

Spring 2022 | Issue 2

Holst House Journal



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Editor's Note

Anci Seymenliyska, Editor of Holst House Journal



Welcome to our Spring edition. We are very happy with our experience after the conclusion of phase 1 of the Museum's rebranding. It seems that the many visitors in the months since September 2021 are too. You can read below some of their comments left in the Visitors' Book.

Since our first issue, a lot has happened at the Museum. It now has a fully redecorated exterior and improved front garden. The two films made by Evenlode Films and Productions have not only proven very popular with visitors but have also won prizes. Our new music trustee

John Wright and his daughter won recognition for their work too. In this issue you will find information about our planned Easter Events; a feature about the latest addition to our most valued exhibits - the pre-Victorian grandfather clock, generously donated by a local lady; article about Gustav Holst's daughter Imogen; more facts about Pittville women builders; new volunteers' reflections about their role in the Museum; information about the second phase of the rebranding and associated fundraising. We offer you further intriguing comments about the Victorian home and traditions, and a lot more!

On behalf of everyone at the Museum I would like to express our deepest gratitude to George Bence & Sons, Eileen Lockwood and Bill Parker – sponsors of the Museum's external decoration; to the organisers of the successful Heritage Open Days; to the local restorer of the grandfather clock's chime; as well as to the many for their enthusiasm in presenting a festive candle-lit evening at the Museum and a great carol singalong at Pittville Gates, despite the strong threat of the Omicron COVID variant at the time. Hopefully we are heading to a more peaceful summer. 🌱

From The Visitors' Book

- "Fascinating to learn both about Holst's life and works, but also about the Victorian era in general. All hosted by clearly passionate and very helpful volunteers." - Essex
- "Very knowledgeable guides" - London
- "Intimate surroundings give a vivid picture of what it must have been like to live here. Wonderful background to Holst's music" - Scotland
- "The pupils enjoyed learning about the Victorian childhood. A lot more engaging than in a classroom" - Cornwall
- "A jewel in Cheltenham's crown. Wonderfully interesting place. A special thanks to the volunteers for sharing their knowledge" - Winchcombe

Volunteer News

There are many reasons to volunteer. Find out what motivates some of our newest recruits



Neville, 85 : Many years ago I sold my corporate business, retired and travelled extensively with my Finnish wife. Shortly after her death last summer, being new to Cheltenham, I started looking for more life-enhancing activities. Playing golf wasn't enough. In August I became a volunteer at the newly rebranded Holst Victorian House.

I must admit, I started purely for my own sake. It was rewarding to feel useful and appreciated. I enjoy the volunteers' company and the visitors' positive feedback. It's extremely stimulating for a person of my age to be involved in the Museum's work. It's also reassuring that what I do is good not just for me, but for a great cause too. With restricted winter

opening days I worked as often as I could. Now being open five days a week, things look better for my little talks with visitors.

Zak, 20 : After reading Business Management at Birmingham University for a year, I realised it wasn't for me and left. During the first lockdown I had the opportunity to think at length about my personal skills, interests and professional development. I felt more interested in design, galleries and museum curating. The then Holst Birthplace Museum was the only one that answered my summer marathon of applications promptly, and after a friendly interview took me on board. I immediately felt wanted, which encouraged me to learn more about Holst, other composers of the time and the Victorian era. I love talking to visitors and staff. The volunteers are an interesting and diverse bunch of people, I learn from their personal and professional experience.



Recently with the Museum's help I was included in Kickstart – a Government-paid six months professional training programme for young people. I've been learning the ropes from Emily, my predecessor on the same programme. My commitments will be a lot more and quite demanding, but I am ready. 📌

If you are interested in joining us in the Museum, please see our Volunteers page on our website or email volunteers@holstvictorianhouse.org.uk.

Not Just A Man's World - Part 2

Local historian Steve Blake reveals more about the women builders of the Pittville estate



Cranley (formerly The Aviary), photographed in 1986, shortly before its demolition. It includes part of an additional storey and (far left) an extension, both added in 1897.

One of the illustrations in Part 1 of this series of articles is the January 1827 Pittville Deed of Covenants and General Regulation, which was signed by purchasers of building land at Pittville – including, as the first signatories, three women: Juliana Charlotte Wade (who was the subject of Part 1) and Eliza & Ellen Wallace.

The Wallaces were responsible for building three houses on the north side of Wellington Square: The Aviary (later known as Cranley, and now replaced by a block of apartments of the same name), which became their own home, and the semi-detached Laurel Lodges (now Laurel Lodge and Percy House), which they rented to tenants. Despite their signatures in the 1827 document, these two ladies were actually named Eleanor and Elizabeth Wallace.

Eleanor (née Legg) was the daughter of a Belfast linen merchant and the widow of an Army officer named Hill Wallace, and Elizabeth was one of her daughters. When and why they came to Cheltenham is unknown, but in February 1827 they purchased the site of all three houses from Joseph Pitt, by which time building was already underway.

How long Eleanor and Elizabeth lived at The Aviary is uncertain, but what is clear is that in 1834 they raised a £1,500 mortgage on security of the three houses, which was increased to £3,000 ten years later – and which by 1861 was still due with an arrear of interest, prompting the then mortgagee, the Revd Edmund Holland, to sell all three houses for a total of £2,340, well below what he was owed.


Long before 1861, however, the Wallaces had left Cheltenham, probably for London, where, according to the Legg family memorial in Drumbeg church, south Belfast, Eleanor Wallace died, aged 90. Unfortunately, the memorial does not give a date, but if she was 70 years old in 1841, as stated in the census, that would put the year of her death at around 1861. Elizabeth was involved with various craft activities; in 1848

(at which time her address is given as 'Laurel Lodge') she was awarded a patent 'for certain improvements in facing, figuring, designating, decorating, planning, and otherwise fitting up houses and buildings...', which fits well with her earlier building activities. In 1852 she helped found a 'Ladies' Guild', which encouraged women to gain an income from their craft work. The Guild was based in London, where Elizabeth died in 1854, aged 68.

Another of Eleanor's daughters, who was definitely called Ellen, also lived in Pittville between c.1849 and 1879, as, between c.1850 and 1861, did one Hill Wallace, perhaps another of Eleanor's children.



Laurel Lodge - Photographed in 2021

In Part 3, I will look at the history of Eastholme, another house in Wellington Square, which was also built for two ladies with Irish connections, Eleanor and Mary Bennett. 

Meeting Imogen - Part 1

Sam Richards, composer, writer, broadcaster and a great admirer of Holst looks back at his personal meetings with Gustav Holst's daughter



Imogen at the piano - courtesy of Britten-Pears Arts

I first met Imogen Holst in 1969 when I was a second year music student at Dartington College of Arts in Devon, Southwest England.

Back in the 1940s she had run the first music courses at Dartington Hall, leading eventually to its establishment as a College in 1961.

In 1950 she had chosen to move on to new endeavours, but continued visiting the College in the subsequent years. That's how I met her. Some of our teachers at Dartington had been

taught by her and still held her in very high esteem. I didn't know it at the time, but when teaching us, to all intents and purposes, they used the Holst method – although I suspect that Imogen might have recoiled from such an idea. In the next issue of the Journal I will introduce "the Holst Method" in more detail.



© Pittville History Works

Imogen with B.Britten - Courtesy of Britten-Pears Arts

When I first met Imogen she gave a short talk and conducted us, students and staff, in some choral music. Having worked for the English Folk Dance and Song Society at one time and continuing to be in touch with its work, she was a great champion of folk music. As a student I was getting deeply into folk song, something that had always been in my family. I was introduced to Imogen as the College's burgeoning folkie. She was terribly impressed, and in her very precise and well-spoken English, encouraged me in my endeavours. I forget what else we talked about, but a profound generosity of spirit shone from her. We chatted enthusiastically and when we parted I had the feeling that this meeting was a privilege – for me. Once met, never forgotten. I can still see her – a small bouncy woman in loose fitting clothes who could get even the most reluctant student to sing like an angel. Well, nearly...

As the daughter of Gustav Holst - one of the 20th century's most formidable composers, Imogen devoted much of her adult life to his work and his life inheritance - both professional and personal. Gustav undoubtedly overshadowed her as a composer, but her generous spirit didn't seem affected by that. She was not only a composer in her own right. She was also a great educator. She played a remarkable role in establishing her father's birthplace in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, as a museum in 1975. That's why I believe Imogen Holst deserves to appear in the roll call of important 20th century music dignitaries. 🧑🎵

This article first appeared in former Holst Museum curator Amelia Marriette's blog,

www.ameliamarriette.com

A Book Group With A Vintage Twist

Laura Kinnear

"To begin with the old rigmarole of childhood. In a country there was a shire, and in that shire there was a town, and in that town there was a house, and in that house there was a room, and in that room there was a bed, and in that bed there lay a little girl..."

So goes the arresting opening of Elizabeth Gaskell's 1866 novel *Wives and Daughters* – just one of many read by the Victorian Book Group at the Holst Victorian House. Set up to delve a little deeper into the 19th century, the discussions both illuminate and are illuminated by the Museum's period setting.



Interested in joining in the conversation? We have a variety of books scheduled for 2022 from Gissing's *The Odd Women* to Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*. Members can come to all monthly meet-ups or pick and choose depending on which books appeal. The group gathers in the atmospheric Victorian Kitchen and there is always plenty of tea, coffee and homemade cake!

The Museum is also a great place to purchase antiquarian books, including 19th century novels. And why not make your book even more beautiful? We also stock hand-printed bookplates to paste on your treasured endpapers.

Please check our website for full details of the Victorian Book Group (www.holstvictorianhouse.org.uk) or contact Laura Kinnear (curator@holstvictorianhouse.org.uk) for more information. 📖

Upcoming Book Club Dates

May 11
On The Origin Of Species
Charles Darwin

June 8
Cranford
Elizabeth Gaskell

July 13
The Odd Women
George Gissing

August 10
Silas Marner
George Eliot

September 14
Phineas Finn
Anthony Trollope

October 12
Bodies of Light
Sarah Moss

November 9
Martin Chuzzlewit
Charles Dickens

December 14
Stories from The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories

Included in cost of
General Admission

The Grandfather Clock

It is our recently acquired exhibit. The editor spoke with Jan Webb, the local lady who donated this beautiful antique and to David Holmes, who restored the chime.

Jan: “The grandfather clock has been with my family for generations. It was first given in 1872 as a wedding present to my great-great grandparents in Stockport. After changing hands down the family line for many years, my mother inherited it in the 1960s and then passed it on to me. The chime was not working, but my family enjoyed the presence of the clock in our home.

Fast forward to recent times, we downsized to a modern house and we couldn't give the clock a deserving place. My children don't own a property yet, so it was time to find it a new home. Rather than sell it at an auction, we decided to donate the clock to the Holst Victorian House. In this way our favourite antique will stay close to us and in good hands. I am happy that the chime has now been restored.”

David: “I have been restoring and repairing

long case clocks for over 25 years. It is a labour of love, I am not a professional restorer or an official dealer in clocks. My experience is born out of observation and lots of reading. My guiding mantra is: The clock that can't be repaired has yet to be built.



The chime of the grandfather clock donated to the Museum has been silent for decades. I managed to bring it back to life, so now visitors and staff can enjoy its full charm.

The clock was made by William Muncaster, a Lancaster Freeman, who worked c.1790-1820.

On the dial it reads EGERMONT, instead of EGREMONT, a market town in Cumbria.

Although very skilled in their craft, clock makers, like many people at the time, couldn't properly spell even their own name. A spelling mistake is seen behind the dial too, with the name of parts manufacturer William Whittaker from Halifax. In the style of the day only Arabic numerals were used. Much later, as education developed and Roman numerals could be read correctly, the minute numbering was dropped completely in the 1850s.” 🕒



Holst Victorian House Unlocked

Martin Renshaw, the trustee in charge of phase 2 of our rebranding project

First, a quick reminder about the huge amount of creativity and work that has gone into delivering phase 1 of the rebranding:

- new interpretative material
- a redesigned website
- two films
- publication of the new Holst House Journal
- changed pathway for visitors
- Victorian-themed events
- external repainting.

All these initiatives were completed by mid-September 2021, before the Museum re-opened under the new name of Holst Victorian House.

The results were noticeable to staff and volunteers very quickly. After the relaxation of COVID restrictions we enjoyed not only a substantial increase in visitor numbers, but also much deeper feedback and interest in both Holst's life and the Victorian era as a whole. Focusing our attention on not just one but two themes proved successful also with young people. The two documentaries shot by Evenlode Films became an extremely popular part of the visit for individual visitors and whole families from various British regions.

The overall objectives of the rebranding project remain relevant to phase 2:

To broaden the appeal of the museum, which in return will attract more visitors, increase revenue and ensure its continuing financial viability.

To deepen visitors' experience by immersing them in the Victorian period, bringing to life the stories of old-time residents, enabling them to get a better appreciation of Holst's music.

Some requirements were identified as part of phase 1 but require extra funding:

- returning the hallway to the original look and feel
- installing period lighting and soundscapes
- revamping the Museum rooms on the ground floor
- providing an audio-visual virtual tour that visitors access on a smart device
- better access to Holst archive material using digital technology ('Turning the Pages').

In all our work we aim to listen to our visitors – to those who visit and to the missing audience that we want to attract, i.e. we need comprehensive audience research. That's why we


will work closely with the South West Museum Development team. We intend to conduct a thorough evaluation of the achievements of phase 1 and the visitors' response to it. We will undertake an audience development exercise to understand better our current and target markets and to develop an action plan, thus ensuring that we provide well for our current visitors and encourage a more diverse and inclusive audience. We intend to research the experience of other museums and heritage sites and learn from it.

We will shortly be launching an awareness and fund-raising campaign called Holst Victorian House

Unlocked on our website, via events and through social media.

How Can You Help?

We would love to get your input and suggestions. Please visit the house and let us know what you think of the changes made to date and what else you think we should do to make it an authentic, immersive experience with the widest possible appeal.

And, of course, we do need funding. To find out how you can help, please visit the Support Us page on holstvictorianhouse.org.uk 



Presto Music Awards

John Wright, our new music trustee, is a local organist, pianist, music teacher and conductor. He has edited many of Holst's lesser-known works for publication by Goodmusic. He talks about Presto Music and his personal recognition on their Award List for 2021.



Presto Music is the UK's leading e-commerce site for classical and jazz recordings in CDs, DVDs, high quality downloads and vinyl, as well as for printed music and music books. Founded in 1986 in a small high street shop, it launched its website in 2001 and has grown into one of the most significant online sites for musical products in the world. In 2021, on the 35th anniversary of the company and 20th anniversary of the website, Presto Music offered an extensive catalogue of over 160,000 classical recordings, 70,000 jazz recordings and more than 60,000 music books, shipping from its Royal Leamington Spa office to over 200 countries worldwide.

Over the last few years, in conjunction with the Holst Society and two other editors, I have been working on some of Gustav Holst's early and lesser-

known pieces. The project includes getting in print his songs for voice and piano. Goodmusic Publishing added a significant number of these to their catalogue. With the publication of Volume 4 by the end of 2021 we completed this major enterprise and got it in print for the first time. Shortly afterwards came the wonderful surprise: *The Holst Songbook* had won the prestigious Presto Classical Award for Best New Series of 2021! My daughter Naomi, who runs Pink Sky Design in Cheltenham, produced the rather quirky drawing of Holst for the cover.



The four volumes of *The Holst Songbook*, published by Goodmusic, together with the Presto Music award for 'best new series of 2021'. Cover image of Holst by Naomi Farmer (Pink Sky Design)

More Awards

During phase 1 of our rebranding project, the Museum commissioned Evenlode Films to produce two films: *A House in Time Unlocked* and *A Maid's Life*. They've been very popular with visitors and have been well received by the international film industry.

A House in Time Unlocked won the Best Short Documentary Award at the Imagine Rain Independent Film Awards in Hollywood. It tells the story of the house's many inhabitants from the 1840s to 1974. The film is directed by Tim Mountain, narrated by Laura Kinnear, our curator, and includes many volunteers. Tim Mountain also composed the soundtrack for the film, adding an extract from Holst's *New Year's Chorus*.

A Maid's Life won Best Short Documentary Award and Special Mentions for best costumes, best

original score, best actress and best historical film at the 2021 ONIROS Film Awards in New York. It is directed by Tim Mountain and gracefully played by professional actress Emmeline Braefield. The film is a dramatic showcase of the daily chores of Julia Giles, the Holst's maid-of-all-work. Holst, played by pianist Gary Branch, also features as an adult in a dream-sequence scene, performing *Toccata* on his piano. 📺



Last month came wonderful news about yet another award! Cheltenham Arts Council gave a Citation Award to the Holst Victorian House Rebranding Project Team. Congratulations to Laura Kinnear, Lucy Moriarty, Mike Jenkinson, Martin Renshaw, David Hewitt and Emily Barnard!



Notes from the Victorian Kitchen



Pudding Time

The Victorians had an unabashed sweet tooth and seldom finished mealtimes without a morsel of something sugary if they had the means. Pudding in its traditional sense (anything boiled or steamed) was a Victorian fail-safe: a warm, crumbly dome of comfort that could sit on the range happily for hours, expelling treacly vapours that filled the household's stomachs with a longing for dinner.

Mrs Beeton includes over 30 recipes for steamed puddings in her *Book of Household Management*, published in 1861. From the delicious-sounding Golden Pudding of breadcrumbs, suet and marmalade to the more dubious Herodotus Pudding with figs, salt and nutmeg, there is a pudding to suit all tastebuds. But if none of these appealed, you could turn to Georgiana Hill's 1862 *Everybody's Pudding Book* for your fix. Less preachy than Mrs Beeton, it guides you month by month through an array of seasonal treats, many of them steamed. April for example takes full advantage of the blooming spring flora with its recipe for Cowslip Pudding: 'Pull some cowslips from their stems until you have a quart of flowers...'

Hill and Beeton both include recipes for rhubarb pudding in their books.

This pudding is perhaps amongst those most suited to 21st century palates, particularly as the vegetable (more commonly thought of as a fruit!) has undergone a culinary renaissance in the past twenty years, chalked up on many a gastro pub blackboard. It's definitely worth the effort and once your spoon has clipped the edge of its moist flakiness to reveal the crimson gloss inside, you will wonder why you haven't made more traditional puddings in the past. For arguably these Victorian favourites are now unfashionable, usurped by the ubiquitous chocolate sweet. As Nigel Slater writes in his recent *A Cook's Book*: 'If there is one dessert whose demise is on the cards it must be the hot pudding...those such as steamed treacle sponge and its friends.'

Perhaps it is the mystery surrounding the steaming? How to employ basin, muslin, paper and string? Certainly, Mrs Beeton gives stern instructions about wrapping your pudding, but in truth, you don't have to go full-on Victorian to produce something reminiscent of the 19th century. Instead, take a tip from Nigel Slater who has reluctantly swapped 'the romance of the crackle-glazed basin' for a reusable plastic bowl with a clip-on lid. That way, perhaps those Victorian sweet lumps of joy will make it more regularly to your table. 🍷

Rhubarb Pudding

From Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management

Serves 6 - Ingredients: 12oz (350g) plain flour, 1 teaspoon of baking powder, 6 oz (175g) of suet, 5 sticks of rhubarb, 4oz (115g) of sugar, butter for greasing

Make a suet-crust with $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of flour, and line a buttered basin with it. Wash and wipe the rhubarb. Cut it into inch lengths, fill the basin with it, add the sugar, and cover with crust. Pinch the edges of the pudding together, tie over it a floured cloth, put it into boiling water, and boil from 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Turn it out of the basin, and serve with a jug of cream and sifted sugar.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Fri 8 April - Pittville after Pitt (talk by Steve Blake)

Mon 11 April - Hand-Tied Easter Bouquets (floristry workshop)

Tues 12 April - Spring Hares (children's craft drop-in)

Mon 18 April - Vintage Portraits (photography workshop)

Tues 19 April - Easter Baskets (children's craft drop-in)

Tues 12 Jul - Holst's Lost Manuscripts (curator talk)

Sat 17 Sept - Holst's Birthday Concert

Wed 12 Oct - Recital on Holst's Piano to celebrate RVW150 - Ralph Vaughan Williams's 150th birthday



Bake Back in Time - Victorian cooking on the range
21 May, 25 June, 10 Sept, 10 Dec

Knit Your Bit - knitting and cake by the range
5 April, 3 May, 7 June, 5 July, 2 August, 6 Sept, 4 Oct, 1 Nov, 6 Dec

Victorian Book Group
13 April, 11 May, 8 June, 13 July, 10 August, 14 Sept, 12 Oct, 9 Nov, 14 Dec

Coming Soon

9 Jul - 21 Dec - Exhibition: Hidden in a Drawer: Gustav Holst's lost 'New Zealand' manuscripts

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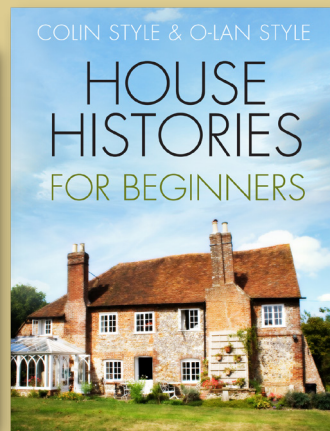
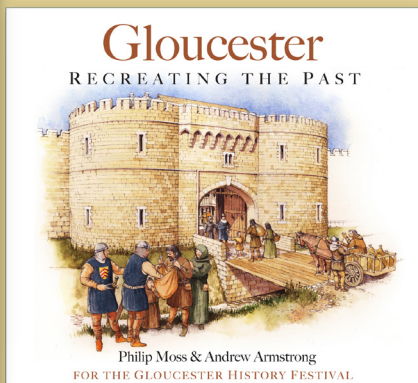
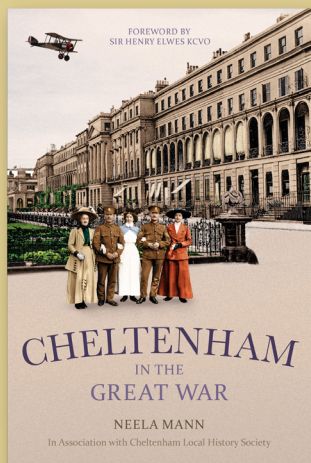
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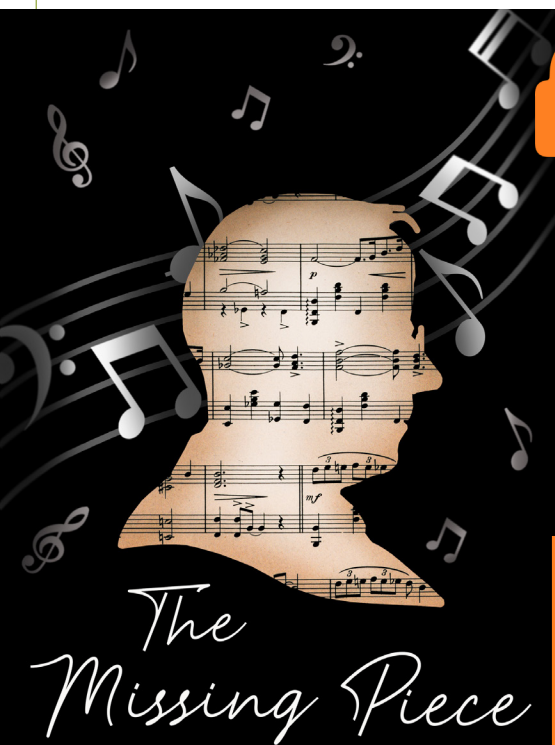
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