

ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 500729

www.altrincham-choral.co.uk

President: Roger Shelmerdine

Honorary Life Member: Steven Roberts

Altrincham Choral Society prides itself in offering a diverse, innovative and challenging programme of concerts, including many choral favourites.

We are a forward thinking and progressive choir with a strong commitment to choral training and high standards, so providing members with the knowledge, skills and confidence to thoroughly enjoy their music-making.

Rehearsals are on Monday evenings at Altrincham Methodist Church, Barrington Road, Altrincham.
Car Park entrance off Barrington Road.
Satnavs please use WA14 1HF.

We are only 5 minutes walk from the train/metro/bus station.
Rehearsals are from 7.45 to 10.00 pm
For more information contact us

E-mail: info@altrincham-choral.co.uk

Tweet us @acs1945 Like us on Facebook

Or go to our web-site where you can find more information about the choir and our future plans. You can also add your name to our mailing list to keep up to date with forthcoming concerts and events.

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Conductors

Steven Roberts

David Lloyd-Mostyn

Accompanist
Lydia Bryan

Organist
David Rickett

CAROLS WITH THE CHORAL

With guests

Oldfield Brow Junior School Choir

Tuesday 16th December 2014

Trinity Hale Church
81 Cecil Road
Hale
Altrincham
WA15 9NT
7.30 p.m.

Tickets: £8, including refreshments
(accompanied children £2) from:-
K Barlow (Tel: 0161 980 4342)
or any choir member



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Would you like to support our choir by becoming
a patron or a sponsor?

We operate a well established scheme for patrons and sponsors
and hope to develop it further with the help of our supporters.

As a patron you will receive advance publicity, complimentary
tickets, reserved seats at concerts, acknowledgement in all our
programmes and on the web-site.

E Lawrence is our Patrons Secretary. She is looking forward to
hearing from you and can answer your enquiries about the
scheme. Contact her on 01925 861862 or ellaw@talktalk.net

**ACS is grateful to the following for their
continued support this season:**

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Altrincham Choral Society

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*Denotes 20 years

#Denotes 30 years

++Denotes 40 years

THE ALTRINCHAM CHORAL SOCIETY
EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD

The Award for Exceptional Service may be conferred on any member who is deemed to have given exceptional service to the Society.

The award may be made to a member who has served for 25 or more years on the Committee or a Sub-Committee.

In recognition of their services to the society

The 2014 Exceptional Service Award

John Greenan

Joyce Venables

Andrew Wragg

Steven Roberts

Steven Roberts is Conductor and Musical Director of Altrincham Choral Society, Chesterfield Philharmonic Choir, Honley Male Voice choir and UnLimited Voices. He has recently become Chairman of The British and International Federation of Festivals and regularly adjudicates throughout the United Kingdom.

Prior to 2006, Steven combined his musical activities with a full-time post at Barnsley College. During 17 years at the college, Steven held a number of posts including Head of Performing Arts and Music, Head of Quality and Director of External Relations.

He has also been conductor of the Dodworth and Skelmanthorpe Male Voice Choirs, the Allendale Chamber Orchestra, the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union, Sing Live UK and with The Huddersfield Choral Society, most notably for concerts with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and José Carreras. He has also been chorus master for 'The Magic of Queen' and the Electric Light Orchestra (ELO), rock classics concerts with the Hallé Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

He has conducted the Manchester Philharmonic, Derbyshire Sinfonia, and the National Festival Orchestra as well as the Yorkshire Wind Orchestra, Black Dyke Band and a variety of other bands and ensembles.

He has also conducted at the Royal Albert Hall and prepared choruses for performances at the Odyssey arena, Belfast as well as the FM Hallam Arena in Sheffield. He has been privileged to conduct in The College Gardens of Westminster Abbey for The Lady Taverners, in St Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, St Mark's Basilica, Venice as well as in Florence, Sorrento, Amalfi, Milan, Austria, on the Rhine, Bavaria, Montecassino and Barcelona.

Steven is proud to be a member The Lord's Taverners – the cricketing charity that raises money to give 'young people, particularly with special needs a sporting chance'.

In November 2013 he became a Life Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society.

Roger Shelmerdine

Roger Shelmerdine was born in Sale, Cheshire. He learnt to play the piano at the relatively late age of twelve. Immediately he began writing small compositions with the encouragement of his teacher, Patricia Shackleton. He then went on to study composition and piano at the Royal Manchester College of Music. His tutor there was Professor Franz Reizenstein, a distinguished former pupil of Vaughan Williams and Hindemith.

Roger has been a piano teacher, choirmaster for adult and children's choirs, MD for Operatic Societies and conductor for many types of orchestra; but his chief love has always been composing. His varied musical life is reflected in his output; classical works for piano and orchestra, stage musicals for Operatic Societies and songs for children's choirs.

Roger founded The Stage One Orchestra which played annually in the Trafford Young Composer Competition. He began this venture in 1992 to give youngsters a unique chance to hear their compositions performed live. In 2012 he was commissioned to write a musical score for a cartoon animation at the Vancouver Film School in Canada. More recently he has concentrated on writing serious works for choral groups.

Bowdon Preparatory School Chamber Choir Conductor: Beth Paterson

Bowdon Preparatory School Chamber Choir are girls from Years 5 and 6, aged between 9 and 11 years. They rehearse enthusiastically twice a week and have enjoyed considerable competition success, both locally and nationally. Both girls and staff feel proud and honoured to be asked to take part in this important remembrance event.

Stockport Youth Orchestra Conductor: Tim Crooks

Leader: Kate Webster

Stockport Youth Orchestra has existed since 1956 to provide high-quality orchestral training to young musicians. Past and present members can now be found in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, the Royal Colleges of Music, the BBC Philharmonic and Hallé orchestras. SYO continues to flourish under the leadership of Tim Crooks and Chris Orton, with generous financial support from Rhino Designs, SMBC, Waitrose, Nationwide, John Lewis (Cheadle), and Gresty's Flowers.

Part 1

1. In Flanders fields

2. My brother's off to war

3. After an epigram of Clement Marot

4. Broadway

5. Gibberish

6. The Warrior

7. Requiem for George Butterworth

a. Requiem

b. Kyrie

c. Sanctus

d. Communion

e. Pie Jesu

f. Agnus Dei

g. Requiem Aeternam



Part 2

8. Anthem for doomed youth

9. Returning we hear the larks

10. Our summer trip

11. Lament for the poets

12. On receiving news of the war

13. Poor old Ted

14. In memoriam

15. Rooks

16. When this lousy war is over

17. The soldier



THE POEMS

***In Flanders Fields* JOHN McCRAE, 1872-1918**

Born in Canada. Educated at McGill University. Although a doctor originally, he fought on the Western Front in the artillery. He was put in charge of the No 3 General Hospital at Boulogne before being appointed medical consultant to all the British armies in France. He died of pneumonia, on 28th January, 1918, before taking up the appointment. Composed in 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres, McCrae was inspired to write it after presiding over the funeral of friend and fellow soldier Alexis Helmer. According to legend, fellow soldiers retrieved the poem after McCrae, initially unsatisfied with his work, discarded it. "In Flanders Fields" was first published on December 8 of that year in the London-based magazine 'Punch'. It is one of the most popular and oft quoted poems from the war.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

My brother's off to war ROGER SHELMERDINE

When the British Tommies attacked in the Somme region on July 1st 1916, each was reported to have carried about 60 pounds of equipment. Approximately 150 rounds of ammunition would have been strapped in their pouches and belts. Most soldiers also had a packet of cigarettes in their kitbags.

My brother's off to war; he's joined the army corps.

In his haversack on his aching back, he's been told to pack...

- 1. Some ammunition in a belt; service cap and gas mask.*
- 2. A digging tool, a bayonet; water bottle and clean socks.*
- 3. A woolly cap, spare boot laces; mess tin cover and great coat.*
- 4. A spoon and fork, a darning kit; tooth-brush, towel and soap.*

After an epigram of Clement Marot ALAN SEEGER, 1888-1916

Born in New York. Educated at Harvard. After graduating he lived in Greenwich Village for two years by sponging off his friends. He was aimless, anti-social and scruffy. His parents sent him to continue his studies in Paris. He saw the war as liberation from the dullness of everyday life and rushed to join the French Foreign Legion. He was killed at Belloy-en-Santerre on 4 July, 1916.

*The lad I was I longer now
Nor am nor shall be evermore.
Spring's lovely blossoms from my brow
Have shed their petals on the floor.
Thou, Love, hast been my lord, thy shrine
Above all gods' best served by me.
Dear Love, could life again be mine
How bettered should that service be.*

Clement Marot (1496-1544) was a French poet who wrote many epigrams. The composer Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) composed a song cycle using the words of some of them. The music here intends to convey the style of the French impressionist school of the early 20th Century.

*Lorsque je voy en ordre la brunette
Jeune, en bon point, de la ligne des Dieux,
Et que sa voix, ses doigts et l'espinnette
Meinent ung bruyct doux et melodieux,
J'ay du plaisir, et d'oreilles et d'yeulx
Plus que les saintz en leur gloire immortelle
Et autant qu'eulx je devien glorieux
Dès que je pense estre ung peu ayme d'elle.*

*When I see all in order the brunette,
young, with beautiful figure, shaped like the gods,
and when her voice, her fingers and the spinet
make a sound sweet and melodious,
it is a joy for my ears and my eyes,
more than the saints in their immortal glory.
And even as they, I become glorious
When I think that she loves me a little.*

***Broadway* ROGER SHELMEARDINE**

Although Broadway shows were used mostly to escape the reality of the war, the Broadway community itself became very active in assisting the war effort. The play "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" at the Century Theatre was used to raise money for the war relief, marking the climax of Broadway's participation in the war in 1918. The show, written by Irving Berlin, was a conventional musical show, but it was equipped with soldiers who impersonated chorus girls, a cartoon of kitchen police called "Safe for Democracy", and the ballad "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." (The latter is briefly quoted). The show aroused the enthusiasm of thousands of Americans, and transformed the boredom of army life into humour.

*We like singing a showbiz song
Curtain up, let's begin
Clap the beat or tap your feet
We don't mind which
Hum the tune we'll be immune if you're off pitch.*

*We like singing a showbiz song
Broadway 'belters' are in.
Always happy, always snappy, short or long
We don't mind, we find the kind to sing along.
Sense the syncopation, enjoy the jazzy swing,
Let the lyrics linger in your mind.
Feel the inspiration that words and music bring
Then relax and let yourself unwind -
You know you could, it's good, you should.*

*Way beyond the footlights, we're singing to the stalls
Up above the circle to the Gods
Hoping that for six nights, we earn our curtain calls
Not all shows succeed and beat the odds
For some will fail and may curtail - ah!*

*Give our regards there, play the right cards there
Goodbye Broadway? Ok. No way!
Don't put your happiness in any jeopardy.
So Rock-a bye your baby with a Dixie melody
"Oh how we hate to get up in the morning".*

***Gibberish* ROGER SHELMERDINE**

The Great War caused the military to acknowledge the psychological problems caused by battle. 100,000 soldiers later received a pension as recompense for "shell shock". The symptoms displayed under this general term were extraordinarily numerous and different. Speech disorders were one of the most common forms of war neurosis. Soldiers returning to their families could lapse into gobbledygook and then return to normal speech. Frightening to adults, children could find humour in such language and some would make up their own 'gibberish'.

*There's a purple kiddley minky pum beside the diddley tay,
And the purple kiddley minky pum is getting in the way.
It goes wizkerplunk and mumdetum till very late at night,
With a pogley for a mupney it's a very ugly sight.*

*Gibber gibber gibber gibberish, Frizzly grumby snelly fish,
Dizzyspliffing in the sea with melly bandwiches for tea.
Gibber gibber gibber gibberish, dustard makes you leverish,
Grimblepopping jantelopes are snortiplogged with bars of joaps.*

*With the mumbo jumbo from Colombo, capital caterpillars are tosh.
Hocus pocus eat a crocus, flowering flatterfiller is bosh.
Don't tell Luke it's not a fluke.
All of this monologue is gobbledegook.*

*Now the purple kiddley minky pum beside the diddleytay,
Has begun to nurdle the twitchisnaps with migs from Ponterrey.
It can ungleplum and spamulise the marmar on the wall,
So the gritchpin has a quackness sometimes muchly sometimes
small.*

*Gibber gibber gibber gibberish, in the clackboard lives a trish,
Flisting with a dortured gat, with gambly kneelines on the mat.
Gibber gibber gibber gibberish, can you gollow all of this?
We suggest you use your noddle.
Cos this has been a load of.....
.....twaddle oddle oddle oddle oddle oddle oddle oddle
Diddle diddle dimple do.*

The Warrior JOHN McCRAE, 1872-1918

Composed in a sea shanty style to reflect the words, this poem refers to the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815). The French, under Napoleon Bonaparte were opposed by a number of European forces in many battles. References in the poem are;

“Bluecher” was Field Marshal of Prussia 1742-1819.

“Almeida” was the place of a siege from 1810-1811 during the war in Portugal. “The Birkenhead” was a troopship. “Aboukir” was a small coastal village. In an 1801 battle, Napoleon was defeated nearby, off the Mediterranean coast of Egypt.

“Bussaco” was a battle of 1810 during the Peninsular War in Portugal.

*A northern wind with sails all set
The folks at home he'll never forget
He wrought in poverty, the dull grey days,
But with the night his little lamp-lit room
Was bright with battle flame, or through a haze
Of smoke that stung his eyes he heard the boom
Of Bluecher's guns; he shared Almeida's scars,*

*And from the close-packed deck, about to die,
Looked up and saw the "Birkenhead"'s tall spars
Weave wavering lines across the Southern sky:
Or in the stifling 'tween decks, row on row,
At Aboukir, saw how the dead men lay;
Charged with the fiercest in Bussaco's strife,
Brave dreams are his — the flick'ring lamp burns low —
Yet couraged for the battles of the day
He goes to stand full face to face with life.*

Requiem for GEORGE BUTTERWORTH 1885-1916

George Butterworth, the British composer, critic and collector of folk song and dance, served with the British Army during the First World War until he was killed by a sniper's bullet in August 1916.

Born on 12 July 1885 in London to a prosperous family, Butterworth was brought up in York before receiving his early education at Eton. His bent for matters musical took on form during his years at Eton and continued to grow during his time at Trinity College, Oxford, where he studied Greats. During this period Butterworth met both Ralph Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp, both meetings which served to encourage his musical ambitions. Following a year spent teaching at Radley, Butterworth undertook to study for a brief period at the Royal College of Music. His interest in collecting folk songs (together with Sharp and Vaughan Williams) burgeoned at this time.

Musically Butterworth was noted for his work in composing *The Banks of Green Willow* (in 1913) and for setting A.E.Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* to music in 1912. He was at this time also writing criticism for *The Times* newspaper.

The onset of war in Europe in August 1914 saw Butterworth enlist as a Lieutenant with the Durham Light Infantry's 13th Battalion. Before departing for France however Butterworth took care to destroy all of his work which, in his opinion, fell short of excellence. Consequently his published musical output is somewhat scarce.

Butterworth's two years of service saw him mentioned in despatches and win the Military Cross for successfully defending a trench at Pozieres during 17-19 July 1916. A man with a reputation for bravery, Butterworth was killed leading a raid during the Somme offensive on 5 August 1916.

The Requiem was first performed in 2010 with piano accompaniment. A year later it was professionally recorded with a string orchestra. Tonight sees a third version with full symphony orchestra and a new movement added.

“Communion” (no.4) is for instruments only and quotes Butterworth’s most famous tune. The solo clarinet begins and ends with part of the melody of the “Banks of Green Willow” as noted by Butterworth from the singing of Mr. Cranstone of Billingham, Sussex in June 1907. (The melody was changed a little from the original by Butterworth).

Requiem aeternam dona eis,
Domine, et lux perpetua
luceat eis.
Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion,
et tibi reddetur votum
in Jerusalem.
Exaudi orationem meam,
ad te omnis caro veniet.

Grant him eternal rest, O Lord,
and may light eternal
shine upon him.
It is fitting that a hymn should be
raised unto thee in Sion,
And a vow paid to thee in Jerusalem.
Give ear to my prayer, O Lord
Unto Thee all flesh shall come at last.

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord have mercy upon us.
Christ have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth!
Pleni sunt coeli et
terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are
full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Pie Jesu
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem
Agnus Dei
Dona eis requiem sempiternam

Merciful Jesus
Who takes away the sins of the world
Grant them rest.
Lamb of God
Grant them everlasting rest.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis
peccata mundi,
dona eis requiem,
dona eis requiem sempiternam.

Lamb of God, who takest away the
sins of the world,
grant them rest,
grant them everlasting rest.

Anthem for doomed youth WILFRED OWEN, 1893 – 1918

Educated at Birkenhead Institute and Shrewsbury Technical College. He was a committed Christian and became lay assistant to the vicar of Dunsden. Pressured by the propaganda to become a soldier he volunteered on 21st October 1915.

He escaped bullets until the last week of the war, but he saw a good deal of front-line action: he was blown up, concussed and suffered shell-shock. At Craiglockhart, the psychiatric hospital in Edinburgh, he met Siegfried Sassoon who inspired him to develop his war poetry. On 4th November 1918 he was shot and killed near the village of Ors. The news of his death reached his parent's home as the Armistice bells were ringing on 11 November.

"Anthem for doomed youth" was written by Owen between September and October 1917 when he was a patient in Edinburgh recovering from shell shock. It contains a quote from "The last post", originally played by solo bugle or cavalry trumpet to commemorate those who have fallen in war.

The Men's chorus sing "Christus factus est pro nobis obediens usque ad mortem" which translates to "Christ became obedient for us unto death". It is an ancient Gregorian chant and forms part of the Gradual of the Mass Service sung in Holy Week.

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.*

*What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.*

Returning we hear the larks ISAAC ROSENBERG, 1890-1918

Born in Bristol, educated in London's East End and Slade School of Art. He was an artist and engraver as well as a poet, but finding no work he volunteered in October 1915. He was assigned to the 12th Suffolk Folk Regiment, a 'bantam' battalion (men under 5'3").

After turning down an offer to become a lance corporal, Private Rosenberg was later transferred to the 11th Battalion, The King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment (KORL). He was sent to the Somme on the Western Front in France where, having just finished night patrol, he was killed at dawn on April 1, 1918.

This poem expresses the soldier's heightened awareness of death and how his mind must always return to survival. But it is also beautiful in showing that a small thing like a flock of larks can infuse a soldier with joy and help him momentarily tap his greater humanity, in contrast with the brutality of killing. Rosenberg writes of a similar simple transcendence in "Break of Day in the Trenches" when the soldier puts a poppy behind his ear.

*Sombre the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.
Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp –
On a little safe sleep.
But hark! joy – joy – strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering our upturned list'ning faces.*

*Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song –
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides.*

Our summer trip **ROGER SHELMERDINE**

The Blackpool illuminations were first switched on in 1912. During the period before, the Pleasure Beach was developed and the first rides began. Most entertainments were put on hold during the War. The story is based loosely on personal recollections of summer holidays at the English seaside.

*There are no illuminations, and the Pleasure Beach is shut.
For the War has put a stop to things, that we usually like to do; but.*

*We're on the beach at Blackpool, sitting in the sun.
The water looks inviting shall we have some fun?
We're on the beach at Blackpool let's go for a dip,
The last one in's a cissy on our summer trip.*

*Now warily we point our toes towards the water's edge,
It's like the stinging pain of a prickly hawthorn hedge.
Owch owch, thu thu, Ouch ouch thu thu.
The water's up to here by now our feet are going numb.
We're looking in good humour, but all we feel is glum.
Isn't it great, No no. Isn't it great, No no.*

*The waves are lapping up to here, our costumes soak right through.
The wind is howling strongly, we think we're getting flu.
Brrr brrr, I want to go home. Brr brr, I want to go home.
At last the sea has covered us, so just our heads remain.
Above the icy waters, and now it starts to rain.
Boo hoo, what a to-do, Boo hoo, what a to-do.*

*The water's up to here by now – Brr Brr.
We're on the beach at Blackpool, sitting in the sun.
The water looks inviting shall we have some fun?
We're on the beach at Blackpool let's go for a dip,
No we'd rather do some homework, on our summer trip.*

Lament for the Poets FRANCIS LEDWIDGE, 1887-1917

The Irish nationalist and poet, was born in Slane on 19 August 1887 the son of a poor labourer. Although possessing moderate Irish nationalist views Ledwidge nevertheless signed up with the British Army - the Irish Volunteers in October 1914 - to serve in France and Flanders, on the basis that it was unreasonable to expect others to fight for the freedoms that he would later enjoy.

Despite having survived harsh service in Gallipoli and Serbia, Ledwidge was killed while serving in Flanders, on 31 July 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres. He was aged 29, and was buried in Passchendaele.

“Lament for the poets” is a poem reflecting on Irish nationalism after the Easter Rising of 1916. The blackbirds represent the Nationalist activists destroyed by the fowler (England). The quotation at the start and finish is from “Rosin the Beau”, a traditional Irish drinking song of the 1830s.

*I heard the Poor Old Woman say:
"At break of day the fowler came,
And took my blackbirds from their songs
Who loved me well thro' shame and blame
No more from lovely distances
Their songs shall bless me mile by mile,
Nor to white Ashbourne call me down
To wear my crown another while.*

*With bended flowers the angels mark
For the skylark the place they lie,
From there its little family
Shall dip their wings first in the sky.
And when the first surprise of flight
Sweet songs excite, from the far dawn
Shall there come blackbirds loud with love,
Sweet echoes of the singers gone.
But in the lovely hush of eve
Weeping I grieve the silent bills
I heard the Poor Old Woman say
In Derry of the little hills.*

On receiving news of the war ISAAC ROSENBERG, 1890-1918

This poem describes Rosenberg's reaction to the outbreak of the First World War, conveying the poet's sense of anxious foreboding of the horrors ahead through a series of symbols of life, death and rebirth. The clarinet/trumpet melody is "Oseh Shalom" a translation of which is "The one who makes peace" It is a traditional Jewish song (which Rosenberg may well have known) often used as dance music, using a polka rhythm associated with its Ashkenazi Jewish roots.

*Snow is a strange white word.
No ice or frost
Has asked of bud or bird
For Winter's cost.
Yet ice and frost and snow
From earth to sky
This Summer land doth know.
No man knows why.
In all men's hearts it is.*

*Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.
Red fangs have torn His face.
God's blood is shed.
He mourns from His lone place
His children dead.
O! ancient crimson curse!
Corrode, consume.
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.*

Poor old Ted *ROGER SHELMEARDINE*

In a child's imagination even teddies enlisted to help in the war effort. This is an original story of a teddy who was too old to fight. The first teddy bears as we know them were manufactured in about 1902 which would make old Ted 12 years old at the start of the war. In "teddy-terms" that is very old indeed!

Time for bed, sleepy head, he's no youngster any more, time for bed, poor old Ted.

Climb those stairs, no one cares, he's too old to go to war, time for bed, poor old Ted.

*In his prime he was known as the "Head Bear,"
Now he's lost all his strength and he's thread-bare.
On his own, all alone, no one takes him by the paw,
time for bed, poor old Ted.*

*Put away, one dark day, in a dusty old box, poor old Ted, poor old Ted.
With his knee, he broke free, forced the rusty old locks, so it's said, so it's said.*

He comes down when the family's gone out.

But he stays where he's put if there's some doubt.

*Feels the cold, cos he's old, so he's wearing woolly socks, poor old Ted,
poor old Ted.*

*Both his friends have gone, Little Ted and Joe.
Joined the Teddy army, to fight the teddy foe.
Time is getting late, must have met their Fate.
Ted asks the question. "Why did they have to go?"
Time for bed, sleepy head, he's no youngster any more,
time for bed, poor old Ted.*

*Climb those stairs, no one cares, he's too old to go to war, time for bed,
poor old Ted.*

In his prime he was known as the "Head Bear"

Now he's lost all his strength and he's threadbare.

On his own, all alone, no one takes him by the paw.

Time for bed, poor old Ted.

Time for bed, poor old Ted.

In memoriam EDWARD THOMAS, 1878-1917

Born in London and educated at St Paul's School, and Lincoln College, Oxford. He was a shy, self-effacing man who suffered from depression and came close to suicide. Having volunteered for the front, after eighteen months training, he went to France with the Royal Garrison Artillery at the end of January 1917. He was killed ten weeks later, on 9th April, leaving a wife and three children.

The manuscript of this poem was headed '6.IV.15' by Thomas. (It was written at Eastertime 1915). This sophisticated four-line poem was given its more elaborate title by an editor at a later date.

*The flowers left thick at nightfall in the wood
This Eastertide call into mind the men,
Now far from home, who, with their sweethearts, should
Have gathered them and will do never again.*

Rooks CHARLES SORLEY, 1895-1915

Born in Aberdeen. Educated at Marlborough, University College, Oxford, and for six months in Germany at Schwerin and Jena. He loved Germany and hated the idea of the war and fighting for England. Consciously yielding to psychological pressure he enlisted in 1914, joining the Suffolk Regiment. He was promoted to Captain in August 1915 and killed in the Battle of Loos, 13 October 1915, at the age of twenty.

Traditionally rooks are said to be able to forecast the weather and to sense the approach of death. Another folk-tale holds that rooks are responsible for escorting the souls of the virtuous dead to heaven. There are countless references to all types of birds in World War 1 poems.

*There, where the rusty iron lies,
The rooks are cawing all the day.
Perhaps no man, until he dies,
Will understand them, what they say.*

*The evening makes the sky like clay.
The slow wind waits for night to rise.
The world is half content. But they
Still trouble all the trees with cries,
That know, and cannot put away,
The yearning to the soul that flies
From day to night, from night to day.*

***When this lousy war is over* ROGER SHELMERDINE**

Not all trench writers or poets became famous. Not all poems/songs were polite. Some well-known hymns of the day took on very colourful lyrics. One was "What a friend we have in Jesus". Words by Joseph Scriven (1819-1886) and music by G.C.Converse (1832-1918).

From the trenches came "When this lousy war is over".

*When this lousy war is over, no more soldiering for me,
When I get my civvy clothes on, oh how happy I shall be.
No more church parades on Sunday, no more putting in for leave,
I will miss the Sergeant-Major,
How he'll miss me, how he'll grieve.
Amen.*

The soldier RUPERT BROOKE, 1887-1915

Educated at Rugby School and King's College, Cambridge. He was an atheist and active Socialist. After hesitation about what course of action to take at the start of the First World War he joined the navy. Though he had seen the devastation and suffering created by the war he kept it all at an emotional distance from himself, denying the realities of battle.

He had a deeply confused personality - given to both ecstatic enthusiasm and suicidal doubt. Following a mosquito bite he died of acute blood poisoning on board ship on his way to Gallipoli, and was buried on the Greek Island of Skyros.

Originally entitled "The Recruit", Brooke's poem "The Soldier" was the last in a sonnet sequence entitled '1914'. It is his best-loved and best-known poem, perhaps because in it he was actually writing his own epitaph. His deep love of his country is very moving and the respect he shows for the English people is quite evident.

*If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.*

Programme notes: Roger Shelmerdine.

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