THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAP OF BRITAIN

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E&T

First published 2010 by Elliott and Thompson Limited
27 John Street, London WC1N 2BX
www.eandtbooks.com

ISBN: 978-1-9040-2790-4

This edition published in 2010

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed in the UK by CPI Group

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the many librarians around the country who have helped me with my research for this book. In particular I would like to thank Clare Trend, Jodie North, Anne Maskell and Denise Price. I am also extremely grateful for the help provided by Dr Stuart Kinsella (the archivist of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin whose history of the cathedral is to be published soon), Lionel Carley, Richard Bradbury, Jaap and Ghislaine Buis, Barbara Coombes, Alistair Hinton, Rolf Jordan, Roxanna Panufnik, Lady Panufnik, Laura Ponsonby, Graeme Kay, Rev Sue Tucker and Malcolm Rudland. My apologies to anyone I may have inadvertently omitted.

Information for a project such as this comes from many sources: newspapers, magazines, books, a chance conversation, guide books, brochures, radio programmes, the internet. The internet has proved invaluable for providing a starting point and for cross-checking, although it does have to be approached with a certain degree of circumspection. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude

to the various composer societies and composer trusts that maintain such invaluable websites. Among the magazines that have been especially useful have been Classical Music, edited by Keith Clarke, and the BBC Music Magazine.

Books I have consulted frequently are The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, The Oxford Companion to Music, the Dictionary of National Biography and Who's Who in Music. The following are books which proved to be particularly helpful and to which I returned regularly: A Musical Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland by Gerald Norris (David and Charles 1981), The London Blue Plaque Guide by Nick Rennison (Sutton 1999), Musical Landscapes by John Burke (Webb and Bower 1983), Gilbert and Sullivan's London by Andrew Goodman (Faber 2000), Music Landmarks of London by Edward Lee (Omnibus 1995), Scotland's Music by John Purser (Mainstream 1992) and Who's Buried Where in England by Douglas Greenwood (Constable 2006). I also consulted numerous composer biographies and autobiographies.

I would like to thank Mark Searle for his unquentionable enthusiasm for this project, Darren Henley of Classic FM for setting it in motion and Clive Hebard for all his hard work correcting my mistakes. Any that are left are mine, not his.

Finally my thanks to Cherry, Harry, Leo and Caitlin, just for being there.

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FOREWORD

As you might expect, there are a multitude of exciting benefits about working at Classic FM, making radio programmes that reach millions of people each week. We are able to listen to the greatest music ever composed, all day, every day. We meet the finest classical musicians of their generation when they drop into our studios for an interview. And we work closely with the very best of British orchestras, as they develop the next generation of classical music lovers.

But, if there is one word that encapsulates day-to-day life at Classic FM, it would have to be 'discovery'.

Every morning, mountains of freshly minted CDs arrive on our desks. Many contain new recordings of familiar works by the very greatest composers. But, in amongst the big names, there are always one or two hidden gems: either completely new pieces penned recently by living composers, or long forgotten works dating back hundreds of years. There is always a sense of thrill about discovering a great piece of classical music for the first time - that moment when you instinctively know that it is a piece that you will return to again and again.

It is important to remember, though, that Classic FM is

not only a radio station for people who already have a passion for classical music. As well as creating radio programmes for existing classical music lovers, we are passionate about taking our music to the widest possible audience. No matter what your age, geography or background, all of us at Classic FM believe that classical music can - and should - play an important part in your life.

In this book, Richard Fawkes has set out on a voyage of discovery of a slightly different kind. Richard is among our most respected classical music writers and when he first told me about the idea for this book, I instantly loved it. As you will read, he has painstakingly plotted a journey around the British Isles, uncovering his own hidden gems about classical music and the people who have composed and performed it. Some of the talent such as Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Jenkins is home-grown. Other entries cover some of the classical luminaries to whom we have played host over the years, including the likes of Mozart, Mendelssohn and Bruch. All are united in playing a part in Britain's classical music heritage.

This is a book for you whichever particular stage of your own personal journey you happen to be at. If you are just starting out, you will find plenty here to whet your classical appetite. And if you are a seasoned aficionado, then the next 300 or so pages will help to further your journey into classical music.

Wishing you many happy discoveries!

Darren Henley
Managing Director
Classic FM

INTRODUCTION

When I was writing my biography of the Victorian playwright Dion Boucicault, I visited his home town of Dublin. It was walking the streets he had once walked, seeing the sights he had once seen, staying in the only surviving house in the city in which he had lived, that gave me a much greater understanding of the man than any amount of reading had done.

It is hard to say exactly why that should be, but there is something special about standing where an artist once stood. To look at the view which inspired Elgar to write his Serenade for Strings; to listen to an organ on which Handel or Mendelssohn played; to stand outside the house where the eight-year old Mozart wrote his first symphony; to visit the birthplace of Gustav Holst – such experiences help us, in an intangible way, to understand more about a composer and his music.

There has always been a fascination with places linked to great artists. Whether strolling through Monet's gardens

at Giverny, standing outside one of Corbusier's residential or civic buildings, or attending a play on the site where Shakespeare's finest works were first performed, we can all gain something from inhabiting, even just for a moment, the same spaces as our icons. This book is a guide to those places in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland with musical connections that will help you discover for yourself the wealth of stories and secrets to be found within these isles.

When he was on his deathbed, Beethoven was given a picture of Haydn's birthplace. He loved the picture and kept hold of it because it reminded him that such a great man was born in such a humble dwelling place.

It is this bond between us and the musically creative artist that I hope will be nurtured by this book.

One thing the book is not is a *Who's Who* of British composers and musicians. I am aware of composers I have not included, of fine musicians left out. Nor is the book a list of all the places in which a particular composer might have lived or worked. Rather, you will read of those locations that played a significant part in their life or output, as well as numerous obscure locations that were the backdrop to notable, hitherto unknown – or just downright odd – developments in their career, and thus in the evolution of Britain's musical heritage. Some characters, such as Vaughan Williams, changed lodgings and homes as frequently as the calendar changes months, and to have listed them all would have been to turn this project into an address book. I have also deliberately avoided including all the sites of houses in which composers and musicians have stayed, unless the

connection to the composer is either very strong or very interesting. This is a guide to places which, generally speaking, can be seen or visited. I have also deliberately not included living composers on the grounds that to give out details of where they live is an invasion of privacy. I have also, with one or two exceptions, not included concert halls and performace venues.

I do hope that by discovering something of the people behind the notes, readers will be sent on a voyage of discovery, that they will be encouraged to listen to music they may never have heard before or may not have heard for a long time.Whether you are a seasoned classical music buff or a curious amateur, everyone will have a corner of the country they'll want to visit to see for themselves how a favourite artist or work played their part in making Britain an important contributor to many of the major movements in classical music.

THE ORGAN

There can hardly be a church in the City of London which does not claim to possess an organ on which Henry Purcell, John Blow, Handel, or even Mendelssohn, once played. There's no doubt the quartet did play on a great many City instruments, but few have survived. Over the years, pipes have needed replacing and bellows mending, so that although the casing may be original, what's inside certainly isn't.

Organs are thought of today as being largely church instruments. Originally though, they were associated more with Roman gladiators entering the ring than sacred rituals within houses of prayer. It wasn't until the eighth century that organs began to take a prominent part in the liturgy. During the Civil War large numbers of organs were destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's men. Following the Restoration of King Charles II in 1660, Britain saw a boom in organ building and playing. In Germany people such as Dieterich Buxterhude and JS Bach demonstrated just what the organ can do by composing numerous ambitious large-scale works, while in England, Purcell, Blow and, in particular, Handel, produced brilliant pieces for the instrument. Handel not only used the organ for accompaniment, he wrote several organ concertos. To become organist of the Chapel Royal was one of the highest positions in the land to which a musician could aspire. No instrument, other than the piano, has a more varied repertoire. Small wonder Mozart called it the King of Instruments. Every so often there is a revival of interest in the organ as a concert hall instrument, and it still requires

a Mighty Wurlitzer to fill a cinema auditorium. A modern organ going flat out is the equivalent of three symphony orchestras' worth of sound.

1. ALDBOURNE, Wiltshire

~ Beech Knoll, Aldbourne ~

In 1933, the composer Gerald Finzi married the artist Joyce Black (known as Joy), gave up his job at the Royal Academy teaching composition, and moved out of London to the country. Witnesses to the marriage included Vaughan Williams who had conducted the first performance of Finzi's Violin Concerto in 1928. The place the Finzis chose to live initially was Beech Knoll in Aldbourne, a village on the B4192, south east of Swindon. They then decided to have a house built at Ashmansworth, staying at Beech Knoll until it was ready in 1939. Finzi, a slow worker, often took years to complete a composition. Among those he finished or worked on at Beech Knoll were the *Dies Natalis*, *Two Milton Sonnets*, *Earth and Air and Rain*, the *Interlude for oboe and strings*, settings of poems by Robert Bridges and the string trio *Prelude and Fugue*. He also began his vitally important work cataloguing the works of the poet and composer Ivor Gurney. Aldbourne is famous as the place where the brothers Robert and William Cor, who made harnesses for horses, produced the first tuned handbells between 1696 and 1724. The US 101st Airborne Division was based here just before D-Day.

2. ALDEBURGH, Suffolk

The seaside village of Aldeburgh will forever be associated with the composer Benjamin Britten who was born in nearby Lowestoft in 1913 and died at The Red House, in Aldeburgh, in December 1976.

In 1937, Britten's widowed mother died and his relationship with the tenor Peter Pears, which was to last until his own death, was just beginning. With the legacy left by his mother, he bought the Old Mill in Snape, a converted stump of a former windmill overlooking a Victorian industrial complex known as the Maltings. In 1942, after a failed attempt to settle in America, Britten returned to Suffolk to work on his opera *Peter Grimes*. In 1947, the success of *Grimes* allowed him and Pears to move to Crag House at 4 Crabbe Street, Aldeburgh, backing onto the seafront. Here he wrote the *Spring Symphony*, *The Little Sweep*, *Billy Budd*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Prince of the Pagodas*. He and Pears moved again in 1957, when Britten was working on *Noye's Fludde*, to The Red House in a straight swap with the painter Mary Potter, whose marriage had broken up. The Red House, at the bottom of a rough track alongside the golf course, was to remain Britten's home until his death.

Britten never composed at the piano and pieces were therefore written in a number of rooms. His work pattern rarely changed: composition from 8am until 1pm, lunch at 1.15pm, followed by a walk across the golf course to the sea to think about what he had done, then back home to score between tea-time and dinner. His major compositions written at the Red House were the *Missa*

Brevis, *Nocturne*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *War Requiem*, the *Symphony for Cello and Orchestra* and the *Church Parables* (which were also worked on in Venice). In 1970, Britten purchased Chapel House, Horham, to get away from the constant stream of visitors to The Red House (Kodaly, Shostakovitch and Poulenc among them), and it was there that much of his work after *Owen Wingrave* was done.

The Britten-Pears archive is open to scholars by arrangement and is sometimes opened to the public during the Aldeburgh Festival.

A memorial window to Britten, designed by John Piper (who designed sets for his operas), can be seen in the church of St Peter and St Paul. There is a memorial bust nearby of George Crabbe, the poet who was born in Aldeburgh in 1754. It was on Crabbe's best-known poem, 'The Borough', that Britten based his first opera *Peter Grimes*.

The Aldeburgh Festival was established by Britten and Pears in 1948 and most of Britten's major scores were written for the festival. In 1967, at Snape, six miles up the river Alde from Aldeburgh, he and Pears converted one of the Maltings (red-brick Victorian buildings built to process barley) into a concert hall. This burnt down two years later and was restored the following year. Apart from hosting concerts during the annual June Festival, there are activities throughout the year, some centred on the work of the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies which is based here. The complex is open all the year round.

A 12ft high sculpture in memory of Benjamin Britten can be seen on the shingle beach between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness. Designed in the shape of a scallop shell by

Maggi Hambling (who lives in nearby Bendham) it was unveiled in November 2003, and is inscribed with a quotation from the libretto of *Peter Grimes*. The idea for the sculpture came from Hambling herself. It was paid for by private subscription with support from charitable trusts, and then donated to the local council. Its position on the beach was controversial with more than 600 people signing a petition to have it removed.

Aldeburgh Festival website: www.aldeburgh.co.uk

3. ASHMANSWORTH, Hampshire

– Church Farm, Ashmansworth –

This is the house composer Gerald Finzi had built for himself and his family in this village off the A343, south of Newbury. It was his home from 1938 until his death in Oxford in 1956 from Hodgkins Disease. Beneath the porch of the house, he buried a copy of the favourite of his own songs, a setting of James Elroy Flecker's *To a poet a thousand years hence*. Finzi was mad about apples and introduced many rare species to his orchard. During World War Two he opened the house to Czech and German refugees. Finzi also founded the Newbury String Players.

Among the works Finzi completed here were the *Clarinet Concerto* (the work by which he is probably best known), the cello concerto, the *Grand Fantasia and Toccata*, many songs and *Intimations of Immortality*, a soberingly ironic title when one considers that he was only seven when his father died, one brother died young from pneumonia, and his other brother committed suicide. Finzi

himself was given only ten years to live while still a comparatively young man. He was fifty-five when he died at Church Farm on 27 September, the day after the premiere of his cello concerto. Finzi is buried in the churchyard of St James' Church, Ashmansworth, close to the church porch where there is an engraved glass window by Laurence Whistler dedicated to English music.

Vaughan Williams was a frequent visitor and in 1956 wrote part of his Ninth Symphony here.

4. ATTLEBOROUGH, Norfolk

– 26 Springfields, Attleborough, Norfolk NR17 2PA –

This is the undistinguished house to which sixty-year old Malcolm Arnold moved in 1984 after he had spent the previous seven years in an alcoholic mist, told by his doctors he only had a short time to live. It was thanks to Anthony Day, who was employed to look after him, that Arnold not only survived but began to write again. The trigger was seeing the Danish recorder player Micala Petri on television: Arnold was so moved by her performance he wrote a recorder concerto especially for her. There then followed a set of *Irish Dances*, the *Attleborough Suite*, the cello concerto commissioned by Julian Lloyd Webber, the final, dark, bleak *Ninth Symphony*, dedicated to Day, and a march for the RAF. He then turned his back on composition, having said all he wanted. Arnold, who was born in Northampton in 1921, died in hospital in Norwich on 23 September 2007, a month short of his eighty-fifth birthday. Out of fashion for long periods in his career,

Arnold is now recognised as being one of Britain's major composers. He was knighted in 1993.

5. BADSEY, Worcestershire

– Vine Cottage, 8 Chapel Street, Badsey –

This was the cottage near Evesham in which the composer Muzio Clementi, mentor of Beethoven and Father of the pianoforte, is supposed to have died, even though he never actually lived in or as far as we know stayed in the village. What allegedly happened is that Clementi, arguably the most famous musician of his day – he is buried in Westminster Abbey – was living in retirement in a cottage on the edge of Evesham, with views across to Bredon Hill, when he died on 10 March 1832.That cottage was later sold to be demolished since it was considered unsightly and a man called Robert Knight bought it. Knight is supposed to have dismantled the building, cleaned up the bricks and taken them to Badsey where he built Vine Cottage and the adjoining Rose Cottage. Local records certainly show that a Robert Knight did own Vine Cottage, and locals have been quoted as being told by parents that Clementi had lived in the village, but otherwise there is no proof that the story is true.

6. BARNARD CASTLE, Co Durham

– The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NP –

The museum was built in the nineteenth century by local businessman John Bowes and his French actress wife

Joséphine, to introduce art to local people. Among the staggering collection of silverware, Sèvres porcelain, Canalettos and Goyas are a number of interesting musical instruments collected either because of their decorative aspect or because of local interest. Most of them are between one hundred and three hundred years old and include early pianos, a Kirchman harpsichord dating from about 1785, locally made violins, flutes, a serpent and barrel organs.

www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk

7. BARNSTAPLE, Devon

– St Anne's Chapel, Barnstaple –

The upper part of the chapel, close by the parish church, probably dates from 1456 but the crypt is much older. From the end of the seventeenth century until 1910 the building was used as the Barnstaple grammar school. John Gay, who in 1728 wrote *The Beggar's Opera* (on which the Weill/Brecht *The Threepenny Opera* was based), was a pupil here. The building is opened occasionally but there are plans to turn it into a concert venue.

8. BATH, Somerset

– 13 Gay Street –

The home of the celebrated castrato Venanzio Rauzzini (he also lived for a time at 17 Queen Square). Born in Camerino, Italy, in 1747 he became a member of the Sistine Chapel

choir where he had the snip to stop his voice breaking. A strikingly handsome man and a wow with the ladies, he was soon singing in the opera houses of Italy. He then moved to Munich where he was run out of town because of his many affairs with married women (women generally were attracted to castrato singers, probably because they wanted to know whether they could or they couldn't). Arriving in Vienna, he was heard by the young Mozart who promptly offered him the leading role of Cecilio in his new opera, *Lucio Silla*. It was for him that Mozart wrote the motet *Exsultate Jubilate*. When he retired from the stage in 1780, Rauzzini settled in Bath to become a singing teacher and help organise the subscription concerts. He took them over completely the following year. Rauzzini was fabulously wealthy, commanding huge fees – he was paid £2,000 a year, for example, to appear at the King's Theatre in London (that's roughly a quarter of a million pounds in today's money). He was a prolific composer for the voice, which included writing six operas. As well as his town houses in Bath, Rauzzini rented Perrymead Villa overlooking the city. It was here that Haydn visited him in 1794 and wrote a canon about Turk, Rauzzini's dog. Rauzzini died in 1810 and is buried in Bath Abbey where there is a memorial to him.

⌐ Linley House, 1 Pierpont Place, off Pierpont Street, ⌐ Bath, BA1 5LA

Linley House was the home of the Linley family from 1764 until 1771 although the blue plaque outside doesn't mention either composer Thomas Linley Senior or Thomas Linley Junior, only Elizabeth Anne Linley who ran away to France with the playwright Richard Brinsley

Sheridan. A singer, she lived in the house from 1767 until 1771. Thomas Linley, her father, was a gifted musician in charge of the Bath orchestra. He also became, with his son-in-law Sheridan, manager of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, for which he wrote much incidental music as well as writing songs and madrigals. Thomas Linley Junior, one of Britain's greatest violinists and a friend of Mozart, was born in nearby Abbey Green. He was to die in a tragic boating accident at Bourne when only 22-years-old. Others of Linley's large family also became professional musicians: Ozias was an organist, Samuel sang and played the oboe, Maria was a singer and William a composer of glees and songs. The house was also supposed to have been rented for a while by Emma Hamilton (best remembered as the mistress of Lord Nelson and the muse of George Romney). Nelson certainly lived just around the corner in Pierpont Street.

There are portraits by Gainsborough of both Thomas Linley Senior and Thomas Linley Junior, the Linley Sisters (Elizabeth and Mary) and William in Dulwich Picture Gallery.

– 19 New King Street, Bath, BA1 2BL –

For many years, this Grade II listed Georgian building was the home of Sir William Herschel, the King's Astronomer, famous for discovering the planet Uranus in 1781.

Herschel, whose first names were really Friedrich Wilhelm, was born into a family of musicians in Hanover in 1738. As a boy he played in the band of the Hanoverian Guards. At the age of nineteen he came to England, changed his name to William, and became a bandmaster and organist in Yorkshire before moving to Bath to become

organist of the Octagon Chapel and a music teacher. He was also a talented composer and conductor, who did not give up composition until he was 40. These include symphonies, chamber works, church music and some military music. Much of it has been lost; what remains rarely gets a performance. Although he was enjoying a successful career as a musician, Herschel began to develop an interest in astronomy, as did his sister Caroline, who had joined him in Bath as a singer, and his brother Alexander. The interest became a passion and it was in this house, to which they moved in 1777, that Herschel, using a telescope of his own design, discovered Uranus. His sister Caroline, who could well have become a professional singer but preferred instead to help her brother with his astronomy, became the first woman scientist and astronomer to be elected to the Royal Society. Herschel's interest in telescopes led him, with the aid of a £4,000 grant from King George III, to build the largest telescope in the world, 40 feet long with a 48 inch reflecting mirror. This was kept at Observatory House in Slough and was destroyed in a gale in 1839, seventeen years after Herschel's death. As well as discovering Uranus, Herschel discovered Saturn's satellites and infra-red radiation. His discoveries helped double the known size of the universe. He died at his home in Slough on 25 August 1822.

According to legend, one very important visitor to Slough, in June 1792, was Haydn. Having finished his concert series in London, Haydn had taken a few days off to go sightseeing (including visits to Windsor Castle and Ascot races). He arrived to see Herschel and was invited to look through the telescope, a moment of such wonder that

he apparently said nothing for twenty minutes until he uttered the words 'So high… so far' and decided there and then to write *The Creation*. While there is evidence that Haydn looked through Herschel's telescope (Haydn noted the instrument's measurements in his diary), there is none that it inspired his oratorio. Indeed, another story claims that after hearing a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, he commented that he would like to write something similar but where to start? The leader of the orchestra that had played his symphonies is supposed to have picked up a Bible, handed it to Haydn and said, 'There, take that and begin at the beginning.'

Herschel's Bath house is now the Herschel Museum of Astronomy.

www.bath-preservation-trust.org.uk

– Parade Gardens, Orange Grove, Bath, BA1 1EE –

An attractive formal garden by the side of the River Avon overlooking Pulteney Bridge and the weir, which Bath citizens can enter for free; visitors have to pay an entrance fee. In the gardens is a bronze statue of the young Mozart playing his violin, based by sculptor David Backhouse on the famous statue in Salzburg. Mozart stands, 140cm high, on a raised, pierced and scrolled bronze base adorned with three doves, two squirrels and a mouse. The sculpture was commissioned on her death-bed by Mrs Purnell of the AM Purnell Charitable Trust to commemorate her music-loving son Mark who died in 1985. The opening ceremony in 1991 was attended by Yehudi Menuhin, a trustee of Bath's annual Mozartfest Music Festival, and local MP Chris Patten who went on to become the last Governor of Hong Kong.

On Sundays during summer concerts are given on the Parade Gardens bandstand.

9. BAWDSEY, SUFFOLK

– St Mary's Church, Bawdsey, a village 9 miles from – Woodbridge at the end of the B1083.

The composer Roger Quilter is buried in the impressive Quilter family vault outside the west door. Nearby Bawdsey Manor was built by Quilter's father, Sir Cuthbert, an MP and real ale enthusiast. It was bought by the RAF in 1936 for use as a secret research establishment and it is where radar was developed at the beginning of World War Two. Quilter, who was born in Brighton in 1877 and died in London in 1953, never lived in Bawdsey Manor which is now a residential conference and educational centre. Although he wrote incidental music for plays and even an opera after schooling at Eton, Quilter, who developed mental problems following the death of his nephew in World War Two, is most noted for being one of the finest English songwriters of the twentieth century. He wrote over a hundred songs, the best known of which is probably *Oh Mistress Mine,* one of his many settings of Shakespeare.

10. BIRCHINGTON-ON-SEA, Kent

– All Saints Church, The Square, Birchington, CT7 9AF –

The English composer Rosalind Ellicott, is buried here. In her day she was considered one of Britain's leading

female composers, quite the equal of Dame Ethel Smyth, the pioneer of women's suffrage and composer of opera. Ellicott had been born on 14 November 1857 in Cambridge, where her father, Charles Ellicott, a distinguished theologian, was Professor of Divinity. He was indifferent to music but her mother was a singer who helped found the London Handel Society and the Gloucester Philharmonic Society and it was she who encouraged Ellicott's interest in music. By the age of six, when her father became Bishop of Gloucester, she was already composing, and at the age of seventeen she went to the Royal Academy of Music to study the piano. When her teacher heard a piano quartet she had written, he advised her to study composition as well. Her first published piece was *A Sketch* in 1883. Her father may not have cared much for music but it cannot have been a drawback to her getting her first major orchestral piece, an overture, commissioned for the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, to be the daughter of the Bishop. Many of her other works, including two cantatas, were written for the Three Choirs. Finding it difficult, even with the Bishop connection, to get performances, Ellicott began to work on smaller scale chamber pieces. But then, around the turn of the century, in spite of people such as Parry thinking her better than many male composers, her output dried up and she floated off into a musical backwater. Her father, after thirty-four years in Gloucester, retired to a bungalow named Tresco in Spencer Road, Birchington. Rosalind moved with him and when both parents died, took over the house. She died here on 5 April 1924 and was buried close to her parents

in the local churchyard. Most of her music has disappeared with only a handful of songs, some instrumental pieces (including an attractive piano trio), the cantatas *Elysium* and *The Birth of Song*, and *A Reverie* for piano and cello, surviving.

Also in the churchyard is the grave of the pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

11. BIRMINGHAM, West Midlands

St Barnabas' Church, Erdington

St Barnabas contains an 1888 Bevington organ built originally for the Church of the Redeemer on Hagley Road. It was moved here in 1976, following that church's demolition. Among those who visited the Church of the Redeemer to play the instrument were the composers Marcel Dupré, Flor Peters, Jeanne Demissieux and Fernando Germani, organist of St Peter's in Rome. The instrument may also have been played by Louis Vierne and Maurice Duruflé. They were all invited to give evening recitals when visiting Birmingham for the traditional organ lunchtime concert in the Town Hall.

– Town Hall –

Birmingham Town Hall merits an inclusion simply because it is the oldest purpose-built concert hall in the world. The city had been holding a triennial music festival ever since 1768 using such buildings as St Philip's Church (now Birmingham Cathedral). So successful was the festival that Birmingham decided to build a special

venue. A competition was held and won by 27-year-old Joseph Hansom (of Hansom cab fame) with a design based on the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome, an ancient edifice in the Forum originally built in gratitude for victory at the battle of Lake Regillus. An organ was commissioned from William Hill, and the hall opened in 1834. Many famous composers have subsequently visited and performed in the building. They include Mendelssohn who wrote *Elijah* for the Birmingham Festival and conducted the first performance, Johann Strauss, who appeared as a guest conductor, Grieg who, in 1897, gave one of his last piano recitals, and Dvorák, who conducted the world premiere of his *Requiem* here in 1891. Gounod's *La Redemption* was first heard in Birmingham in 1881. Standards were high. As Saint-Saëns wrote: 'I wish people who describe the English as unmusical could hear the Birmingham singers. This choir has everything: intonation, perfect timing and rhythm.' The Town Hall also witnessed the first performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. It was not a success. The choir master died not long before the premiere and the parts arrived late, giving conductor Hans Richter only ten days to study the score. 'I always said God was against art,' commented Elgar afterwards. Elgar's other great connection with Birmingham was that he was the University's first Professor of Music.

The Town Hall organ was the largest in England at the time with over 3,000 pipes. Samuel Wesley gave the first recital on it in 1834 and Mendelssohn also played it.

12. BLANDFORD FORUM, DORSET

– Stepleton House, Iwerne Steepleton, Blandford Forum –

A private house on the A350 between Blandford and Shaftesbury, not open to the public, this is where Sir Peter Beckford, who is buried in the churchyard of St Mary's Chapel on the estate, brought the young Muzio Clementi in 1766. Beckford's family money came from sugar and slavery in Jamaica. It was while he was in Rome, on a European Grand Tour, that he first heard thirteen-year-old Clementi, the son of a Roman silversmith, playing the organ in the church of San Lorenzo, in Damaso. Realising the boy's talent, Beckford, a cousin of writer William Beckford and future Member of Parliament, did a deal with Clementi's father to bring the boy to England for tuition. Clementi stayed at Stepleton for seven years, until he was twenty-one, perfecting his keyboard technique and performing for Beckford's guests whenever it was required. He left for London to find fame and fortune. He became not only 'the Father of the Pianoforte' but a composer (one of the first to write for the piano and considered at the time to be second only to Haydn as a symphonist), a conductor, an editor and influential teacher. He even became a piano manufacturer, designing his own instruments. In Vienna, on a European tour, he was entered into a musical duel with Mozart, a duel that the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph declared a draw. Clementi was full of admiration for Mozart, even though Mozart did go on to steal one of his tunes for *The Magic Flute* overture; Mozart dismissed Clementi as a charlatan. Clementi died in Evesham in

1832 and was buried in Westminster Abbey with three of his students, John Field, Johann Baptist Cramer and Ignaz Moschelles, acting as pallbearers.

13. BLICKLING, Norfolk

– Blickling Hall, Blickling, Norwich, Norfolk NR11 6NF –

Built in the early seventeenth century and now owned by the National Trust, Blickling Hall is one of England's finest Jacobean houses. The organist and composer Richard Davy (c1467–c1516) apparently lived here when it was the home of Sir Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne Boleyn, the mother of Queen Elizabeth I. He seems to have been here from about 1506 until the time of his death some ten or so years later, possibly as Sir Thomas's house musician. Very little is known about Davy other than that there are some pieces by him in the Eton Choirbook and he was organist at Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1490 until 1492 when he became the college choirmaster. A Richard Davy who may or may not have been the same person was organist at Exeter Cathedral.

14. BLYTHBURGH, Suffolk

– Lark Rise, Dunwich Road, Blythburgh –

The village of Blythburgh on the A12 near Halesworth was the home for the last fifteen years of his life of composer William Alwyn. Alwyn had been born in Northampton on 7 November 1905. He became a flautist and it was while

playing in a cinema orchestra that he got his first compositional break: the man engaged to write the score they were due to play couldn't manage it and Alwyn was asked to take over. It was to be the start of a career as one of Britain's finest film composers. He eventually wrote the scores for more than 200 films including such classics as *Desert Victory*, *Odd Man Out* and *The Crimson Pirate*. He was also Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music, a post he held from 1926 until 1954. As well as film scores, Alwyn wrote a number of concertos, five symphonies, four operas and a considerable amount of chamber music. He was a founder of the Composers Guild of Great Britain and vice-president of the Society for New Music. Although he was respected by the musical establishment (he was championed by Sir Henry Wood and Sir John Barbirolli, to whom he dedicated one of his symphonies), Alwyn had difficulty in getting his more serious works performed: the thinking of the day was that if you were first and foremost a film composer, your other music had to be light and insubstantial.

Alwyn moved to Blythburgh in 1960 having suffered a nervous breakdown due to his turbulent private life – he left his wife for his mistress – and the constant film deadlines. Here he began painting and writing poetry, and although he did cut down on the amount of music he was writing, he continued to compose. Amongst the pieces completed here were his Fifth Symphony, the opera *Miss Julie,* several songs and the *Sinfonietta for Strings*. He died in 1985, two years after suffering a massive stroke.