

# Those that Marched Away Never to Return

By Andrew Glover-Whitley



## Prologue

With the commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War soon to land upon us it is hard not to think of the men that never came back from the slaughter. Many of whose corpses were never actually found. How many were talented creative artists, whose futures were never allowed to be fulfilled through the folly of Monarchs, Political leaders and idiots who war mongered, it is difficult to assess even one hundred years later. The loss to European culture was unfathomable leaving great gaps in the arts that could never be filled.

In music the name that is always mentioned is George Butterworth, a pupil and close friend of Ralph Vaughan Williams, himself a soldier who served from 1914 to the end of the conflict in the Field Ambulance Service. But alongside George Butterworth there were a number of lesser known, but who is to say not just as important, names had they lived, on both sides. Some from Germany, Hungary some from Australia and New Zealand, France Belgium and other countries. Who is to say that one of these would not have gone on to change the course of musical history in a similar way to that of Stravinsky, Schoenberg or Webern. We unfortunately will never know.

Those that did survive such as Albert Roussel and Vaughan Williams went on to have glittering careers others lost their way and in some cases, such as Ivor Gurney, their minds too; creating stark, bleak works that when viewed in the light of the conflict that spawned

them give an insight into the lost generations and their plight on the battle fields of Prussia and the Western Front. In no particular order here are a few names to conjure with and investigate. Some of their music has been recorded some unfortunately not. Some have been lost for a second time and this time they will not be back even in the legacy of their music.

## *Theme and Variations*

### **Aládar Rádo (Hungary) (1881-1914)**

Aladar Rado was a Hungarian composer brought up in the Austro Hungarian Empire. His works included the operas "*The Black Knight*", "*Golem*" and also "*Shylock*". His style was that of his time, rich and luscious romanticism. Little is really known or recorded about his life. He was killed while fighting in Serbia in the early stages of the war in 1914.

### **Andre Devaere (Belgium) (1890-1914)**



Andre Devaere was considered one of his generations most talented composers with a great future ahead of him. His compositions included many piano pieces and also many for organ. He died from a fatal wound to his lungs on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1914.

## **William Denis Browne (1888-1915) (Britain)**



Browne was a composer, pianist, organist, music critic and very close friend of the poet Rupert Brooke. Vaughan Williams wrote Browne a reference describing him as having "a most musical nature and his artistic judgment and perception are remarkable."

Having seen the public reaction to Brooke's death, Denis Brown's musical executors were concerned that as the first composer to die in the war he would be similarly sentimentalised. As a result of this, his legacy was hidden from view until the war was over, and before then on the composer's own instructions only a handful of works were retained.

His song cycle "*To Gratiana Dancing and Singing*", set to the poems of Richard Lovelace are often seen as the high point of English Song of this Edwardian period. His songs are imbued with a directness and diversity that few others had. He wrote a one act ballet, "*The Comic Spirit*" which was performed in 1914 to some acclaim but is now mostly lost. He was probably the most forward looking of all of the War composers and displayed a leaning towards the French school of impressionism.

He saw action in the Dardanelles, and was wounded in the neck. During the Third Battle of Krithia he took part in an attack on Turkish trenches on 4 June 1915 during which he was wounded first in the shoulder and then the stomach. He died from these wounds soon afterwards.

## **Rudi Stephan (1887-1915) (Germany)**



Rudi Stephan was the most promising German composer of his generation who was killed at the age of 28. He was born in the Rhine city of Worms. He completed his only opera, "*Die ersten Menschen*", shortly after the outbreak of the war, and it was eventually premiered in Frankfurt, five years after his death.

His compositions show a tendency towards a hyper expressive late Romanticism that showed almost proto expressionist leanings of the like seen in Schoenberg's works of this period. He came from a fairly well to do family and his father financed many of his early performances.

He was killed by a bullet in his brain fired by a Russian sniper on the Galician Front, now part of the disputed Ukraine.

## **William Manson (New Zealand) (1896-1916)**

William Manson was a New Zealander whose compositions included settings of Longfellow and Housman in a late romantic musical language. He fell on the first day of the battle of the Somme 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1916, his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. A composer of great promise.

## **George Butterworth (Britain) (1885-1916)**



George Butterworth is probably the best-known of the 'war composers', held up as emblematic of the lost talent of his generation. A keen folk dancer and cricketer, Butterworth and his music still appear to many as the very model of a particular type of Englishman.

He was tirelessly self-critical and destroyed many of his early works before joining up so we will never really know the full extent of his musical mind as a composer. There is a string quartet that for some unknown reason remains unrecorded that would give us an insight to his chamber music in the same way we have for his songs and orchestral music.

Several of his works remain in the repertoire. The justly famous orchestral work "*The Banks of Green Willow*" of 1913 is a staple of the English music repertoire. The clarity of his melodic writing and folksong modality still sound fresh to our ears today.

Later works such as his rhapsody "*A Shropshire Lad*" display a darker, more uncertain tone and the fragments of an unfinished fantasy for orchestra give hints that this is the direction his music would have taken and possibly away from the richness of the folksong scene.

## **Francis Purcell Warren (Britain)(1895-1916)**

Francis Purcell Warren died so young, aged 21, that any assessment of his abilities can only be made on the basis of a very small number of early works and the esteem that his contemporaries held him in.

He was born in Leamington Spa Warwickshire the son of a local musician. His earliest surviving pieces appear to be an "*Ave Verum*" and a "*Benediction*" for the Roman Catholic service published in 1912.

While at the RCM, he became a firm friend of Herbert Howells and it is through Howells that his name is mostly remembered. Warren was one of "*The B's*" in Howells' early orchestral work (Op.13) of 1914 which celebrated some of the composer's close friends; Purcell Warren got into the "B's" through his nickname of 'Bunny'.

In September 1914, 'Bunny' enlisted as a private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and went to France in the following March. Shortly afterwards he returned to England and joined the 10th Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment. According to Hubert Parry, he 'endured bravely some very uncongenial experiences in the earlier stages of training', which Parry does not expand on, but perhaps hints that he was not ready for the trauma of fighting in the conflict.

In March 1916 Warren obtained a commission as a Second Lieutenant and was posted to France. He was reported missing at Mons on July 3, 1916 during the Battle of the Somme. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Works that were published before or soon after his death include a short "*Caprice Fantastique*" for solo piano and an "*Adagio for violoncello and piano*", the latter published in 1925. The *Adagio* was his last completed work before leaving for the Western Front, and was planned as the slow movement of a Sonata, of which the first movement also existed in manuscript as an incomplete sketch in the 1920s but now appears to have been lost.

The only other significant work by Warren is a "*String Quartet in A minor*" of 1914, of which the final movement, a pleasant set of *Variations on an Original Theme* for String Quartet is available on the IMSLP website.

# VARIATIONS

ON AN ORIGINAL THEME

FOR

TWO VIOLINS, VIOLA AND VIOLONCELLO.

TEMA.

F. PURCELL WARREN.

Allegro deciso. (♩ about 72)

Violin I.

Violin II.

Viola.

Violoncello.

Perhaps his greatest legacy was as a friend of Herbert Howells, who commemorated him in an *"Elegy for Viola, String Quartet and Strings"* first performed in a Mons Memorial Concert in the Royal Albert Hall in 1917.

## George Jerrard Wilkinson (Britain) (1885-1916)



George Jerrard Wilkinson was a composer and folk dancer. A friend of George Butterworth and little has been written about Wilkinson and even that is dubious in accuracy. However,

by all accounts Wilkinson was one of the main instigators in the foundation of the English Folk Dance Society alongside Cecil Sharp.

He was born in Edgbaston, Birmingham in 1885. His father was a member of the clergy at St. John's Church, Ladywood, Birmingham while his mother was the daughter of the Bishop of Brisbane, Australia. Cambridge University records show he attended Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, where studies in music led him to form a friendship with Cecil Sharp, and by the age of 19 he was already assisting Sharp in arranging country dance tunes. He became part of Sharp's folk dance demonstration side alongside fellow English folk dance enthusiasts and was evidently instrumental in the founding of the English Folk Dance Society.

In this picture from 1911 we see left to right D. N. Kennedy, George Butterworth, James Patterson, Perceval Lucas, A. Claud Wright and George Wilkinson.



Following the outbreak of the war, he became a sergeant in the 16th Middlesex Regiment. Tasked with storming Hawthorn Redoubt on the 1st July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, his battalion suffered heavy casualties. He was killed that day and is commemorated on the Thiepval monument.

In terms of original compositions, no works have been recorded but some were published, mostly in 1916, which implies they were published posthumously.

## **Frederick Septimus Kelly (Australia) (1881-1916)**

Frederick Septimus Kelly is one of the most enigmatic of all the War Composers. Australian by birth he was more famous at the time as a rower and Olympic Gold Medal winner for rowing in the 1908 London games, Kelly was commissioned into the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve with his friends, the poet Rupert Brooke and the composer William Denis Browne. Kelly was wounded twice at Gallipoli, where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and reached the rank of lieutenant-commander. At Gallipoli he wrote his scores in his tent at base camp, including his most enduring composition, a tribute to Brooke – *“Elegy for String Orchestra”*.



In common with many of the War Composers his music was neglected during the 20th century, although a large project by the National Library of Australia in 2004 led to a rediscovery of his work including a very complete set of personal diaries from 1907-1915 which reveal his friendships and connections to the ‘great and good’ of the day.

Unusually, like Cecil Coles, Kelly continued to compose music even after enlisting, for example writing an *“Elegy”* for strings and harp to commemorate Brooke’s burial on the Isle of Skyros early in the voyage. That battalion ended up at Gallipoli where he won a DSC in January 1916 during the Gallipoli evacuation. He was promoted to lieutenant-commander, but posted to the Somme. Kelly himself died aged 35 in the Battle of the Somme in November 1916.

## Cecil Coles (Britain) (1888-1918)



Christmas 1917 Gustav Holst received a music score splashed with bloodstains and mud marks. This score was "*Cortege*", the third movement of a four movement suite entitled "*Behind The Lines*" by the Scottish born composer whom Holst had taken "under his wing" called Cecil Coles. By the following April Coles was dead. Wounded while attempting to rescue casualties from a copse near the Somme on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1918.

When war broke out, he had joined the Queen's Victoria Rifles and became their bandmaster. While on active service, he sent manuscripts home to Holst. Coles' deeply felt work has been 'rediscovered' through a 2001 recording and is now receiving the attention it deserved.

Other than a prominent dedication on Holst's *Ode to Death*, Cecil Coles remained virtually unknown until 2002. His revival that year was due to the intervention of his daughter Catherine Coles whose research into her father, about whom she knew very little until the last years of her life, brought to light 40 piano, vocal and orchestral pieces stored in a cardboard box at George Watson school in Edinburgh.

There is very little written or known about him and is very much a "what if" composer like many her mentioned. However, it is probably '*Cortege*', a funeral elegy written in the midst of the war by a composer who was to die in it that is the most evocative of his works.

## **Ernest Farrar (Britain)(1885-1918)**

Best-known today as the teacher of Gerald Finzi, Farrar wrote a large number of works for orchestra, voices and organ. He enlisted in the Grenadier Guards in 1915 and joined the regiment in August 1916. He was then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion Devonshire Regiment. He was killed in the Somme in 1918 after being at the front for only two days.



Farrar has been relatively neglected since 1918, and is now best known as the first, and probably most influential teacher of Gerald Finzi. Finzi went on to be one of the most celebrated English composers of the mid-century and the melancholic tone of his works is often attributed to the loss of his friend and teacher.

During his lifetime Farrar was considered an up-and-coming composer who had written over 40 opus numbers, the majority of which were published. Having trained at the Royal College of Music chiefly under Charles Villiers Stanford, Farrar was equally adept at writing miniatures and longer musical forms; the majority of his orchestral works survive and have now been recorded.

## Coda

### (Lucien) Albéric Magnard (French) (1865-1914)



Magnard was born in Paris, France to a wealthy couple and decided to rebel and become a composer and musician on his own terms and without his families money. He wrote his first two Symphonies under the guidance of his friend and tutor Vincent d'Indy. Magnard dedicated his Symphony No. 1 in C minor to him

Magnard published many of his own compositions at his own expense, from Opus 8 to Opus 20. Similar to the oeuvres of Paul Dukas and Henri Dutilleux, Magnard's musical output numbered only 22 works with opus numbers.

In 1914, at the beginning of World War I, Magnard sent his wife and two daughters to a safe hiding place while he stayed behind to guard the estate of Manoir de Fontaines at Baron, Oise. When German soldiers trespassed on his land he fired at them, killing one of them, they fired back and set the house on fire. It is believed that Magnard died in the fire, but his body could not be identified in the remains. The fire destroyed Magnard's unpublished scores. He wrote four romantic style symphonies worth searching out.

### Enrique Granados (Spanish)(1867-1916)

The Spanish pianist and composer Granados was invited to give a recital at the White House by President Woodrow Wilson, but on the return, he and his wife missed their boat to Spain. They took a boat to England where they boarded a ferry to take them to France. On 24 March 1916, while crossing the Channel, the ferry was hit by a German torpedo. Granados jumped out of his lifeboat to try and save his wife but both sadly drowned. Ironically, the section of the ferry where his cabin was located did not sink and the passengers in that part of the boat survived.

## *Epilogue*

### Ivor Gurney (Britain)(1890-1937)



Ivor Gurney is the one composer who sadly epitomised the tortured artist more than any creative artist of the age due to the suffering he endured during the conflict and after.

Gurney studied at the Royal College of Music under Stanford, who rated his student highly. Gurney enlisted as a private soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment in February 1915, and composed music during his service. He was gassed in September 1917.

He wrote mainly songs but there are two very Edwardian style orchestral pieces one about his beloved Gloucestershire and the second an Elegy about the War. Both show an individuality that is refreshingly naive.

After the war he suffered a serious breakdown and, despite studying for a brief time with Ralph Vaughan Williams and continuing to compose and write some extremely powerful poetry he spent the last 15 years of his life in mental hospitals slowly deteriorating due to the traumas faced and endured during the conflict. Possibly the saddest of all the names mentioned here.