



Welcome to the latest edition of AGS News, the forum of The Armstrong Gibbs Society, which covers events, people and music.

Armstrong Gibbs A Golden Anniversary Celebration



6th February 2010

Laurette Guest writes:

THE AESS CELEBRATION OF ARMSTRONG GIBBS

It is always a delight for the Executive Committee of the Society when someone, somewhere, takes the initiative to organise an event which furthers the objects of the Society. It was thus when, towards the end of last year, an enquiry was received from Caroline Hodgson of the Darlington and District Organists' and Choirmasters' Association. Caroline was organising a meeting of her members devoted to Armstrong Gibbs and his music. The enquiry was passed to me and eventually a parcel of 'goodies' was despatched. This contained some CDs, multiple copies of some choral works that had been specifically requested, single copies of a few others and a very special copy of the Turning Year with Gibbs' initials, in his handwriting, written on the front cover. With the return of the music after the event Caroline wrote:

The 50th anniversary of Gibbs' death falls this year, 2010. The trustees, who form the Executive Committee, are keen to promote and support any events to mark the occasion. We were therefore pleased to be able to attend one such event on 7th February in the intimate atmosphere of the Budworth Hall, Chipping Ongar, where the Association of English Singers and Speakers, together with the AGS and the Lea Valley Incorporated Society of Musicians, held an afternoon's "Celebration of Armstrong Gibbs".

"We had a lovely night. There were 24 of us, all eager to join in the singing, listen to the recordings and learn about Armstrong Gibbs' life. I had so much material that I feared that we might be there till midnight! However, we started at 7.30 and finished at 9.20pm. We didn't have a break – the audience (sorry, choir!) were getting up and down during the evening to sing, so no-one needed a leg-stretch. We had a large table full of music and photos for people to see. I kept 'The Turning Year' in its packet but pointed out the signature to everyone. I had listened to your recording while following the score and enjoyed it very much. We sang three of the carols which you sent, and listened to your CD of 'Sleep Little King' while we followed the scores. Thank you for making our evening so successful."

The two-hour programme consisted of some thirty-four poems mostly by Walter de la Mare, but including J Masefield, A Tennyson, R L Stevenson and others. Some were recited and others sung to settings by Gibbs.

Although I haven't met Caroline it was a pleasure to correspond with her by email and her enthusiasm for Gibbs' music was clear. It sounded as though Caroline's evening was very well organised and well-received. I was delighted to have been able to help by sending material. The members of the executive committee are always pleased to assist anyone wishing to hold an event by providing music and information, drawing on the archives and other material held in Danbury.

The first half was introduced by an excellent biographical presentation entitled "Armstrong Gibbs, the Man", written by Angela Aries and read in her unavoidable absence by Christopher Kingsley. The second half was prefaced by Michael Pilkington's presentation of "Gibbs the Songwriter". As an expert on English song Michael Pilkington was able to give some intriguing insights into Gibbs's career and his considerable gifts as a songwriter. He also made reference to R Hancock Child's research into Gibbs the Ballad-maker, concluding his talk by reading an extract from it.

Christopher Kingsley, Chairman AGS

The performers, - singers, readers and accompanists, - were diverse in their ages and experience, ranging from professionals such as Graham Trew and Mark Wilde, to the youngster who won the Gibbs' song trophy in the Chelmsford competitive festival. She sang "Dusk" accompanied by her singing teacher - and the Cup! The programme was rounded off by members of the Milton Keynes Youth Chorale who gave a very accomplished performance of excerpts from "A Saviour Born". Overall, the standard of recitation and singing was high and a pleasure to listen to. Although on the long side, the wide variety of the programme and the high standard of the performances held our attention.

Congratulations should go to Patricia Williams for organizing so many singers, readers and accompanists to come together to help put Armstrong Gibbs on the map in this anniversary year. The audience of some eighty people included Giles de la Mare and his wife, and Ann and Lyndon Rust, who travelled considerable distances to be able to attend. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and the friendly atmosphere of the occasion.

Members of the AGS set up a promotional display board in the hall, and were pleased to sign up two new members for the Society. As a trustee I felt it had been a worthwhile exercise and an enjoyable way to spend a Sunday afternoon.



Memory Lane

An evacuee writes:(part 2)

‘I have many happy memories of my stay in Little Baddow. Mrs Gibbs took Jean and I to a small restaurant in Woodham Walter for afternoon tea, we also went shopping in Chelmsford. We went to lunch at Ann’s nannies house, I remember it was the first time I had tasted baked parsnips, I have liked them ever since. It was a very severe winter, the pond at Eaves Corner was frozen over and the villagers were able to skate on it. There was a thatched bungalow at the entrance to Blakes Wood, the icicles reached from the thatch to the ground fencing the people in. I remember there was a Foot and Mouth scare, the farms had long troughs of disinfectant across the entrances. My love of the countryside came from my stay in Little Baddow.

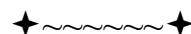
Dr and Mrs Gibbs had a cook and a parlour maid (Jessie and Evelyn). Jessie made jam and pickles from the kitchen garden produce. They were both very kind to Jean and I. On my 12th birthday I had an attack of quinsy and could not swallow, Jessie made me a jelly with candles all round the edge.

Dr Gibbs was quite surprised when my father cycled from Tottenham to see me; he was made very welcome. Jean’s father was killed in action and she returned home to her Mother, I was left on my own until I returned to my parents.

I have a Prayer Book signed Dr and Mrs Gibbs Christmas 1939, A Bible signed Jessie and Evelyn Christmas 1939, and a newspaper account of Ann’s wedding with a photo of Ann arriving at Danbury Church on Dr Gibbs arm.

There are so many memories I will never ever forget. Dr and Mrs Armstrong Gibbs were a wonderful couple so kind and generous to share their home with two evacuees.’

Doreen Gray



NEWS AND VIEWS

Recordings

March 2010

Gibbs’ oboe concerto recorded by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, soloist Jonathan Small

2010 Celebrations

8th May 2010, Danbury

*Armstrong Gibbs Society AGM
(please see separate leaflet)*

9th May 2010, Danbury

Choral Evensong to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the composer’s death

12th May 2010

Fiftieth anniversary of the death of Armstrong Gibbs

15th May 2010, Purleigh

The Lingwood Consort include songs by Gibbs

28th – 31st May, Dorchester Abbey

English Music Festival, with a performance of Gibbs’ Threnody for Walter de la Mare

19th June 2010, Great Waltham

Waltham Singers concert featuring Gibbs’ music

10th -12th September 2010, Danbury

Second Armstrong Gibbs Music Festival

20th November 2010, Chelmsford

Essex Symphony Orchestra perform Gibbs’ Oboe Concerto, soloist Will Oinn

For regular updates on events please visit the Armstrong Gibbs website at www.armstronggibbs.com

Subscriptions 2010

Annual subscriptions of £10 are now due. Kindly send you cheque to the Treasurer, Douglas Potter, at the following address:

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See Next Issue for CAG Soundbites, From the Records, Memory Lane, and News and Views. Please send contributions to the editor:

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