NEWS

Harrogate Heritage

Looking back on the 100th anniversary of a great musical year

Malcolm Neesam
news@harrogateadvertiser.co.uk
@HgateAdvertiser

For almost twenty years from 1995, the eminent local historian Malcolm Neesam contributed a series of remarkable articles to the Advertiser, initially under the headline 'Bygone Harrogate' and later using the title 'Our Heritage'. In association with Harrogate Civic Society, we are proud to republish a selection from the series. The views expressed were those of the late Mr Neesam at the time of writing and do not necessarily reflect the current view of the Advertiser or Harrogate Civic Society.

The year of 1912 was a year of amazing music in Harrogate, as Malcolm Neesam recounts.

As a keen student of the history of both Harrogate and of music in general, it is a great temptation for me to indulge my interests by writing regularly about the town's musical history.

But as I am aware that my interest may be shared by only a few readers, I try to limit the number of times when I yield to temptation.

However, I cannot let pass the 100th anniversary of 1912 without reminding readers of the details of that extraordinary year, at least so far as Harrogate was concerned.

In 1912, Ernest Bristow Farrar moved to Harrogate.

A contemporary of George Butterworth, that other English composer who perished in the cataclysm of the Great War, Farrar had received his education at Leeds Grammar School and Durham University, before being awarded a scholarship in 1905 at the Royal College of Music in London, where he was taught composition by Stanford.

After graduating with several prizes, he became an organist in Dresden, before returning to England in 1910 to become choirmaster and organist at St Hilda's Church at South Shields, and in 1912, organist at Christ Church.

He lived at 15 Hollins Road, where he also taught pupils such as the youthful Gerald Finzi, who became one of England's very greatest songwriters.

Farrar established a warm working relationship with Julian Clifford, director of music at the Kursaal, who also became a close friend, and dedicatee of more of Farrar's compositions than anyone else save the composer's wife.

Farrar discussed his latest works with Clifford, whose considerable experience as a performing orchestral musician must have been valuable.

The period between Farrar's 1912 arrival in Harrogate and his death on the Western Front in 1918, is of the greatest musical interest, as it not only saw the standard of local music making taken to new heights, but also the composition of several musical masterpieces of lasting merit.

> *Wednesday, June 19 saw Farrar's splendid "Vagabond Songs" being performed in the Kursaal*

For example, Wednesday, June 19 saw Farrar's splendid "Vagabond Songs" being performed in the Kursaal during the afternoon concert.

1912 also saw the death of the town's most celebrated pianist and music teacher, Max Blume, who had been born in 1849 in Leipzig.

Wounded in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, it was during his convalescence that he composed an elegy to the fallen Saxon heroes of the struggle.

In 1872, the restored Blume accepted a professional post in Harrogate living at first in Mansfield House before buying a home in East Parade.

On August 24, the *Harrogate Advertiser* announced "Sir Edward Elgar will conduct the entire Symphony orchestra on Wednesday next, August 29th, when Mr Julian Clifford will be the solo pianist, and will play the Schumann piano concerto, Sir Edward Elgar conducting the augmented orchestra. The rest of the concert is devoted to Sir Edward Elgar's compositions, including the Enigma".

During the summer of 1912, Elgar's ill-health caused him to plan a visit to Harrogate for a "Cure", but on August 12 he wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley that "we can get no lodging in Harrogate until the end of the month so all "cure" plans are in abeyance...".

Eventually, Elgar managed to get into the Crown Hotel, and he travelled to Harrogate by train, arriving on August 28, 1912.

When Lady Charles Beresford, who was staying at the Hotel Majestic, heard of his pending arrival, she ordered her Rolls Royce to meet Elgar at the Station.

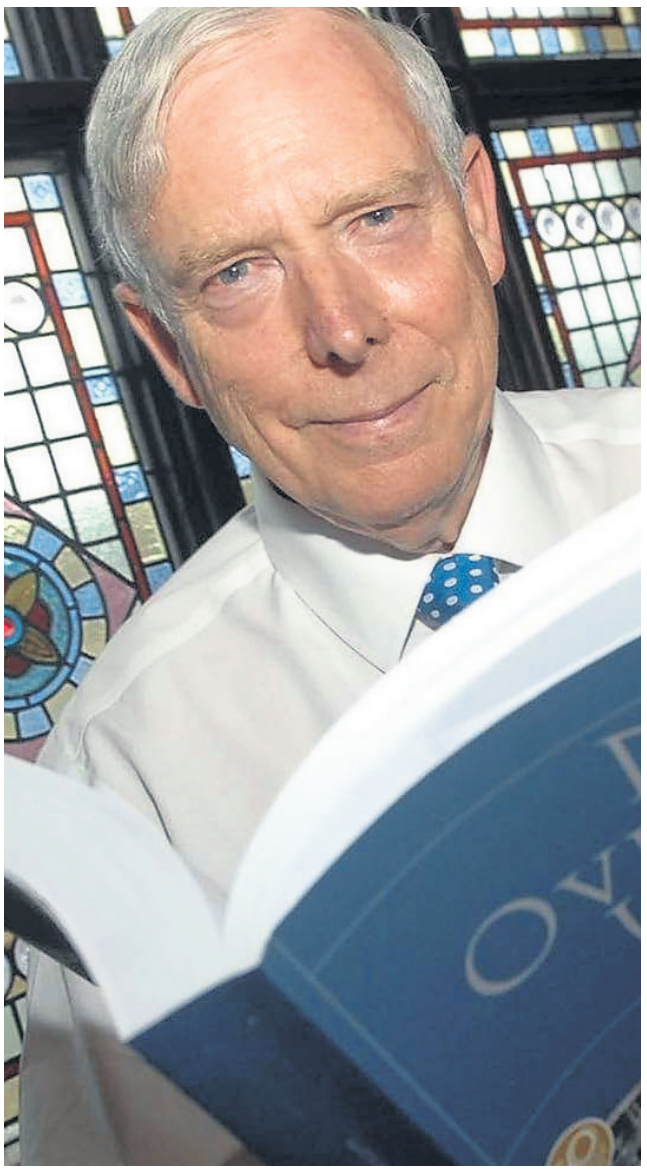
Elgar described his visit in a letter of August 29: "LadyC. Sent her car to the station to meet me and I dined with her last night at the Hotel Majestic - very amusing – she looks much better and ate a great dinner, much more than double my effort.

"She telephoned that I was not to dress - but I did put on something. I found her loathing the whole place and people. Of course Harrogate thinks self very fashionable and more than chic.."

In a lengthy and articulate review the *Advertiser* observed: "There was a large audience, the feature of which was the well-filled gallery, showing that the taste for high class music is spreading to the cheaper parts of the house."

This was Sir Edward Elgar's first public appearance in Harrogate, and the distinguished composer had a hearty reception as he mounted the dias. Sir Edward was persistently applauded, from which it was evident that the appreciation was great.

Mr Julian Clifford played the solo passages in the Concerto for piano (Schumann) and artisti-



The late Malcolm Neesam.

NEWS



The Kursaal as it appeared during Elgar's visit in 1912. Below: The original article.

cally wove the solo pattern into the musical scheme, and brightened the beauty of the work by his exposition. He was enthusiastically received.

Sir Edward also conducted the orchestra during this number. The season of brilliant music making closed with a visit by the world's most celebrated violinist, Fritz Kreisler.

This article was first published on October 25, 2012

A note from Harrogate Civic Society: It is now more than four years since Malcolm's death. He left behind an astonishing body of work that we at the Harrogate Civic Society are determined should be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of future historians and, indeed, for the benefit of anyone who cares about Harrogate.

Not long before his passing, we discussed with Malcolm and the Advertiser republishing at least some of his articles.

> *A well-filled gallery shows the taste for high class music is spreading to cheaper parts of the house*

Many of Malcolm's articles dealt with the history of the town, exploring the people, places and events that helped to form the Harrogate we know today.

At other times Malcolm concentrated more on contemporary issues.

While acknowledging that Harrogate could not stand still, he was convinced that change should always be tested.

In September 2024, the first re-publication of Mr Neesam's articles appeared and this article continues the series.

We are grateful to Malcolm's family for their approval, to Simon Kent (closely involved with securing Malcolm's legacy) for his work researching and preparing the articles for reprint, for the advice of historian Paul Jennings and to Graham Chalmers and his team at the *Advertiser* for their support and encouragement.

We hope you will enjoy reading (or in some cases re-reading) these irreplaceable snapshots of history.

If you are able to add to our knowledge, or wish to know more about our work, contact us at: history@harrogatecivicsociety.org



Our Heritage

A look at yesteryear of a spa town

With Malcolm Neesam

ackrill.news@ypn.co.uk

The 100th anniversary of a great musical year

1912 was a year of amazing music in Harrogate, as Malcolm Neesam recounts.

As a keen student of the history of both Harrogate and of music in general, it is a great temptation for me to indulge my interests by writing regularly about the town's musical history.

But as I am aware that my interest may be shared by only a few readers, I try to limit the number of times when I yield to temptation. However, I cannot let pass the 100th anniversary of 1912 without reminding readers of the details of that extraordinary year, at least so far as Harrogate was concerned.

In 1912, Ernest Bristow Farrar moved to Harrogate. A contemporary of George Butterworth, that other English composer who perished in the cataclysm of the Great War, Farrar had received his education at Leeds Grammar School and Durham University, before being awarded a scholarship in 1905 at the Royal College of Music in London, where he was taught composition by Stanford.

After graduating with several prizes, he became an organist in Dresden, before returning to England in 1910 to become choirmaster and organist at St Hilda's Church at South Shields, and in 1912, organist at Christ Church. He lived at 15 Hollins Road, where he also taught pupils such as the youthful Gerald Finzi, who became one of England's very greatest songwriters.

Farrar established a warm working relationship with Julian Clifford, director of music at the Kursaal, who also became a close friend, and dedicatee of more of Farrar's compositions than anyone else save the composer's wife. Farrar discussed his latest works with Clifford, whose considerable experience as a performing orchestral musician must have been valuable.

The period between Farrar's 1912 arrival in Harrogate and his death on the Western Front in 1918, is of the greatest musical interest, as it not only saw the standard of local music making taken to new heights, but also the composition of several musical masterpieces of lasting merit. For example, Wednesday, June 19 saw Farrar's splendid "Vagabond Songs" being performed in the Kursaal during the afternoon concert.

1912 also saw the death of the town's most celebrated pianist and music teacher, Max Blume, who had been born in 1849 in Leipzig. Wounded in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, it was during his convalescence that he composed an elegy to the fallen Saxon heroes of the struggle. In 1872, the restored Blume accepted a professional post in Harrogate, living at first in Mansfield House before buying a home in East Parade.

On August 24, the Harrogate Advertiser announced "Sir Edward Elgar will conduct the entire Symphony orchestra on Wednesday next, August 29th, when Mr Julian Clifford will be the solo pianist, and will play the Schumann piano concerto. Sir Edward Elgar conducting the augmented orchestra. The rest of the concert is devoted to Sir Edward Elgar's compositions, including the Enigma".

During the summer of 1912, Elgar's ill-health caused him to plan a visit to Harrogate for a "Cure", but on August 12 he wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley that "... we can get no lodging in Harrogate until the end of the month so all "cure" plans are in abeyance...". Eventually, Elgar managed to get into the Crown Hotel, and he travelled to Harrogate by train, arriving on August 28, 1912.

When Lady Charles Beresford, who was staying at the Hotel Majestic, heard of his impending arrival, she ordered her Rolls Royce to meet Elgar at the Station. Elgar described his visit in a letter of August 29 : "Lady C. sent her car to the station to meet me and I dined with her last night [at the Hotel Majestic] - very amusing - she looks much better and ate a great dinner, much more than sublime my effort.

She telephoned that I was not to dress - but I did put on something. I found her loathing the whole place and people. Of course Harrogate thinks itself very fashionable and more than chic ...". In a lengthy and articulate review the Advertiser observed "There was a large audience, the feature of which was the well-filled gallery, showing that the taste for high class music is spreading to the cheaper parts of the house.

This was Sir Edward Elgar's first public appearance in Harrogate, and the distinguished composer had a hearty reception as he mounted the dias. Sir Edward was persistently applauded, from which it was evident that the appreciation was great.

Mr Julian Clifford played the solo passages in the Concerto for piano (Schumann) and artistically wove the solo pattern into the musical scheme, and brightened the beauty of the work by his exposition. He was enthusiastically received.

Sir Edward also conducted the orchestra during this number. The season of brilliant music making closed with a visit by the world's most celebrated violinist, Fritz Kreisler.

The Kursaal as it appeared during Elgar's visit in 1912. (S)

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE NEWS HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA WWW.RIPONGAZETTE.CO.UK
Niddal
WINDOWS
We have a range of high security and energy efficient windows including :
Casement windows
Vertical sliding sash windows
Tilt and turn windows
All available in a wide range of colours & finishes
DOORS
Niddal have a vast range of high security doors to suit all kinds of needs from:
• PVCu residential
• Composite doors
• French doors
• Double doors
• Patio doors
• Bi-fold doors
Introducing the Aura range exclusively from Niddal
Various energy efficient specification options including
• Triple glazing • Thermal Reinforcing
• Energy Efficient • A Rated windows
AURA
CONSERVATORIES
We'll help transform your wishes into a reality, from initial design to all the necessary planning applications giving you total peace of mind.
ROOFLINE
Although specialists in doors, windows and conservatories, we also provide and install a wide range of products for the roofline on your home including
• Fascias • Soffits • Bargeboards • Guttering
For our very best discounts pay us a call today on 01423 866 588 or visit our showroom www.niddal.co.uk
Eastern Factory, 13 IES Link, Knaresborough North Yorkshire HG5 8DY
FENSA
35