30pm, members free, visitors £2, Prestbury W.I. Hall, with Michelle Rees, prestburyhistory.com

Knit Your Bit, Tue 1 Nov, 2pm, Holst Victorian House, knitting and cake by the range



ALISTAIR YOUNG — GLOUCESTERSHIRE GUILD OF CRAFTSMEN AT THE GARDENS GALLERY DURING THE CHELTENHAM LITERATURE FESTIVAL

The Arts Society, Cheltenham: Day of Special Interest - The Expert Eye, Thu 3 Nov, 10.30am, £30, The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane, A Personal Insight into Collecting, with The Antiques Roadshow's Marc Allum, who also invites attendees to bring along a piece of their own for discussion and valuation. See theartsocietycheltenham.org.uk for info and booking form

Cheltenham German Club: German Modern Dance of the early C20th, Fri 4 Nov, 7 for 7.30pm, The New Club, Montpellier Parade, talk in German by Susanne Lahusen. For details see www.cheltgesell.uk or email club@cheltgesell.uk

Cercle Français:**Baroque et classicisme,**

Mon 7 Nov, 7.30pm,
Zoom meeting, with
Mme Fabienne Manèle,
cheltenhamfrenchcircle.
co.uk

The Arts Society,**Cheltenham: Art After****Windrush, Thu 8**

Nov, 7.15pm, members
free, visitors £7, The
Pavilion, Hatherley
Lane, postcolonial artists
in Britain since 1948,
with Barry Venning.
theartsocietycheltenham.
org.uk

Victorian Book Group:**Martin Chuzzlewit,****Charles Dickens, Wed**

9 Nov, 10am, Holst
Victorian House, book
group with a vintage
twist! Revisit old
favourites and discover
forgotten classics in
this monthly meet-up.
holstvictorianhouse.org.
uk

Cheltenham Local**History Society, Wed**

16 Nov, 7.30pm, St
Luke's Church Hall,
John Bellamy (1808-
93), A Gloucestershire
Travelling Showman, with
Steven Blake



FIONNA HESKETH —FAT SEED POD EARRINGS, GLOUCESTERSHIRE GUILD OF CRAFTSMEN AT
THE GARDENS GALLERY DURING THE CHELTENHAM LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Cercle Français:**L'éducation, l'amour et le****mariage dans le théâtre****de Molière, Mon 21 Nov,**

7.30pm, St Luke's Church
Hall, with Mme. Annie
Kean

Prestbury Local History**Society: The Natural****History of Cleeve****Common, Mon 28 Nov,**

7.30pm, members free,
visitors £2, Prestbury W.I.
Hall, with Giles Alder,
prestburyhistory.com

Cercle Français: Soirée**Film, Mon 5 Dec, 7.30pm,**

St Luke's Church Hall, avec
un verre du vin gratuit,
cheltenhamfrenchcircle.
co.uk

Cheltenham Local**History Society,**

Tue 6 Dec, 10am, St
Luke's Church Hall,
Cheltenham's Lung: the
long making of Cleeve
Common, with David
Aldred

Knit Your Bit, Tue 6 Dec,

2pm, Holst Victorian
House, knitting and cake
by the range

Victorian Christmas Day,

Sat 10 Dec, 11am-3pm,
Holst Victorian House

**The Arts Society,
Cheltenham: A Very
Ceremonial Christmas,**

Tue 13 Dec, 7.15pm,
members free, visitors
£7, The Pavilion,
Hatherley Lane, with
Dr Graham Jones, see
theartsocietycheltenham.
org.uk

**Victorian Book Group:
Oxford Book of Ghost
Stories,** Wed 14 Dec,
10am , Holst Victorian
House, book group with a
vintage twist! Revisit old
favourites and discover
forgotten classics in
this monthly meet-up.
holstvictorianhouse.org.
uk

**Cheltenham German
Club: Weihnachtsfeier,**

Fri 16 Dec, 7 for
7.30pm, The New Club,
Montpellier Parade,
for details see www.
cheltgesell.uk or email
club@cheltgesell.uk

**Victorian Magic
Show,** Sat 17 Dec, Holst
Victorian House, details
tbc, holstvictorianhouse.
org.uk

Museum by Candlelight,
Wed 21 Dec, Holst
Victorian House, details
tbc

**The Arts Society,
Cheltenham: Heaven on
Earth,** Tue 10 Jan, 7.15pm,
members free, visitors £7,
The Pavilion, Hatherley
Lane, A road trip through

Medieval Burgundy, with
Dr Caroline Shenton.
theartsocietycheltenham.
org.uk

**Cheltenham Local
History Society,** Wed 18
Jan, 7.30pm, St Luke's
Church Hall, VCH-
Leckhampton with Louise
Ryland-Epton

**Cheltenham German
Club: Neuhannover/
Lavongai,** Fri 20 Jan,
7 for 7.30pm, The New
Club, Montpellier Parade,
talk in German by Mark
King. For details see www.
cheltgesell.uk or email
club@cheltgesell.uk



CHELTEHAM PAINT FESTIVAL 2022 - MISTER SAMO MURAL ON PRINCESS ELIZABETH WAY
IMAGE COURTESY OF: [HTTPS://INSPIRINGCITY.COM](https://inspiringcity.com)

WE CAN'T BE

A NEW AUDIO PLAY BY LOU BECKETT OF PARROT PRODUCTIONS

Astra and Pen, two young women just finishing university in Cheltenham, begin to muse about the caryatid statues along Montpellier.

On one level, these statues can simply be viewed as following the fashion of the Acropolis architectural supports. But, as Astra observes, they are also tightly clad, nubile young females, more in the mode of ancient wet t-shirt contestants than high-minded Greek classical architecture. In a town with multiple heroic statues to men – think Holst, Wilson, William IV – there don't seem to be any role models for women. Surely it must be time.

To follow the adventures of the two young women, listen to the audio recording of *We Can't Be*, written and directed by Lou Beckett, part of this year's Heritage Open

Days 9-18 September. Astra is played by Stephanie Louise, Pen by Ariane Anindita, and the Council Chair is played by Philip Douch. Volunteers from Blockley kindly created the crowd scene.

Parrot Productions would like to thank Cheltenham Arts Council for their generous financial support, Sarah Harvey of Art Works for help on marketing, Jim Barne for music, and Paul Hamblin and Cam Shand for the sound production.

The play can be freely accessed on all leading podcast platforms, via the Cheltenham Civic Society website (see <https://cheltcivicsoc.org/events/heritage-open-days/>) and the Lou Beckett website (www.loubeckett.com).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE BOYS' CHOIR'S BIG TRIP TO BIRMINGHAM

BEN SAWYER DESCRIBES A CHALLENGING AND EXCITING PERFORMANCE

On Friday 7th July, Gloucestershire Boys' Choir made the trip to Birmingham to take part in the National Festival of Music For Youth.

They had been invited to take part in the National Festival following their outing at the Regional Festival in Stroud in March hosted by Gloucestershire Music in the Subscription Rooms. This was the climax for a busy and exciting year for the choir. Following a steady return to live rehearsals at the back end of Covid restrictions in the UK, the choir picked up with a full programme from September 2021.

The choir's tagline is 'building confidence in boys through a love of singing', and an important focus of Gloucestershire

Boys' Choir is to nurture boys' voices as they approach voice change. This can be a challenging time for boys, particularly ones that have loved singing at a younger age and are worried about how their 'new' voice might turn out. In the choir, music is selected that not only appeals to the boys' interests but also covers a comfortable vocal range so that they can really enjoy the songs they are learning. Voice change is something that happens to every boy, and it is often a different experience from boy to boy. Having this safe space to explore singing and use it to enhance confidence is an invaluable boost to boys' self-esteem.

From Summer 2021, there have been two sections to the boys' choir: a junior section



for boys aged 7-11 and a senior section for boys aged 11-16, with the cut being the move to senior school. The Juniors sing mostly in unison but with a good range available in the Seniors, their harmony singing has developed superbly over recent months. The choir has also started to flourish socially. We finished the summer term with a concert for parents and other supporters, followed by a family picnic and a chance to thank the boys for their efforts in the lead up to the trip to Birmingham.

Speaking of which, having earned their place at this event, they rose to the challenge of performing to a new audience brilliantly. Their set was on the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space in the Symphony Hall complex. This is a new 'pop-up' performance space, and to be a part of such a diverse range of performances in their session was a joy.

One resource that has been used a great deal for the boys is the 'Friday Afternoons' catalogue. Started in 2013 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Britten, 'Friday Afternoons' is an initiative to promote singing in younger children. Britten unknowingly started this off in the early 1930s by writing twelve songs for Clive School in Prestatyn, where his brother was Headmaster. Now

contemporary composers including Jonathan Dove, Errollyn Wallen and many more have been commissioned to put together a huge bank of songs, all available for free through the 'Friday Afternoons' website. One selection by Russell Hepplewhite, with themes based around science and nature, using texts by Michael Rosen, have really captured the boys' imaginations.

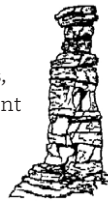
Music For Youth was a wonderful occasion for Gloucestershire Boys' Choir, and the professional mentor that listened to them sing, along with a band of supporters, were all suitably impressed by their committed, clear and enthusiastic singing.

You can follow the progress of Gloucestershire Boys' Choir through the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/GlosBoysChoir, and if you have a son, grandson or nephew that you think might enjoy being a part of this happy choir, contact Ben Sawyer, the choir's founder and director, through the dedicated page on his website: www.bensawyermusic.co.uk/boyschoir.

Gloucestershire Boys' Choir is proud to be a member of Cheltenham Arts Council, and grateful for ongoing support from Brimpsfield Music Society.

MEET THE MEMBERS

LECKHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Our Society was founded in 1992. We aim to collect, study and publish information about the history of Leckhampton and to stimulate wider interest in local history. Currently, we have over 100 members.

Leckhampton has a rich history. There is the beautiful fourteenth-century St Peter's church and Leckhampton Court (now the Sue Ryder hospice). The quarries, railways and tramroad on Leckhampton Hill have left a many-layered legacy of industrial archaeology. Social history includes the dramatic Leckhampton Riots over a century ago, when locals protested against being prevented from enjoying their traditional access to Leckhampton Hill. Other current research interests include local archaeology, Leckhampton's historic manors, former trades and industries, and education.



We hold regular monthly meetings, usually with a speaker, but with opportunities for members to share their research or interests. For many years, we met in Church House adjoining St Philip's and St James' Church, off the Bath Road. In 2015, we moved to the Glebe Cottages next to St Peter's. During the pandemic, meetings were held on Zoom until our AGM in May 2022 - our first "in person" meeting since lockdowns began - which was in St Peter's Church itself, where meetings from September this year will take place.

We don't just sit down indoors, however; walks are an important feature of the Society's activities and outreach. One of our members has created a series of self-guided walks around the area, including aspects of local history and also the nature and wildlife of Leckhampton Hill. These walks are extremely popular and residents particularly appreciated them during lockdown. This summer, members also enjoyed a walk around Mitcheldean with the Forest of Dean Local History Society. Our Society was represented at this summer's Gloucestershire Local History Association events and we were very grateful for a grant from CAC to help us produce high quality display material. We also held our own public exhibition of items from the Society's locally-held archive.

Over the years, members have produced a variety of publications about aspects of Leckhampton history. The most recent are reprints of the very popular "Leckhampton Yesteryear" and "St Peter's Church - the Stained Glass Windows", both by Eric Miller. We also publish research bulletins, with contributions from members - the most recent was published in 2020. Our newsletter "Smoke Signal" (an allusion to the famous landmark on Leckhampton Hill) is issued three times per year to keep members informed about activities and developments.

We are always happy to welcome queries, information and new members! If you would like to know more, visit our website at www.llhs.org.uk.

Anne Gale

CHELTENHAM ARTS COUNCIL GRANTS

A LETTER FROM A PROMISING YOUNG ARTIST

Dear Cheltenham Arts Council,
I am writing to update you on how your kind donation has helped me so far with my studies at The Slade School of Fine Art, University College London.

I have used the funding I received to continue to develop, research and create artworks on the MFA Sculpture course at The Slade. The support from Cheltenham Arts Council has been invaluable to me and meant that I have been able to create ambitious artworks that continue to address my critical concerns.

My academic tutor, Patrick White, offers some further insight here:

“George joined the MFA programme at the Slade in 2021 and has already proven himself to be a thoughtful, engaged, and generous student. Of the many strands of work he has been developing, two stand out: a technically ambitious project involving the 3D scanning and printing of clouds, and a series of paintings and sculptures drawing on symbols from

George's lived experience. Each project exhibits a high degree of conceptual and aesthetic sophistication, and a sensibility both precise and poetic: a rare combination, particularly when demonstrated so early in the first term of a two-year course.

In addition to his undoubted artistic and intellectual talent, George's attitude is exceptional. On a course that relies heavily on peer-critique, he is highly supportive of other students and generous in offering constructive comments about their work in group contexts.”

Moving forward, I have three exhibitions planned for the rest of the year, as well as other course related commitments. The support from Cheltenham Arts Council has been and will continue to be extremely helpful in pursuing my ambitions!

Kindly,

George Richardson



FORMER GLOUCESTERSHIRE YOUNG MUSICIAN PERFORMS WITH CCO

CONCERT REVIEW

Cheltenham Chamber Orchestra (CCO) performed a programme of music by Schubert and Tchaikovsky on 14 May 2022 in St Andrew's Church, Montpellier, with Guest Conductor Katherine Stonham and Leader George Ewart.

The programme opened with Schubert's Overture in the Italian Style D.590, the first of two overtures that Schubert composed in November 1817. The cello soloist Rebecca McNaught delighted the audience with her accomplished playing of Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme, originally an arrangement for cello and piano, which was later changed by the cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen; it would appear that Tchaikovsky orchestrated the work from the piano arrangement as amended by Fitzenhagen. The concert finished with Schubert's Symphony No 2 in Bb major.



Rebecca was Gloucestershire Young Musician in 2015. She attended Oxford University and the Royal Academy of Music and has now reached the milestone of playing the cello for 20 years! She is currently working as a teacher at the Royal College of Music Junior Department and is Head of Strings at King Edward's School, Witley. She plays on an English cello that is over 200 years old from the workshop of John Betts.

The CCO is grateful to Cheltenham Arts Council for their generous support for this concert.

Angela Walker

THE CHRISTIAN ARTS FESTIVAL

EMPOWERING ARTISTS AND BLESSING COMMUNITIES

Blending the facilitation of Christian artists of all genres with community engagement, The Christian Arts Festival is now entering its 7th year.

One of the strands of each Festival is to seek to work with local churches in different areas, often deprived, to provide a range of free arts performances on playing fields and parks to enrich the lives of the local community. Their strap line is 'Creative arts for everyone, to inspire communities for the glory of God.' In an age when the public is suspicious of the preacher or street evangelist, these ventures place

themselves outside the church walls and at the heart of community spaces and let the arts in all their forms (music, drama, singing, literature, visual arts, comedy, competitions etc) speak for themselves.

This non-threatening approach is as relevant now as it was in the 13th century, as this quote from Franciscan theologian Bonaventura shows: "Less vividly is the mind stirred by what passes through the ears than by that which is brought before the trusty eyes, and that which the spectator can see for himself.' It gives everyone of all faiths or none the freedom to enjoy and explore and choose the



level to which they engage. Artists visit local primary and secondary schools with drama and performance, including groups such as Riverside Performing Arts, 4Front Theatre, Saltmine Creatives and iSingPOP. This encourages and prepares the children to come and take part in the outdoor festivities through performing on stage and boosts their confidence, and creates a safe space for them to explore their creative talents.

The festivals have been grateful for regular support from Cheltenham Arts Council, which helps facilitate our community events, for example last year's workshops, where individuals, communities and church groups made a staggering 26 textile banners on the theme of "Eden, Restoring Paradise", which are now on tour round the country. When this goes to print, CAC alongside the Community Lottery Fund will have sponsored our 3rd Festival of Stars on the Pavilion Sports Field in Hatherley Lane, Cheltenham – a summer celebration for everyone featuring live music, bands, arts and sports activities, open mic sessions, festival food and the very popular Dog Show by Cheltenham Animal Shelter. 'Like a mustard seed... this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.' Matthew 13:31. We are delighted that many

organisations are happy to settle on our branches including Art Shape, Art for All, Purple Shoots, XR Cheltenham, Heart Heroes, LivingfromArt.com and more.

We are always dependant on funding which to date has always come through at the 11th hour! Our next festival, GOSPEL 2023, is in the planning stages, with a Literature Day at Pip and Jim's, Leckhampton, on 22nd April; GOSPEL featuring the London Community Gospel Choir at the Town Hall on 23rd April, plus workshops, a Big Sing, talks, dramas, a visual arts competition on the theme of 'New Life', a Gospel song-writing competition with studio recording for the prize-winner and much more in the pipeline: visit www.christianartsfestival.org

I can testify to the encouragement of being able to participate in a Christian arts event. It has helped me to more boldly own up to having a Christian faith. We are often wary of being too open about it due to the prejudice and misconceptions about religion. It is in Nikki Seville's heart that Christian Artists grow in confidence to fully express themselves – she sees the creative arts as a healing expression of the work of the Holy Spirit for all to experience.

Deborah Harrison
 Sculptor and Trustee

THE BAT, THE BOLT HOLE AND THE BANDITS

A SHORT STORY BY PHIL JONES OF
CHELTENHAM WRITERS' CIRCLE

Barnaby Augustus Tristram Spooner, Barney to his family but 'The Bat' to his friends, was in big trouble once again; and for the third time in a week.

The punishment was the usual one and, because it was Wednesday evening, it really rather suited Barney. On Wednesday evenings, Rachel & Randall Stewart from down the road came around to play bridge with his parents, to have a light supper and to gossip over a glass of wine or two or three. This always meant that once Barney had finished his homework and had spent a happy hour or so practising chords on his guitar, his Mum would come in and tell him it was time for bed. She'd come back a few minutes later to tuck him in and kiss him goodnight. After that, all she would normally do would be to look in through the door before she went to bed to see that he was still asleep.

very much but that he really had to start being nicer to his little sister.

He'd probably been foolish to suggest that the little snitch should play goalkeeper but she'd been quite willing at the time. He was getting the hang of striking the special football with the bell but he normally wouldn't have caught it quite that cleanly. He got this instant feeling of exhilaration as it flew off his foot and he waited for Milly's reaction. What he heard was a screech of pain followed immediately by the crash and the tinkle of breaking glass.

"Oh! You rat, Barney Spooner! That was my face! That really, really hurt! I'm going to tell Mummy! And you've broken the outhouse window! You're a pig!"

He heard the receding clatter of the hard little heels of her shoes on the crazy-paved path and the slam of the back door and he



Tonight, though, it had been straight to bed after his homework. His Mum had kissed him goodnight and, annoyingly as ever, told him that they were only being cruel to be kind and that she loved him

waited for the retribution that must surely follow. He stared hard towards the vague dark mass that was the house. Normally he wouldn't have been able to make even that

out if it hadn't been outlined against the brightness of the evening sun.

He'd heard the door open again, heard the slap of his mother's slippers until they reached the grass, sensed as much as saw her outline against the sky and felt her hand grasp his upper arm before he was hauled off towards the house and told that he was due for another early night in the quiet of his bedroom.

Barney lay in bed and heard the doorbell ring. He heard the cheery voices of his parents greeting the Stewarts and heard the usual sounds of the grown-ups settling down around the card table. He reached out of bed and felt for the time on his special little alarm clock. Too early yet! He lay back and waited.

When he checked again, it was time.

He slipped out of bed, already wearing jeans and socks. He took his pyjama jacket off and pulled on his shirt and sweater. He felt for his trainers, slid them on and pulled the Velcro tabs tight. He pulled the bolster from under his pillow, turned it lengthways into the line of where he slept and pulled his duvet up over it. He strode confidently to the mantelpiece and groped in the little china dish that always held the key to the window lock.

Without hesitating he went to the window, felt for the security lock, slid in the key and turned it. He left the key on the sill and, very quietly, slid the sash window upwards. He climbed out, carefully avoiding the rose bush that grew there and, equally quietly, slid the window down again but making sure that he left a half-inch gap to prevent the lock from clicking back into place. He looked away from the house and could just about make out the glow of a full moon.

He walked quickly across the lawn towards the back gate, only hesitating as he sensed that he was approaching the line of the fence. He put his hands out and

stepped forward carefully until his hands felt the wood of the uppermost rail. He worked his way along until he reached the gate, opened it and stepped out onto the narrow little bridle path that ran behind the houses. He felt for the wooden staff



that he hid behind the telegraph pole and gripped it firmly. He set off down the path using his staff to make sure that he kept well to the right to avoid the branches of the trees that had been allowed to grow all over the common. His father was forever grumbling that if the local council spent as much time and money clearing the common, repairing the roads and keeping the drains clear of silt as they did on Outreach Coordinators, pretend policepersons and useless surveys, we'd all be much better off.

Barney wondered if Bugsy would be waiting at the den for him. Their secret den was about two hundred metres down the track from the Spooners' back gate and set under a large hawthorn bush across the bridle path behind the garden of the Stewarts' big old manor house. The den was made from an old rusty grid of wire mesh that they'd set deep into the soil that bounded the track and had tied with green cord to the lower branches of the hawthorn. The branches were pulled so far down that they almost reached the floor. According to Bugsy, the den was almost impossible to see unless you knew it was there. Certainly they would often

sit there in silence as groups of walkers or riders passed by and nobody seemed aware of their existence.

However, the den wasn't a complete secret. Barney's parents allowed him to go down there with Bugsy as long as he had his friend's eyes to help guide him. And Sir Randall Stewart, to give him his full title, knew what they were up to. Sir Randall liked the boys and the boys liked Sir Randall. Every so often, when he wanted a minute or two off from his gardening, he'd lean over his back fence and have a chat to them.

"In your bolt hole again?" he'd asked them one day.

"Why do they call you 'The Bat'?" he'd asked on another. "Because of your initials, I suppose?"

"No," Bugsy had chipped in. "It's because he's as blind as a blinking bat, Mr Stewart."

Barney worked his way steadily down the lane until his stick caught the stump of the tree that sat to the right of the lane. Then he knew that he'd arrived. He turned and crossed the track until he could feel the leaves of the hawthorn. Slowly he worked his way round to the end of the bush, ducked down under the natural canopy and sat down on one of the two boards that they'd set into the bank among the hawthorn roots.

"Bugsy?" he mouthed quietly although he knew that if his friend had been there, he would have spoken already. He settled back on the little bench to begin his wait when he felt the vibration of his silenced mobile phone in his jeans pocket.

"Yes," he answered quietly.

"Bat?" queried the hushed voice at the other end.

"Yeah."

"Bat. I can't come. My parents have decided that we're going to have a family night together and play bloody Monopoly

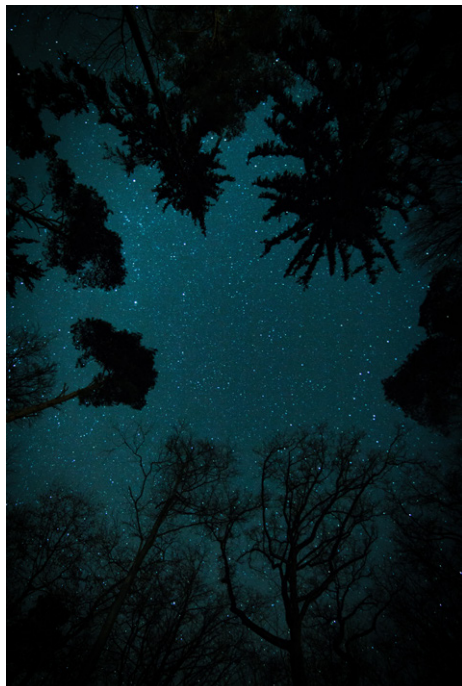


PHOTO BY MAX SHELING ON UNSPLASH

and there's no way that I can get out of here. Sorry."

"That's OK," Barney replied. "I'll go back home. It's probably best. I'm in enough trouble as it is."

"Will you be all right?" Bugsy asked.

"Course I will. I got here, didn't I?"

When his pal had rung off, Barney settled back again for a few seconds. He liked being outside at night. He liked the quietness, he liked the feel of the little whispers of breeze on his cheek and he liked it when he heard the call of an owl from across the wood.

Then he heard something else; the muffled sound of footsteps coming down the path. Barney sat very still and waited, confident, but not very confident, that whoever it was wouldn't spot him sitting quietly behind that hawthorn screen in the dark.

"Why does Sledger want me in on this?" a rough male voiced asked when they

seemed about ten feet away.

“He and Dougie reckon that you’re the man to deal with the dog. Ginger reckons that he can handle the burglar alarm but you’re best with dogs.”

Sledger? Dougie? Ginger? The names sounded familiar to Barney. Where had he heard them before?

“What’s the bloody attraction of this place aznyway?” the rough voice asked.

“Keep your voice down,” the other one hissed. “It’s Sir Randall Stewart’s place, dummy. He’s loaded. Sledger read that he’s just bought this original Klimt painting for hundreds of bloody grand. That’s what we’re after. And the rest.”

“Are they out?”

“Of course. There’s nobody in there; just the pooch. Jimmy saw them go out about three quarters of an hour ago. It’s regular on a Wednesday, he reckons. Come on. Let’s get over this bloody fence.”

Sledger? Dougie? Ginger? Suddenly Barney remembered. It was the Jacksons. Barney’s Dad often seemed to be reading out snatches from the local paper about the Jacksons. A one family crime wave, he would state loudly to anybody around, a bunch of 21st century bandits. They only get away with it, he would declare, because they pretend to be gypsies and the police are frightened of looking racist.

The full impact of what was going on struck Barney. My God! They’re planning to rob the Stewarts’ house. He’d have to get home and tell them. But then he’d be in even bigger trouble and, anyway, it would probably be too late.

His phone! That was it! He pulled out his mobile with its big buttons and felt for the nine. Hand quivering, he pressed the nine key three times.

“Police, fire or ambulance?” the female voice at the other end asked.

“Police,” said Barney firmly, hoping desperately that he was doing the right

thing.

He was transferred and then another, male, voice asked what they could do to help.

Barney explained; the Jacksons are breaking into Sir Randall Stewart’s house and that Sir Randall had just bought this posh painting.

“Are you sure?” the voice asked. “Sir Randall Stewart, eh! You don’t sound very old.”

“I’m not but I’m right outside the house. They’re breaking in now.”

“Whereabouts is this house?”

Barney gave their own post code and hoped that it was the same and told them that the house was called Fernleigh.

“What’s your name?” asked the voice.

“I can’t tell you, really I can’t” pleaded Barney, “but you’ve got to believe me. It’s really important.”

“O.K.” said the voice. “We’ll be there as soon as possible but you’d better be telling the truth, whoever you are.”

The line went dead and Barney sat and waited for several minutes. Then he heard the barking of the Stewarts’ Labrador, Chummy, and the sound of a low, calm whispering voice. Then the dog seemed to go quiet and he heard a voice say, “There’s a good dog.” Then another hushed voice said, “The back door’s open,” and then quiet again.

Suddenly Barney heard the thump of heavy boots on the path and the sounds of men scrambling over the Stewarts’ fence and, from the front of the house, he heard the screaming of the arriving police sirens.

It was high time, Barney decided, that he ought to be getting home. He began to work his way back up the little lane as quickly as he could but it all seemed to be taking a terribly long time.

Eventually he reached the back gate and put his staff back in place. He hurried off across the lawn and winced when he felt

the scratch of a rose thorn on the back of his hand. At least, he decided, he was back near his own room. He pushed his fingers into the gap that he left under the window and levered the window up. He threw a leg over the sill, climbed in and pulled the window hard down.

He worked his way over to the bed to reach under the duvet for his pyjamas but, scarily, instead of the duvet his hand touched an unexpected object. He moved his hand and realised at once what it was. It was one of his mother's stockinged knees sticking out from under her skirt as she sat on the bed.

"And just where have you been to, my little man?" she demanded sternly. "I've been worried sick and your father wants to have a word with you right now."

She stood up, grasped him by the upper arm, frog-marched him through into drawing room and pushed him into the usual place of judgement in front of his father's big armchair. Barney could just make out his father's outline but was also becoming aware of other people in the room.

"You are a very naughty young man," he heard his Dad say. "I ought to thrash you within an inch of your life. However, there are some other people here who also want to have a word with you."

The shadow of a large figure loomed over him. "Hello, Barney," the figure said. "I'm Chief Inspector Lewis and I'd like to shake your hand."

He reached down, took Barney's hand and shook it firmly. "Very, very well done, young man. Thanks to you, we've finally got the Jacksons on a charge that we can really make stick."

"How did you know it was me?" Barney asked.

"Oh! Mobile phones are pretty easy to trace these days, young man."

Then another large figure appeared in front



PHOTO BY ALEXANDRE DEBIEVE ON UNSPLASH

of him and gripped his hand. "Well played, The Bat," boomed Randall Stewart's big, deep voice. "You've prevented our house from being burgled and saved us an awful lot of money. Thank you very much indeed, young feller."

"We're very proud of you, Barney," he heard his father say, "but don't ever try to pull that stunt again."

His mother's arms went round him and she gave him a big kiss and a hug.

"Even so, Chief Inspector," his father's voice sounded, "I wonder if you'd have got here that quickly if your people hadn't known that Randall here is going to be Chairman of the local Police Authority next year?"

The Bat grinned. Did his father ever give up? But, for tonight at least, he was grateful that he'd been able to remember something of one of his Dad's outbursts.

The End

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