

Company Archives – Our INHERITANCE

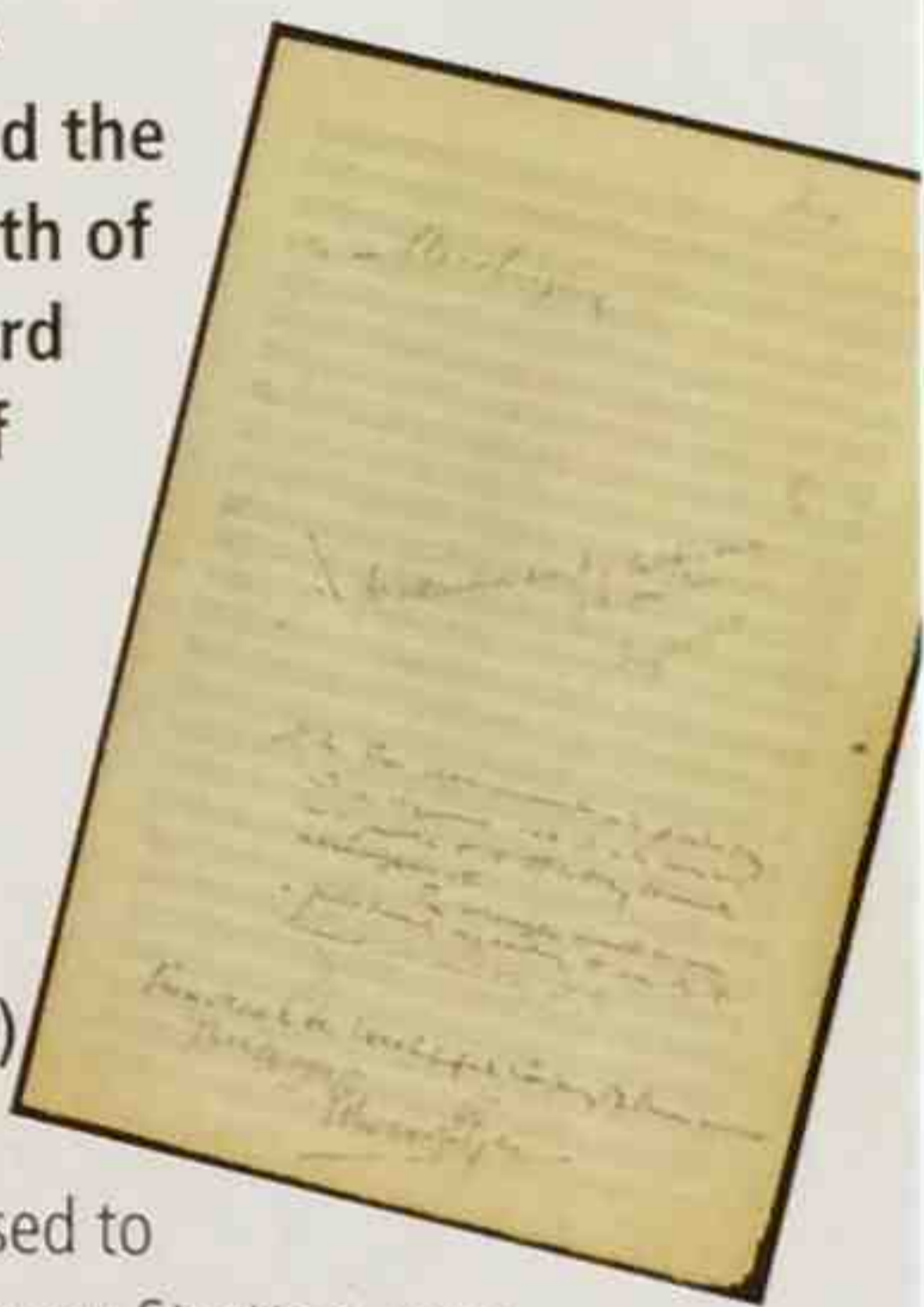
In future issues of *Preserve Harmony* we look forward to featuring some of the most interesting items from our archival collection, much of which is now safely stored at the Guildhall Library and openly available for anyone to see on application. These treasures include autograph musical manuscripts, fine pieces of silver and plate and copies of the Company's Charters, granted in 1604 by King James I and in 1950 by King George VI, together with Court and Committee minutes dating from the mid-18th century to the present day.

It is through our archives that we can recognise the work of our predecessors in the Company and acknowledge the foundations they laid for our present thriving activities. Please 'watch this space' for our new archival spot in forthcoming editions.

Pastmaster PAUL CAMPION

In the centenary year of the beginning of World War I and the 80th Anniversary of the death of Honorary Freeman Sir Edward Elgar, we give a foretaste of treasures to come.

**Autograph manuscript:
A Marching Song
"Follow the Colours"
Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)**



Elgar's *Marching Song*, composed to words by Captain William de Courcy Stretton, was written following a commission from the Worshipful Company of Musicians in 1907. It is said that Alfred Henry Littleton (chairman of Novello's music publishers) had to plead with Elgar to go ahead, as there was much Elgar disliked about the idea. Reportedly, some of the more jingoistic members of the Court hoped it would rank with *Rule Britannia* and be sung by squads of every battalion in the army. Its première was given by a Kneller Hall Band for the Court on 28 April 1908 and its first public performance was at the Royal Albert Hall on Empire Day, 24 May 1908.

In 1914 the song was adapted by the composer for solo and optional male chorus, orchestrated and republished as *Follow the Colours*. In this form it was heard at the Royal Albert Hall on 10 October 1914. The mood is at best cheerful optimism, at worst bombastic. The chorus generally reinforces the solo singer in the second and fourth lines of each verse, and joins in the refrain. The accompaniment, for full orchestra, is an example of brilliant but sensitive writing for the large percussion section, which consists of three timpani, side drum, triangle, bass drum and cymbals. Sadly, *A Marching Song* never achieved its anticipated popularity and it remains a real Elgarian rarity.