

Memories are made... of this

More news from the Company Archives



Herbert Howells 1970s

Have you checked out the Company's new Archive website recently? It is at www.wcomarchive.org.uk Since the last issue of *Preserve Harmony* much more work has been done to add to the pages of 'Treasures' that can be seen there. 'Treasures' mean memories, and everything that is illustrated plays a part in our Company's extraordinary history.

Many of these unique items are held securely in Guildhall Library but others are kept separately – always safely under lock and key. There have been too few opportunities in recent years to show these exhibits in public but now they are freely available for all to see on the website.

Now, have you ever seen a pair of Beethoven's scissors? Unlikely, perhaps. But in 1973 Mr C. C. Stevens presented such a gift to the Company, with a provenance that traced their history back almost 200 years. You can view them at: <http://www.wcomarchive.org.uk/#!—beethovens-scissors/c30v> Soon after the scissors came into our possession, a member of the Court took them to a

medium who confirmed that they had indeed belonged to the great composer, which must have been greatly reassuring to the generous donor.

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of Benjamin Britten's Honorary Freedom ceremony. Whilst arguably the greatest composer of the 20th century, Britten could nevertheless be diffident and extremely nervous when appearing in public.

Humphrey Carpenter, his biographer, wrote that "...from the outset he was very nervous – he had only accepted on the understanding that it was to be a 'quiet little party' ". That 'quiet little party' at which the ceremony took place was held at Cliveden, home of Lord Astor, the Master of the day and a friend of the composer. Britten's letter of thanks to 'Bill' Astor and a photograph of the occasion can be seen at:

<http://www.wcomarchive.org.uk/#!letter-from-benjamin-britten/c1jjj>

The Company received its first Royal Charter from King James I in 1604, but during the following reign it was rescinded, thanks to the machinations

of Nicholas Lanier, a courtier and musician in the King's Band. But we have much to thank King James I for and in July 1929 the Company's Treasurer, Arthur Hill (Master in 1911-12), presented the Company with an early portrait of the monarch. The picture was exhibited at the Court meeting, being 'much admired by the members present and the Honorary Treasurer was, on the proposition of the Master, cordially thanked for his generous gift'. For some time the portrait hung in the Guildhall Art Gallery, although more recently it has been under the direct care of the Company. View this special Treasure at:

<http://www.wcomarchive.org.uk/#!—king-james-i/cry>

Finally, a Treasure created by Herbert Howells – a most distinguished British composer. Howells had a long and affectionate connection with the Company, from 1915 when, at the age of 22 and a student at the Royal College of Music, he was awarded the Silver Medal, until 1983, the year of his death. In 1930 Howells was the first composer to be awarded the prestigious Collard Fellowship, named after the Pastmaster who left a generous bequest to the Company. Over the years this monetary award has allowed its holders 'to concentrate on creativity in composition or excellence in performance' and Howells used it to great advantage. In 1934 he became a Freeman and Liveryman and, 25 years later, received the Honorary Life Collard Fellowship in succession to Ralph Vaughan Williams. Elected as Master in 1960, Howells composed his *Hymn for Saint Cecilia* at the request of the Company's Livery Club and it was first performed in St Paul's Cathedral. Howells was devoted to the Company and his manuscript can be seen on the website at:

<http://www.wcomarchive.org.uk/#!—a-hymn-for-st-cecilia/c22na>

As our Archive website continues to grow we hope that all our members will use and enjoy the wealth of information that lies there. If you would be interested in joining our small, hard-working group of Archive enthusiasts, please use the CONTACT US facility, found under the INFORMATION tab on the Archive website. It's great fun, researching, discovering and working together; but there is much more that we can do and your enthusiastic, active support really would be greatly appreciated!

Pastmaster PAUL CAMPION

Wondering how to fill those dark winter evenings?

We need volunteers to help transcribe our old Minute books, dating from the late 1770s to the early 1900s, using Word or similar software. There are not many words per page (you can see them on our archive website) so if you are willing to transcribe 50 or more pages it would help us greatly - but any contribution would be most welcome. Please contact Margot Mouat margot@mouat.me.uk for further details.