

GORTON PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

CENTENARY
SOUVENIR

1854 - 1954

GORTON PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

(Registered)

Established 1854

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HISTORICAL

ONE HUNDRED years ago a small body of men met in the front room at the home of Mr. R. B. Blackshaw, who resided in Brook Green Lane, Gorton, for the purpose of forming a musical society. There were ten or twelve people present, amongst them James Rider and Walter Knight. These two,

that they ought to become organised into an entity, and the Gorton Philharmonic Society accordingly came into being.

The orchestra thereupon met on alternate Sunday mornings — for a time at a private house in Hyde Road, Gorton. Later their meeting place was at the Aspinal Smithy, a



along with Mr. Blackshaw, were actively connected with the Aspinal Nonconformist Chapel, at which latter at appropriate times in the year, special services were held when the "Messiah," "Elijah," "St. Paul," "The Creation," and other similar oratorios or excerpts therefrom were sung, the organ accompaniment being augmented by a body of musicians. The latter, who had only been drawn together previously as and when required, were, however, of one mind, viz :—

photograph of which we reproduce, as a matter of interest : later they moved to a room over the old Pomona Hotel at the corner of Reddish Lane, and it was outside this hotel, following a fortnightly rehearsal in 1866, that the accompanying photograph was taken. Of the fourteen people appearing thereon ten were members of the orchestra. Their names appear below the photograph and we are able to say that the five men on the front row were founder members.

A few years later the orchestra transferred its quarters to the upper rooms of a building in Wood Street, Gorton, owned by a playing member of the Society named John Howarth, a joiner and builder (he appears on the photograph on the back row) who used the rooms during the week as a joiner's workshop. These rooms continued to be the Orchestra's

In this year the Gorton Council provided the Society with accommodation at the Gorton Town Hall, which then became the Society's headquarters. When Gorton was incorporated in the Manchester boundary the Watch Committee, in January 1910, granted the Society a tenancy at a reasonable rental and the Gorton Town Hall is still our head-



Back Row—W. Clayton (Landlord), D. Whitehead, J. Howarth, W. Rider, F. Pickford, G. Nichols, J. Smith, F. Beswick, J. Lee.
Front Row—F. Holland, J. W. Tatton, R. B. Blackshaw, James Rider, Walter Knight.

meeting place up to 1873 or 1874, by which time the playing strength had increased to twenty and light music of a general character was practised.

When the Wood Street premises became too small, a better rendezvous was secured for a time in Burlington Street, which was in due course superseded by slightly better premises in Ainsworth Street, West Gorton, where the Orchestra continued to practice until 1891.

quarters and our registered office—a privilege we greatly value.

On the 20th October, 1872, James Rider died, and he was interred in a graveyard attached to an old chapel erected in Gorton Vale in 1703 by Thomas Oldham, at his own expense, for the benefit of scattered Nonconformists in Gorton, Openshaw, Droylsden, Reddish and Denton areas. Nothing now remains of this old chapel, and in its place

Brookfield Unitarian Church was erected in 1871. We mention this incident because at a little later stage in the Society's history the Brookfield School was, for a short period, utilised by the orchestra for rehearsal purposes and they gave occasional concerts there.

James Rider was obviously a man held in high regard not only by the members of the Philharmonic Society, but by others in the locality, because a notable monument, wrought in white stone, was erected over his grave, on which the following inscription appears :—

" Erected by the Gorton Philharmonic Society and numerous friends by whom he was highly esteemed and admired for his musical and vocal abilities."

Immediately underneath this inscription are to be found three bars of notation taken from Handel's "Messiah," and underneath this notation are the words, "For the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth" — part, of course, of the "Hallelujah" Chorus.

James Rider was 71 years old when he died, which indicates that he was 53 years of age when he helped to form the Society.

At this stage Edward Moyses — an experienced euphonium player — joined the Orchestra and almost at the same time, through the medium of James Hardman, Mr. Samuel Benn, a second violinist in the Hallé Orchestra and a teacher of music, was introduced to the Society in the capacity of Conductor. Edward Moyses was appointed Deputy Conductor. Concerts were held from time to time under Mr. Benn's conductorship, the last one being at Brookfield Church Schoolroom in November 1883. At that concert he played a violin solo. In the spring of 1884 Samuel Benn died, and Edward Moyses became the conductor of the Orchestra, which now numbered twenty-seven players.

The first concert under Mr. Moyses' baton was held at the old M.S. & L. Schoolroom in Gorton on the 8th April, 1884, the proceeds being in aid of the widow and children of the late Mr. Benn. At that time the Orchestra contained several members — to wit R. H.

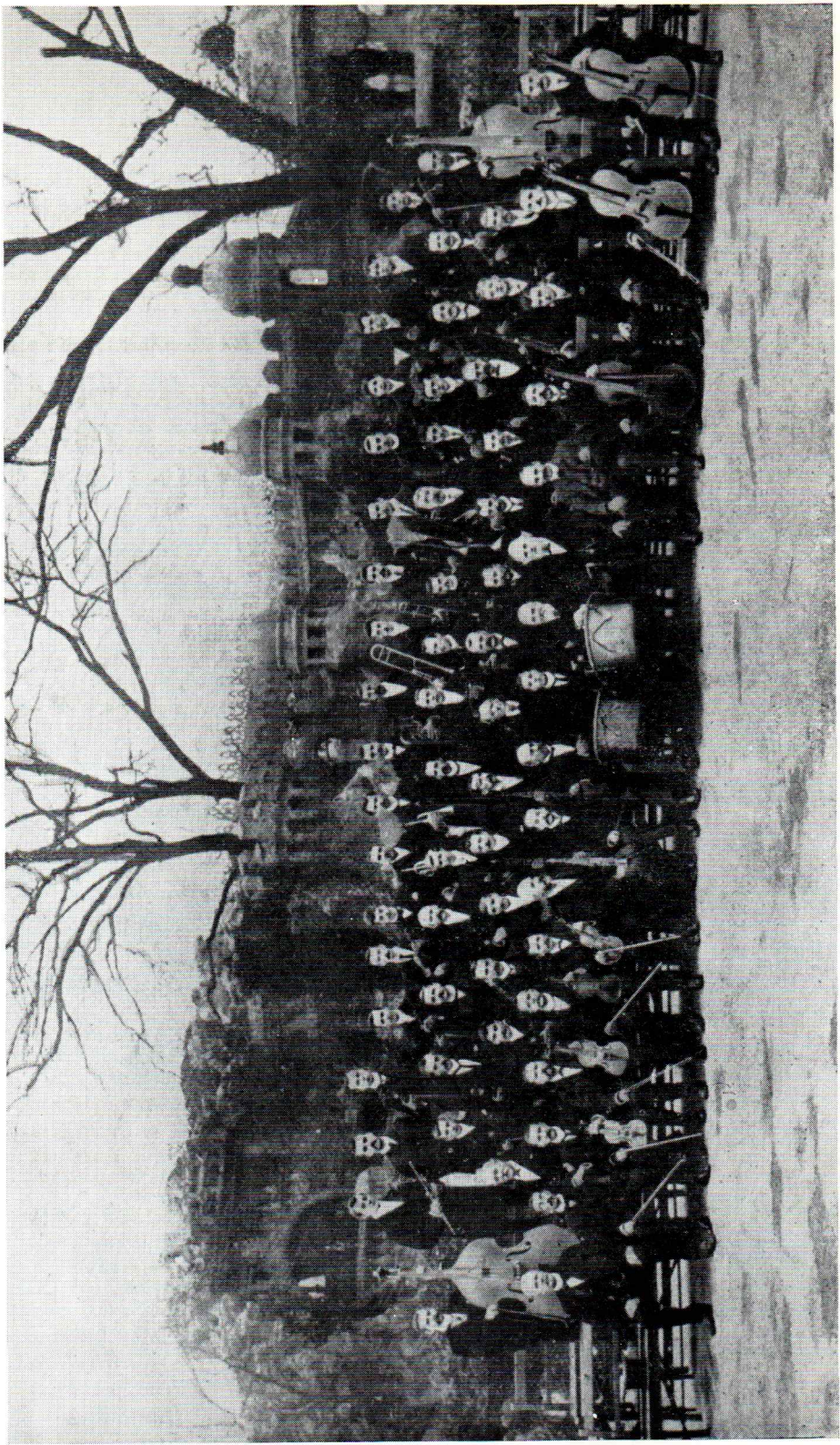
Lees, J. Hardman, T. Williams, J. Clapham, J. C. Bateman, J. Thewlis and T. W. Locking — who were still playing with the Society on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee in 1904.

In May, 1887 — the year in which Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden Jubilee — the Orchestra was privileged to give its first "Open Rehearsal" in the ballroom at Belle Vue, and from that time right up to the present — with a single exception referred to below — the Society has continued to give an "Open Rehearsal" at Belle Vue in the months of May to October.

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, all these rehearsals were held on the first Sunday in the month from 11 a.m. to 12-30 p.m. On the first Sunday in September in that year Mr. Neville Chamberlain had made known over the wireless the momentous news that we were at war with Germany. The members of the Orchestra and several hundred friends who were assembled, were of the unanimous opinion that the occasion was not one for musical entertainment, and those present wended their way homeward.

The monthly Sunday morning Open Rehearsals at Belle Vue continued up to June, 1945. From the time that the Kings Hall was erected they had been held in that spacious building instead of the ballroom. In July 1945, at the request of the Belle Vue management, the Rehearsal took place in the evening as an experiment, and a further evening performance was given, instead of morning, in the month of October. The following year, evening performances were given in the months of May, September, and October, and since then all of the Open Rehearsals have taken place in the evening, commencing at 7 p.m. and finishing at about 8-45 to 9 p.m. The result has been larger audiences, better playing, and greater enthusiasm.

(We are often asked why we use the term "Open Rehearsal" instead of "Concert" — for they are concerts, it is said. The answer is that there is no charge for admission and that the greater part of our audience — generally speaking — is comprised of our non-playing members and patrons.)



ORCHESTRA 1904

Conductor : J. F. RIDGWAY

First Violins :

JAS. HARDMAN (Leader)
T. WILLIAMS
J. CLAPHAM
H. LANSOM
C. TILSLEY
S. HOWARD
A. BESWICK
J. HOLMES
W. H. KEMP
A. E. VICKERS
A. H. LORD
W. RIGNOLD
H. TILSLEY
R. HALL
HURST

Second Violins :

G. CARTER
J. KENNEDY
J. E. BROTHERTON
J. W. ROSE
J. E. BEDFORD
R. LANSOM
J. W. BESWICK
H. WATSON
H. WIGNALL
W. CARTER
J. C. GREGORY
F. W. DAVIES
W. THOMPSON
J. D. HARDMAN
F. HARDWICK
J. MYNETT

Violas :

T. EXLEY
J. DOUGAN
G. R. CARTER

Violincellos :
G. RIDGWAY
W. BRYCE
F. CLARKE
S. SHORROCKS
J. F. BARWISE
E. J. POPPLEWELL

Double Basses :

R. JONES
W. H. JOHNSON
J. DODD
J. THEWLIS
J. JESSON

Flute and Piccolo :

J. SMETHURST
E. CREECH

Oboes :

J. BRYCE
PARKIN

Clarionets :

R. H. LEES
J. P. WOOD

Bassoon :

J. C. BATEMAN

Cornets :

J. A. RENSHAW
W. S. MAINEY

Horns :

T. W. LOCKING
T. E. CRONIN

Tenor Trombones :

F. PARKER
G. W. DOWNING

Bass Trombone :

BESWICK

Euphonium :

H. WELDON

Tympani :

B. HODGSON

Pianist :

CLIFFORD TILSEY

Librarians :

R. JONES
C. SENIOR

Hon. Librarians :

E. WARDLEY
H. WELDON

Life Member :

E. MOYSES

Secretary :

G. W. DIXON

OUR CONDUCTORS—1873 TO DATE

1873 - 1884 : SAMUEL BENN

BRIEF reference has already been made to Mr. Benn's association with the Society. Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain any photographs of him to include in this section of our brochure. There is no doubt

that with Samuel Benn's advent the composition of the Orchestra and the type of music played, underwent a change. He was not interested in choral work.

1884 - 1903 :

EDWARD MOYSES

EDWARD MOYSES was an ex-service bandsman, his regiment being the 14th Hussars. During the course of a musical career of more than 50 years he played several wind instruments and (occasionally) a string bass. His principal instruments, however, were the tuba and euphonium, on which he was regarded as a first-class exponent. His first job in Manchester was in 1870 with Joseph Higham's Military Band — at that time one of the foremost in the country. He joined the Belle Vue band two years later as a euphonium player and continued with them in that capacity for 31 years.

As mentioned elsewhere he became Deputy Conductor of the "Gorton Phil" in 1873 or 1874 and on Samuel Benn's demise in 1884 Edward Moyses succeeded him and continued to direct the Orchestra until 1903, when he expressed a desire to retire. Under



his guidance the Orchestra developed numerically and, of course, in experience, even though his beat was rather metronomic. His services to the Society were marked by making him a Life Member.

(The photograph has been taken from an orchestral group bearing the date 1891.)



1904 - 1932 : JOSEPH F. RIDGWAY

ON Edward Moyses' retirement, Robert Johnson acted as Conductor for about a year. His commitments as a professional pianist, however, demanded his full time and attention and he had no option, therefore, but to relinquish the appointment.

At that time "Joe" Ridgway, as he was known amongst his wide circle of musical colleagues, had joined the Orchestra. He was an accomplished flautist and a member of the Hallé Orchestra, and although he had no experience as a conductor, he had a very wide experience as a player under many famous conductors. He was, therefore, offered the conductorship of the "Phil" and accepted it.

His orchestral experience was, of course, of an entirely different character from that of Edward Moyses and by reason of that, a better type of music was purchased from time to time, affording a greater degree of enjoyment to the playing members of the Society and enabling a better class of programme to be provided at the Open Rehearsals.

"Joe" Ridgway died in June 1932, and in his twenty-eight years as Conductor he had given yeoman service. During the remainder of the season at Belle Vue the Open Rehearsals were taken by the Deputy Conductor, Frederick Gee.

The following year a former member of the Hallé Orchestra — E. C. Pickerell — was appointed the Society's Conductor and he acted in that capacity for a couple of years.

In 1935, however, he received an appointment from the B.B.C. at their Belfast Studio and it thus became necessary for him to sever his connection with the Society.



1935 - to date : OSWALD E. WALLIS

DURING the two years of E. C. Pickerell's conductorship, Oswald Wallis held the position of Deputy Conductor. He joined the Orchestra in November 1922, and became leader of the second violins prior to his appointment as Conductor in 1935. He received his early tuition on the violin at the Manchester School of Music. His deep knowledge and understanding of music in all its phases — and particularly orchestration — however, was derived from years and years of intense private study, in the Henry Watson Music Library at lunch time and in the evening, and at home. The effect of this, as may be imagined, has been greater attention to detail, following upon such a complete knowledge of scoring and chording, and to better co-ordination amongst the various sections of the Orchestra. His bright dispo-

sition and his tact have brought about a freedom from the bickerings and jealousies which are so frequently met with in amateur musical societies — orchestral and otherwise.

In 1936 the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra performed Mr. Wallis's "Caprice in G Minor," an interesting composition, which he was invited to conduct. The following year, on the occasion of the Society's 50th season at Belle Vue, the Orchestra played his "Festival Overture," specially written for the occasion and this overture will be included in the programme prepared for the opening "Rehearsal" in this Centenary year.

It is our earnest hope that Oswald Wallis will be spared for many many years to continue the great work he has done and is doing for the betterment of the Orchestra, and the progress and well being of the Society.

OUR PRESIDENT

WM. PENNEY

OUR President's first association with the Society dates back to the early months of 1905 when he joined the Orchestra, and for a couple of years his name was incorporated amongst the second violins. Thereafter he was elevated to a seat amongst the "firsts." He was assiduous in his attendances at the weekly rehearsals and invariably returned specially from his annual holiday for that purpose.

In 1908 he was appointed one of the Society's auditors, a position he held for several years, and at the Open Rehearsal in August 1917, he was the vocal soloist.

At the end of 1919 it became impracticable for him to attend Sunday morning rehearsals and his name was transferred to non-playing membership. In 1935 he re-joined the Orchestra in its then weakest numerical section — the violas.

In 1947 he was elected President of the Society, a position he still retains, having previously been honoured by being made an "Honorary President."

By profession our President is a Loss Adjuster to Insurance Companies and is a Past President of the Association of Fire Loss Adjusters — a national body. He is also a Past President of the Insurance Institute of Manchester — the oldest Insurance Institute in the world — and has been a member of the Council of that organisation for more



than forty years. Last year he was President of the Manchester Reform Club.

He is held in high esteem in whatever circle he moves, and particularly by the members of the Orchestra, Committee and Officers of this Society. Under his Presidency the Society has undoubtedly gained in prestige, and its library has been materially enlarged by his gifts of music from time to time. His happy disposition and enthusiasm in the Society's cause are a source of inspiration to us all.



ORCHESTRA 1954*Conductor : OSWALD E. WALLIS**First Violins :*

WM. PEEL (Leader)
H. HARDMAN
A. I. EMMETT
EDNA PRICE
E. LEVY
H. CHATBURN
E. R. WRIGHT
RITA BOWDEN
G. PRICE
J. PEAKE
J. A. BAYLISS
EDITH HARDMAN
T. BURKITT
A. HARGREAVES

Second Violins :

F. HARDWICK
H. E. REACROFT
VIOLET STEER
L. T. DAVENPORT
H. WHITTAKER
G. KNIGHT
CLARA GOODLEFF
A. V. BARKER
G. SOMECH
N. BINKS
R. THOMAS
L. JENNETT
K. CAVANAGH
DOROTHY M. JONES
PATRICIA CHATBURN
BETTY GRINDLEY
I. N. MCRAE
J. STONE

Violas :

G. BINKS
WM. PENNEY
EVELYN ROGERS
A. FITTON
J. BESWICK
R. W. BLUNDELL
A. FERRIER

Cellos :

J. R. PENDLEBURY
L. STANWAY
H. MARTIN
R. CARLISLE
W. CUMMING
DR. C. VIPONT BROWN
R. ASHBURN
MARGERY WYNNE
ELIZABETH SHERRY
J. BLUNDELL
J. COUPE

Basses :

S. ARMITAGE
P. THOMPSON
A. W. MIDDLEBROOKE
H. EARL
E. JONES

Flutes and Piccolo :

H. LANSOM
T. H. PHILLIPS
J. OLDHAM
SHEILA MIDDLEBROOKE

Oboes and Cor-Anglais :

A. FERNLEY
J. S. HOWARD

Clarinets :

J. DAVIDSON
A. BROWN
D. PEEL

Bassoons :

G. PETERS
J. COOPER

Horns :

J. HEYWOOD
WM. HANDFORTH
R. WOODWARD
W. HAY
M. TEMPLE
W. T. BROWN

Trumpets :

C. CROSDALE
J. CROSDALE, L.R.A.M.
W. STOPFORD

Tenor Trombones :

T. P. HOPLEY
W. MALONEY
G. ROBERTS

Bass Trombone :

L. BROWN
J. R. COONEY

Tuba :

H. S. LANE

Timpani and Percussion :

A. W. BRYON
J. C. ROTHWELL
T. PERRY
A. C. RICHARDSON
FREDA FAULKNER

Honorary Accompanist :

H. V. CLAYTON

OUR VICE-PRESIDENT

ARTHUR BAXTER, O.B.E.



ARTHUR BAXTER was an active member of the Orchestra from 1908 until the close of 1942, and for thirty years he was "principal trumpet." He unfortunately lost a leg at Gallipoli during the Great War of 1914-18 and nearly thirty years ago he helped to form the Limbless ex-Servicemen's Organization in Manchester. Four years later he organised a conference in Lancashire and Yorkshire which led to the formation of "Blesma" — the British Legless ex-Servicemen's Association. He held the office of Treasurer of "Blesma" from 1932-38 and from thence until 1949 he was the Associa-

tion's National President. During that time the Association's ten branches, with a total membership of 600, increased to eighty-four branches with 10,000 members. For this great work he was made an O.B.E. In addition to being Vice-President of our Society, he is a life member and a Trustee and during his membership of the Orchestra he held the position of Deputy Conductor for a period. He is a very regular attender at the monthly meetings of the Committee and the President is deeply appreciative of his loyal and assiduous service.

HONORARY PRESIDENTS

FROM time to time during the past forty years well known figures in the musical world have honoured the Society by becoming Honorary Presidents. Amongst them are Lieut. Charles Godfrey, M.V.O., Sir Henry J. Wood and Sir Hamilton Harty, and on three occasions at the September Open Rehearsal — the month in which the Open Championship Brass Band Contest is held at Belle Vue — Lieut. Godfrey conducted the Orchestra.

But not all our Honorary Presidents were notable figures in the musical world. We refer to two of them in particular — John Buckley, J.P., and Philip M. Oliver, B.A., C.B.E. The former, who was well known and highly respected in the Gorton area, lived to

a ripe old age and had been a patron of the Society for more than forty years. Philip Oliver's close contact with us arose in the first instance from his association with Ancoats Hospital. But Ancoats Hospital was only one of the many institutions with which he was closely allied. His active and unselfish life of public service has come to an end by his sudden death as we are going to press. It was the President's privilege to know him well and the number of personal messages of appreciation which have appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* in the past week or so are evidence of the affection and regard in which Philip Oliver was held in every circle in which he moved. We have lost a friend with whom we were honoured and proud to be associated.



GENERAL INFORMATION

FROM time to time and over a period of years we have been criticised by the press for including in our programme isolated movements from symphonies. It was said by one critic a few years ago, in a rather patronising tone, that we had reached a stage when we possessed the ability to play whole symphonies and that we ought to play them. The policy of the Society has, throughout, been influenced by the knowledge that there is a very considerable public who, whilst enjoying tuneful music, are unable to sit through and enjoy or appreciate entire symphonies. In our view Manchester is very well served by symphony orchestras — in particular, of course, the Hallé, and by visiting professional orchestras — and we have deliberately set ourselves out to provide programmes of a different character containing items of good, tuneful and pleasing music, no one item exceeding fifteen minutes. This policy has undoubtedly been to the liking of our audiences for the last seventy or eighty years, and it is not our intention to change it.

We possess a non-playing membership of more than a thousand, so that we have at all times a potential audience of at least two thousand people. Rightly or wrongly, we believe that music was meant to charm and not offend the ear, and for that reason we have avoided including in our programmes much of the music designated "modern." In the winter months, when we are rehearsing at our headquarters for our own edification and enjoyment, we frequently play symphonies and other serious music — items which we do not feel are suitable for inclusion in our monthly programmes at the Open Rehearsals.

It may be of interest to record some of the additions to our very comprehensive library in the last nineteen or twenty years :—

SYMPHONIES :

Brahms Nos. 1, 2 and 4.
César Franck — D Minor.
Mozart — Nos. 38, 39, 40 and 41.
Haydn — "London," "Oxford" and "Clock."

Our closing item is always of a type designed to enable our audience to return to their homes in happy mood. Is our reasoning faulty?

Following upon recent Press publicity a number of people have been enquiring how it is that we have arrived at such a grand old age and yet they have never heard of us previously. The answer is that we have never embarked upon any publicity campaign even of the mildest character. We have

always had our old family associations, members introducing their friends; people who have wandered in to "Open Rehearsals" casually and have afterwards expressed a wish to become subscribers and so on.

It may be that the publicity which we are receiving in this centenary year will result in an increased membership — we hope so. We still think we have a part to play in the musical life of the City.



MISCELLANY

FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS

MENTION has been made elsewhere of family connections. The outstanding instance of this is the history of the Clapham family's association with the Society. Thomas Clapham was the Society's double bass player eighty years ago. He eventually became President and was made a life member of the

Society. His son John also joined the Orchestra as a second violinist eighty years ago. John's son, Arthur is a present Trustee and a life member of the Society and Arthur's son, Eric, is a member of the General Committee — four generations of continuous service. What a record!



OTHER OUTSTANDING PAST AND PRESENT SERVICES

Amongst a rather lengthy list of Past Presidents, two names call for special mention, viz: James Taylor and James P. Wood. The former, who was not a playing member of the Society, held office for thirteen years at an important stage in the Society's history, and in recognition of his services, at the close of the Society's Diamond Jubilee Year in 1914 he was presented with an illuminated address.

Before his election to the Presidency, James P. Wood — a very popular member of the Orchestra, in which he was first clarinet — was a Vice-President for many years, becoming President in 1921. He held the Presidency for many years and was actively connected with the Society for nearly fifty years.

Amongst the other Past Officers who rendered lengthy service, mention must be made of John Holmes and J. D. Hardman,

each of whom held the office of Secretary for a considerable number of years. Mr. Hardman was a member of the Orchestra at the time of the Society's Golden Jubilee, and prior to his resignation a few years ago, he held the office of President. Both he and John Holmes were made life members of the Society. Mr. Hardman's father was a member of the Orchestra eighty years ago and he it was who introduced Samuel Benn to the Society.

H. C. Britton, who held the office of Treasurer from 1913 until 1939, was elected a life member of the Society in 1927 — twenty-six years of loyal and conscientious service.

J. D. Hardman was succeeded in 1935 as Secretary by his brother-in-law GEORGE E. DUNN, who carried out the duties with meticulous care for thirteen years, at the end of which he became the Society's Honorary

Treasurer — a position he still holds. Mr. Dunn also acts as a sort of general factotum behind the scenes on the occasions of our Open Rehearsals at Belle Vue.

ARTHUR W. BYRON, the Society's highly efficient Secretary, joined the Orchestra in 1933 in the timpany and percussion section, of which he is now the leader. Under his direction and by his unselfish example, this department is now one of the most efficient sections of the Orchestra. The

onerous duties of Secretary were undertaken by him in 1948 and his work in that direction has been of a model character. Particular reference should be made to the excellent manner in which the Minutes of the monthly Committee Meetings are recorded.

Commencing with this Centenary Year, Harry S. Lane, our tuba player, has been appointed Assistant Secretary and his work will mainly have relationship to the membership of the Society.



Back Row—J. A. Gibson, H. S. Lane, B. Hicklin, G. Peters, H. Hardman, J. Peake, L. W. Murgatroyd, T. P. Hopley.
Middle Row—G. Binks, E. Clapham, H. Lansom, W. Peel, H. E. Reacroft, J. Davidson, J. Murgatroyd, F. Lawrence.
Front Row—A. Brown, A. W. Bryon, O. E. Wallis, Wm. Penny, A. Baxter, O.B.E., G. E. Dunn, A. Clapham.



LIBRARIANS

Since its inception there have, of course, been many Librarians and Assistant Librarians, but none have been more efficient than T. H. Crawford and his assistant, Nat Binks.

Elizabeth Dodd, A.R.C.M., was the

Society's accomplished accompanist for nearly forty years and on her retirement from that office she was presented with a gold wristlet watch in gratitude for her excellent services. She also is a life member of the Society.

APPRECIATION

In the course of the last 65 years the names of Charles, Richard, James, William and Angelo Jennison are to be found amongst our patrons.

The interest of the Jennison family in the welfare of the Society was so great that when our series of Open Rehearsals commenced in 1887 the old ballroom at Belle Vue was placed at our disposal without any charge. That generous spirit was continued when the Jennison family ceased to be connected with Belle Vue and the present company was formed.

They have indeed been true benefactors and without their warmhearted collaboration and generosity in other directions we could not have functioned or developed in the way we have done.

This centenary year marks our 67th season of Open Rehearsals at Belle Vue, and in gratitude the foregoing facts are recorded.