

From Oldham to Oxford:
The Formative Years of Sir William Walton

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Abstract

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The formative years of William Walton (1902–1983) are rarely considered when studying the composer’s life and works. However, careful study of that period indicates many of the directions that the adult Walton would take. Industrial Lancashire was more musically active during the period of Walton’s youth (covering the years 1902 to 1912) than is generally considered. His time as a chorister and later undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford (1912 to 1920), is replete with influential interactions with talented adults and fellow students. Detailed consideration of Walton’s juvenilia reveals a keen thinker who assimilated these various influences in a unique manner. Far more than merely a springboard for a future talent, these years resulted in inspired works and a firm purpose for the budding composer.

From Oldham to Oxford

The Formative Years of Sir William Walton

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Introduction

Sir William Walton has been well served by biographers, researchers, archivists, and editors. Few twentieth-century composers have been the subject of such focused research. During his lifetime Walton was never neglected by critics or writers of small independent volumes. The first major wave of true Walton scholarship came slightly before and after his death in 1983, with the publication of a chronological catalog of his works, a bibliography, and three biographies including his widow's memoirs. Walton's centennial year of 2002 brought a second swathe of published materials: a volume of his selected letters, another fine biography, a photojournalistic study, a survey of his manuscripts, and especially the critical edition of his published scores, comprising twenty-three exhaustively researched volumes. Add to these assorted articles, recording notes, tributes, and webpages, and certainly Walton scholarship is a path well trod.

This begs the question why further Walton research is deemed necessary. Notwithstanding all of the above, there remains one crucial aspect of his output that has suffered neglect. The best Walton biography, Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Walton*, deals with his youth—the period from his birth in Oldham to his departure from Oxford to live with the Sitwell clan in London—in a mere thirteen pages. Other biographies remain similarly slight as to their subject's formative years. Yet to Walton this was a period replete with music-making, first as a child singer in his father's church choir, later as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and then as an undergraduate at the university. The fact that his youthful musical experiences were so focused on the choir loft make this period an especially apt subject for a dissertation in choral music.

That said, readers should not expect herein a discovery of unknown and unsung choral works. Only two of Walton's choral works from the period survive today. The earliest is *A Litany* for unaccompanied choir. This work is well known among aficionados of English church music, though in a revised version now believed to have been prepared over a decade later. The second work is *The Forsaken Merman*, for soprano and tenor soloists, double women's chorus, and orchestra. Alas, Walton apparently never orchestrated this cantata—indeed, there are indications that he never completed its initial sketch—and it has never been performed. It survives only in a piano-vocal score with few indications of his expected orchestration. From the point of view of choral music, *The Forsaken Merman* is of but minor interest: the chorus appears in only twenty of the work's total 424 surviving measures.

He is known to have composed other choral music during his youth—including Magnificat settings and a six-part motet—but none of it has survived. Of the music that remains, most is vocally oriented: four settings of Swinburne and one of Shakespeare. There are also miniatures for organ or piano. At age sixteen he attempted his first multi-movement work, the Piano Quartet. This was Walton's work-in-progress when he first met the poet Sacheverell Sitwell, an encounter which completely changed the direction of the young composer's life. Soon thereafter Walton left the ivy-covered halls of Oxford for the glitz and glamor of interwar London, newly embraced among the now mythical "Bright Young Things."

The vast majority of Walton scholarship has been undertaken by British scholars whose expected audience has clearly been British readers. These writers have made certain assumptions on behalf of the reader: an understanding, for example, of the stereotypical personalities and sociocultural backgrounds of diverse regions in England, or the manner in which the University of Oxford functions. As the present document is written by an American scholar trained in the United States, and as the William Walton Trust has expressed interest in publishing some of this research on their website, every effort is made herein to render matters clear for international readers. For similar reasons, quotes have been reproduced exactly as they appear in the original, complete with unorthodox or inconsistent spelling, capitalization, punctuation and the like. If punctuation appears inside or outside a quotation mark, it is because the original source did or did not include that punctuation.

How Walton's early years were both representative and unusual among English youths of his period will be considered on equal grounds. Indeed, one purpose of the present dissertation is to consider what Walton did *not* do as much as what he did. This is especially crucial in considering the reasoning whereby he became an undergraduate at Christ Church and why he opted to leave without a degree. As regards his juvenilia, we will likewise consider the impressively unorthodox manner in which he composed. Herein you will find discussions of those musical works that Walton is known to have encountered in his youth, either as a performer or an audience member, and the relative influence that these works had on his concurrent and future compositional output. To aid this survey of an artist's evolving maturity, we will proceed in strictly chronological order, rather than dealing with each influence in turn. It is hoped that this will yield a sense of the development of a young man's musical mind as one coherent whole, rather than a collection of disparate voices. For example, too often scholars handle the Oxford period *in toto* before moving to the Sitwell influence, whereas strict chronology demonstrates a subtle interplay that better informs our understanding of why Walton left Oxford in the manner that he did and why he composed in a particular style at a particular time. Moving chronologically also affords the opportunity to assess each composition in turn, witnessing the steady maturation of a unique musical voice.

The various influences of Walton's formative years are here revealed as an intricate web. From the professional singing careers of his parents to the repertoire sung in his father's church choir, from the mostly traditional works that Walton sang in cathedral to the more modern works he consulted at the university library, from the established composers passing through town to the innovative young poets returning from war... each of the many influences in Walton's life plays its own part. It takes, however, a very special personality to assimilate all of this in such an individual way. Let us begin with the region of Walton's birth, Lancashire, and the musical family into which he was born.

Walton in Oldham, 1902–12

Lancashire, Manchester and Oldham

Manchester and Music in the Industrial Revolution

Though the southern metropolis of London has dominated English politics and culture for centuries, the northern region of Lancashire gained great influence in the late eighteenth century. Here was the seat of the global Industrial Revolution. Lancashire was uniquely poised to take advantage of the development of industry thanks to large deposits of coal in the Pennine hills to the east. In the south of Lancashire lies the city of Manchester.

First settled by the Romans in AD 79, Manchester has been continuously inhabited since, and, partly due to its geographical position as a midway point between Chester and York, it was a prominent feudal town during the medieval era. An Act of Parliament in 1542 described Manchester as a town that “is, and hath of long time been, a town well inhabited, and the King’s subjects inhabitants of the town well set awork in making cloths as well of linen as of woollen.” These cloths were produced in the cottages of the Pennines—including those in the village of Oldham, eight miles northeast of Manchester and the eventual birthplace of William Walton—and then sent to Manchester for finishing.¹ The Industrial Revolution brought Manchester to the forefront of the world, as merchants flocked there from throughout Britain and beyond: its population in 1758 was a mere 17,000, leaping to 70,400 by 1801, an increase of over 400% in under fifty years. Abundant coal and soft water fueled the industries of cotton weaving and machinery manufacture. The region’s cool, damp climate helped to prevent threads from breaking. In 1853 there were 108 steam-powered mills in Manchester; after this time, the focus on industry moved to nearby towns such as Bolton and Oldham, while Manchester became a center of commerce.² The assertion of Manchester as England’s second city was solidly grounded, and some claim that it still applies.³

Lancashire has long had a reputation of being rough and contrarian. Manchester has generally sided with political opposition groups, including Cromwell’s revolutionaries in 1642 and Bonnie Prince Charlie in the Jacobite uprising of 1745.⁴ The year 1819 brought the Peterloo massacre, when cavalry attacked a crowd of over 60,000 protesters. Frederick Engels lived in Manchester in 1842, and much of his work in proto-Communist theory developed from witnessing the plight of impoverished factory workers.⁵ Manchester became a second center of English journalism upon the foundation of *The Manchester Guardian* in 1821 and *The Economist* in 1843.

¹ Kennedy 1970, p.30

² Hylton, p.78

³ Kennedy 1970, p.89

⁴ Kennedy 1970, p.61

⁵ Kennedy 1970, p.54

In the 1730s, the River Irwell, which links Manchester to the western sea near Liverpool, had become navigable to shipping, but the process was still expensive. Historian Stuart Hylton commented that as late as 1825 “merchants in Oldham used to complain that it was cheaper to send their goods 100 miles by road to the port of Hull on the east coast than to transport them 35 miles to Liverpool and pay their various harbour dues and levies.”¹ The railway came to Manchester in 1830,² and a canal opened in 1894,³ further developing transportation links with Liverpool and the world beyond. Upon the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, Manchester was second only to London among English cities. In fact, in 1900, Manchester was the sixth most populous city in Europe, and the largest that was not its nation’s capital.

Few outside England realize that many foundations of English and international science and industry have centered in Manchester. The physicist James Prescott Joule, eponym of the standard unit for measuring energy, experimented with electromagnetism there in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ In Manchester aristocrat Charles Rolls met engineer Henry Royce in 1904. A few years later, New Zealand-born Ernest Rutherford, one of the world’s pre-eminent physicists, discovered the structure of the atom there.⁵ In 1913, Lancashire mills exported over seven trillion linear yards of cotton cloth, or over 65% of the global supply.⁶ In Manchester in the mid-twentieth century, F.C. Williams and Tom Kilburn invented the prototype of the modern computer, the first device that stored its own programs rather than requiring re-programming for every function.⁷ After a terrorist bombing in 1996, Manchester underwent a thorough modernization and it remains one of the most prominent cities in England: a vast conurbation of over 2.2 million people. Yet it is internationally known primarily for its soccer team, Manchester United.

Any great artist is, at least in part, shaped by his surroundings. Not only Manchester but Lancashire in general has elicited a certain stereotypical personality. Michael Kennedy, Walton’s appointed biographer who had previously written an engaging volume on the history of Manchester, describes the typical Lancashire persona thus: “cheerful people usually, less dour than Yorkshire folk, but still phlegmatic, unemotional on the surface, feeling deeply below it, level-headed, fair, accustomed to bad times as much as to good, loyal but not sycophantic, good friends and good haters, stubborn to a fault, generous often beyond their means. Long-suffering, too, and slow to anger, but tenacious in the fight when they felt right to be on their side.”⁸ Historian Brian Law has described a representative denizen of Oldham as “down-to-earth, blunt and unpolished, but above all good-humoured, hard-working and self-reliant”.⁹ Winston Churchill commented on the “warm hearts and bright eyes” of the people of Oldham.¹

¹ Hylton, p.213

² Kennedy 1970, p.45

³ Kennedy 1970, p.86

⁴ Kennedy 1970, p.139

⁵ Hylton, p.234–5

⁶ Hylton, p.226

⁷ Hylton, p.268

⁸ Kennedy 1970, p.23

⁹ Law, p.353

Oldham.¹ Through the course of this volume it shall be seen just how aptly these descriptions pertain to William Walton even in his youth. And though it is beyond the reach of this study, Walton's adulthood, passed mostly in London and Italy, demonstrates these traits even more.

Manchester's musical prominence developed together with its moneyed class. 1777 saw the foundation of a series of Gentlemen's Concerts, in a specially built concert hall. There were twelve concerts each season, six of which were choral. These flourished into the 1830s, when a new, larger hall was built, to accommodate the series' 600 subscribers, with a waiting list of 200 more.² In an unfortunate coincidence, two of Europe's most prominent musicians performed in Manchester shortly before their deaths: Mendelssohn conducted *Elijah* on April 20, 1847, and Chopin performed a recital the following year. Such illustrious events were not, however, the watershed moments they perhaps should have been. Mendelssohn, for example, did not hold the Manchester orchestra in high regard, and the town's poor reception of Chopin was not inspiring to his friend, the pianist and conductor Charles Hallé, who had brought him there.³

Hallé forgave Manchester in time, as evidenced by his lifelong dedication to the city's musical life. From 1850 he oversaw the local orchestra and gradually raised its level of musicianship. In 1858, they began a series of weekly concerts in Free Trade Hall, building on the success of the previous year's summer exhibition concerts.⁴ International soloists such as Jenny Lind, George Henschel, and Edvard Grieg came to town. Hallé's orchestra presented the British premieres of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and *Damnation of Faust*,⁵ and early performances of symphonies of Brahms and Dvořák.⁶ Perhaps more important than these landmark occasions was Hallé's determination to ensure that they were available to the working class: some seats were available for a mere shilling.⁷ The orchestra that Hallé founded remains one of the world's top ensembles today, and has even preserved his memory in its name.

Another of Hallé's lasting contributions to the region was the foundation in 1893 of the Royal Manchester College of Music, now the Royal Northern College of Music.⁸ This provided an alternative to the two colleges in London, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, which had served as the primary training centers for British musicians. Hallé was the first Principal of the RMCM, a post he held until his death two years later. When the RMCM opened its doors in October 1893, there were eighty students: twenty-nine singers, twenty-eight pianists, seventeen violinists, and six organists. More students joined in the following spring, and in the fall of 1894 there were also cellists and one harpist.

¹ Drummond, p.19

² Kennedy 1970, p.95

³ Kennedy 1970, p.95–6

⁴ Hylton, p.165–6; Kennedy 1970, p.96

⁵ Kennedy 1970, p.79

⁶ Hylton, p.165–6

⁷ Kennedy 1970, p.96

⁸ Hylton, p.166

Oldham

In 1958, the eminent conductor Sir John Barbirolli proclaimed: “Never has such beauty come out of Oldham”,¹ the town of Walton’s birth. Oldham was one of several towns around Manchester that flourished in the nineteenth century thanks to the cotton industry. Mills and their concomitant chimneys cluttered the skyline. Michael Kennedy’s description of Oldham in 1970 serves an equally apt introduction today:

Oldham is on the eastern border of Lancashire with Yorkshire. Just beyond it the western slopes of the Pennines frown over the man-made scene. It is as if man and nature were in perpetual conflict to provide the most forbidding aspects. Here in Oldham you can still see in all their starkness the rows of identical houses, can imagine the knocker-up as he went his rounds summer and winter [knocking on doors every morning to awaken mill-workers], can hear the clogs on the cobblestones as the mill-workers poured forth on their way to work. It is a haunted place.²

Even today the town is perceived popularly as a decayed remnant of King Cotton.

But the history of Oldham extends far beyond the Industrial Revolution. Oldham was inhabited as much as seven thousand years ago, according to archeological evidence including a flint arrowhead. Then, in turn, came Romans, Celts, Anglians, and finally Norsemen. The oldest version of the town name, Aldhulme, is of Norse origin.³ This comes from an account by William of Canterbury, a monk writing between the 1170 murder of Thomas à Becket and the death of King Henry II in 1189. The township of Werneth-with-Oldham had existed already for several decades as part of a large estate called Kaskenmoor; historians have traced the manorial lords of the region.⁴ Despite the stained-glass portrayal at the Oldham Town Hall, dispute remains as to whether Hugh Oldham, who served as Bishop of Exeter from 1504 to 1519 and founded Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was born in the eponymous town.⁵ Before the bubonic plague attacked Oldham in 1593, its population was probably about one thousand.⁶

Through the seventeenth century, Oldham’s economy was based on farming. Slowly other industries, such as weaving, hat-making, and coal-mining began to be practiced. In fact, in 1863, building projects uncovered in the neighborhoods of Werneth and Coppice—the very districts where young Walton was born and raised—“a cluster of 60 pit shafts which were four or five feet wide at the top and extended downwards to a considerable depth”, together with other evidence of coal-mining.⁷

¹ Aston, p.2

² Kennedy 1970, p.162

³ Bateson 1949, p.1–4

⁴ Bateson 1949, p.7

⁵ Bateson 1949, p.9

⁶ Bateson 1949, p.33

⁷ Bateson 1949, p.48–9

As one would expect from a farming community during the Puritan regime of the Commonwealth, music was virtually eradicated. From around 1695—fully thirty-five years after the restoration of the monarchy—dates the earliest evidence of a resumption of music-making, as the elderly Abraham Hurst began teaching singing. The following year, notwithstanding accusations of “Popery,” the parochial curate, Richard Sugden, authorized singing on Sundays, though for a time only the tune “St. David’s” was allowed. Thus church music, which would become so important in Walton’s youth, slowly developed in Oldham. In fact, Oldham was the catalyst whence spread sacred music to Rochdale, Prestwich, and other towns around Manchester.¹

Daniel Defoe toured Britain and observed that Oldham and its neighbor towns had by 1724² morphed from a farming-based economy, as cloth-making of various sorts took hold:

Tho’ we met few people without doors, yet within we saw the houses full of lusty fellows, some at the dye vat, some at the loom, others dressing the cloths; the women and children carding or spinning; all employed from the youngest to the oldest. [...] The people in general live long. They enjoy a good air, and under such circumstances hard labour is naturally attended with the blessing of health, if not riches. The sides of the hills were dotted with houses, hardly a house standing out of a speaking distance from another [...].³

The town center had St. Mary’s Church, an inn, and some dwellings, and on the nearby hills were perched farmers’ houses and weavers’ cottages. Into the 1770s, the population of the village of Oldham reached about eight thousand.⁴

Oldham slowly lost its rural character partly through the growth of the cloth industry, but also through developments of transport. The settlement found itself on the turnpike road connecting Lancashire to the west and Yorkshire to the east.⁵ The canal that connected Manchester to the sea gained an extension to Ashton-under-Lyne in 1795;⁶ this passed just two miles south of Oldham’s center, near the coal-mining region described above. Even Samuel Wesley, the pre-eminent preacher of the late eighteenth century, was known to have visited Oldham.⁷ Taverns developed, complete with musical carousing.⁸ Here developed a town newly built on mercantilism. The 1801 census in Oldham reported merely forty-two people still working in agriculture, but 5,906 in trade.⁹

Oldham developed quickly with the Industrial Revolution. To journey from Manchester to Oldham is a slow, steady incline of ten miles, as one climbs the slope toward the Pennine hills. The natural geography around Oldham has rivers and ample mineral deposits, which led in due time to thriving

¹ Bateson 1949, p.54–5

² Law, p.16

³ Bateson 1949, p.56

⁴ Law, p.17

⁵ Bateson 1949, p.77

⁶ Law, p.21

⁷ Bateson 1949, p.80

⁸ Bateson 1949, p.78

⁹ Bateson 1949, p.83

industries. In 1790 the first local factory to manufacture machinery was built; it was located in the heart of town, adjacent to the grammar school of which more will be heard later.¹ Later that decade, Henry Platt and Elijah Hibbert founded their manufacturing partnership² which remained prominent in Oldham even through the twentieth century and provided a source of regular employment for Walton's father. Hat-making was also of great local importance: in 1837 the *Manchester Guardian* reported that fully one quarter of the hats in England were produced in Oldham.³ The city grew rapidly: by 1839 the population was 32,000.⁴

The town retained a reputation for low culture. The term "roughhead", or, in the local dialect, "roughyed",⁵ became a common appellation, as Edwin Butterworth reported in 1834: "I am a native of Oldham and consequently a thorough Roughhead, as my fellow townsmen have long been called."⁶ This may have been due to the prominence of taverns, but also to the predominant political proclivities. Oldham had sided with the Jacobites even more firmly than had Manchester.⁷ The protestors of Peterloo in 1819 had included a strong Oldham contingent of at least 864 marchers,⁸ largely hand-loom weavers suffering from increased industrialization.⁹ Oldham had seen a vigorous group of Radicals promoting parliamentary reform even back to the 1790s.¹⁰ Soon after Peterloo the prominent Radical writer Samuel Bamford made note of "the best and truest supporters of the radical cause, a small but firm band of patriots at Oldham".¹¹ The town, now the seventeenth-largest borough in England,¹² finally gained its first two seats in Parliament with the Reform Act of 1832,¹³ promptly electing two Radicals.¹⁴

As Oldham's politics gained in prominence during the nineteenth century, the town also expanded its cultural presence. The Oldham Musical Society had been founded as early as 1764,¹⁵ and it continued to flourish. The Oldham Lyceum was established in 1838 with the purpose of educating the working man; in 1856, with the financial support of James Platt (son of Henry and then leader of the family firm), the Lyceum constructed its own building, complete with library, reading room, and evening classes in topics such as algebra, mechanical drawing, and Latin.¹⁶ In 1865 the Lyceum established a highly successful School of Science and Art, with classes in chemistry and applied mechanics;¹⁷ in 1892 the Lyceum also

¹ Bateson 1949, p.91

² Bateson 1949, p.92

³ Bateson 1949, p.88

⁴ Bateson 1949, p.126

⁵ Fowler, p.7; Law, p.54

⁶ Bateson 1949, p.88

⁷ Bateson 1949, p.57

⁸ Bateson 1949, p.100

⁹ Law, p.67

¹⁰ Bateson 1949, p.97

¹¹ Law, p.68

¹² Westley, p.5

¹³ Bateson 1949, p.104

¹⁴ Law, p.77

¹⁵ Bateson 1949, p.194

¹⁶ Bateson 1949, p.119

¹⁷ Bateson 1949, p.151

created a School of Music.¹ (Much of the Lyceum’s progress was thanks to donations from the wealthy Platt family.²) The Theatre Royal began in 1845, licensing use of the Working Men’s Hall;³ five years later one Manchester newspaper hailed it as “superior to many provincial theatres of much higher pretensions.”⁴ At least until the 1880s, the Hallé Orchestra journeyed from Manchester to perform there.⁵ Though Oldham is often maligned for its architecture, with an emphasis on mill smokestacks and identical terrace houses, the downtown area had highlights such as the Town Hall, built in 1841 and expanded in 1877,⁶ which Michael Kennedy described as “like a Greek temple, with a pillared portico and a window in which Art, Industry, Commerce, Mechanism and Science are symbolised beneath the arms of Lancashire’s manufacturing towns and Oldham’s benefactors.”⁷ Anglicanism began to lose its foothold as, one by one, non-conformist religions built new institutions: Baptists, Congregationalists and Unitarians in 1816, Methodists in 1822, and Catholics in 1829.⁸

Development accelerated after the railway came to Oldham in 1842, with a station in the Werneth neighborhood. Five years later this expanded into the Mumps district, closer to the town center.⁹ (One scholar in Manchester quipped to the present author that Oldham plays host to the only rail station in the world named after a disease.) But Oldham was still in great need of the elaborate internal infrastructure that could only follow incorporation. Parliament finally granted this thriving town of 50,000¹⁰ a charter of incorporation in 1849.

After the Cotton Famine of 1861–5, brought on when imports of cotton from the southern United States were severely disrupted by the American Civil War, Oldham recovered quickly. By the end of the century, Oldham had more half-millionaires than any other town in England.¹¹ Opportunities for wealth, or at least for financial stability, encouraged immigration. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the population of Oldham rocketed from 12,000 to 137,000.¹² The table below indicates the town’s census results¹³ for the century from 1801, together with the percentage increase over the preceding decade. This rate of growth was consistent with most mid-sized industrial towns in Lancashire, such as Bolton, Blackburn and Preston.¹⁴

1801	12,024	
1811	16,690	38.8%
1821	21,662	23.8%

¹ Law, p.230

² Tait, p.9

³ Law, p.55

⁴ Bateson 1949, p.113

⁵ Law, p.229

⁶ Law, p.156–7

⁷ Kennedy 1970, p.162

⁸ Bateson 1949, p.120–1

⁹ Bateson 1949, p.121–2; Law, p.77

¹⁰ Bateson 1949, p.131

¹¹ Law, p.244

¹² Oldham Hulme Grammar School, *Oldham’s Grammar School*

¹³ Bateson 1949, p.232

¹⁴ Law, p.36

1831	32,381	49.5%
1841	45,595	40.8%
1851	52,820	15.8%
1861	72,333	36.9%
1871	82,629	14.2%
1881	111,343	34.8%
1891	131,463	18.1%
1901	137,246	4.4%

At the beginning of the Cotton Famine, in 1862, Oldham had about 9% of the global total of cotton spindles.¹ By the 1890s, Oldham had become the center of the cotton-spinning industry not only in the region, but in the world. The town also maintained its reputation for weaving locally produced cotton yarn into the heavier fabrics such as corduroy and velvet.² Even though cotton conquered Oldham in the nineteenth century, hat-making and coal-mining continued. Other ancillary trades developed, particularly the manufacture of machinery to be used for the cotton industry. Foremost among such manufacturers was Platt Brothers & Company Limited. The Platt family had featured prominently in Oldham’s textile industry since the 1770s. In 1868, Platt’s moved its headquarters to the Hartford New Works, a large factory complex occupying sixty-five acres³ in the Werneth district of Oldham, southwest of the town center. Platt’s employed about ten percent of the population of Oldham,⁴ and the National Archives has calculated that in “the 1890s an estimated 42% of Oldham’s population was supported by the company.”⁵

Walton was born near the same Werneth district where Platt’s was headquartered, in the residential neighborhood now known as Coppice. Construction began at Coppice in earnest in the 1860s, in the wake of the Cotton Famine.⁶ In 1875 the neighborhood was described as “dotted over with chaste and elaborate residences, the fashionable west end of the town”.⁷ To the south was Werneth Park, privately owned land with three large mansions of the wealthy Platt, Lees, and Radcliffe families. To the east was Alexandra Park, a large, public open space, complete with a boating lake. To live in Coppice placed one in the comfortable middle class.

While Coppice and Werneth are today largely residential neighborhoods, in Walton’s time Werneth especially was industrial. In 1902, the year of Walton’s birth, there were 270 cotton mills in Oldham, processing a quarter of England’s cotton imports.⁸ In 1890, future Prime Minister H. H. Asquith described Oldham as “one of the most dismal of manufacturing towns.”⁹ A local newspaper described the scene in 1908: “Within a few yards of the town hall you can hear the low purring growl of caged

¹ Law, p.80–81

² Law, p.99

³ Eastham, p.44

⁴ Eastham, p.44

⁵ National Archives, “Platt Collection”

⁶ Law, p.84

⁷ Law, p.130–1

⁸ Burton, p.8

⁹ Law, p.187

machinery... The smoke of the innumerable tall chimneys lies over all like a pollutice... Brick houses and shops go on for ever and at the back of them, blotting out all the rest of the world, rise great precipitous mills like frowning cliffs, at whose bars are the small houses where the folks live like coney at a mountain foot.”¹ Since the 1870s, over two-thirds of the machinery found in those mills had been constructed at Platt’s.²

Pollution was a major irritant. The prevailing wind was westerly, bringing damp coolness from the Atlantic, but also pushing the output from hundreds of smokestacks against the Pennine hills.³ The smoke lingered over residential districts and the town center, resulting in poor health among the local population and a black, sooty appearance on virtually all buildings. One visitor, and probably many more, described Oldham as all “soot and stink”.⁴

Despite its Radical past, Oldham became politically divided in the levels of local government, with the Liberals and Conservatives trading prominence every few years.⁵ The town’s two newspapers—the Liberal *Oldham Chronicle* and the Tory *Oldham Standard*—represented these split loyalties. What united the two parties was downright stinginess. Any amenities or infrastructure projects, no matter how crucial to the city’s development, were fiercely contested, despite steady growth of the civic coffers. This was the case for roads, public transport, sewage collection, parks, the market, the Town Hall, the public library, and even the police.⁶ Perhaps this led, in part, to Walton’s hyper-awareness of finances later in life, even when his financial situation became steady to the point of moderate affluence.

Oldham’s two Parliament seats also demonstrated the political climate. At least until the First World War, Oldham was a marginal district (what Americans call a swing district), with loyalties shifting between Liberal and Conservative candidates.⁷ Among the Conservatives who failed to gain a seat in Parliament for Oldham was a twenty-four-year-old war correspondent previously resident in South Africa, who in 1899 lost his very first election. The following year, this young journalist, none other than Winston Churchill, was indeed elected from Oldham. William would later become a staunch Conservative supporter, and he was certainly aware of politics even during his youth, when election turnout was regularly over 80%.⁸ After all, most Anglicans were Conservative voters,⁹ and Walton’s parents were devoted church-goers.

All of these disparate elements of life in Oldham, and in broader Lancashire, played a part in Walton’s youth and his eventual music. The perception of Oldham as an industrial wasteland persists today, but in retrospect it is perhaps not surprising that a prominent composer should emerge from the region. Manchester and its satellite towns, of which Oldham was one of the most prominent, were growing in

¹ Burton, p.2

² Law, p.115

³ Law, p.153

⁴ Law, p.154

⁵ Law, p.133–5

⁶ Law, p.138–147, 156–9, 163

⁷ Law p.238

⁸ Drummond, p.64

⁹ Fowler, p.17

affluence, influence, and cultural awareness. And indeed Walton was not alone: the great opera soprano Eva Turner was also born in Oldham, in 1892.¹

American readers can perhaps equate turn-of-the-century Lancashire with the industrial Midwest. Manchester is comparable to rapidly growing Chicago of the era, and Oldham to Chicago's satellite towns, such as Gary, Indiana. Or, as the rise of cloth industry catapulted Manchester to global prominence, so did the automobile industry for Detroit. Oldham's focus on cotton-spinning could compare to the focus on rubber tires in Akron, Ohio. Neither analogy is perfect, of course, but both aptly convey the evolution of Oldham's cultural perception over the past hundred years, initially as a city with great promise tied to the industry in a nearby larger city, and today as a town of secondary, regional importance at best, whose glory days are decidedly behind it. But it was to Oldham as a city of promise that Charles and Louie Walton, the composer's parents, settled at the turn of the century.

Charles and Louie Walton

Charles Walton

Charles Alexander Walton was born on February 28, 1867 at Albert Terrace in Hale, a small town in Cheshire, about ten miles southwest of Manchester. According to his obituary, Charles "had been in Oldham since boyhood".² However, employment records indicate that he had studied at Hull Grammar School,³ and the eastern port of Hull is far from Oldham. His father worked for Inland Revenue, the tax-gathering government agency.⁴ Charles sang in the Werneth Vocal Society in the 1890s (in 1897 it became subsumed into the Oldham Musical Society⁵). The obituary further reports that "in young manhood he did a good deal of concert work being a baritone whose singing was marked by clever interpretation and excellent taste."⁶ By April 1894, he was living at 41 Coppice Street in Oldham. The Coppice neighborhood was, as we have seen, a fashionable one, but Charles was on its outskirts, merely a block away from the main road between Oldham and Manchester.

Neil Tierney has described Charles Walton as "a capable, highly intelligent man".⁷ Susana Walton, William's widow, recalled her husband's opinion of his father's musical abilities: "William would often remark that his father was a very good singer and, had he been alive after broadcasting started, he would have been very well known indeed".⁸ She further hypothesized that Charles "had probably settled

¹ Law, p.281

² Anonymous, "Mr. Charles Walton"

³ Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys' Staff Register, 1895–1943

⁴ Burton, p.6; Craggs 1993, p.2; Kennedy 1989, p.4; Tierney, p.21

⁵ Oldham Choral Society, "History of the Society"

⁶ Anonymous, "Mr. Charles Walton"

⁷ Tierney, p.22

⁸ Zelda Lawrence-Curran, "'All the things that might have been': *Christopher Columbus*", in Craggs 1999, p.149

in Oldham because in those days it was very difficult to make a living as a singer [...]. He had needed a job, which he found in Platt's Ironworks in Oldham".¹ He was one of many thousands who had flocked to Oldham in the late nineteenth century, mostly from other towns in Lancashire, but also from nearby Yorkshire and Cheshire.²

Charles Walton worked for Platt's as an office clerk.³ Unfortunately, the company's hiring records do not survive from this period, and we do not know exactly when Charles began working there. But his address in 1894 was near Platt's corporate headquarters at Hartford New Works. Photographs from the period show many shoeless, filthy men in the mills and factories of Oldham, but these do not represent Charles's working conditions. He held a clerical post, most likely working in the "New Offices" which had been constructed directly opposite the Werneth railway station,⁴ a ten-minute walk from his home in Coppice Street. Historian Walter Prestwich, in his extensive unpublished research on the history of Platt's, pointed out that "the difference in status between the office staff and the overcalled works personnel was far more marked than it is at the present time, even down to the washing facilities. [...] Over 90% of the workforce had a particular job to do in a particular department, so they would see little of what went on elsewhere".⁵ Charles held a socially respectable, comfortable office job, befitting the son of a government employee. He was certainly neither working class nor poor, as is often hinted in Walton studies. In fact, the Platt family took pride in treating their employees well,⁶ so Charles may have been even better off than office workers from other companies.

The details of Charles Walton's address come to us from his hand-written entry from 1894 in the student register at the Royal Manchester College of Music. The decision to begin study must have been an odd one, given that he was almost middle-aged by the day's standards. Perhaps he was motivated by the 1892–3 twenty-week strike in Oldham.⁷ Definitely he had already been singing throughout Oldham, and perhaps he was encouraged by friends and family to apply to the RMCM. It is certain that he harbored ambitions for a career in singing; as shall be seen, his eventual disillusionment would become a prominent feature in his relationship with his sons.

It is often claimed that Charles was among the first intake of students at the RMCM, but this is mildly misleading. When instruction began in October 1893, there were eighty students, whereas Charles was among the thirty-seven who joined in the first four months of the following year. The student register indicates that Charles was student number 113, and gives his age as twenty-seven. This was rather old for a new student: of the 117 students who joined the RMCM in that first year, 59% were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. Only four were older than Charles Walton, and one of those left after just one term. Charles was hardly a student in the conventional sense at all, but was truly a self-

¹ S. Walton, p.41

² Law, p.126

³ Burton, p.3

⁴ Eastham, p.46

⁵ Prestwich, p.76

⁶ Law, p.45–46

⁷ Bateson 1949, p.179

sufficient adult. On the intake form, students were requested to indicate a “Parent or Responsible Person,” but Charles left this entry blank.

Geoff Thomason has researched these early years of the Royal Manchester College of Music in great detail. Regarding the social structure of the College, he has observed that: “Students were predominantly female, middle class and studying mostly piano, violin and singing. The fact that many stayed only months suggests that the college was seen by some as a kind of finishing school where well brought up young ladies could treat music as a social accomplishment but little else. There were, of course, no grants, so students were privately funded unless fortunate enough to gain one of a handful of scholarships offered by, for example, local authorities.”¹ Thomason also points out that the RMCM had an intriguing connection with Oldham: its buildings were acquired through the Oldham cotton giant Charles Lees, who was Treasurer of the College’s General Committee.

Charles Walton’s tutor was Andrew Black (1859–1920), a Scot who was gaining prominence as a baritone soloist among the country’s many provincial choral festivals. His recent appearances at the Crystal Palace in London (1887), the Leeds Festival (1892, in Dvořák’s *The Spectre’s Bride*), and the Birmingham Festival (1894, as Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*) were very well received.² Hallé is to be praised for hiring a teacher with such promise; in fact, he also engaged Black to sing the title role of Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman* in Manchester, in November 1893. October 1897 saw another appearance with Hallé’s orchestra, this time conducted by Frederic Cowen, in three major Wagner excerpts: “O Star of Eve” from *Tannhäuser*, “Pogner’s Address” from *Die Meistersinger*, and “Wotan’s Farewell” from *Die Walküre*. In the following years Black premiered two major roles in Elgar oratorios: the title-role in *Caractacus* at Leeds in 1898, and Judas in *The Apostles* at Birmingham in 1904. In 1899 he sang in the first performance of extracts of Delius’s opera *Koanga*.³ Black eventually settled in Australia upon his retirement.

The Visitors’ Book from the RMCM includes hand-written entries of many luminaries who passed through. Among the visitors were composers (such as Charles Villiers Stanford, November 1893; and Edvard Grieg, November 1897), singers (Clara Butt, December 1893), violinists (Joseph Joachim, February 1894 and March 1895; Alexander Siloti, December 1896), conductors (Hans Richter, October 1894), and pianists (Ignacy Jan Paderewski, February 1895; Ferruccio Busoni, November 1897). Charles Walton would probably have encountered some of these figures, especially the singers. It is noteworthy that the RMCM was able to attract such illustrious figures, demonstrating not only the prestige of the College but also of Manchester and Lancashire in general.

Charles Walton was featured in several early performances at the RMCM. He sang at one of the three public performances that marked the end of the College’s first year. On Tuesday, July 17, 1894, he sang the aria “O God, Have Mercy” from Mendelssohn’s *St. Paul*. This is one of the highlights of a role that was still a central part of any baritone’s repertoire. “O God, Have Mercy” calls for great lyricism and steadiness in the voice, not to be overpowered by excessive emotion. He also participated in *Ecco quel*

¹ Thomason, p.110

² Allan, “Andrew Black”

³ Lloyd, p.2

fiero istante by Sir Michael Costa, the Italian conductor who gained prominence in London in the 1830s. This vocal quartet in canon requires virtuosic embellishment. The subject's final statement is harmonized homophonically in four parts, requiring the singers to function well not only as soloists but truly as an ensemble. As he was chosen to sing these works at a public forum after only three months of study indicates that he innately possessed these skills of lyricism, virtuosity, and ensemble awareness.

Beginning in the 1894–5 season, each month at the RMCM saw a new "Students' Monthly Musical Evening," with students presenting their work to the public. Charles Walton appeared frequently on these programs. In that first season, he was heard singing "Why do the Nations" from Handel's *Messiah* on November 30, 1894, and "Even bravest heart may swell" from Gounod's *Faust* on March 14 the following year (one printed program in the archive bears the hand-written indication: "Joachim was present!"). As part of the "Annual Public Examination" that closed the season, Charles sang two major works on July 10, 1895: Mendelssohn's *Hear my prayer* and also the "Prologue" from Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, still a very new work. In later seasons, Charles features somewhat less frequently, but was given greater responsibilities. The major event of the Annual Public Examination in July 1896 was a performance of the third act from *Faust*, with Charles in the role of Mephistopheles. That December he sang the *Pagliacci* Prologue again and a duet from *L'étoile du nord* by Meyerbeer, and in the next month Wotan's Farewell from *Die Walküre*, which his tutor, Andrew Black, would sing with the Hallé Orchestra later that year. There followed "Là ci darem" from *Don Giovanni* and Handel's "O ruddier than the cherry" on April 2, and "Taci, taci" by Weber on June 25. The Annual Public Examination 1897 once again saw a major operatic presentation: the first act from *Die Zauberflöte* (sung in Italian as *Il flauto magico*), in which Charles sang Papageno, took place on July 5. On the following night he again sang "Là ci darem," and on July 7 "Non più andrai" from *Le nozze di Figaro*. These works demonstrate a broad ability, again incorporating lyrical and virtuosic elements, but also a heightened sense of drama. This was the last occasion when Charles Walton sang at the Royal Manchester College of Music.

Notwithstanding his prominence among the RMCM students, Charles Walton's name is conspicuously missing from the Diploma Register. In the Student Register, his date of withdrawal is given as July 1897. Though he studied for ten terms, he seems never to have completed a degree. In fact, a great many students did not finish: by 1897, only thirty-three diplomas had been awarded, though this figure almost doubled in the following two years. There is no known documentation to explain precisely what criteria for graduation Charles lacked, or, for that matter, why he made the decision at all. Perhaps he found the schedule was no longer conducive to combine with an office job. Perhaps age had something to do with it. Perhaps he ran out of money (the initial fee was a handsome £30 per term¹). Or perhaps he felt that his level of proficiency was sufficient to launch a career without the degree. All such reasoning is of course speculative, but will come into importance when we consider why his son, William, would eventually make a similar decision at Oxford.

Manchester was very active musically during the late 1890s. The archive of the Royal Northern College of Music includes printed programs for a great many performances of orchestral societies, choral unions, and chamber ensembles. Interestingly, the orchestral and chamber-music fare tended to be

¹ Thomason, p.116; Heywood, p. 25, confirms that this remained the fee until at least 1906.

Germanic, dominated by Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Brahms, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Dvořák, and Mendelssohn. But vocalists mostly presented songs by British composers such as Macfarren, Benedict, Cowen, Balfe, Sullivan, and Wallace, and vocal ensembles sang partsongs by Stanford, Elgar, Pearsall, and occasionally international figures such as MacDowell and Cornelius. Some of Charles Walton's contemporaries at the RMCM figure prominently in the many concert programs, including William Wild, his frequent collaborator who had sung Papageno to Charles's Tamino. One performance at Manchester's Brasenose Club is especially notable. On Tuesday, March 8, 1898, the year after Charles Walton ceased his studies at the RMCM, he sang as a member of the Manchester Gentlemen's Glee Club Choir. William Wild appeared as well, but more importantly, so did a contralto billed as "Miss Louie Turner". Charles and Louie had previously met and sung together, but this performance's printed program is the earliest one at the RNCM archive that demonstrates their occasional collaboration.

Louie Turner Walton

Louisa Maria Turner, who everyone called "Louie", was born on October 11, 1866, at Herbert Street in Stretford,¹ a suburb three miles south of Manchester. The Turner family had come from Devonshire in the eighteenth century,² and was therefore part of the great migration to the increasingly industrial and prosperous north in the nineteenth. Her father, originally from the eastern port of Hull, was, like Charles's father, a government official: he collected excise taxes. His family historically worked as upholsterers and furniture makers. The Turner family tradition maintains that Albert, Prince Consort to Queen Victoria, had commissioned furniture from them for Buckingham Palace.³ Louie lived in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, an up-and-coming suburb just east of Stretford, having been rural until the rail station opened in 1880.⁴

We know little of Louie's character—Susana Walton once described her as one "who looked very frail but was a most determined character".⁵ We know even less of her musical background and training. Charles and Louie met at a recital in Chorlton,⁶ but we do not know the precise date of this meeting. They sang together on several occasions, but nothing other than these professional encounters is known of their courtship. They were married on August 10, 1898, at Macfayden Memorial Congregational Church in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.⁷ On the marriage certificate, Charles listed his occupation neither as singer nor as ironworks clerk, but as teacher of singing.⁸

¹ Craggs 1993, p.2; Kennedy 1989, p.4

² Family tree at William Walton Archive, La Mortella

³ Burton, p.6; S. Walton, p.41

⁴ Hylton, p.211

⁵ S. Walton, p.44

⁶ Kennedy 1989, p.4; S. Walton, p.41

⁷ Craggs 1993, p.2; S. Walton, opposite p.18

⁸ Kennedy 1989, p.4

93 Werneth Hall Road

The couple proceeded to live in Oldham, at 93 Werneth Hall Road.¹ This remained the family home for several decades. It was one of a series of attached, terraced houses, the second from the end, near the corner of Werneth Hall Road and Coppice Street, about a mile southwest and thus downhill of the town center. This was part of the pleasant neighborhood of Coppice, which was undergoing development at the time. The Waltons' home was one of six adjoining terrace homes that had been carved out of a larger estate. The house had been built only recently; it does not appear in the ordnance map of 1894. It was a mere five minutes' walk from the town's manorial estate, Werneth Hall. Mills and smokestacks were clearly visible, especially downhill to the west, where the Hartford Works were located. Coppice was a quiet residential district, too pricey for immigrants or the working class. Nevertheless, in adulthood William would describe the neighborhood, in one of many demonstrations of typically Lancastrian wit, as "very picturesque ... outside loos ... that sort of thing".²

There survives a photograph of Coppice Street from 1906.³ It was taken from the corner of Werneth Hall Road, the intersection nearest the Walton home, and accurately demonstrates the Waltons' living conditions. The brick terrace homes were of the "two up, two down" variety, meaning two rooms upstairs and two downstairs. Some of the residences, including the Waltons', had an additional upper level with a single, small bedroom. Adjacent houses share an adjoining wall. Each front door opened to a small, tidy courtyard, some with a lone, small tree. The homes were compact, but pleasant.⁴ Historian Brian Law has described them thus:

The four-room terrace house, two-up, two-down, holding on average a family of four to five, but in many cases several more, offered a crowded comfort. The kitchen at the back was the family living room; its door might be screened to prevent draughts. The kitchen had a range with open grate, oven on one side, boiler on the other, and since this was the place for cooking, toasting bread, heating flat irons, and the source of hot water, the range would often have a fire kept going all day, all the year round. [...] A stone sink, or slopstone, with cold water tap was the other basic feature; washtub, metal bath, maybe a mangle would be outside in the yard. Cooking, washing, eating, indeed daily life took place in this room. [...] The front room or parlour was 'for best' and not everyday use. Visitors at weekends, special occasions, were accommodated here. Furniture, carpets, ornaments, pictures, brass fenders and fire irons, a fancy fireplace, curtains, increasingly a piano would be features of the better homes[.]⁵

The Waltons definitely had a piano, and, since Louie and Charles taught voice lessons there, their parlor gained greater than average use. Law also describes the situation upstairs: "Bedrooms were crowded places; chamber pots were prominent and as a rule there was no heating. Very cold and often damp in

¹ Burton, p.3

² Burton, p.1

³ Oldham Education and Cultural Services, *Images of Oldham*, p.30

⁴ Law, p.151

⁵ Law, p.193–5

winter, comfort in bed came to rely on night shirts, heavy blankets and hot water bottles or the life. This was a coal-fire society but with the fire in one or at most two rooms.”¹

Walton’s comment about “outside loos” tells much about his family’s financial situation. Brian Law indicates that by 1899 about 16% of Oldham homes had indoor toilets,² with higher concentrations in affluent neighborhoods such as Coppice.³ In 1911, 23% of Oldham lived in larger houses, with five or more rooms,⁴ and much of Coppice qualified. So Walton may have been speaking in general terms, rather than specifically of his own childhood home. Or, what is more likely, the Waltons may have been less affluent than their neighborhood would suggest.

The neighborhood was predominantly residential. Most of the shopping took place on Saturdays at the market in the town center. But there were corner shops as well: butchers, bakers, grocers, fishmongers. Milk was delivered directly from the farm, and hawkers walked the streets selling bread, fish, crockery, hats, and other household goods.⁵ All the evidence suggests that 93 Werneth Hall Road was peaceful: the perfect place for a pair of newlywed, middle-aged singers to teach lessons from the parlor and to begin a family.

Walton’s Youth

Family Life

On December 14, 1899, Louie Walton gave birth to her first child: a son named Charles Noel, who was always addressed by his middle name. Even as their family grew, Charles and Louie continued their music careers, singing around Manchester. Louie used her maiden name for such occasions.⁶ Both taught music: Louie at home, Charles traveling to nearby towns. Charles sang a concert performance of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* in March 1902 at the Royal Manchester College of Music.⁷ Precisely one week later,⁸ on Saturday, March 29, 1902, William Turner Walton was born at the family home⁹ at 93 Werneth Hall Road. Unfortunately, nothing else is known of the circumstances of his birth. The occasion coincided with the dawn of the Edwardian era, as the coronation of King Edward VII took place a few months later, on August 9, 1902.

¹ Law, p.195

² Law, p.155

³ Law, p.151

⁴ Law, p.192–3

⁵ Law, p.204

⁶ Tierney, p.21

⁷ Lloyd, p.2

⁸ Lloyd, p.2

⁹ Burton, p.3; Craggs 1993, p.2; Hayes, p.3; Kennedy 1989, p.5; Lloyd, p.2.; S. Walton, opposite p.18, p.41

Though Charles worked at the ironworks and both he and Louie maintained singing careers and private students, they lived only modestly. Charles sang an annual recital in Oldham, “with a local pianist called Willy Lawton.”¹ Employment records from Platt’s Ironworks having survived incomplete, we do not know precisely when Charles left his job as a clerk there. Eventually he managed to focus purely on music, traveling to Manchester, other nearby towns such as Glossop and Hyde, and even as far as Leeds,² thirty-five miles northeast.

Around the time of William’s birth,³ his father undertook the post of organist and choirmaster at St. John’s Church, Werneth. It should be noted that this was not the pleasant church on a hillock, just two blocks from the Walton home. That is St. Thomas, which had been established in 1855⁴ and was attended by the wealthy Platt and Radcliffe families who lived in Werneth Park. St. John’s, rather, is to the southwest. To walk from the Walton home to St. John’s takes only ten minutes, but the surrounding neighborhood was at the time much closer to the ironworks and large groups of mills, and thus less affluent. Consecrated in 1845,⁵ St. John’s was one of the leading Anglican churches in Oldham. It had established a Sunday school in 1862,⁶ which young Noel and William probably attended. St. John’s had been a controversial local leader of the conservative Oxford movement; Easter of 1869 marked the first time in Oldham that any Anglican church had a surpliced choir.⁷ The parish dissolved in 1985, and its colorful recent history will be discussed further below.

Charles was organist and choirmaster at St. John’s for a total of twenty-one years,⁸ initially under the vicarage of Edward William Roberts Hutchinson, who served the parish from 1894 to 1920.⁹ Charles Walton’s leadership at St. John’s was commented on forty years later by the then vicar, Rev. W. A. Westley: “Mr. Charles Walton was not only a musician but a wonderful teacher of music. I call to mind a schoolmaster’s remark to me that the effect of half-an-hour’s tuition at his school by Mr. Walton had endured for months. His keen musical ability built up a choir surpassed by no other in the vicinity, and the musical services [...] at St. John’s became famous.”¹⁰

Charles was not, however, the sole or even necessarily the pre-eminent voice teacher in Oldham. Twice during William’s childhood, the position of vocal and choral coach at the Lyceum School of Music became available. In 1908 the post went to one Frank Barker. He soon left, however, and the job was taken up by Norman Allin (1884–1973), himself a former student at the Lyceum. Allin was at the time a

¹ S. Walton, p.41

² Anonymous, “Mr. Charles Walton”; Kennedy 1989, p.5

³ Charles Walton’s obituary from 1924 states that he was at St. John’s for twenty-one years, but Noel said that his father was bed-ridden the last two years of his life. This suggests that Charles began at St. John’s around the year 1901.

⁴ Bateson 1949, p.144; Beever, p.12; Deem, p.9

⁵ Beever, p.9; Westley, p.6

⁶ Bateson 1949, p.153

⁷ Beever, p.10

⁸ Anonymous, “Mr. Charles Walton”

⁹ Westley, p.33

¹⁰ Westley, p.20

student at the Royal Manchester College of Music, and soon to be a nationally renowned bass.¹ That Charles did not receive the post is especially odd since the director of the Lyceum, Harry Brookes, was also conductor of the Oldham Musical Society,² and thus most definitely knew him. Over the following years, Charles became increasingly bitter about his failure to gain a major career as a baritone soloist; thoughts of Norman Allin's success certainly can't have helped.

Charles Walton, according to the composer's widow, "was very severe, had a violent temper and was a keen disciplinarian".³ Noel agreed: "I must say that memories of my father are not always too pleasant. He was a violent disciplinarian[.]"⁴ Humphrey Burton posited that "the operatic career that seemed to be beckoning did not materialise and in later life he was bitter about his lack of success, apparently turning for solace to drink."⁵ As will be seen, Charles's drink and ill temper would have a direct impact on William's youth. Louie, on the other hand, was particularly adoring of her children, and provided constant encouragement to William throughout his life.

Early Education

On May 17, 1932, Walton wrote to his publisher and friend, Hubert Foss, evidently in response to a request for a biographical sketch. This letter marked one of the very few occasions when Walton discussed his youth, either in writing or in interviews. Walton wrote it in the third person, sprinkling in colorful comments that further demonstrate his undeniable humor. The first lines are these:

Perhaps it is wiser (& more profitable) to case a doubt about the parentage, only born March 29th 1902.

It is said that he could sing before he could talk (doubtless untrue).

Anyhow he remembers making a scene (tears etc) because not allowed to sing a solo in local church choir when about the age of 6.⁶

The first sentence was apparently in response to a playful rumor that Walton's close friend, Constant Lambert, had spread: that William was actually the illicit offspring of Sir George Sitwell and the composer Dame Ethel Smyth. Walton seems to have enjoyed the rumor with his typical good humor, and his aside that it is "more profitable" indicates his awareness that any such biographical sketch would generate positive publicity regardless of its veracity.

Louie Walton herself seems to be the source of the assertion that William could sing at a very young age. Osbert Sitwell reported in his autobiography that she recalled William's singing sections from

¹ Heywood, p.20

² Anonymous, "History of the Society."

³ Quoted by Zelda Lawrence-Curran in Craggs 1999, p.149

⁴ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella

⁵ Burton, p.3

⁶ Quoted in Hayes, p.75

Handel's *Messiah* before he could speak.¹ However, Osbert was not one to avoid embellishment, and Walton implies that this was also merely a rumor. One early writer on Walton in 1946 developed the claim even further, stating that "throughout his boyhood the music of Handel exercised a strange charm" upon Walton,² a certain embellishment of which Osbert Sitwell would have approved. What is probably more accurate is Susana Walton's claim that "He is supposed to have been able to sing before he could read".³

In another sense, however, even the more outlandish claim seems not impossible. The Walton home was filled with music. Both Charles and Louie taught singing from the parlor. Neil Tierney reported that: "When Professor Roy Fuller's mother was a girl, she took singing lessons there and recalls a grubby infant, 'Willie', playing happily on the pavement outside the house."⁴ Thus the young boy received a musical education from his parents by a kind of aural osmosis. Perhaps this early exposure to music explains how he developed the sense of perfect pitch.⁵

Susana Walton wrote that her husband's "first school was a kindergarten about twenty yards up the road run by a Miss Wilson. He liked this school and remembered meeting there a girl called Eileen Slight. The thought of her always made him giggle as he wondered if she'd still be around."⁶ Walton's legendary fondness for women began rather early indeed.

Noel, being the elder brother, attended the local grammar school. The Waltons could not afford to send both sons, so William instead attended the local board school, which was free of charge. This was not a boarding school, but an institution overseen by the civic school board, i.e. what today is called in Britain a "private school" or in the United States a "public school." The first board school in Oldham was established in 1871, marking the first time that the local government became involved in education. Initially, parents were required to pay the teacher a small fee, but in 1891, thanks to an act of Parliament, the Oldham School Board decreed that all students between ages three and fifteen would be educated free of charge.⁷ This arrangement suited the Waltons adequately for the education of their younger son. Noel reported that before William "went to Oxford he was considered to be a bright boy at School."⁸

William attended Werneth School, just two blocks away from the Walton home. Built in 1892 with a noteworthy clock tower, the school is still in use today, now known as Werneth Primary School. According to contemporary stonework on the building, the school had adopted the town's motto: "Sapere aude," or "Dare to be wise." Historian Brian Law uses another institution, Derker School in northeastern Oldham, to describe typical activities in an Edwardian primary school:

¹ Kennedy 1989, p.5

² Lloyd, p.107, quoting Donald Brook, *Composers' Gallery*, Rockliff, 1946, p.106

³ S. Walton, p.41

⁴ Tierney, p.21. Fuller, born in nearby Failsworth in 1912, was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1968–73.

⁵ Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.v

⁶ S. Walton, p.41–42

⁷ Bateson 1949, p.174; Law, p.176

⁸ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella

The day started with twenty minutes religious instruction featuring hymns, bible reading and the Lord's Prayer. The curriculum included the three Rs, but was now extended by music, drawing, history, geography, elementary science, with needlework and cookery for girls, and drill and carpentry for boys. The school had a gymnasium. Both boys and girls were taught to swim and the school had a boys' brass band and a lending library as well as a penny savings bank.¹

Later in life William reported the school experience thus: "My elder brother went to the grammar school, but my father couldn't afford sending me there, too, so I was sent to the local school round the corner, which was very rough."² In the documentary *At the Haunted End of the Day*, Walton wistfully recalled that "the boys were separated from the girls by iron railings; a pity." Evidently his appreciation of women continued, for—notwithstanding cold iron—he was able to achieve his first kiss. "Her name was Elsie Slight."³ Evidently the kindergarten romance continued unabated.

Susana Walton added some details about William's schooling: "He thought his father had decided to bring him down a peg or two, that he probably deserved."⁴ Neil Tierney reported that Charles Walton was "a man of rigid views with a regal bearing and temper who, resorting to violent forms of discipline, ruled and subjugated his family, compelling the children as a kind of ritualistic duty, to attend church services and rehearsals."⁵ Charles was religiously devout, at a time when no more than 20% of the population of Oldham regularly attended church.⁶

Both Noel and William sang treble in the choir at St. John's Church, under their father's direction. Noel wrote that "I could hardly read when I joined" the choir.⁷ William began singing there at about the age of five.⁸ Hugh Ottaway wrote that even at such a young age Walton "had a good voice and was a natural singer."⁹ Susana Walton indicated that "when he was little he had not minded singing in the choir".¹⁰ Mention has been made above to the emotional response when he was denied the opportunity to sing a solo at about age six: whether this was a mere youthful tantrum or genuine passion for music-making is, of course, impossible to decipher.

Charles Walton's disciplinarian streak was quite evident in his working with his children at St. John's. Noel confirmed that "our attendance at Services and Rehearsals was indeed compulsory."¹¹ His severity and temper began to demonstrate themselves more deeply as the sons aged. Susana Walton reported that when William "grew up, his father would rap him on the knuckles with his ring whenever he made a mistake, which he rather objected to."¹² Noel added: "and it hurt."¹ Susana went so far as to say that

¹ Law, p.178

² Burton, p.4–5

³ Burton, p.9

⁴ S. Walton, p.42

⁵ Tierney, p.21–22

⁶ Law, p.216

⁷ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella

⁸ Lloyd, p.3

⁹ Ottaway, p.2

¹⁰ S. Walton, p.41

¹¹ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella

¹² S. Walton, p.41

William “was made to sing in the choir, which he didn’t enjoy.” No doubt these experiences laid the groundwork for Walton’s eventual dislike for sacred music, though it formed such a major part of his youth for several more years.

The choir at St. John’s was an ambitious one. Each year St. John’s presented a public performance of one of the large-scale compositions that were staples of the Victorian oratorio repertoire, including Haydn’s *Creation*, Mendelssohn’s *Hymn of Praise*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and Gounod’s *Messe solennelle*.² While I have been unable to ascertain which of these works were presented at St. John’s during young William’s time as a singer there, this list demonstrates his father’s musical tastes and the choir’s abilities. Church services also included far more than hymns and psalmody, but also many anthems, some of which were probably excerpted from the concertized masterworks.

Choral singing was not the limit of young William’s musical training. As he aged, he began to study instruments. He learned piano from a local teacher, with the help of a volume called *Smallwood’s Piano Tutor*.³ This primer was in common use in early twentieth-century England; it taught rudimentary music theory as well as piano. He also took up the organ, perhaps under his father’s tutelage at St. John’s.

Walton’s instrumental interests extended also to the violin, as he took lessons from a local teacher.⁴ He later commented, regarding his poor ability on the violin: “I could never organize my fingers properly and it sounded so awful.”⁵ Much later in life Walton gave an indication that he believed his training on violin had other benefits. On June 11, 1933, Hubert Foss wrote to his wife Dora from Amsterdam, where he was attending a concert of *Belshazzar’s Feast* together with Walton. The conversation had turned to the Fosses’ young son, Christopher: “he was talking about Christopher a lot yesterday and urging me to have him taught the violin soon so as to train his ear early.”⁶ Certainly study of violin can help a musician to hear more carefully, as issues such as tuning require more precision while playing violin than piano.

Music in Edwardian Oldham

It has often been commented as unlikely that a musical talent such as Walton’s should emerge from a town as purely industrial as Oldham. But this simplistic view negates the thriving cultural life of Oldham,

¹ Kennedy 1989, p.5; Lawrence-Curran, in Craggs 1999, p.156

² Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.v; Burton, p.3; Kennedy 1989, p.5; Tierney, p.22

³ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella; see also Tierney, p.22

⁴ Ottaway, p.2; Tierney, p.22. These sources indicate that violin lessons stopped at around age ten, but Noel Walton (letter to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970) indicates that they continued until Oxford. Paolo Petrocelli (p.74) has claimed that Walton studied the piano only after his attempts with the violin had failed, but I can find no evidence to support this statement. Petrocelli also asserts that Walton “demonstrated a great adeptness” for the piano, which, as shall be seen, is inaccurate. Further, it seems unlikely that Walton would have required a primer as basic as *Smallwood* if he had already studied violin.

⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.5

⁶ Hinnells, p.58

Manchester, and northern England more broadly. There is no direct evidence that Walton or his family participated in some of the events that will be described here, but it is unrealistic to assume that a couple as musically centered as Charles and Louie Walton would have kept themselves or their family from these activities entirely. Humphrey Burton summarized the music available to the boy Walton thus: “He seems to have imbibed the great tradition of English choral music with his mother’s milk, he sang in children’s Sunday school groups, heard marching brass bands on parade in the Oldham streets during public fêtes such as the Whit Walks and the Wakes Week and experienced the arbitrary counterpoint of the fairground on holiday trips to the seaside”.¹

Burton mentions two annual festivities that are lost to modern culture. As with most industrial towns in northern England during the late Victorian era, Oldham had its annual fair during the Wakes week. The Wakes had begun as a devotional observance during the medieval era, as worshippers fasted and prayed. Over the years, the pre-fast carousal gained primacy.² In Oldham, Wakes took place in the last week in August (other towns commemorated at other times). Mills and factories closed, and although workers were unpaid for the week, the sense of excitement was palpable. Grand carnival events took place at the Tommyfields market: “travelling shows and entertainments, swing-boats, freak shows, card-sharpers, ballad-mongers and the like, a source of excitement and diversion.”³

Many families saved the entire year to take trips to seaside tourist towns during Wakes, especially to Blackpool, but also to the somewhat classier Southport and Lytham St. Annes.⁴ Given William’s later assertions that his trip to Oxford in 1912 was his first major train ride, it is possible that the Walton family never took advantage of the opportunity for travel. In fact, only half of Oldham’s population usually made such a journey.⁵ Perhaps Charles and Louie found their abilities as musicians in higher demand that week, or perhaps their income as freelance singers and music-teachers proved insufficient to accomplish much savings. It is also possible that William didn’t consider the journey to Blackpool to be of major consequence: after all, Blackpool’s allure was neither beautiful scenery nor historical interest, but mere proximity to industrial towns like Oldham.⁶ In any case, similar music would be heard whether at Blackpool or in the Oldham Wakes celebration. The cacophonous ambient music must have delighted the boy William, who would in later decades capture such joyous bitonality in moments of *Façade*.

The other grand occasion each year was the Whit Walks on the Friday after Pentecost or Whitsun, the seventh Sunday after Easter. A grand procession of Sunday school children took place, probably including a young William. Each school had its respective banner and band. The parade was followed by games, treats, and fairground entertainments. The following weekend was often another occasion for travel to the sea. Unlike the Wakes week, with its more adult entertainment, Whit Walks was geared

¹ Burton, p.4

² Bateson 1949, p.71

³ Law, p.53

⁴ Law, p.213

⁵ Fowler, p.21

⁶ Drummond, p.41

specifically for children.¹ Werneth Park was one place where school children congregated for merriment.² The occasion is today marked mostly by brass band competitions throughout southeastern Lancashire, especially in neighboring Saddleworth, just east of Oldham's town center.

Christmas was a third annual event for which the mills and factories closed for a few days. Caroling was rather different at the turn of the twentieth century. Brass bands or small groups of singers began to walk the streets on Christmas Eve after the midnight bells tolled. Music reigned throughout the streets of Edwardian Oldham all through the night and into Christmas morning.³ While William was still a young boy, and thus probably didn't participate in the late-night caroling, he certainly would have heard the traditional songs through his bedroom window.

Other occasional events were also filled with music, though more often brass bands than singing. These included civic occasions such as "the annual Mayor-making, when councillors and magistrates, officials, police and firemen, in uniform and regalia, marched through the town accompanied by bands, Volunteers, Sunday School-children and many voluntary organisations."⁴ Even bigger were royal occasions such as the coronation of King George V in 1911. The royal visit of July 12, 1913, was grander yet, as the first visit of a reigning monarch to Oldham. Whether Walton was home from Oxford at the time is unclear, though the celebration included 14,000 school children in a pageant at Werneth Park, near the Walton home.⁵

The common musical thread through all of these celebrations was the brass band. Within twenty miles of Oldham could be found at least thirty bands, ranging from modest village ensembles to some of the most accomplished bands in all England. Of the latter category, one local example was the Besses o' th' Barn, named for a neighborhood in the town of Whitefield, nine miles due west of Oldham. Their director was an Oldham man named Alexander Owen, one of the legendary band conductors of the era. Walton told conductor Elgar Howarth that he heard bands often in his youth. Howarth expounded on the various means whereby Walton probably heard them, including some mentioned above: "Christmas carolling, Whitsuntide church parades, summer garden parties, and concerts in the park or on the seaside pier where, in the words of the well-known song of the moment, 'the brass bands play tiddly-om-pom-pom'."⁶ Most mills had their own bands,⁷ which were among those who competed annually in Saddleworth.⁸ The local Shaw Prize Band even won national competitions, including at London's Crystal Palace in 1909.⁹ Walton probably had little experience with bands other than these informalities, as his family was rather choir-centric and the worlds of choir and band rarely interacted directly. Nevertheless,

¹ Law, p.220

² Drummond, p.46

³ Law, p.225

⁴ Law, p.226

⁵ Law, p.226

⁶ Howarth, WWE v.21, p.vii

⁷ Kennedy 1970, p.112

⁸ Law, p.230

⁹ Law, p.230, 234

his later orchestral music shows every indication that he had an instinctive sense for brass instruments and their capabilities.¹

Nearly as ubiquitous as the brass band was the large choral society. Those in nearby Huddersfield (less than twenty miles northeast of Oldham, just over the Pennines) and North Staffordshire (around the city of Stoke-on-Trent, about fifty miles south) were renowned throughout England.² These large choirs regularly performed major works with orchestra. The oratorios of Handel, Haydn and Mendelssohn remained supreme among English choirs into the twentieth century, mixed with a dose of contemporary works by Dvořák, Elgar, Parry, Sullivan, and now lesser known figures such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, George Macfarren, and Alexander Mackenzie.³ As discussed above, Charles Walton's church in Oldham performed several oratorios; St. John's was probably not unique in this respect. Walton encountered many such works, either as a performer or an audience member, even in his youth.

Smaller choirs also flourished. The year 1907 saw an Oldham Choir Competition. The winner, among three hundred entrants, most of which were local, was the East Oldham Vocal Society.⁴ Records from Walton's period in Oldham are spotty, but the Oldham Musical Society, which was based in Werneth district, provides a fine example of the repertoire that was performed. (Charles Walton had sung in this organization in the 1890s; perhaps he still did.) In the period 1905 through 1913, they performed major works such as Haydn's *Creation* in 1906, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in 1904 and *Lobgesang* in 1913, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* in 1909 and, on several occasions, *Messiah*. They also presented works by contemporary English composers—Elgar's *From the Bavarian Highlands* in 1905, Arthur Sullivan's *The Golden Legend* in 1911, and in 1912 *The Bride of Dunkerron*, a cantata by the now little-known Henry Thomas Smart (1813–79).⁵ Also, the choir of the local Lyceum School of Music presented Frederic Cowen's cantata *The Rose Maiden* in 1907 and in the following year Mendelssohn's *Psalm 42*.⁶ Such programming choices were representative of oratorio societies throughout provincial England. Though this tradition collapsed after the First World War, it was still quite strong in the years of Walton's youth at Oldham.⁷

The song recital had yet to develop as a concert for public consumption, though Walton's father certainly presented annual performances. Solo singers more often participated in "ballad" performances with an orchestra, providing moments of light entertainment amid the more serious-minded, purely instrumental music. Composers such as William Balfe, William Wallace, Liza Lehmann, Amy Woodforde-Finden, and Arthur Sullivan were commonly represented by operetta arias or art-songs. Charles and Louie most certainly were familiar with this repertoire, teaching it to their students within earshot of young William.

¹ Howarth, WWE v.21, p.vii

² Cuckston, introduction to Walton, *Four Early Songs*

³ Smither, p.279

⁴ Law, p.230

⁵ Oldham Choral Society, "Repertoire"

⁶ Heywood, p.20

⁷ Smither, p.279–80, 632

Singing in more informal manners took place in the mills themselves, for not only did each mill have a dedicated brass band, it also had “its leading soprano, some weaver whose voice would be heard even over the noise of the looms.”¹ Traditional songs were found in the mills and, of course, in the pubs. In 1913, the year after Walton left for Oxford, there were 362 pubs in Oldham, or one for every 380 people.² Fortunately, these songs have not entirely disappeared. The 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in the music of Victorian working-class Lancashire, led by musicians such as Harry Boardman (1930–87).

Among Boardman’s recorded works³ is *The Hand-Loom Weaver’s Lament*, accusing the “gentlemen and tradesmen” of neglecting their workers with the refrain: “You tyrants of England, your race may soon be run. / You may be brought unto account for what you’ve sorely done.”⁴ The festival song *Cob-a-Coalin’*, as Harry Boardman recorded it, includes verses that were sung in Oldham’s specialized version of this tune.⁵ The suggestive lyrics of *The Bury New Loom* would possibly have been known to the young Walton, though more likely in his adolescence, and would certainly have bemused him with his well-known taste for bawdy humor. Another Boardman tune is a setting of the poem *The Little Doffer* by the leading Victorian Lancashire poet, Edwin Waugh (1817–90), who was from Rochdale, six miles north of Oldham. Waugh wrote music to many of his poems on the fiddle.⁶ *The Little Doffer* recounts in local dialect a tale of a scrappy lad who talks himself into a job at the mill while avoiding giving his family name or any references.⁷ Waugh’s poetry conveys aptly the humor of Lancashire denizens, but also the misfortunes of child labor.

The trio called The Oldham Tinkers, founded in 1965 and still active with its original musicians,⁸ has delved deeply into the folksong traditions of their namesake town. They have performed and recorded several children’s songs, including those known to have been sung by the youth of Oldham at the turn of the century. One of these is recorded as a prologue to their original song, *In Our Town*, as recalled by “an elderly lady, Mrs Ada Connell, who remembered it being taught in Oldham schools some seventy years ago” from 1971, making her a contemporary of William Walton.⁹

We march to our places with clean hands and faces
And pay great attention to all we are told.
For we know we can never be happy or clever
For learning is better than silver and gold.

¹ Kennedy 1970, p.112

² Law, p.227

³ Various artists, *Deep Lancashire*. Originally released on LP in 1968.

⁴ Complete lyrics available from The Mudcat Café at <http://mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=9718>. Accessed October 27, 2013.

⁵ Complete lyrics available from Mainly Norfolk.info, at <http://mainlynorfolk.info/watersons/songs/cobacoaling.html>. Accessed October 27, 2013.

⁶ Boardman, Lesley, liner notes to *Deep Lancashire*, 1997, p.[6].

⁷ Text available from All Poetry.com, at http://allpoetry.com/poem/8559219-The-Little-Doffer-by-Edwin_Waugh. Accessed October 27, 2013.

⁸ The Oldham Tinkers website, at <http://www.oldhamtinkers.com/about-us.html>. Accessed October 27, 2013.

⁹ Liner notes to *For Old Time’s Sake*, p.7.

We march to our places with clean hands and faces
And pay great attention to all we are told.¹

The Oldham Tinkers have also delved into songs that would have been sung by Edwardian children not in the classroom, but in less formal situations. They have made several medleys of children's songs from their youth in the 1940s, some of which assuredly date from the period of Walton's boyhood. Two fine examples of Lancashire wit and dialect as demonstrated in children's songs are found in their *Coalhole Medley*.² One, "Where's tha' bin lad", is also claimed by children of neighboring Yorkshire:

On the croft, on the croft, where we played pitch an' toss
An' a copper came an' chased us away;
So I hit him on the head wi' a bloody big lump o' lead,
An' the slimey little bugger ran away.

Another is perhaps less directly identifiable as a children's lyric, but most assuredly would have been known in Oldham:

Well I went up to heaven, one mornin' in May.
Th'angels said "Where dost come from an' where dost tha' stay?"
When I tow'd 'em from Owdham, how they all did stare,
They said "Come in lad th'ert welcome, th'ert first 'un from there."

The Oldham Tinkers have also recorded a more complete children's song, *Down at our school*, with its first verse: "Down at our school, things are rather funny. / Kids do all the bloody work, and teachers get the money." The turn of the twentieth century was a period when child labor laws, from which young William benefited, were still relatively new.

Music in Oldham included both the lowest brow of children's lyrics and the highest brow of the symphony orchestra. The Oldham Orchestral Society was founded in 1893 "to save local ladies and gentlemen the inconvenience of travelling to Manchester." They performed at the Hill Stores of the Equitable Co-operative Society,³ the building in which took place Walton's first exposure to orchestral repertoire. He reported that the first orchestral work he had heard was the suite from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, adding: "I have never lost my affection for it."⁴ The suite was performed by the Oldham Orchestral Society in February 2012, in a program⁵ which included the following works:

Wagner: Overture to *The Flying Dutchman*
Handel: "O ruddier than the cherry", from *Acis and Galatea*

¹ Text available from Traditional Music Library, at http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/In_Our_Town.htm. Accessed December 27, 2013.

² The Oldham Tinkers website, at <http://www.oldhamtinkers.com/coalhole-medley.html>. Accessed October 27, 2013.

³ Law, p.229

⁴ Interview with Stephen Williams, *Evening Standard*, November 5, 1935, as quoted in Burton, p.14; Kennedy 1989, p.12

⁵ Burton, p.14

Saint-Saëns: “Softly awakes my heart”, from *Samson and Delilah*
 Bach: Violin Concerto in A minor
 John Ireland: “Here’s to the Ships”
 Tchaikovsky: Selections from *The Nutcracker Suite*: “Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy”,
 “Russian Dance”, “Reed Pipe Dance”, and “Waltz of the Flowers”
 Sibelius: *Valse triste*
 Edgar Barratt: “My Ships”
 Eric Coates: “Reuben Ranzo”
 Tchaikovsky: *Sérénade mélancolique*
 Nováček: *Perpetuum mobile*
 Robert Coningsby Clarke: “Poppies for forgetting”, “The Charm of Spring”
 Berlioz: *Rákóczy March*
 “God save the King”

This concert program is representative of orchestral performances of the period, long before the modern tradition of overture–concerto–symphony became established. Note the use of vocal works interspersed among the purely instrumental repertoire. While the Handel and Saint-Saëns arias were more serious in nature, the songs by John Ireland (1879–1962), Eric Coates (1886–1957), Edgar Barratt (1877–1928), and Robert Coningsby Clarke (1879–1934) provided lighter moments. The soloists themselves were of the highest caliber. Bass Harry Dearth (1876–1933) sang the Handel, Ireland, and Coates; he was popular in ballad concerts and performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, and went on to a distinguished career in opera.¹ Gertrude Lonsdale, a contralto popular among the oratorio circuit, sang the Saint-Saëns, Barratt and Coningsby Clarke. The violin soloist in the Bach, Nováček, and Tchaikovsky *Sérénade* was Adolph Brodsky, one of the leading players of the day and Hallé’s successor as director of the Royal Manchester College of Music. Perhaps Charles had secured tickets to this concert thanks to the efforts of the conductor, William Lawton, the pianist in his annual song recitals.

Of course Manchester was only ten miles away, still a thriving commercial and artistic center. Though the Waltons seem not to have brought their children to musical events in Manchester until the next decade, the 1900s certainly kept Manchester in the limelight. One highlight, for example, was the premiere in December 1908, conducted by Hans Richter, of Elgar’s First Symphony.² As can be seen above by the appearance of Brodsky, Oldham was not untouched from the great musical culture of Manchester.

¹ Anonymous, “Obituary: Mr. Harry Dearth”

² Kennedy 1970, p.97

Earliest Surviving Letter

Two more children were born to the Walton family: a daughter, Nora, in 1908, and, on September 5, 1909, a third son, Alexander, who became known as “Alec.”¹ The children mostly got along well together. Humphrey Burton described a common pastime: “The road [where the Waltons lived] was on a steep hill leading down to the main road. William’s favourite game was to put his little sister Nora on a tea tray and send her skidding down the incline. The trick was to run and overtake the tray before it and she were trampled underfoot by the busy horse and cart traffic on the Manchester Road.”²

When the youngest child, Alec, was born, eight-year-old William was sent to stay with his maternal uncle, Laurence, who lived in Chorlton-cum-Hardy.³ This was evidently the occasion of William’s earliest surviving letter. The text reads as follows:

My dear mother[,] I hope that you are keeping well[,] I suppose, Nora and baby will miss me. Noel is rather glad I am away. I am having a nice time. Loree is going to buy me a bagpipe[,] I lost a ball in the winter gardens.

With love from

Billie⁴

This letter, notwithstanding its brevity, hints at several elements of William’s budding personality and his family’s dynamic. First and foremost is the establishment of a trend that would hold true for Walton’s future letter-writing: the addressee is Walton’s mother, Louie. Charles and the other children are routinely omitted from the salutation, and William’s letters home over the following years very rarely mention his father. This is one of several indicators that William and his father did not have a close, personal relationship. He also usually signs off “With love” or even “With much love.” While this seems a simple enough closing, it again draws a distinct difference from his few recorded interactions with his father: not a single letter, and evidently little else.

The letter also indicates that Walton’s later relationships with his siblings seem to have been already established. Noel was William’s senior by three years, and there was evidently a mild rivalry between them. They were both gaining experience as singers in the same choir. Noel having been sent to the grammar school, and William to the local board school, the former would have had some justification of believing himself better educated. (Later events mollified the animosity between the two brothers.) On

¹ Alec’s birth is usually given as two years after Nora’s, but the records at Oldham Hulme Grammar School indicate the date given here. See also Craggs 1993, p.2; Kennedy 1989, p.5; Lloyd, p.3.

² Burton, p.8

³ S. Walton, p.41

⁴ Quoted in Hayes, p.7. Most of Walton’s childhood letters appear in Hayes’s volume. The original manuscripts of these and other, as yet unpublished, letters are held at the William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio. The originals were consulted for this dissertation’s research. When the letters appear in Hayes’s volume, the reference is given. However, at times the present author has tacitly made different editorial decisions than Hayes.

the other hand, Walton's relationships with his youngest siblings, Nora and Alec, seem to have been positive from the start, and remained untinged by jealousy or rivalry.

Two hobbies are mentioned in this letter as well. The boy had evidently been playing in the winter gardens and lost his ball there. This is the earliest hint of his youthful love of sport, which diminished later in life. Winter gardens, incidentally, were indoor conservatories popular in Victorian England: the most famous example was London's Crystal Palace, also a popular concert venue. It is unlikely that Chorlton-cum-Hardy, being a small town, had its own winter garden, so Walton's uncle Laurence, "Loree," probably took the boy to Manchester. Laurence evidently tried to please Walton by indulging not only in a trip to Manchester but also by intending to purchase him a bagpipe. Here is a hint that Walton's musical interests were deeper than merely being forced to sing in his father's choir.

Finally, there is the signature "Billie". Walton maintained this moniker through his youth, shifting eventually to "Willie" by the time of his undergraduacy at Oxford. Not until he gained greater fame in the 1930s did he begin to sign his letters, even those to his closest friends, as "William."

Audition for Oxford

The most often told story of Walton's life surrounds his audition for the cathedral choir at Oxford. Like every great story, this one acquires different details—some complementary, others contradictory—at each telling. Every attempt is made herein to weave together all of the threads that have been reported separately and to determine a likely truth based on the prevailing evidence.

By early 1912, the Walton family included two adult musicians and four children. Despite living in one of the more pleasant neighborhoods in Oldham, they found that finances were tight.¹ The eldest son, Noel, attended the grammar school, where money could buy a superior education, but William found himself in the free, government-run school. In this situation, Charles Walton perused the *Daily Telegraph*, which Noel said that Charles "took each Saturday."² He came across an advertisement soliciting boys to audition as choristers for Christ Church, the cathedral in Oxford. The advertisement indicated that "Candidates must have a good Ear and a good Voice and be between nine and twelve years of age."

¹ Petrocelli, p.74

² Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella; see also Tierney, p.22. Other accounts differ as to which paper included the advertisement. William Walton himself believed it was the *Manchester Guardian* (per "Sir William Walton talks to John Warrack" (BBC02), from *The Listener*, August 8, 1968, as quoted in Ottaway, p.2). Susana Walton (p.42) reported it as the *Manchester City News*. Noel's recollection that Charles definitely took the *Daily Telegraph*, plus the national reach of that paper, makes it the most probable source. Further research may confirm if the advertisement was in one or even all three of these journals.

Interested parties were to apply before June 22, and the auditions themselves would take place on Thursday, June 27.¹

The decision to submit William's name was not automatic. Noel, as the eldest son, would have been the more logical recipient of such benefice, but his voice had broken merely days before.² William, who had turned ten in March, was in fact somewhat old for a new chorister.³ Certainly there was no indication that either son was intended for a musical career; sixty years later, Noel wrote⁴ that: "Owing to his own ill-fortune as a musician, my father frequently voiced his determination that his sons would never follow the profession!"⁵ Noel further believed that William "had not impressed anybody by any signs of a possible 'Mozartian precocity'", and "[i]t is my definite opinion that my parents were unaware of Willie's musical talent." He went so far as to assert that "the only reason my parents sent Willie to Oxford was the opportunity to give him a superior education at a comparatively low price, which at that time they could just afford".⁶ Susana Walton estimated that the cost was "something like £8 a year",⁷ comparable to the tuition at the local grammar school.⁸ William questioned Noel's remembrances, stating in a letter to Alan Frank in August 1975 that such details were probably "misinformation obtained from Noel who is more gaga, I gather, even than I am. Neither of us, I suspect, are to be trusted for accuracy—unless there's confirmation and I doubt if any exists."⁹ Despite any concerns Charles Walton may have had about finances or his son's future, he duly submitted an application on William's behalf. And the boy was called for an audition.¹⁰

Problems arose the night before William was due to travel to Oxford for the audition. Charles went on a pub crawl. Humphrey Burton hypothesized: "Did Charles get cold feet? [...] Perhaps his musical friends egged the proud father on to a premature celebration. Perhaps he had a subconscious desire to prevent the inevitable separation from his son. At all events he was in no fit state next morning to accompany Billie to Oxford."¹¹ Charles's condition was not the worst of it: he had also spent all the money that would have purchased the train tickets. Louie Walton took charge, firstly deciding that she, and not her

¹ Burton, p.17. It is usually reported that Christ Church merely sought probationer choristers (Hayes, p.3; Tierney, p.22; S. Walton, p.42), and indeed Walton himself was under that impression (*Sunday Telegraph*, March 25, 1962, quoted in Lloyd, p.3; also letter to Hubert Foss, 1932, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.5). But a facsimile of the advertisement in Burton (p.17) solicits merely for "choristerships", with no indication of probationary status.

² Tierney, p.158

³ S. Walton, p.42

⁴ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 16, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella; see also Tierney, p.23

⁵ Ottaway, p.3

⁶ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 16, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella; see also Kennedy 1989, p.6, Lawrence Curran, in Craggs 1999, p.156. In this letter, Noel Walton stated that the cost was "£30 plus extras. (per annum) (money in those days!)", but that assertion is rejected based on the other indications above. Perhaps Noel was approximating the cost in 1970 terms. It is worth noting that Kennedy misquotes the amount as £50.

⁷ S. Walton, p.44

⁸ Law, p.181–2

⁹ Kennedy 1989, p.6

¹⁰ Aston, p.2

¹¹ Burton, p.5

husband, would accompany William.¹ She borrowed the necessary funds from a neighbor, the local grocer.²

The train journey itself presented more trouble. Reports differ as to whether Louie and William missed the first train due to the delay in securing money,³ or the train was late,⁴ or perhaps they merely missed a connection.⁵ It is of course quite conceivable that all three assertions are true. It was also William's first lengthy train journey;⁶ the passage took about four or five hours.⁷ The stresses of the morning, the novelty of the train's motion over such a long period of time, and nervous apprehension of the impending audition combined forces to render the boy "frightfully sick."⁸ None of the records indicate it specifically, but we can safely assume that the nature of the sickness involved vomiting. No doubt Louie and William both worried how this might affect his voice during the audition.

When they finally arrived in Oxford, the auditions had already finished. The boy wept sincerely and vigorously, and the mother had to plead with the Christ Church authorities to allow the audition to proceed.⁹ Thomas Strong, the Dean of Christ Church, and Henry Ley, the cathedral Organist, agreed to allow the audition notwithstanding the schedule.¹⁰ Young William undertook the appointed tests, all of which were new to him.¹¹ Among them was the task of singing the middle note upon hearing a chord of five pitches.¹² There was also a certain but unknown degree of sight-reading involved in the proficiency examination.¹³ And the boy sang a prepared solo: *O Lord, our Governor* by Benedetto Marcello;¹⁴ nearly seventy years later, while filming *At the Haunted End of the Day*, Walton still remembered its opening bars. Ley, then aged a mere twenty-five,¹⁵ played the keyboard part.¹⁶ It was the first of many occasions that these two men would make music together.

¹ Burton, p.17

² Burton, p.5; Tierney, p.22

³ Kennedy 1989, p.5-6; Tierney, p.22

⁴ Ottaway, p.2

⁵ Walton, quoted in *Sunday Telegraph*, March 25, 1962, quoted in Howes 1973, p.xi; Lloyd, p.3

⁶ *At the Haunted End of the Day*; also letter to Hubert Foss, 1932, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.5. Ottaway (p.2) claims it was his first time in a train, but this seems unlikely.

⁷ S. Walton, p.42

⁸ Walton, quoted in Ottaway, p.2

⁹ *At the Haunted End of the Day*; quoted in Burton, p.5; Lloyd, p.4

¹⁰ S. Walton, p.42. Lloyd (p.4) claims the decision was made by Strong along, citing *At the Haunted End of the Day*. Others (Burton, p.5; Tierney, p.22) say that Ley was the authority. The two busy men were on very friendly terms, and surely they both would have had to agree.

¹¹ *At the Haunted End of the Day*, quoted in Lloyd, p.4

¹² Kennedy 1989, p.6; Tierney, p.22; S. Walton, p.42

¹³ Ottaway, p.4; Tierney, p.22

¹⁴ *At the Haunted End of the Day*, quoted in Burton, p.5; Kennedy 1989, p.6; Lloyd, p.4; Tierney, p.22

¹⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.6; Tierney, p.22

¹⁶ Hayes, p.3

Walton was accepted. It is unknown whether he received this information immediately or, more likely, in a written letter sent shortly thereafter. On August 20, 1912, a brief notice appeared in the *Oldham Standard*, one of the two principal newspapers in the town.¹

SUCCESS OF AN OLDHAM CHORISTER

Master William Turner Walton, son of Mr. Charles Walton the well-known teacher of singing, has been successful in gaining a probationership at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. Master Walton is at present a chorister at St. John's Church, Werneth, and a scholar at the Werneth Council School. He commences his new duties on Sept. 7th.

This article is noteworthy as the earliest known mention of William Walton in print. It serves as the only contemporary corroboration of several details of his life that he and his family recounted later: that he studied at the board school rather than the grammar school, that he sang in the choir at St. John's, and that his post at Christ Church was initially of probationary status. Given that he maintained a chorister post at Christ Church for five years, he was obviously granted a promotion to regular status at some unknown later time. The notice also provides one piece of hitherto unknown information in the Walton chronology: he took up his post at Oxford on Saturday, September 7, 1912.

Oldham in 1912

When William left Oldham, the town was at its historical apex. Mills continued to be built—thirty-seven alone between the years 1905 and 1907.² Oldham was truly “Spindleopolis”,³ with over seventeen million spindles in 1913. This was one-eighth of the global total, not only substantially more than any other city (nearby Bolton had but seven million), but more than any foreign country other than the United States.⁴ In 1908, industrial commentator Arthur Shadwell wrote that Oldham was “the most complete example of the purely manufacturing town that can be found anywhere”.⁵ In 1907, tram service connected Oldham to Manchester,⁶ further increasing the opportunities both for trade and for recreation.

Though many went to Manchester for their recreation, the arts continued to grow in Oldham. In the 1911 census, about five hundred people claimed their occupation as “art, music, [or] drama”, a four-fold

¹ I am grateful to Susan Smith at the Oldham Local Studies and Archive, who located this notice by chance some weeks before my visit there. She had the wisdom and foresight to make a note of it for possible future use, and graciously brought it to my attention.

² Law, p.94

³ Fowler, p.1

⁴ Law, p.94

⁵ Law, p.125

⁶ Bateson 1949, p.189

increase over sixty years.¹ The Grand Theatre had opened in 1908, with an emphasis on classical drama and other contemporary plays.² The Oldham Orchestral Society was a prominent part of local culture.

Oldham was no longer all work and no play, or for that matter all soot and no beauty. 1902 saw the creation of a Beautiful Oldham Society with the credo: "We believe in the power of life to change the environment of life. The smoke-blackened walls and tall chimneys duly crumble and convey themselves away before the forces that lie dormant in the pale and wistful face of a little child."³ In its first two years, the Beautiful Oldham Society succeeded in planting 2,000 trees throughout the town.⁴ Thousands of children planted bulbs and grew flowers,⁵ and the result was an annual Flower Show at Werneth Park, which, as biographer Humphrey Burton pointed out, was "five minutes' walk down the hill from Walton's home. Perhaps young William was among the crowd gathered [in a photograph from] 1910."⁶ The eight-year-old William may also have been one of thousands of children present at the opening on July 16, 1910, of Snipe Clough,⁷ a waterway at Alexandra Park, a twenty-minute walk east from the Walton home.

No discussion of Edwardian Oldham is complete without mention of the redoubtable Sarah Lees (1842/3–1935). She rose to prominence as the director the Beautiful Oldham Society and in 1907 joined the governing Oldham Council. Two years later she became the town's first female Freeman of the Borough, and in 1910 its first female mayor.⁸ She became well known as a social reformer and suffragist. Sarah Lees lived at Werneth Hall, one of the four opulent residences in the privately owned Werneth Park, merely three blocks from the Walton residence. Werneth Park had indeed changed much during William's childhood, as the Platt and Radcliffe families moved away, and the Lees family purchased and demolished those mansions.⁹ The Music Room of the Platt mansion was maintained as a flower conservatory for the Beautiful Oldham Society. Local choirs and bands also performed and rehearsed in the Music Room of the Platt mansion.

Following the lead of Sarah Lees, the town government had slowly begun to invest in Oldham somewhat, with a new Market Hall completed in 1906, and two new parks in 1911.¹⁰ In 1903, jurisdiction over the public schools transferred from the independent School Board to the Oldham Council.¹¹ In that year, education accounted for just under one-quarter of the town's total budget.¹² Still, it was said that there were few towns other than Oldham where "thrift was so persistently taught and

¹ Law, p.229–30

² Bateson 1949, p.215

³ Burton, p.12

⁴ Drummond, p.54

⁵ Law, p.212

⁶ Burton, p.12

⁷ Drummond, p.58

⁸ Law, p.136

⁹ Prestwich, p.7

¹⁰ Law, p.235

¹¹ Law, p.165

¹² Law, p.179

so diligently practised”.¹ The people of Oldham were especially self-reliant, as evidenced by the rather small number of people who passed time in the local workhouse, compared to similar towns.² Such frugality and independence also comprised parts of the adult Walton’s persona.

Heavy pollution remained, and the buildings maintained a black, sooty appearance until well into the twentieth century. Though Oldham was home to some of the wealthiest men in Britain, those men chose not to invest in the beauty of their town: “the guiding rule of most of those who benefited by this prosperity was that under no circumstance should they live in it”, said the prominent Labour politician J.R. Clynes, who was born in Oldham.³ Despite various civically sponsored housing projects, many old slums remained, mostly in the town center and the district of Mumps to the southwest. (In the twenty-first century, some of those areas are still being destroyed and built anew.) A contemporary Baedeker travel guide included just two sentences on Oldham: apparently the town’s only claim of worth for a tourist was that “over 600 tall factory chimneys may be seen from the top of Oldham Edge”.⁴ Another journalist summarized the situation thus: “Our forest is mill chimneys, our lakes are mill lodges, our music is the sound of the loom and the spindle and the rattle of machinery”.⁵

Still, Oldham had improved, albeit mildly, during the first decade of the 1900s. There is today, for example, a small garden just south of St. John’s Church with a stone indicating its construction in 1910. The garden’s proximity to the church where Charles Walton directed the music makes it feasible that the Walton family attended the dedication, or at least frequented the open space.

St. John’s itself had seen other special occasions in the interim, including its Diamond Jubilee in 1905. The parish building was expanded in 1909, when “the Clergy and Choir Vestries were added at the East end [...], avoiding the unsatisfactory accommodation for the choir under the tower.”⁶ Further changes followed in the next few years. The tasks included, according to the later vicar William Arthur Westley,

the removal of the West Gallery, intended originally for musicians, and now rendered unsafe by the ravages of dry rot. This pestilent disease had attacked also the walls and roof of the North aisle, and had to be dealt with at once. The objects included also the building of the West window, the alteration of the East window to receive the new stained glass, the decoration of the church, the building of the two new vestries, the installing of electric light, and the re-arrangement of the heating apparatus.⁷

As Westley mentions, important changes took place to the stained glass windows at St. John’s. The old east window, of which Westley wrote “the ruby coloring shows up in the rays of the setting sun”,⁸ was moved to the tower in the west. A new stained glass, depicting the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ,

¹ Law, p.192

² Law, p.199

³ Fowler, p.1

⁴ Fowler, p.2

⁵ Fowler, p.3

⁶ Westley, p.26

⁷ Westley, p.21

⁸ Westley, p.27

was dedicated on October 2, 1909; the choir, under Charles's direction with Noel and William among the boys singing, certainly participated in a special service for the occasion. The north window was also new, installed in 1903.¹ One wonders the thoughts of the boy William, then singing in the choir, as these various improvements took place. Little could he know that he was soon to become a chorister at one of the great historic cathedrals of England.

Had Walton remained in Oldham, it is likely that he would have begun working full-time in the mills or machine-works of Oldham at age fourteen, i.e. in the year 1916. In fact, at age twelve he could begin working part-time, and probably would have done so, given the effects of the war on the Walton family income. Very little secondary education was available,² and that was beyond the Waltons' financial means. For example, the Hulme Grammar School, where Charles Walton would later gain employment, cost £8.4 per year.³ Oldham had an unusually high number of twelve-year-old boys already working in the mills,⁴ though all of Charles and Louie's children escaped that fate.

Young William, then aged nine, would surely have witnessed the grand festivities in Oldham that marked the coronation of King George V on June 22, 1911. Yet no one could have guessed that two Oldham-born musicians would feature prominently in the next coronation, on May 12, 1937, when diva Eva Turner sang the national anthem immediately after the King's speech⁵ and the world first heard William Walton's coronation march, *Crown Imperial*. The young man still had quite a long path to walk, the next steps of which would take place not in the grime of industrial Lancashire, but in the polished, hallowed halls of Oxford.

¹ Westley, p.28

² Law, p.180–1

³ Law, p.181–2

⁴ Fowler, p.10

⁵ Drummond, p.15

A Cathedral Chorister, 1912–15

Christ Church and Oxford

Foundation of Christ Church

The town of Oxford is located about sixty miles east-northeast of London, or about one hundred and fifty miles south-southeast of Oldham and Manchester. It is on the River Thames, which flows thence to London. There have been discoveries of artifacts from prehistoric humans and Romans at the river crossing, plus a seventh-century skeleton. In the Saxon period (roughly the sixth through tenth centuries), the Thames formed the border between the kingdoms of Wessex to the south and Mercia to the north. The location of present-day Oxford is, as the name implies, at the easiest point to cross or ford the river in this region.¹ The town is first mentioned in documents from the year 912, and by the eleventh century it had achieved significance comparable to Winchester, the principal city of Wessex, or Lincoln, the center of the British Viking population to the north.² One of Oxford's principal claims to fame at this time was the nunnery founded by St. Frideswide, a Saxon noblewoman. Soon after her death in 727, the nunnery became a monastic priory. The shrine to Frideswide became a destination for pilgrims, especially women.³

During the twelfth century, Oxford flourished yet further. The monastery for St. Frideswide became an Augustinian establishment in 1122, probably thanks to the influence of King Henry I.⁴ Two future kings were born at Beaumont Palace (Richard I in 1157 and John in 1166),⁵ demonstrating Oxford's importance to the royal family. Most importantly a small community of intellectuals began to settle independently in the town. As more scholars arrived, paying students eventually followed. Such men banded together as a university, akin to a trade guild, in order to demonstrate the worthiness of their teachings.⁶ Some grouped themselves further into specialized halls or colleges. As education focused on religious studies, most colleges had their own chapels, and two—New College, established in 1379, and Magdalen College from 1458—developed an emphasis on church music.⁷ The third college with an extended musical tradition is Christ Church.

The establishment of Christ Church is somewhat complex, but is worth discussion in order to understand the great historical surroundings in which Walton found himself centuries later. In 1523, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (c.1473–1530), Archbishop of York and King Henry VIII's principal advisor as Lord

¹ Curthoys, p.1

² Evans, p.79–80

³ Curthoys, p.1–2

⁴ Henry Mayr-Harting, in Butler, p.18

⁵ Evans, p.80

⁶ Evans, p.81–2

⁷ Wollenberg, "Oxford"

Chancellor, announced his intention to establish a new college at Oxford. Pope Clement VII granted permission that the priory of St. Frideswide be dissolved for conversion into the new college's chapel, and a royal license to create the college soon followed.¹ Wolsey's institution was to be named Cardinal College, as a subtle reminder that he outranked William Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of the University, in the religious hierarchy. With six public professorships and over a hundred personnel, Cardinal College would dwarf the other colleges, allowing Wolsey to flaunt that he was also the wealthiest man in England after the king.² According to historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, "he wished to eclipse his predecessors in munificence, as he had already eclipsed them in power, wealth, and ostentation."³ Construction of a large quadrangle near the former priory began in July 1525, and the kitchens and the vast Great Hall were ready by Christmas the following year.⁴ In that first year alone, Wolsey spent the then enormous sum of £8,000 on his new college.⁵

Music was an integral part of the college chapel from its foundation. Among the first personnel engaged were eight choirboys and eight singing lay clerks.⁶ A school for the choristers was established, meeting in rooms under the Hall.⁷ The choir soon expanded to sixteen choristers and twelve lay clerks, numbers it retains today.⁸ Wolsey coaxed John Taverner (c.1490–1545) away from the collegiate church at Tattershall in Lincolnshire to be his new organist and choirmaster. Taverner had been reluctant, fearing that in Oxford he would have greater difficulty finding a suitable wife,⁹ but secured from Wolsey a handsome annual salary of £10 plus supplies.¹⁰ Taverner, poaching several singers from Tattershall, quickly established at Christ Church one of the leading choirs in England.¹¹ However, external circumstances hastened his premature departure from Oxford in 1530.

Wolsey's vast ambition had become thwarted. In 1529, he failed to secure a papal annulment of King Henry's first marriage, and the resultant royal wrath held no bounds. Wolsey's fall from grace was complete and swift. He was convicted; his property, including the college, was assumed by the throne,¹² and he died the following year. Throughout the 1530s and early 1540s, the king was occupied with wars in Scotland and France, the break from Rome, and the constant quest for a male heir. Renamed King Henry VIII's College, Wolsey's fledgling institution puttered on without any educational component, merely as a chapel within the University.¹³ The shrine to St. Frideswide even fell victim to Henry's purge of Roman objects in 1538.¹⁴ Matters solidified in 1546, when Henry formally established Christ Church as

¹ Curthoys, p.5

² Timothy Shroder, in Butler, p.54

³ Trevor-Roper, p.1

⁴ Curthoys, p.11

⁵ Trevor-Roper, p.1

⁶ Curthoys, p.92

⁷ Curthoys, p.93

⁸ Curthoys, p.7

⁹ Bowers, "Taverner, John"

¹⁰ West, p.83

¹¹ Curthoys, p.7–8; also Bowers

¹² Christopher Haigh, in Butler, p.11

¹³ Christopher Haigh, in Butler, p.11

¹⁴ Curthoys, p.20

a joint institution: the college's chapel was also to serve as cathedral of the recently created Diocese of Oxford. Operations began the following year.¹ Henry commandeered nearby properties, expanding Wolsey's already grand designs. As historian Christopher Haigh summarized:

The new Christ Church dwarfed the other colleges, in its scale, its numbers, its endowment, and the eminence of its members. It was stuffed with the men who ran the University. [...] The monarch controlled Christ Church, and Christ Church was to control Oxford: that had been Henry VIII's plan. In a period of religious change, it was important for the Crown to regulate higher education [...]. Christ Church was not only a royal foundation: it was an instrument of royal policy.²

The priory church was re-named the Cathedral Church of Christ in Oxford of the Foundation of King Henry VIII, but it was more informally known as *Aedis Christi*, or "House of Christ."³ The latter nickname persists today as "The House," which writer Jan Morris puckishly describes "as though irreverently to suggest that if the Almighty himself had been an Oxford man, he would surely have studied at Christ Church."⁴

Development of Christ Church and Music in Oxford

In its early years, Christ Church housed around 130 men, including students and leaders alike. Like any feudal landowner, most of its income came from estate rents.⁵ Christ Church continued more or less without difficulty through the Tudor era, as each reigning monarch—in official capacity as Visitor, or ultimate authority in the college⁶—appointed suitably loyal collegiate and ecclesiastical leaders. By the Stuart era in the early seventeenth century, matters were very calm indeed. Music at Christ Church expanded considerably thanks to an endowment from William Heather (c.1563–1627), a lay clerk at Westminster Abbey and later at the Chapel Royal in Windsor. His funds established two new positions, a formal Professor of Music who was to lecture "on the theory of the art" and a Choragus who led weekly music practices among the students. While these duties were rarely fulfilled as Heather had intended, the two positions remain notable parts of Oxford's musical life today.

Such calm changed dramatically when the Puritan-led Parliament ejected King Charles I from the throne in 1642 and the English Civil War ensued. Charles established his court at Christ Church, living in the college deanery (the set of rooms where the Dean had resided) and worshipping daily at the cathedral.⁷

¹ Christopher Haigh, in Butler p.13

² in Butler, p.15–16

³ Curthoys, p.40–41

⁴ Jan Morris, in Butler, p.25

⁵ Curthoys, p.51–52

⁶ Curthoys, p.79

⁷ Evans, p.173

Military training took place in the college quadrangle.¹ Soldiers and courtiers were buried at the cathedral; their monuments remain today.² There were frequent skirmishes around the Oxford area, and Parliament's forces occasionally besieged or occupied the town. Admissions of students to Christ Church plummeted from twenty-eight in 1641 to five in 1645.³ After the king fled England and the war concluded, admissions quickly rebounded, with thirty-five new students in 1647.⁴ During the Commonwealth period, Christ Church—like the rest of England—was too preoccupied with internal squabbles to devote much energy to development. The Puritan regime frowned upon music in church, and the cathedral organ was removed.⁵ Informal presentations of chamber music became the primary artistic events on Oxford.⁶

The Restoration period saw institutional normalcy return to Oxford and to Christ Church, allowing an expansion of both the college and the university as a whole. For over a century the north boundary of Christ Church's Great Quadrangle had been little more than a stone wall seven feet high,⁷ but the quad was properly completed in the 1660s.⁸ During this period, Christopher Wren designed the Sheldonian Theatre, built for ceremonial occasions but often used as a concert venue.⁹ Wren also designed Tom Tower, today Christ Church's principal landmark, to preside above the west entrance to the quad and to house Great Tom, the cathedral's largest bell; construction of the tower was completed in 1682.¹⁰ A new organ was installed at the cathedral in 1680, to replace that which was destroyed during the Commonwealth.¹¹ To honor Oxford's continued devotion to the monarchy, Charles II convened Parliament in Christ Church's Great Hall in 1681.¹² Despite Oxford's past loyalty to the Stuart line, the town embraced the arrival of William and Mary in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.¹³

This was an era when Christ Church came to be affiliated with several great luminaries of thought. John Locke came to Christ Church as a student in 1652, and continued his affiliations there for three decades. However, his revolutionary political ideals became too extreme for royalist Christ Church, and he was expelled in 1684.¹⁴ One of Locke's contemporaries at Christ Church was the great scientist and inventor Robert Hooke. Another of the independent thinkers at The House was theologian John Wesley; the term "Methodist" was initially an informal name used to mock Wesley and his college friends for their detailed, methodical study of scripture.¹⁵ For the most part, Christ Church remained a haven for the

¹ Curthoys, p.102

² Curthoys, p.87

³ Curthoys, p.105

⁴ Curthoys, p.109

⁵ Curthoys, p.94

⁶ Wollenberg, "Oxford"

⁷ Trevor-Roper, p.11

⁸ Curthoys, p.119

⁹ Wollenberg, "Oxford"

¹⁰ Curthoys, p.119, 286

¹¹ Curthoys, p.94

¹² Evans, p.181

¹³ Curthoys, p.132

¹⁴ Curthoys, p.128; see also Brian Young, in Butler, p.61–2

¹⁵ Curthoys, p.158

flippant pursuits of young gentlemen.¹ The old Tory establishment gained a stronghold at the college, and nearly all of Parliament's Oxford-educated noblemen had attended Christ Church.² This dichotomy—of great geniuses working alongside less academically inclined nobles —was a feature that remained a hallmark of Christ Church's identity even into Walton's time, having a major impact on the path of his life.

Expansion continued in the eighteenth century, both in matters of construction and of academic thought. The area north of the cathedral and deanery was developed as Peckwater Quad, where Walton later lived as an undergraduate. The Library, occupying the south end of Peckwater, was completed in 1771.³ Hitherto the primary areas of study at Christ Church had been logic (Aristotle), math (Euclid), ethics (Aristotle and Locke), classics (especially Latin), and religion (including the Hebrew and Greek Bible texts).⁴ But new fields such as law, medicine, geography, mineralogy, botany, British history, and modern languages began to take hold in the 1760s through 1790s.⁵

Music was not considered an appropriate field of formal study at the time, but it was by no means entirely neglected. Henry Aldrich (1647–1710), dean of Christ Church from 1689—he who had designed Peckwater Quad—was also an amateur composer;⁶ according to Charles Burney, Aldrich “had concerts and rehearsals at his apartments weekly”. In 1748, Oxford's musically inclined public constructed the Holywell Music Room, Europe's first purpose-built concert hall. The next year saw a performance of Handel's *Messiah* to launch the Radcliffe Camera, a library where Walton would spend much of his time. Handel and Haydn themselves occasionally visited Oxford to present new works; the latter was awarded a rare honorary doctorate in music.⁷ As for the cathedral of Christ Church, William Crotch (1775–1847), who became one of the most prominent English composers of the early nineteenth century, served as Organist from 1790 to 1807.⁸ Crotch was also Heather Professor of Music from 1797 to his death, though he settled in London,⁹ and founded the Oxford Choral Society in 1819.¹⁰

By the nineteenth century, Christ Church was the acknowledged leader among Oxford colleges. In academia, a young Robert Peel achieved one of Oxford's first two “double firsts” in 1808. (This refers to a system of student assessment established in the first decade of the nineteenth century. A “first” is akin to an A+ grade in modern American schools; to achieve “first” in two different subjects is thus especially noteworthy.) The third “double first” of Oxford would wait for another future Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, to achieve in 1831.¹¹ Christ Church retained close links with Britain's and Europe's governing elite. In 1814, after the Peace of Paris, Oxford granted honorary degrees to the victorious

¹ Curthoys, p.138

² Curthoys, p.140

³ Curthoys, p.287–8

⁴ Curthoys, p.171–2

⁵ Curthoys, p.180–4

⁶ Ferguson, p.9; Trevor-Roper, p.20

⁷ Wollenberg, “Oxford”

⁸ West, p.85

⁹ Temperley, “Crotch, William”

¹⁰ Wollenberg, “Oxford”

¹¹ Butler, p.86

sovereigns of Europe, many of whom lodged at Christ Church.¹ The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), attended Christ Church briefly from 1859, as did his younger brother Leopold fifteen years later.² Christ Church was definitely still the fashionable “place to be,” though serious academic pursuits continued as well.

Christ Church retained its conservative, Tory political leanings. The most prominent demonstration of this loyalty took place in 1829, when in response to a proposal to emancipate Catholics—which the University’s Member of Parliament, Robert Peel, had initially opposed but then came to accept—a group of Christ Church students famously hammered with iron studs the words “No Peel” into a door by the Hall stairs.³ The emancipation ended up having a major influence on Christ Church. The increased number of Catholic, non-conformist, and even non-believing undergraduates necessitated the construction of Meadow Building, completed in 1865, to accommodate them.⁴ Yet most of Christ Church’s undergraduates had come from prestigious preparatory schools such as Eton, Winchester, Rugby, and Harrow, where the country’s wealthiest men sent their sons.⁵ Hugh Trevor-Roper summarized Christ Church over the years: “Royalist in the royalist age, it became aristocratic in the aristocratic age.”⁶ That such disparate groups of young men should interact so fully will become noteworthy when Sacheverell Sitwell, second son of the eminent Fourth Baronet Sitwell, would befriend William Walton, son of a music teacher in industrial Lancashire, after the First World War.

Four fundamental aspects of British culture that are strongly associated with Oxford also centered on Christ Church in the mid-nineteenth century. The conservative “Oxford movement” of theological thought, which attempted to link Anglicanism with Catholicism, swept the university; its unofficial leader, John Henry Newman, occasionally preached at Christ Church. In matters of literature, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a renowned mathematician at Christ Church, famously published his children’s story *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865 under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll.⁷ The flourishing of English fine arts was represented at Christ Church by painter and writer John Ruskin.⁸ And rowing, an activity which later occupied an undergraduate Walton, came to Oxford in 1815; Christ Church was dominant in rowing competitions on the Thames in the 1810s and 1820s.⁹

One aspect where Oxford, and especially Christ Church, had lagged behind was music. Thomas Gaisford, Dean from 1831 to 1855, disapproved of choral music to the point that one visitor to Christ Church in 1847 proclaimed its music the “most slovenly and irreverent ... in any English cathedral”.¹⁰ Charles William Corfe (1814–1883), Organist of Christ Church from 1846,¹¹ resorted to establishing other musical

¹ Curthoys, p.221

² Curthoys, p.251

³ Curthoys, p.211

⁴ Ferguson, p.14

⁵ Curthoys, p.265

⁶ Trevor-Roper, p.8

⁷ Curthoys, p.256; Ferguson, p.67

⁸ John Drury, in Butler, p.101

⁹ Curthoys, p.220; Gerald Parkhouse, in Butler, p.127

¹⁰ Curthoys, p.94

¹¹ West, p.85

outlets in Oxford, most notably the Motet and Madrigal Society which he founded the year after his appointment in order to provide practical opportunities for future clergymen to develop musical skills.¹ When Henry George Liddell (1811–1898) arrived at the Deanery in 1855, he encouraged Corfe to revive choral services in the cathedral. Substantial progress was made under Corfe’s leadership. For example, in 1873 the Christ Church choir combined with Magdalen College and the Chapel Royal to present Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* in the cathedral for the first time.²

Corfe’s successor as Organist, Charles Harford Lloyd (1849–1919), was appointed in 1882,³ and he also made considerable contributions to the cathedral’s music program. Foremost among those was the restoration and expansion of the seventeenth-century organ, undertaken in 1884 by Henry Willis. Of this instrument, John Stainer, then Heather Professor of Music, wrote that they had spared no “pains to produce an instrument of the highest excellence”.⁴ The organ was moved to the west end, where it currently stands, perched literally above as one enters the nave.

Other institutions that would prove central to the musical life of early twentieth-century Oxford, and thus to Walton’s early exposure to music, were founded during this Victorian age. John Stainer created the Oxford Philharmonic Society in 1865. Seven years later, Lloyd founded the Oxford University Musical Club, which presented professional concerts of chamber music. The students presented similar concerts through the Oxford University Musical Union, starting in 1884. Balliol College initiated its series of concerts the next year.⁵ Music flourished in Oxford as the Victorian age shifted to the Edwardian.

Edwardian Christ Church

By the turn of the twentieth century, Christ Church largely resembled its current self. Certainly the structure of the modern University of Oxford was established. This organization is unusual because of its piecemeal development. The current Dean of Christ Church, Christopher Lewis, has described the arrangement as “a federation of happily autonomous bodies”.⁶ International readers, and especially Americans, may benefit from comparing the format of the University of Oxford to that of the University of California or similar public universities in the United States. Just as the University of California system has a governing body that oversees its various campuses, so does the University of Oxford. The UC campuses function as essentially independent units, as do the colleges at Oxford. Some UC campuses have reputations for certain specialties: UC Berkeley in the hard sciences and selected humanities such as music, UC San Francisco for medicine, UC Davis for veterinary and agricultural sciences, and so on. Likewise, the prestige and expertise of each of the now thirty-eight Oxford colleges may vary—Balliol College, for example, has a famed reputation for “PPE”: philosophy, politics, and economics—though

¹ Wollenberg, “Oxford”

² Curthoys, p.94

³ West, p.87

⁴ Curthoys, p.94

⁵ Wollenberg, “Oxford”

⁶ Butler, p.202

students from one college may attend lectures and interact with faculty from another. Just as prospective students apply for admission to each University of California campus separately, each Oxford college has its own process for admission. Oxford campuses have distinct personalities, buildings, accommodations for students, libraries, archives, and sports teams, though some resources—such as the central Bodleian Library—are shared among the colleges. One crucial difference is that students can easily transfer from one Oxford college to another, as one can shift departments within a single University of California campus. Such parallels are not always exact, but the comparison is worthwhile when considering the situation in which young Walton found himself as a student at Christ Church.

Christ Church was the largest of the Oxford colleges in 1900, with about 210 men studying. According to one student who arrived in 1899, and who would later become the influential 1st Earl of Halifax, this was “large enough to allow an almost indefinite measure of diversity”. There were Catholics, non-conformists, Jews, and non-believers. There were students from grammar schools and from preparatory schools, and from England, Scotland, and Wales.¹ There were aristocrats, scholars, and sons of brewers, shippers, bankers, and manufacturers.² There were even a few Americans and prominent royals from eastern Europe and south Asia.³ That said, Christ Church was not for everyone. It had developed a reputation for rowdiness. In 1911, Christ Church was considered for the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, but was perceived as full of *nouveaux riches*; the young royal was instead shepherded to Magdalen College down the road.⁴ The mother of future conductor Adrian Boult also had her concerns: in 1905 she requested the opinion of his schoolmaster, writing: “We should like Christ Church or Balliol, the first preferably if it has really (and I am told it has) outlived its evil reputation.”⁵ The largest and most diverse college of Oxford was not necessarily a place where anyone would flourish.

Academics had changed considerably over the centuries, though it was still possible to gain admission to Christ Church simply through noble blood. Examinations had been conducted orally, but were now increasingly written.⁶ Most graduates were aiming for honors degrees (such as “firsts” described above), rather than merely a “pass”.⁷ Students now had a vast array of career opportunities upon completion of their studies, not merely politics or the church.⁸ The curriculum was changing—a history faculty was founded in 1913—but only slowly. The basis was still Aristotle and the great Roman writers,⁹ which later proved Walton’s academic undoing.

Musical events continued around Oxford. At the dawn of the Edwardian era, the cathedral’s Organist was Basil Harwood (1859–1949), appointed in 1892. Harwood was a noted organist and composer for the organ,¹⁰ and became a central figure in Oxford’s music life, serving as President of the University

¹ Mark Curthoys, in Butler, p.114–5

² Curthoys, p.296

³ Curthoys, p.296; Mark Curthoys, in Butler, p.115

⁴ Curthoys, p.296

⁵ Kennedy 1987, p.38

⁶ Curthoys, p.281

⁷ Mark Curthoys, in Butler, p.114

⁸ Curthoys, p.281

⁹ Curthoys, p.294

¹⁰ Bark, “Basil Harwood, 1859–1949”

Musical Club, conductor of the Oxford Orchestral Association,¹ and founder of the Oxford Bach Choir.² The eminent composer Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848–1918) was Heather Professor of Music from 1900 to 1908, followed by organist Walter Parratt (1841–1924). From 1901 Hugh Percy Allen (1869–1946) conducted the Oxford Bach Choir, which four years later enveloped the Choral Society and the Philharmonic Society to create a behemoth wherein musicians from both the college and the town joined forces for large-scale musical performances. Performances continued at the Holywell Music Room, Sheldonian Theatre, Town Hall, various college chapels, and the cathedral itself.³

Walton's comments on life at Oxford were regrettably few, so modern scholars are forced to make certain suppositions based on the lives lived by others at the time. It is worthwhile therefore to consider briefly Adrian Boult's experiences while an undergraduate, as they are indicative of the university lifestyle as Walton found it a few years later. His mother's concerns assuaged, Boult began attending Christ Church in 1908. His assigned accommodation in Tom Quad was spacious enough for two pianos.⁴ He wrote to a friend on October 29, 1908, about "the awful sociableness of the place":

I think I have had two or three breakfasts alone in my room this term and not a single tea! My rooms (which are quite respectable, by the way—although the furniture is of the rather ancient and shabby splendour order, and consequently rather rickety) are in the most accessible place in College—consequently they are always full of people. This of course I enjoy hugely, but work is *rather* difficult, as you may imagine.⁵

Boult's training was, like Walton's, under the direction of Hugh Allen. Boult joined the Bach Choir, the Musical Club, the cavalry training brigade, an informal debate club, and later also the University Dramatic Society and the Oriana Society. He made occasional trips to London for performances, hearing Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Strauss's *Elektra* conducted by the composer, and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* under Beecham. Extraordinary concerts took place in Oxford too: baritone Frederic Austin singing *Dichterliebe*, cellists Robert Hausmann and Pablo Casals in Beethoven sonatas, pianists like Leopold Godowsky and Ignacy Paderewski playing solo recitals, Hans Richter conducting Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*, baritone George Herschel singing Schubert and Schumann, the first complete performance of Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*, and even John Philip Sousa and his band on tour from America. Boult began to deputize for Hugh Allen in performances at Oxford and elsewhere, and also to appear as a bass soloist in works such as Bach's *Magnificat* and even in dramatic roles such as Don Fernando in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Pilate in the Bach *St. John Passion*.⁶

With so much musical activity, it is no wonder Boult struggled in his study of history. He considered shifting his goal from honors to a "pass" degree.⁷ In a situation that would presage Walton's own, Boult

¹ West, p.85

² Wollenberg, "Oxford"

³ Wollenberg, "Oxford"

⁴ Stephen Darlington, in Butler, p.26

⁵ Kennedy 1987, p.38

⁶ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.5, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁷ Kennedy 1987, p.39–52

consulted the Dean of Christ Church, Thomas Strong, who he called “that great man.” As Boult recounted in his autobiography, Strong:

listened readily and said that he had no contempt for the Pass Man: the crux was really whether the time thus saved could be usefully employed. I was sure that anything I did with and for Hugh Allen was the finest experience and preparation that I could have. [...] The Dean said he could not see that my music could in any way benefit from a longer study of history, so the die was cast, and I was free to take on any number of useful unofficial things [in local music performance].¹

Boult spent 1912–13 in Leipzig, but returned to Christ Church, completing his doctorate in music in 1914.² Thus in Boult’s final year in residence, he would have heard the boy Walton in the cathedral choir. Another future prominent musician that year was Philip Heseltine (1894–1930), better known as the composer Peter Warlock, who spent only 1913–14 at Christ Church but whose rooms in the Meadow Building overlooked the Merton Meadow where the choirboys played.³ Naturally, neither Boult nor Heseltine had any reason to know that one of their future friends and colleagues had newly arrived in the choir.

In most respects, Christ Church during Boult’s and Walton’s stay much resembled Christ Church today. The most noticeable difference was the lack of green space, since the first public gardens at Christ Church were the Memorial Gardens of the 1920s. The space they now occupy, just south of Tom Quad and the Meadows Building, at the time consisted of sheds and storehouses on the west and a poorly tended orchard to the east.⁴ Also, there was not a statue of Mercury in the center of the Tom Quad: the statue that was pulled down by prankster students in 1819 was not replaced until 1928.⁵ These decorative matters aside, Christ Church has largely remained perfectly preserved over the centuries. Then as now, Great Tom rang the bell every daytime hour, exactly five minutes after the hour to recall the days before Greenwich Time was established, and at 9:05 it would strike 101 times to honor the official Studentships (comparable to Fellows in other colleges), for it had always been thus since the sixteenth century.⁶ One observer in 1779 noted that Christ Church was “more like some fine castle, or great palace, than a College”.⁷ It was to this pseudo-castle that the ten-year-old William Walton arrived, having passed all his life in sooty Lancashire.

¹ Boult, p.25

² Crichton, “Boult, Sir Adrian”

³ B Smith, p.49

⁴ David Hine, in Butler, p.116–7

⁵ Butler, p.89; Trevor-Roper, p.16

⁶ Ferguson, 9.8

⁷ Curthoys, p.285

Thomas Strong

Stephen Lloyd, in his insightful biography of Walton, commented that “Walton’s great fortune at Oxford was that the music staff with whom he came into contact were open-minded and did not discourage individuality. There was no beating him into conformity.”¹ Before moving to Walton’s known experiences, it is thus worth considering the characters and experiences of those adults who were responsible for his training and, essentially, his teenage upbringing. Foremost among these men is the Dean of Christ Church from 1901 to 1920, Thomas Banks Strong (1861–1944). Strong is a character of great importance in Oxford history, but he has elicited surprisingly little historical interest. In fact, when Harold Anson published his monograph on Strong in 1949, the *Annual Report* of Christ Church reported that “nothing particular ever happened to him”.² This was rather an understatement.

Despite an unassuming background, Strong attended the prestigious Westminster School in London in his youth. One contemporary, the theologian Clement Webb, remembered him merely as “a shy boy, a good deal bullied by stronger boys”.³ Music was Strong’s passion as a boy; he spent leisure time not in the sports field but in the organ loft at Westminster Abbey, listening to the eminent James Turle practice and taking lessons from Frederick Bridge.⁴ In 1879 he began studying classics as an undergraduate at Christ Church⁵ and remained at The House, in one capacity or another, for over forty years. In his undergraduacy, Strong gained a reputation as a comic singer of the music-hall variety and was active in the Oxford University Musical Club. He gained permission to play the cathedral organ; Charles William Corfe, who mostly wanted to go hunting, even allowed him to plan occasional Thursday services. Anson reported that Strong “once said he had drifted into the Ministry by mistake, and that music was his real rôle.”⁶ Strong rarely attended live musical performances, however, and was timid as a performer himself. Rather, he gained his greatest joy in music by reading orchestral scores in his head. Strong also had a notable sense of humor: when in 1889 the important volume of conservative theological essays titled *Lux Mundi* was published, he suggested an alternate title: “There’s Life in the Old Dogma Yet.”⁷

Strong succeeded admirably as an undergraduate and took holy orders as an Anglican priest. Rather than moving to a pastoral post, he remained at Christ Church as a lecturer and tutor. Among Strong’s first batch of students was Harold Anson, whose recollections, despite being tinged with nostalgia and hero-worship, reveal the essence of Strong’s character.

Strong’s attitude to his pupils was highly individual. [...] He would sit in an armchair, sometimes waving his arms and legs in the air, sometimes with his leg out of the window. He would converse with extraordinary rapidity, always more intent on establishing intimate and friendly relations with his pupil than on actually imparting information.

¹ Lloyd, p.5

² Christopher Lewis, in Butler, p.40

³ Anson, p.8

⁴ Anson, p.115

⁵ Anson, p.8

⁶ Anson, p.15

⁷ Anson, p.21

I can quite believe that he would have been an unsatisfactory Tutor for a young man intent on cramming for an examination, but for any young man feeling his way into the great stream of intellectual life nothing could have been more inspiring than to be received into the intimacy of an extraordinarily brilliant and affectionate mind. Strong's idea of being a Tutor was to share with his pupil everything that he had and was. It was a deeply personal relationship.¹

In 1892, Strong became Junior Censor, a post whose primary responsibility was the discipline of undergraduates.² This was an era of particular rowdiness—a victorious sporting team inevitably resulted in students throwing furniture out of their windows for a celebratory bonfire—but Strong seems to have had the ability to hold in check a student's extreme enthusiasm while maintaining a good rapport.³ He rose up the ranks to Senior Censor. He was an unlikely and mildly controversial pick to serve as Dean in 1901. This appointment is made by the Prime Minister, who has many traditions to consider. Some of these traditions matched Strong well: he held holy orders, he was a Christ Church graduate himself, he was well liked among the students and the leadership alike, and he had been recommended by his predecessor.⁴ But Strong also tended to consider questions from unconventional points of view, and was unmarried, which would spell an end to the role of Christ Church's Deanery as a center for royal visitations and upper-crust social mixing.⁵ Nevertheless, the appointment was made and accepted, and Strong proved to be one of the most able Deans in the college's history.

He remained beloved of the Christ Church student body. He was known to all, regardless of their class or station, simply as "Tommy."⁶ On April 30, 1903, *Varsity* printed a cartoon caricature of Strong, facing the viewer with gentle expression and mildly unkempt manner, a setting of tea at the table to his side, asking: "Do you like your T strong?"⁷ One clergyman described him as "the man with a genius for friendship, who interpreted religion in terms of friendship with Christ".⁸ He was deeply interested in undergraduates of all walks of life, whether they were noblemen or sportsmen, and whether they were aiming for an honors degree or merely to pass. He believed that Christ Church was an ideal home for Englishmen of all sorts.⁹ One of the men who he particularly supported was the young Philip Heseltine. Heseltine had very little positive to say about his time at Christ Church, but always remembered Strong's friendship,¹⁰ describing him as "a charming man", albeit "somewhat embarrassingly gushing and affectionate".¹¹

¹ Anson, p.18

² Curthoys, p.279

³ Anson, p.24

⁴ Curthoys, p.294

⁵ Anson, p.28–29

⁶ Anson, p.30

⁷ Anson, facing p.24; see also Howes 1973, p.xi; Lloyd, p.6; Tierney, p.23

⁸ Anson, p.55

⁹ Anson, p.25

¹⁰ Anson, p.122

¹¹ Letter from Philip Heseltine to his mother, February 16, 1914, quoted in B. Smith, p.50

Though Strong continued to be a respected theologian—earning a doctorate in divinity in 1902¹—more of his time became taken up with administrative tasks. He chaired meetings ably: Anson recalled that

he generally remained silent and apparently uninterested, sometimes playing a fugue on the table with his fingers, and on one occasion at least composing a hymn-tune. After everyone had said everything that seemed important, and many were eager to say things which were by no means important, Strong rose and very tersely gave his judgment, and said, ‘We are now ready to take a vote’. The whole question was rapidly disposed of, and the Council passed to the next question.²

Strong was not enthusiastic about pomp or ceremony for its own sake. He was generally a dull preacher,³ reading his sermons rapidly and unemotionally.⁴ He was indifferent to formal vestments. Later in life, while Bishop of Ripon in the north of England, he often intentionally neglected to bring his pastoral staff. On one such occasion, when asked about it before a service, he offered a rain-soaked umbrella: “perhaps this would do equally well?”⁵ He accepted an honorary doctorate in music in 1917, and was knighted after the war in 1918, but never used these honors to his advantage.

Despite such lack of snobbery to persons and situations, he was very particular about how music should be performed. Though he developed the knack of a straight face, he could become troubled when a parish choir undertook an anthem beyond their abilities, once commenting: “The noise it made was such as to twist the intestines of a hyaena.”⁶ In such circumstances he regularly requested no hymns or singing at all.⁷ He once wrote to an undergraduate who resided in Peckwater Quad: “I must draw your attention to the rule prohibiting music between 10 a.m. and 12.30. For the purposes of this rule I shall be obliged to count your piano-playing as music.”⁸

One of Strong’s great contributions to worship and to music was the editorship of the *Oxford Hymn Book*, from which the choirboy Walton later sang daily. He oversaw the volume, with input from the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, William Sanday, and the musical editor, Basil Harwood. The hymns, both music and text, are restrained and unsentimental, and as such the volume never gained great popularity among parish churches after its publication in 1908.⁹ Five of the tunes were composed by Strong himself. Two of them are especially noteworthy for popularizing their respective texts: *South Shields* sets Christina Rossetti’s poem *In the bleak mid-winter* before Gustav Holst and Harold Darke took to these words, and *Poplar* is believed to be the first music composed for the now-popular sixteenth-century text “God by in my head”. The tune *Hebdomadal*—composed during a meeting of the university’s Hebdomadal Council to the text ‘Praise to the Holiest’—was described by Basil Harwood as a

¹ Anson, p.x

² Anson, p.38

³ Anson, p.48

⁴ Anson, p.70

⁵ Anson, p.56

⁶ Anson, p.58, 70

⁷ Anson, p.70

⁸ Anson, p.95–6

⁹ Anson, p.121

“fine tune, broad and dignified. It must be sung boldly, with plenty of spirit throughout.” His two other tune names, *Peckwater* and *Aedes Christi*, confirm his devotion to Christ Church.¹ Strong’s music is conservative, and there are some indiscretions in the part-writing—indirect fifths, odd leaps, and the like—but all five hymns are worthy of being heard today.

As shall be seen, Walton and Strong developed a close friendship during the former’s time at Christ Church. So many of Strong’s core abilities and traits—his childhood shyness, his extraordinary inner ear, his unswerving devotion to music, his impish sense of humor, his refined intelligence, his appreciation for practical experience over theoretical knowledge, his lack of snobbery, his solitary reserve, his impatience with substandard musicians—can also be found in the adult Walton. It seems that in Strong Walton had found something he had perhaps lacked in Oldham: a refined male role model.

Henry Ley

The head of Oxford University Press for many years, Hubert Foss, recalled in 1948:

One of the decisions upon which Strong prided himself, and to which he often recurred in his later life with infinite pleasure, was his appointment of Dr. Ley as organist of the Cathedral. Personages of high importance in the musical world had strongly urged the claims of older and better-known men, but Strong was quite certain in his own mind that Ley, in spite of his youth and comparative lack of experience, was by far the best candidate, and the appointment, though much criticised at the time, was a brilliant success.²

One contemporary comment made to the press read: “some persons naturally wonder what the greybeards in the Cathedral Choir think of having set over them for guidance, instruction, and reproof a director who might be a grandson of some of these singers.”³

What of this miracle organist, in whom such a demanding musician as Thomas Strong had such confidence? Henry George Ley (1887–1962) had been a choirboy at St. George’s Chapel, the royal chapel of Windsor Castle,⁴ in which capacity he sang at the funeral of Queen Victoria and the coronation of King Edward VII.⁵ The director of music at Windsor was the redoubtable Walter Parratt (he later recommended Ley to the post at Christ Church).⁶ Ley had also studied briefly at the Royal College of Music, where his instructors included Parratt and composers Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) and Charles Wood (1866–1926).⁷ He became an organ scholar at Keble College in 1906 and immediately

¹ Anson, p.122

² Anson, p.119

³ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.1, p.58, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁴ Leach, p.65; Webb, “Ley, Henry George”

⁵ Ley, “Coronation Music”, introduction

⁶ Anson, p.121

⁷ Dibble, Jeremy, “Ley, Henry George”

became very active in the musical scene at Oxford, serving as conductor of the Keble College Musical Society and even as president of the Oxford University Musical Club in 1908.¹

In 1909, the Organist at Christ Church, Basil Harwood, resigned in order to manage his family's estates in Gloucestershire. Strong appointed Henry Ley as Harwood's successor. Ley was just twenty-two years old, and still hadn't completed his degree (he eventually received the B.Mus. in 1911 and the B.A. the following year).² Yet he was definitely an extraordinary performer. Walter Alcock (1861–1947), himself a great organist and composer, called Ley the "Paderewski of the organ."³ One of the choirboys, Leslie Russell, described him as "far and away the finest organist I have ever heard: the colour, rhythm and dexterity of his playing were unbelievable." Russell further described Ley's rapport with the choir: "he often 'blew up,' but was immensely kind and cheerful and adored by everyone".⁴ Ley had a playful fascination with the train schedules, which he demonstrated occasionally, such as during one choir practice when he stopped the rehearsal, glimpsed a clock, and proclaimed: "Driver Jones in a Castle Class is at this moment passing through Oxford on the 3.40 from Paddington to Worcester."⁵ These morsels demonstrate why Strong felt he could trust Ley's abilities and appreciate his character.

A further testament to the manner in which Ley won over Strong is this description by George Thewlis, who later sang under Ley as a lay clerk:

The 'greybeards' respected him because he knew his job; the choirboys loved him because he was 'Henry G.'—although his cane was always handy in the practice room—and the undergraduates made themselves a perfect nuisance by crowding the organ loft to visibly and aurally admire his dexterity and wonderful skill. As a motorist he was a nightmare; as a friend his kindness was only exceeded by that of his wife. Many a wounded soldier in Oxford carried away with him the memory, life-long treasured, of those concerts given on their behalf in which Dr and Mrs Ley took a part.

[...] Dr Ley's skill as pianist and organist brought many opportunities to exhibit those gifts, and the many references in the press relating to concerts at the Music Club, to his illustrations of the Professor's lectures, to his brilliant organ recitals, and his visits to the outlying parishes [...] show both his popularity and his genuine keenness for the cause he served so well.⁶

Strong's letter to Ley offering him the post of organist, dated April 13, 1909, describes the state of the cathedral choir:

[T]he conditions here are awkward. The lay-clerks are, several of them, old—one was appointed in 1864—and they are very difficult to manage. Also the chaplains are not easy, and the boys—though they are very nice boys, and I am very fond of them all—have still the natural tendency to

¹ West, p.87

² Dibble, Jeremy, "Ley, Henry George"

³ Dibble, Jeremy, "Ley, Henry George"

⁴ Letter from Leslie Russell to Stewart Craggs, 17 February 1976, quoted in Tierney, p.24

⁵ Tierney, p.24

⁶ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.1, pp.58–60, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

experiment, which they will probably exercise upon you. There may be trouble in all these directions, but of course I shall support you, and I hope we shall get things into smooth order.¹

Thewlis confirms that Ley was able to put these matters right eventually, but perhaps this process was still developing when Strong and Ley heard the choirboy Walton audition.

Walton Arrives at Oxford

Life at the Choir School

What wonders must the ten-year-old William Walton have beheld, on arriving at Christ Church on September 7, 1912? In 2006, writer Jan Morris recalled arriving in Christ Church as a young chorister:

My earliest Christ Church memories, for example, revive in me to this day the hushed and ancient mysteries of the cathedral, contemplated through a child's eye. How infinite the subtleties of the fan-vaulting when one is nine years old! How deep the blues of the rose window! How magically tantalising the glimpse of [...] the organist, reflected in the mirror above his keyboard in the organ loft!"²

Morris likewise recalled "lazing in the long summer grass, sucking straws and contemplating the towers and silhouettes of Christ Church."³ Walton himself was never one for such flowery language; he merely said: "Oxford was the most beautiful place I had ever seen."⁴ Before his arrival there, he had hardly ever left his industrial birthplace. In one train ride, he exchanged cotton mills and smokestacks for quadrangles, cloisters and bell towers.

Young Master Walton, as a probationary chorister at the cathedral choir, set up residence in the Cathedral Choir School, a boarding school. This institution had been part of Christ Church since its foundation under Wolsey as a means whereby to educate the choirboys. In the nineteenth century, it expanded to serve as a preparatory school for others as well. The school moved to buildings south of the Great Quad, probably the building where the Clerk of Works now has his office. Later it moved again to 1 Brewer Street, a site that proved undesirably noisy, smelly, and crowded; its primary virtue was proximity, sitting directly across the street from Tom Tower. Notwithstanding that the choir school was already a major drain on Christ Church's resources, new buildings were constructed at 3 Brewer Street. These were completed in 1894, a commemorative service being held that Easter Saturday.⁵ It was in these buildings that Walton lived from 1912.

¹ Anson, p.120

² Butler, p.31

³ Butler, p.32

⁴ Burton, p.19; see also S. Walton, p.43

⁵ Curthoys, p.93

The new premises were small but pleasant, custom built for the school's needs. There were at the time twenty-one students who slept six in each dormitory.¹ Twice a day the choristers marched from their lodgings dressed in full robes,² which Humphrey Burton describes as "long gowns and square black hats that gave them the air of novice monks".³ They walked down Brewer Street (which is barely wider than an alley), across the busy thoroughfare of St. Aldate's, through Tom Gate, and across the Great Quadrangle into the Cathedral. Christ Church's archivist, Judith Curthoys, has described a chorister's daily routine in the nineteenth century. With the probable exception of dietary changes, there is no indication that a chorister's life had changed much in the sixty years leading to Walton's time.

In around 1850, the daily routine for a chorister started after breakfast with lessons for an hour between 9 and 10, a cathedral service for an hour, and then more school lessons until 1 pm, including Latin and Greek as well as writing and arithmetic. Choir practice was held in the organist's house between 1 and 2 pm three times a week, followed by dinner in the Chapter House. There was meat every day except on Wednesdays and Fridays when there was pudding only, and water was shared in a communal quart cup. Every Friday at 5 pm the choristers were given a jam tart as a special treat. Between 3 and 4 in the afternoon there were more lessons, followed by another cathedral service, and prep in the evenings until bedtime. Cricket and football were popular, and the boys had six weeks' summer holiday and four weeks at Christmas. Every saint's day was a whole holiday, and Wednesdays and Fridays were half-holidays. Clothes were provided and other living expenses met.⁴

Susana Walton, the composer's widow, described this routine a little more simply: "The school boys got up at seven, had breakfast, then a lesson, and at ten had a choir practice and another one in the afternoon. They also sang at two services a day. Quite a tough discipline."⁵

The building at 3 Brewer Street was simply the lodgings for the choir school. During Walton's time, the choir school's classrooms were in buildings just south of Tom Quad and west of Meadows Building. This area also contained the college's stables, and thus was not nearly as illustrious as the quadrangles. (These buildings were demolished in the 1920s to create the Memorial Garden, and the classrooms were moved to Brewer Street.⁶) For their studies they were required to wear "three-piece suits with stiff Eton collars".⁷ According to his wife, "William would often say that their education was almost nil and this was the reason for his supposedly not being able to read or write."⁸ Indeed, Walton's letters even into adulthood are littered with misspellings and a cavalier approach to punctuation, and his few formal writings similarly suffered. In 1948 Walton described his education as "very meager", specifying "without Greek, little Latin and less mathematics".⁹ Lewis Foreman shrewdly points out that "Walton's

¹ Burton, p.20–21

² Ferguson, p.30

³ Burton, p.20

⁴ Curthoys, p.93

⁵ S. Walton, p.42–43

⁶ Curthoys, p.302

⁷ Burton, p.20

⁸ S. Walton, p.42–43

⁹ Anson, p.116

earliest surviving works give every indication of a mainstream interest in the heritage of English literature”, including the “Spenserian poet Phineas Fletcher”, Shakespeare, Swinburne, Marlowe, and *Dr Syntax*, after William Combe’s verses written to evoke the grotesque adventures recorded in Thomas Rowlandson’s celebrated suite of etchings.”¹ Thus Walton’s education was not quite as superior as his parents had hoped. Perhaps, given the time spent in musical rehearsals and cathedral services, he learned less at the choir school than he would have in the board school back in Oldham.

Walton also recalled Dean Strong “secretly delighting me by saying that the head-master was a ‘bit of an ass’”.² (No doubt this exchange took place some years after the boy’s arrival.) The headmaster in question was the Reverend Edward Peake (1860–1945),³ who headed the school’s staff of eight.⁴ Peake had gained a national reputation as a professional sportsman, playing both rugby and cricket, before becoming chaplain and headmaster of the school at Christ Church. Sports, or “games” as they were known, appear frequently in Walton’s earliest letters home. Then, as now, the schoolboys used Merton Meadow as a sports ground, just south of Christ Church’s main complex.⁵

“A Small Quiet Boy”

Another important matter made part of Walton’s routine: he wrote home to his mother nearly every week.⁶ Not all of these letters have survived. In fact there is only one extant letter from the pre-war period. Malcolm Hayes editorially dates it to November 17, 1912.

Dear Mother,

we have had a very nice time the fortnight. We had a lovely prize giving the being dressed up. One Saturday we went to the Deans to tea and he showed us the State [Room] in which Charles I slept in. We went up the watch tower as well. We won our first match by three goals to none yesterday against Marlborough House. I did go down in class a fortnight yesterday I was ninth. I was sixth last week and I am now fourth[.] The Trades Exhibition is being held [in] the Town Hall all next week. Will you send me some cash as I have none left. I got taken out in the half-term by Russel, Lindquest and Proger! Russel took me to the Picture Palace, Lindquest to the Scating Rink and Proger took me out to tea. I can skate quite well now. I went again on Monday and I can do the inside edge[.] I did not do what that postcard ment and I threw it away[.] But tell Mary that I was very pleased. Will you send me some jam for ‘tuck’ night as I have to use school jam or someone gives me some. I am going to close my letter here.

¹ Lewis Foreman, in Craggs 1999, p.232

² Anson, p.116

³ Burton, p.24

⁴ Burton, p.20

⁵ Curthoys, p.34

⁶ Burton, p.24

With much love

Billy¹

For someone who had arrived at Oxford just two months prior, Walton seems to have adjusted quickly. Three other boys took him out on the town—from his language it seems that they paid his way. Walton's future letters attest to a continual lack of funds. He was athletically successful in soccer matches. ("Marlborough House" probably refers to Marlborough School in Woodstock, nine miles north of Oxford.) He was only moderately successful in his schoolwork. Interestingly, there is no mention of cathedral services or of the choir. No doubt he was already so enveloped into the routine that anything musical seemed sufficiently dull as to be unworthy of mention. Perhaps most important in this letter is the mention of tea at Dean Strong's rooms. Strong and Walton were to develop a close friendship over the following years.

Walton later recalled his early time at the choir school as being rather less inspiring than the letter above would indicate: "It was horrid. The problem was I had a broad Lancashire accent and the other boys used to sit on my head until I spoke the same as they did—properly, as they thought."² On another occasion he even upgraded his assessment to "odious".³ Right away the boy had to start changing his very nature, in this case his accent. He largely succeeded, though Michael Kennedy detected bits of Lancashire "in certain inflexions of his pleasant voice".⁴ Thus Walton struggled to fit in well at first.

One description of the schoolboy Walton is often quoted in Walton scholarship. Leslie Russell, who was head boy in the choir school in 1914, remembered him as "an uninteresting, quiet, unathletic boy with a poor voice".⁵ This was evidently the same "Russel" who took young Walton to the cinema. It is unfortunate that this description should be so commonly cited, as at least two of these assertions are rather inaccurate. Walton was frequently a treble soloist in the anthems,⁶ and thus we can assume that his father had trained him quite well vocally. And, as shall be seen, he was quite an able sportsman in his youth. The Cathedral School Magazine for January 1913 indicated that in one soccer match Walton "kept goal very well, and saved many dangerous attacks."⁷ Russell, of course, would have been a few years older than Walton, and thus perhaps didn't know the boy well. For that matter, Walton's characteristic reserve was no doubt exacerbated when the result of speaking in his native dialect was to have his head sat upon!

The official school photograph of 1912 shows eight staff and twenty-one boys posed for the camera. Often such photographs show nearly identical-looking boys, told by their leaders to sit up straight, look

¹ Hayes, p.7. Walton's letter appears exactly as he wrote it; all editorial clarifications are in square brackets. This process will be retained throughout the dissertation.

² Lloyd, p.4, quoting *At the Haunted End of the Day*; see also Burton, p.20; S. Walton, p.42

³ Kennedy 1989, p.6

⁴ Kennedy 1989, in Craggs 1977, p.2; see also Tierney, p.22

⁵ Letter from Leslie Russell to Stewart Craggs, February 17, 1976, in Tierney, p.24

⁶ Tierney, p.22

⁷ At La Mortella, Forio

to the camera, and hold their arms to the side. In this photo,¹ however, the boys all have distinct characters, as revealed in their posture and visage. Walton, one of the smaller and younger boys, is seated on the lawn in the front row. He is on the edge, in a suit of slightly lighter color than the other boys, and his shoes are less polished. Of all the boys in the photo, Walton cuts the tiniest figure, compressing his body as he hunches forward, tightly clasping his knees with his arms—a veritable poster child for timidity.

Perhaps the most accurate description of the schoolboy Walton is also the simplest. Dean Strong, after hearing the premiere of *Belshazzar's Feast* in 1931, summed up the composer as having been merely “a small quiet boy”.²

Repertoire at Christ Church

According to Susana Walton, her husband “would often express the opinion that his musical education consisted of nothing but ploughing through the English anthems.”³ This is a simplistic view that overlooks the various other opportunities that the present study hopes to enumerate, but it certainly strikes to the core: with two choral services per day, plus the necessary rehearsals, Walton’s childhood was dominated by music for the cathedral. John Coggrave summarizes this repertoire as “the Anglican choral tradition which then consisted largely of nineteenth-century works which displayed solid craftsmanship even when they lacked any particularly distinctive melodic or harmonic invention.” He goes on to place the music of Mendelssohn, Wesley, Stanford and Parry in this unflattering category.⁴

Walton did encounter other composers, and in some instances we have his later opinions of these masters. For example, in 1983, the year of his death, Walton wrote to Alan Frank that he had gained an interest in Palestrina, though that composer had bored him in his youth.⁵ Louis Spohr—not a composer highly praised today—was described by Walton as “a very underrated composer. I only know comparatively well, needless to say, his church music, full if I remember rightly of pre-Wagneriana which the old sod took full advantage of and why not.”⁶ Spohr’s *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts* was often sung at Christ Church.

How many times must the boy have sung the words to the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, or the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate Deo*? It is no surprise that when he came to set these texts in the 1950s through 1970s, he was disparaging about the results. Of his *Missa brevis*, composed in 1965–6, he wrote: “I’m also on to the *Missa Brevis*. I doubt if there will be more than 8 to 10 minutes of it. Remembering the boredom I suffered as a dear little choirboy, I’ve made it or am making it as *brevis* as possible. It

¹ Burton, p.24

² Letter from Thomas Strong to Edward Lyttleton, December 29, 1931, in Anson, p.106

³ S. Walton, p.43

⁴ John Coggrave, in Craggs 1999, p.22

⁵ John Coggrave, in Craggs 1999, p.23

⁶ Kennedy 1989, p.285

should be v[ery] popular among Communion takers. But how uninspiring are the words!”¹ Likewise, when he came to compose his own *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in 1974 he confessed: “How I dislike the words of the Mag. & Nunc, most uninspiring.”²

As a microcosm of service music at Christ Church, let us consider Walton’s first week as a chorister. The Archive at Christ Church includes the service sheets that tracked all of the music sung during daily services. As reported by the *Oldham Standard*, Walton began duty on Saturday, September 7, 1912. For Evensong that evening the choir sang the *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in A major by John Goss (1800–1880), whose typically Victorian output remains popular in Anglican service today. The anthem was *Seek him that maketh the seven stars*, a men’s chorus extracted from Elgar’s oratorio *The Light of Life* (1896).

The next day was the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity. During Matins that morning the choir sang the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* in E-flat by Charles Harford Lloyd, formerly Organist of Christ Church. Lloyd’s music is occasionally still performed in Anglican service, but is otherwise unknown; it has been described as “well written though undistinguished. Stylistically similar to S.S. Wesley’s, it lacks Wesley’s individuality in treatment of dissonance.”³ Later that morning, they sang the *Litany* by Thomas Tallis, a work that is diatonic, consonant, and chordal. It appears so frequently in the Christ Church service books that the men and boys could no doubt sing it from memory. Right away, Walton was infused with the Christ Church choral tradition: well written, though perhaps unimaginative by today’s standards.

For Evensong the service music was the *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in E-flat, again by Lloyd. The anthem was Mendelssohn’s *Sing ye praise*, from his Second Symphony, the *Lobgesang* or “Hymn of Praise”, which Charles Walton’s choir at St. John’s had performed. A tenor soloist probably sang the introductory recitative (in German known as “Saget es, die ihr erlöst seid durch den Herrn”) and aria (“Er zählet unsre Tränen”), followed by the chorus on the recitative text. It was quite common practice at Christ Church to sing an aria and its accompanying chorus extracted from an oratorio.

The rest of the music sung in Walton’s first week at Christ Church follows:

Monday, September 9

Matins: Service music: *Te Deum and Jubilate* in G, by Aldrich

Anthem: *Commit thy ways to Jesus*, by Bach

Tuesday, September 10

Matins: Service music: *Te Deum and Jubilate* in F, by Garrett

Anthem: *O Lamb of God*, by Harwood

Evensong: Service music: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in F, by Garrett

Anthem: *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd*, from *Messiah*, by Handel

On Wednesday, September 11, services were “plain,” i.e. not sung.

¹ Craggs 1999, p.29

² Craggs 1999, p.29

³ Banfield, “Lloyd, Charles Harford”

Thursday, September 12

Matins: Service music: *Te Deum and Jubilate* in B-flat, by Kempton

Anthem: *Save me, O God*, by Boyce

Evensong: Service music: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in B-flat, by Kempton

Anthem: *Lord God of Abraham*, from *Elijah*, by Mendelssohn

Friday, September 13

Evensong: Service music: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in F, by S.S. Wesley

Anthem: *Hide not Thou Thy face*, by Farrant

Saturday, September 14

Matins: Service music: *Te Deum and Jubilate* in F, by S.S. Wesley

Anthem: *God, my King*, by Bach

Evensong: Service music: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in A, by Arnold

Anthem: *Jesu, Word of God Incarnate*, by Mozart

Sunday, September 15

Matins: Service music: *Te Deum and Jubilate* in A-flat, by Harwood

Litany: in five parts, by Tallis

Evensong: Service music: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in A-flat, by Harwood

Anthem: *And Jesus entered into the temple*, by Walford Davies

The composers sung during that week are thoroughly representative of those listed in the subsequent service sheets. They fall roughly into three categories. First are current English composers. Some have a specific Oxford connection, such as Henry Ley's two immediate predecessors as Organist at Christ Church: Charles Harford Lloyd and Basil Harwood. Henry Walford Davies (1869–1941) was in 1912 Organist at prestigious Temple Church in London; his cantata *The Jovial Huntsmen* (1902) and oratorio *Everyman* (1904) were among the most popular works in the provincial oratorio festivals.¹

The second category is English composers of the previous two centuries. The Oxford connection is here somewhat less essential, though Henry Aldrich is far better known as the Dean of Christ Church at the turn of the eighteenth century. Thomas Kempton (1694–1762) spent most of his life as Organist at Ely Cathedral. William Boyce (1711–1779), the breadth of whose output is now recognized, in the early twentieth century was known almost exclusively for anthems such as *Save me, O God*. Though mostly a theatrical composer, Samuel Arnold (1740–1802) had also been Organist of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey. Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876) was the great English cathedral composer of the nineteenth century, having served as Organist at Hereford, Exeter, Winchester, and Gloucester; he had also received degrees from Oxford. Finally George Garrett (1834–1897), who had been a boy chorister at New College, Oxford, had been a prominent organist at St. John's College, Cambridge.

The final category consists of those great composers of the previous two centuries. In the week in question, all of them were of German background, and all of their works were sung in English

¹ Ottaway and Foreman, "Davies, Sir Walford"

translation. Bach was heard twice in this week: his *Commit thy ways to Jesus* is “Befiehl du deine Wege,” the statement of the “Passion Chorale” in the *St. Matthew Passion* heard after Pilate has conversed with Jesus. *God, my King* is an adaptation of the chorale *Liebster, Jesu, wir sind hier*. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd” from Handel’s *Messiah* is another instance of a solo aria, in this case alto or treble, to be followed by a chorus, “His yoke is easy”. Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* is the source of “Lord God of Abraham,” probably preceded by the brief recitative “Draw near, all ye people” and followed by the chorale “Cast thy burden upon the Lord”. Mozart’s *Jesu, Word of God Incarnate* is the English version of his *Ave verum corpus*. All of these works were sung in subsequent weeks as well.

The rest of 1912 proceeded similarly. Occasionally, composers of the Renaissance appeared, as on September 19, when a worshipper at Christ Church could hear *Jesu, dulcis memoria*, which at the time was attributed to Victoria but is now believed to be spurious, and Orlando Gibbons’s *Almighty and everlasting God*. Purcell appears occasionally, Palestrina twice, and there was one anthem each by Jacob Handl, Arcadelt, and Byrd. Of the standard-repertoire composers, Christ Church presented a fair amount of Handel and Mendelssohn, with smatterings of Franck (*Hallelujah, O praise God in His temple*, twice), Schumann (*Qui Mariam absolvisti*), Schubert, Gounod, and Mozart (*Dies irae* and *Lacrimosa* during Advent). It is worth noting that the only two non-Germans on the list—Franck and Gounod—were among the previous century’s most Germanic of French composers.

Service music and anthems by English composers of the nineteenth century predominate. To the composers mentioned above are especially added Attwood, Battishill, Crotch, Ouseley, Stainer, Sterndale Bennett, Sullivan, and Walmisley. Of the more recent English composers, Stanford appears with greatest frequency, and his service music in B-flat was featured on the three services on Christmas Day. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Percy Buck, and Ernest Walker tallied one anthem each by the end of the year. Henry Ley himself composed the service music in C minor that was sung on Sunday, December 29. Thomas Strong’s setting of *In the bleak mid-winter*, discussed above, was sung on Christmas Eve.

In 1913, not much changed. Haydn, Brahms, and Dvořák appeared, always sung in English. There is more from Tallis and Purcell, and also Blow. Some anthems were repeated from previous weeks. Henry Ley’s *God so loved the world* was sung on Thursday, March 6, and his *Let all the world in every corner sing* on Monday, May 5. Holy Week (March 17–21) consisted solely of chants and hymns. Just as Stanford dominated Christmas, Easter was given to Basil Harwood, together with Beethoven’s “Hallelujah unto God’s Almighty Son” from *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, an annual Easter tradition. The mid-term week of April 7–12 was sung by the men only. Early May saw slightly more extended works, such as *Zadok the Priest* by Handel (May 6), *How lovely is Thy dwelling-place* from the Brahms Requiem (May 8), and *As the hart pants* by Mendelssohn (May 12).

Starting on Sunday, February 23, an organ recital took place after most Sunday Evensong services. Perhaps the boys of the choir were expected to hear their leaders play at these recitals. The names of the organists are not indicated in the service sheets, but the works are. The first such recital was typical of those that followed: the Prelude and Fugue in C minor by Bach, chorale preludes on “O Sacred Head surrounded” by Bach and Brahms, and Mendelssohn’s Sixth Organ Sonata. The next week, March 2, had the special treat of Reubke’s Sonata on Psalm 94. Another monumental work, the Liszt Prelude and

Fugue on BACH, was played on June 29. One wonders which of the Preludes by Rachmaninov was the one played on May 11, Whit Sunday. The overture to Wagner's *Tannhäuser* was heard on May 18. There are occasional appearances of English composers, especially Wesley, Stanford and Harwood. But otherwise the repertoire is relatively standard, with Bach, Rheinberger, and Karg-Elert leading the way among Germans, and Guilmant, Franck, and Widor common among the French.

One flips through these service sheets searching for special morsels, but largely in vain. The tastes are rather comfortable. Perhaps the only surprise is the under-representation of Hubert Parry, given his strong Oxford connections, though his music was indeed heard more often at Christ Church starting in 1914. The most commonly sung composers at Christ Church were probably Mendelssohn, Bach, Handel, Wesley, Stanford, and Harwood. Ley's service music in B-flat was heard on several major feast days. Another study could chart the precise frequency of various composers and works. Likewise one could compare the repertoire at Christ Church with that of Magdalen College and New College to determine how representative Christ Church was of the other prominent Oxford chapels.

What we gain from this overview is that Walton may have sung often, but the works were not particularly varied. There are occasional works from the Renaissance, and large quantities of works by English composers (service music and anthems) and by German or German-leaning composers of the previous two hundred years. Certainly nothing hints that one of the choirboys would gain an interest in rather more exotic music. Or perhaps his interest was fueled precisely because the repertoire at Christ Church was so consistent.

There was still, of course, much to learn from this music. The composer Geoffrey Bush, who had been a choirboy at Salisbury Cathedral, wrote:

music was around all the time; we absorbed it as children absorb a foreign language when they live abroad, effortlessly. We did not need to be taught, for instance, as some first year harmony students at university have to be taught, the normal spacing of a succession of 4-part chords; we knew which was the right and which the wrong way just from the look of the page.¹

Christopher Palmer expounded on this idea:

Walton at this time had had no formal training whatever in composition[.] [...] No *formal* training, maybe: but those who in Quires and Places where they Sing, are fed a daily diet of Renaissance polyphony absorb contrapuntal feeling and technique without realizing what they're doing; the same applies to harmony, whether imbibed in the form of a Bach Chorale or 'Nearer my God to Thee.' It's a natural instinctive, non-intellectual educative process and arguably the ideal way to learn, at least to *start* learning. This was the legacy of Christ Church[.]²

Walton the future composer was learning his craft without even realizing it.

¹ Palmer, in Nimbus Records NI 5364

² Palmer, in Chandos Records CHAN 9222, p.6

The list of repertoire should not, however, serve to imply that the boys of the choir sang only sacred music. For example, on Saturday, May 23, 1914, the cathedral choir participated in a concert held in Christ Church's Great Hall.¹ They sang two series of madrigals, some of which are still well known, though others are now more obscure. In the first set were *All creatures now are merry-minded* by John Bennet, *Lullaby* by William Byrd, *The Silver Swan* by Orlando Gibbons, and *To lovely groves (or Au joli bois)* by the Frenchman Charles Tessier. Mid-way in the concert, the choir sang four more madrigals: *Great God of Love* by Robert Lucas Pearsall, *In going to my naked bed* by Richard Edwardes, *The cloud-capp'd towers* by Richard John Samuel Stevens, and *Like two proud armies* by Thomas Weelkes. Six of these works date from the Renaissance, and in the Hall were sung under the gaze of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I in portrait form. The works by Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795–1856) and R.J.S. Stevens (1757–1837) represent a later era in English music that was better known during Henry Ley's time than it is during ours. The cathedral boys no doubt enjoyed singing these light-hearted works as a contrast to the more formal works they knew so well from worship.

This concert consisted of more than just the choir singing. Charles Harford Lloyd and Basil Harwood played Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D major as the concert's centerpiece.² Undoubtedly most impressive was the eminent tenor Gervase Elwes (1866–1921), a former Christ Church student, who contributed a major part. After the choir's first set of madrigals, he sang three songs of Brahms: *Wir wandelten*, *Am Sonntag Morgen*, and *Wie froh und fusch*. Later in the evening he presented a collection of songs in English: *Bring her again, O western wind* by the American R. Huntington Woodman (1861–1943); *Break, break, break* by Henry Ley; *Is my team ploughing?* by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958); and *I love the jocund dance* by Roger Quilter (1877–1953), whose songs were especially popular at the time. The young boy Walton thus had an opportunity to hear one of his country's leading tenors performing songs written by his countrymen. Would that Walton's letters home from this period survived, as his opinion of this occasion would be illuminating.

Learning Instruments

Walton continued to study the piano and violin at Christ Church. His instructor in the piano was Basil Charles Allchin (1877–1957), the Assistant Organist at Christ Church,³ who in the coming years became the first person that the boy Walton entrusted to see his original compositions. Allchin was an Oxford native who received a Bachelor of Arts as part of Oxford's Society of Non-Collegiate Students. He then

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.1, p.60, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² Unfortunately, Thomas Strong and Charles Buller Heberden (Strong's predecessor as Vice-Chancellor and at the time Principal of Brasenose College) did not reprise their performance of the *Andante* from this sonata, which they had presented for the one-thousandth concert of the Oxford University Musical Club on February 10. This had been one of the few occasions when Strong ever performed in public, and it is unlikely that Walton, age ten, was present. According to one attendee, Strong was "clad quite adventitiously in knee-breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes. There was something Puckish about Dr. Strong; he had a quiet way of deflating pomposity and of exposing humbug." (Anson, p.123)

³ Howes 1973, p.xi; Lloyd, p.5

studied under Walter Parratt at the Royal College of Music. *The Musical Times* favorably reviewed a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* that Allchin conducted at Holy Trinity Church in Roehampton in 1905, saying that he “had evidently spared no pains in training the choir, and his efforts were amply repaid, the rendering of the unaccompanied chorales being especially good.”¹ That year he became Organist of Hertford College, Oxford, a post he held for over twenty years. I have been unable to discover at what point he became Assistant Organist at Christ Church as well. Later he taught at Exeter College, Oxford, and joined the board of the Royal College of Music. One writer avers that Allchin “was considered to have a genius for explaining complex matters in simple language”,² an ability helpful to his chorister students.

Walton also undertook to study the violin, though we do not know who served as his tutor. However, he didn’t practice diligently and as a result Charles Walton canceled those lessons.³ By all accounts he was a poor performer on both piano and violin. Walton himself claimed “I could never organise by fingers properly.”⁴ His widow’s memoir clarifies: “He also tried to learn how to play the violin, but because he could not organize his fingers properly he found this excruciating torture.” She likewise blamed “his clumsy hands” for his inability to learn piano.⁵ This lack of skills continued into his adulthood: Walton’s friend and publisher Alan Frank even claimed that Walton played “excruciatingly badly”.⁶ Yet Walton soon earned a piano prize in the school⁷ and served temporarily as a chapel organist. Walton’s youthful compositions that involve the piano, as we shall see, demonstrate either a simplistic approach (as in three of the Swinburne songs) or extraordinary demands (as in the *Valse* and Piano Quartet); either of these attributes may indicate lack of familiarity with advanced piano technique. Walton never composed much for the piano, but by the late 1920s he had studied enough scores and worked with enough players to have learned effective writing for string instruments, as evidenced by his three masterful concertos.

The choir school presented a concert for Christmas on December 23, 1912.⁸ In the second half of the concert, Walton performed two works on the violin. Only seven boys performed instruments at this event, the others all on the piano, so it seems that Walton must have had some minimal ability on the violin, or the school staff wouldn’t have scheduled such a performance. That said, Walton’s appearance was folded in the middle where he would be hardly noticed. The first work was *Spring* by Thomas Augustine Arne, originally published in 1760 as a cantata for voice, strings and continuo. The complete work is about eight minutes long, so Walton probably played a brief excerpt. The second work was *Hey Baloo* by Schumann, better known as the Lied “Hochländisches Wiegenlied” from the cycle *Myrthen* of 1840. I have been unable to locate any violin manual that incorporates either of these works.

¹ Anonymous, “Country and Colonial News”

² Hooper, “Biographical Appendix”

³ Ottaway, p.2; Petrocelli, p.74; Tierney, p.22. These sources indicate that violin lessons stopped at around age ten, but Noel Walton (letter to Hugh Ottaway, 9 April 1970) writes that they continued in Oxford. Noel seems correct given that William performed on the violin in concert that December.

⁴ Burton, p.12

⁵ S. Walton, p.43

⁶ Lloyd, p.5

⁷ Burton, p.3–4

⁸ Cathedral School Magazine, January 1913, at La Mortella, Forio

Among the other performances in the program were, as mentioned above, six other boys on the piano. The repertoire is an interesting mix of classics—the fifth Hungarian Dance, for piano duet, by Brahms and studies by Bach (played by G.W. Proger, who had taken Walton out to tea)—and more contemporary works. These included *Morning Song* by Thomas Dunhill (1877–1946) and two selections for piano duet (one of the pianists was S.L.L. Russell, who had taken Walton to the pictures) from *The Nursery* by the Frenchman Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht (1880–1965). This cycle for piano duet had been published in five volumes between 1905 and 1911.¹ Inghelbrecht’s harmony has hints of Debussy. Evidently the teachers at Christ Church worked to stay up to date with contemporary composition.

The choir itself also sang several partsongs at the Christmas concert. Again, some of these were standard classics: *Coronach* by Schubert and five songs by Mendelssohn: *Greeting*, *The Passage-bird’s farewell*, *O wert thou in the cauld Blast*, *Autumn Song*, and *The Harvest Field*. Not surprisingly, all were sung in English. The concert began with four unison *Songs of Innocence* by Henry Walford Davies and also included *To Daffodils* by Basil Harwood. There were also three dramatic or poetic recitations. The audience thus heard from these young lads a varied concert, with piano, violin, chorus, and speaking voice, but few adventuresome sonorities.

The Christ Church school magazine after that Christmas in 1912 commented: “Our exile from home at Christmas [...] was enlivened in the usual way ... we might have been Bulgarians from the way we attacked the turkey.”² Presumably Walton had begun to settle in among the student body, and was among the enthusiastically hungry Bulgarians. (What would Christ Church’s prominent eastern European undergraduates have said about the moniker?) Walton visited home in Oldham only rarely and briefly, as his duties at the cathedral allowed.³

Walton also continued to sing as a soloist. In fact, Susana Walton recalled attending a formal dinner in Washington, D.C., at which “Joan Sutherland sang some Handel songs [...] which William assured me he had sung in his Oxford days as a choirboy, but much more beautifully.”⁴ He no doubt undertook several songs that would have been standard repertoire at the time, Handel foremost among them. His early vocal compositions show the mark of Quilter, Somervell, and other Edwardian songsters whose output the boy may have known.

All in all, the music that Walton encountered at Christ Church—whether sung as a soloist, or by the choir in cathedral or concerts, and whether played or heard on instruments—was rather straightforward. The most extraordinary pieces he might have heard were the virtuosic organ works performed at recitals after services. Otherwise, all was melodious with mostly diatonic harmonies and rhythmically of only moderate interest. The year was 1912, but some of the elements of Modernism that were brewing elsewhere had yet to reach Christ Church.

¹ Kaye, “Inghelbrecht, D.-E.”

² Burton, p.25

³ Burton, p.5

⁴ S. Walton, p.157–8

Earliest Compositions

Accounts differ as to when Walton began composing. The earliest estimation is from Susana Walton's assertion that "William had started to scribble pieces for the choristers to sing at around the age of eleven."¹ No doubt this claim is based on Walton's own comments made to his wife. But in a letter of May 17, 1932, the composer, writing in the third person, made a different claim: "First signs of composition 'Variations for violin and pf. on a chorale by J.S.B.' didn't progress (like his latest composition) more than a dozen bars. Not very interesting and wisely decided to stop."² He gave no specific date for this work, but added: "However broke loose again about 13".³ Thus the incomplete Bach Variations would have dated from the age of eleven or twelve, placing them in 1913 or 1914.

Even though they were aborted after only a few bars, these variations are interesting in several respects. First is the scoring. It is natural to begin compositional efforts with a work for solo piano, since such works are often the first that are studied. To add a violin is somewhat unusual. Given that he had performed as a violinist, and not as a pianist, at the Christmas 1912 school concert, perhaps he envisaged a similar performance opportunity with himself on violin. Another interesting element is Walton's choice of source material. From cathedral services he was familiar with many Bach chorales, both from singing and from hearing organists embellish or expand upon them. One of Walton's earliest surviving works, the *Chorale Prelude on 'Wheatley'* which shall be discussed later, is also based on a hymn tune, though not one by Bach. It makes sense that the young composer would use materials that he encountered daily for his own compositional efforts.

One of the most illustrative elements of the Variations is the fact that he left them incomplete. Later in life Walton was famously critical of his compositions, especially of their embryonic forms. He frequently burned drafts and in one case discarded a section on a friend's piano and left it behind.⁴ He preferred that his manuscripts and scores of an occasional nature—including film scores and the music for the radio play *Christopher Columbus*—were destroyed rather than refined for eventual performance and publication.⁵ Such insecurity evidently plagued even his first attempt at composition.

Yet one still wonders if his wife's account is also accurate. Could Walton have also composed works for the other choristers to sing at this early time? There are neither pieces of evidence nor supporting claims to reinforce her statement, but the prospect is ever so tantalizing.

¹ S. Walton, p.44

² Hinnells, p.54; Kennedy 1989, p.7. The "latest composition" was the First Symphony, which Walton struggled to compose.

³ Lloyd, p.4

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.72

⁵ Hayes, p.368–9

War Begins

Changes at Oldham and Oxford

The spring of 1914 saw one of the most enthusiastic celebrations in Oxford history. Christ Church's team in the Torpids rowing tournament had emerged victorious as "Head of the River." In years past, students typically commemorated such an occasion by throwing furniture out from their windows and stacking the shattered remains to form a bonfire. Peckwater Quad, having no central fountain and less grass than Tom Quad, was usually the site of the controlled conflagration. But on this grand occasion, as Gerald Parkhouse summarized, "over eighty pianos were dragged to the Meadows from various undergraduate rooms to form the basis for a celebratory bonfire."¹ This was, however, to prove the last Torpids race on the Thames until 1920.

On July 19, 1914, the boys' last Sunday before departing for six weeks during the summer, the cathedral choir sang a short concert in the decorative staircase that leads to the Great Hall. This Gothic staircase is famous for its unique fan-vaulted ceiling built in the 1630s.² A side effect of the extraordinary ceiling design is an incredibly clear acoustic. This concert launched a tradition that would continue for many years.³ The boys then proceeded to their respective homes.

In the summer of 1914, the European powers, one by one, declared war. What became known as the First World War had begun. Among the British populace, the reaction was enthusiastic; modern caricature recalls soldiers lined up at train stations, smiling, waving, and cheering: "Home by Christmas!" Such optimism proved unfounded, as Europe undertook one of the bloodiest episodes in its history.

Walton was home in Oldham during July and August. When Britain declared war against Germany on August 4, 1914, Oldham responded immediately. The very next day, the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry was called up and the 10th (Oldham) Battalion, Manchester Regiment, was mobilized.⁴ On a chilly, cloudy morning, someone allegedly called out as the soldiers marched to the rail station: "What time will you be back for dinner?"⁵ Within two weeks, the Oldham Territorials began training in nearby Bury. Against this backdrop Oldham held its annual Wakes festival, and most families took their vacations as scheduled.⁶ In late September, local soldiers were shipped off to Egypt.⁷ Eventually even more Oldham men volunteered: the 24th Battalion, Manchester Regiment, was known as the "Oldham Pals."⁸

¹ Butler, p.129

² Mark Girouard, in Butler, p.49–51

³ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.1, p.62, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁴ Bateson, p.195; Law, p.254

⁵ Bateson, p.197

⁶ Law, p.254

⁷ Bateson, p.195; Law, p.254

⁸ Law, p.254

Walton's duties at Christ Church resumed in early September, before the university term began. The cathedral service sheet for the first week of August indicates no change in plans; the record for the fourth merely bears the handwritten indication: "WAR declared against Germany." Perhaps fortunately, the anthem that night was by Tallis. Yet there seems to be no bias against German composers. The sheets indicate that Mendelssohn was still the most frequently sung composer. Anthems by Schubert, Bach, Mozart, Handel, Brahms, Schumann, Ferdinand Hiller, and Johann Gottlieb Naumann were sung between August and the end of 1914. There is no change in the frequency with which the men sang. Musically speaking, life continued normally at the cathedral.

Yet Christ Church was about to change fundamentally, in a manner not seen since 1642. When war was declared, Thomas Strong was not only Dean of Christ Church, but also Vice-Chancellor of the University. This latter post traditionally rotated in three-year terms among the various college Deans. Strong had begun his term in 1913. The Chancellorship being a purely titular affair (the post was at the time held by Earl Curzon), Strong was the *de facto* head of the University. He coordinated with the military authorities to create a special committee whereby he interviewed men who sought to go to war and recommended which of them would be suitable as officers.¹ Generals visited him daily. Harold Anson recounted that the generals

were astonished to find a clerical don who could choose officers for them with unfailing precision and speed, who could take quick decisions, over-ride statutes, sweep away obsolete regulations, turn his house into a hospital, learn to converse with Russians and Jugo-Slavs in their own language, and get through an incredible amount of work, while discovering and enjoying amusing situations in every problem which tormented the minds of the Army authorities.²

This activity kept Strong occupied through the war, and he was even prevailed upon to extend his term as Vice-Chancellor by an extra year, through 1917.³ Strong attempted to direct Christ Church in "business as usual." Among the few changes was that the college leaders followed the king's example by refraining from drinking alcohol until the end of the conflict. A military banner was now hung above the subdean's chair in cathedral. Confidence in the brevity of the war led the Governing Body to decline insurance on the priceless pictures, books, and fabric against possible bomb damage.⁴

But it became increasingly difficult to proceed with any illusion of normalcy. Bit by bit, students, faculty and staff undertook a steady exodus from Christ Church. E.R. Dodds, the noted classicist who was an undergraduate at Oxford during the war years, described the University's remaining denizens as "chiefly [...] young boys putting in time while they awaited their call-up, plus a few crocks, a few overseas students, and a number of women".⁵ Enlistment of new students at Christ Church collapsed from sixty or seventy per year to merely fourteen in 1914. There were just thirty undergraduates, including five

¹ Judith Curthoys, in Butler p.120

² Anson, p.4

³ Anson, p.34

⁴ Judith Curthoys, in Butler p.120; Curthoys, p.297

⁵ Butler, p.120; Curthoys, p.297

from America and four from India. About nine hundred members of Christ Church, past and present, were serving in the war.¹ Strong had his work cut out for him as he interviewed dozens or hundreds of these men to make recommendations to the military of how they should best serve. Right away, casualties were felt: on September 3, 1914, the first former Christ Church member was killed in action, Stephen Christy, captain in the 20th Hussars, at Le Ferté on the French-Belgian border.²

Soon Christ Church invited the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry to use the college rooms as barracks until more permanent buildings were constructed in the Cowley neighborhood³ southeast of central Oxford. In 1915, Christ Church and Brasenose College began hosting the Royal Flying Corps, who remained for the duration of the war.⁴ A description of Christ Church amid the Civil War in 1642—“half arsenals and half hotels”⁵—was again suddenly apt. The military men used the Common Room as their dining mess hall (depleting the stores of wine on behalf of The House’s governors). The Military School of Education took over the chemistry lab. Slowly refugees from Belgium and Serbia came as well.⁶

Life eventually changed in the cathedral. Archivist Judith Curthoys described the changes thus:

organ recitals were given on Saturday afternoons and Sunday evenings in the summer months to raise funds for the Red Cross. On the third Sunday of every month, commemorative communion services for the fallen were held; there were special services at Easter and Christmas for the troops in residence, and regular Parades. At first the military men occupied only the north side of the cathedral, but soon khaki began to appear among the choir as the lay clerks joined up. The precentor had already left as chaplain to the 2nd South Midland Mounted Brigade, and chaplains and singers were roped in from other colleges to join Walton and other choristers in the stalls.”⁷

Help from Dean Strong

The war created a major problem for the Walton family. With thousands of men heading off to war—over 15,000 enlisted from Oldham before conscription was established in March 1916⁸—there were considerably fewer people, especially young men, available to take voice lessons. Charles Walton’s income collapsed.⁹ William’s fourteen-year-old brother, Noel, had finished his schooling at the Hulme

¹ Curthoys, p.297

² Curthoys, p.299

³ Judith Curthoys, in Butler p.120

⁴ Judith Curthoys, in Butler p.120

⁵ Curthoys, p.297

⁶ Curthoys, p.298

⁷ Curthoys, p.299–300; also Butler, p.121

⁸ Bateson, p.196

⁹ Aston, p.4; Burton, p.20; Kennedy 1989, p.7; Lloyd, p.6; Tierney, p.22–23; S. Walton, p.44

Grammar School, and was already working as a clerk in a cotton mill office.¹ Even though most of William's school fees were already paid for through a scholarship,² the family tried to save wherever they could. Charles had resolved to call back William from Christ Church, but Louie hesitated. Dean Strong came to the rescue. As Susana Walton retells it, Strong "told the parents he would pay the sum out of a trust fund. William believed he had probably done so out of his own pocket."³ This was but the first occasion when Strong assisted Walton in indispensable ways.

Strong had developed a close rapport with the choristers. Neil Tierney, described occasions on which the Dean had come to know them:

Strong, [...] a brilliant pianist with a wide and progressive repertoire, almost vibrated with excitement whenever an unfamiliar piece of music, especially one by Debussy, came his way. Affectionate and kindly in manner and speech, he treated the choristers as if they were his own children, walking with them in the garden of the Deanery, chatting about music or life in general as he entertained them to tea, generously placing his valuable and extensive library at their disposal, or playing to them on the splendid piano in his study and sometimes allowing them to play on it themselves.⁴

Several letters and other recollections add further detail to these occasions. On January 8, 1938, Thomas Strong wrote to Hubert Foss:

In those days the 5 senior boys used to come to my house every Sunday morning after Cathedral—i.e. about 11.30 a.m. It began by being a sort of little Bible class; but they gradually developed the habit of staying till 1 p.m. and messing about with my books, etc. I think, but am not quite sure that W. [Walton] used to strum on my piano. It was rather fun for them, because I often had distinguished people staying with me whose autographs the boys used to secure. I remember Lord Rosebery being seized upon in this way. All this was just before the War.⁵

A letter from Dean Strong to Cedric Glover, from February 23, 1914, describes one episode in particular.

I was away a good deal of last week, and on my return I found Schönberg's compositions awaiting me. I have read them carefully through and they are certainly quite beyond my understanding. Yesterday I tried them on some of the choir boys. I did not, of course, know if I played them right, but I certainly made some mysterious noises. They were greatly astonished, and one of them said: 'But they are not even a pleasant noise'. He was prepared to put up with breaches of rule and the like, but only in consideration of a pleasant result.

I wonder very much whether Schönberg has hit upon anything. On the whole I did not

¹ It is usually said that the war was the reason Noel was pulled from school, but Oldham Hulme Grammar School records indicate he finished studies in "Summer 1913," one year before the war began. See also Burton, p.20; Ottaway, p.3; Tierney, p.22–23.

² Kennedy 1989, p.7

³ S. Walton, p.44

⁴ Tierney, p.23

⁵ Letter from Thomas Strong to Hubert Foss, undated, copy at La Mortella, Forio; see also Bedford, WWE v.8, p.vii; Burton, p.25; Kennedy, in Craggs 1977, p.2; Kennedy 1989, p.7

think them altogether unpleasant, but they gave me a kind of groping feeling, as if there were goodish music beyond some opaque veil. But I suppose this is rather a heresy. It is very kind of you to send them to me.¹

Of such visits, Walton himself later wrote:

After Sunday morning service he [Strong] used to take the choristers in Scripture, and very interesting he made it, and never too long. Afterwards we walked with him in the garden, or were allowed to write our letters or play on his new grand piano in his study. It was, by the way, a very odd piano, which when shut looked anything else but what it really was.

On one of these occasions we had our first introduction to modern—in fact ultra-modern—music, when he played us Schönberg's six Short Piano Pieces.

They caused a good deal of mirth amongst us, and he fairly bubbled with amusement. He was greatly interested in modern music, and possessed a great deal of it, which he was always willing to allow one to borrow if one wished.

What he thought about it is difficult to say, but he was much more open-minded and knowledgeable about it than many professional musicians, and if he joked and made fun of it it was from knowledge and not prejudice.²

Above Strong had indicated that only the "5 senior boys" would come to this tea. It is not known precisely when Walton joined this special club. He was not in the "Senior Class" until September 1916,³ but given the great lengths to which Strong was to help Walton, it seems that their special rapport had begun by 1914. Further, while it is possible that Walton was part of the group in February 1914, it also seems likely that Strong tested out these Schoenberg scores on later groups of choristers. Walton recalled that other modernist music was heard from Strong's piano as well, recounting that the Dean:

used to have a group of us to the Deanery after Sunday morning service for religious instruction. Occasionally, perhaps as a recompense, he would play what seemed to us very odd music indeed—pieces such as the Schoenberg op. 11 and op. 15. I also remember him once playing some music by [Leo] Ornstein [who] was notorious around 1914 as a sort of John Cage of his day.⁴

There are records therefore of Strong introducing to the choristers three works by Schoenberg: the *Drei Klavierstücke*, opus 11, of 1909; *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (The Book of the Hanging Gardens), opus 15, of 1909; and the *Sechs Klavierstücke*, opus 19, of 1911.⁵ It is already unusual that Strong, a university don with a love of music, followed modernist trends from the Continent. But it is even more unusual that he would have taken upon himself to introduce these young musicians to such works. Needless to say, Schoenberg did not form part of a chorister's regular musical diet in cathedral. Neither did other modern continental composers whose music Strong collected, such as Debussy, Ravel, or

¹ Anson, p.107

² Anson, p.116–7

³ Hayes, p.11

⁴ Murray Schafer, *British Composers in Interview*, London: Faber & Faber, 1963, p.74, quoted in Lloyd, p.6

⁵ Neighbour, "Schoenberg, Arnold"

Florent Schmitt.¹ Strong wished to expand the minds of these youngsters, and in the process deeply affected one of Britain's greatest composers.

1915

For the year 1915 we have very little documentary evidence regarding Walton's activities. We can only piece together a few aspects from other documents that survive.

The music at Christ Church continued consistently through 1915. There were, however, a few highlights. The choir sang the Allegrì *Miserere* at Evensong on Friday, February 26, which would have been a major undertaking. Holy Communion on July 18 included the Kieff *Melody*, or Russian kontakion of the faithful departed, probably in the adaptation by Walter Parratt. Most importantly, the gradual awakening of English music before Tallis had finally begun. Holy Communion on Sunday, March 7, included service music by John Merbecke, rather older music than was usually sung at Christ Church. Also, the *Laudate nomen Domini* of Christopher Tye was sung on Tuesday, September 14. And Monday, October 4, brought *O Lord, the Maker of all thing* by King Henry VIII. All of these departures from previous repertoire tended to recur: not only had Henry Ley expanded his choir's horizons, he apparently liked the change.

Occasional services had special dedications. For example, at the services of Sunday, February 28, collections were taken on behalf of the Christ Church Mission. The next Sunday included "Special Memorial Services for Members of Ch. Ch. and Those Belonging to the Diocese Who Have Fallen in the War." Several Wednesdays saw a "Special Memorial Service for Those Fallen in the War" after Evensong, though the choir would not have been present. On July 11 there was a "Special Service for the Oxford Benefit, Friendly and Trade Societies Hospital Committee." The following Sunday included more "Special Memorial Services" for the war dead; the Merbecke and Russian kontakion were heard. These memorials increased in frequency as the year progressed. Starting on September 5, the weekly organ recital was often given by a guest organist—that week was William Henry Harris—with a collection for the British Red Cross Society. Basil Harwood, Henry Walford Davies, Ivor Atkins, Herbert Brewer, and Walter Parratt were among these guests. While the war had not drastically changed the service music, it certainly gave a new dimension to the worship services, as special dedications and collections were held for the war effort.

Eventually the choir's staff fell from nine lay clerks to only six. The choirs of New College and Christ Church held services at different times, and so the two groups shared male singers.² This of course made for rather long days for those men, but it was necessary to maintain choral services.

There is just one surviving letter from Walton in 1915. It is dated July 11.

¹ Anson, p.123

² George Thewlis papers, p.62, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

Dear Mother,

I have had a very nice week. I can go to Ballacheys from Aug 3rd to 8th can't I. He is awfully de[c]ent and if I can go I can learn to ride a horse. I think Mrs Ballachey is writing to you about it. Say "yes". There is hardly any news this week. I had a solo in Stainer in Eb on Tuesday. We went to the Baths. I nearly did [a] breadth in swimming. We had a [cricket] match with Cothill on Wednesday. We lost. 80–50. It was a ripping drive there. We went to the Baths on Thursday. There was no practise. We had a full practise on Friday. There was a game yesterday. I had the solo in "God of my righteousness" [by] Greene. I had a solo in Garret in D this morning[.] Dr Watson preached. We are having "Praise thou the Lord" [by] Wesley. I have got three out of the four solos. The "Gym" Competition is on next Wednesday. I enclose another photo and the vouchers etc.

With much love

Billy.¹

Walton had evidently made great strides in being accepted by the other boys, given that a fellow student had asked him to visit for several days in August. He was active in the school's sports endeavors. And he was a musical leader in the choir as well, with solos in several services that week.

One would hardly know from Walton's letter that there was a war on. Certainly Oldham had changed considerably. The Hartford Works, where Charles Walton had worked during William's infancy, had been converted to make munitions.² The coarse fabrics for which Oldham had gained its reputation during the Victorian era now included yarn for bandages sent to the trenches.³ Belgian refugees came to Oldham, where they found work in the factories and where their wounded soldiers were treated at the local hospital.⁴

Over the course of 1914–15, the Oldham battalion had shifted from Egypt to Sinai⁵ and they found themselves at the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli on June 4, 1915. Many Oldham soldiers—fathers and sons together—died in that distant land on that terrible day.⁶ The survivors were then sent to the trenches of Flanders.⁷ Enlistment in Oldham, as in much of the country, slowed to a trickle.⁸ Christ Church suffered its casualties early in the war as well. The youngest to be killed was Second Lieutenant N.M.K. Bertie,⁹ an undergraduate just five years Walton's senior.

¹ Hayes, p.8

² Eastham, p.58

³ Fowler, p.41

⁴ Fowler, p.41

⁵ Bateson, p.197

⁶ Bateson, p.196; Law, p.254

⁷ Bateson, p.197

⁸ Law, p.254–5

⁹ Curthoys, p.299

There was another major change in the Walton family, this time a positive one. As we have seen, able-bodied men were joining the military, rendering the Walton family finances very precarious. But prospective voice students for Charles Walton were not the only men leaving: teachers signed up to fight as well. On November 6, 1915, Charles Walton was hired to the staff of the Hulme Grammar School in Oldham.¹

The school dates its history to the establishment of a Puritan school in Oldham's town center in 1606.² One of the school's founding leaders was Laurence Chaderton, who, in 1584, became the first Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which he promptly molded into that university's most Puritan college; The Oldham Grammar School remained at the center of the hamlet until the Industrial Revolution turned its neighborhood into a slum: to one side lay housing for the poor, to another a slaughterhouse,³ to another a pub called the Doctor Syntax.⁴ The school closed in 1866 (the one-room school building was finally demolished in 1921; its site is now occupied by the Town Square Shopping Centre). However, in the year 1885, funding was procured from the will of a wealthy seventeenth-century magistrate, William Hulme of Kersley, to purchase a new site,⁵ occupying eight acres on Chamber Hill⁶ in the Coppice neighborhood, surrounded by fields. The school thus officially re-opened in 1895, renamed the Hulme Grammar School. In the boys' school, the headmaster and four assistants taught forty-eight boys,⁷ mostly the sons of textile professionals: engineers, managers, salesmen, and the like. The girls' school, which functioned independently, had twenty-six pupils. By 1901 there was a choir, taught by Mr. R.H. Pardoe, who had been on the staff since the school's foundation;⁸ there was a music master, Mr. T.H. Ingham,⁹ on staff by 1904.¹⁰ From January 1903 the headmaster at Hulme was Alfred Garside Pickford, who retired in 1931.¹¹ It was he who hired Charles Walton as music master, teaching four lessons per week.¹² The circumstances of his hiring are unknown, but this provided a new major source of income for the Walton family.

¹ Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys' Staff Register, 1895–1943. Most references imply that Charles Walton had held this post during William's earlier years, but the surviving record clarifies that the boy was already at Oxford when his father began to work at Hulme.

² Bateson 1961, p.7

³ Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools. *Oldham's Grammar School*

⁴ Bateson 1949, p.130

⁵ Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools. *Oldham's Grammar School*

⁶ Bateson 1949, p.176

⁷ Bateson 1961, p.50–1

⁸ Bateson 1961, p.51

⁹ Bateson 1961, p.53

¹⁰ Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools. *Oldham's Grammar School*

¹¹ Bateson 1961, p.53, 56

¹² Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys' Staff Register, 1895–1943

Chorister and Composer, 1916–18

To “Make Myself Interesting”

A Composer’s Motivation

In the fall of 1915, only fifteen new students arrived at Christ Church.¹ In March 1916, Parliament authorized conscription.² Military airmen continued to be housed at Christ Church. The war served as an ominous backdrop for the year 1916, during which a young man began to compose with almost feverish devotion. The Holy Communion service at noon on Sunday, January 2, included a “Special Service of Intercession in Connexion with the War”—no longer simply mourning for those killed, now the Cathedral prayers hoped actively to bring the war to a conclusion. At 3:00 that afternoon was a “Special Service for Men”, no doubt with a focus on war duty. Starting in February, the third Sunday of each month held a special “Commemoration of Those Fallen in the War” during Holy Communion at 11:00. Occasional Thursday nights at 8:00 included an organ recital, with artists including Walter Alcock and Henry Ley himself.

The musical repertoire at Christ Church remained constant, still with its focus on English and German composers and a sprinkling of more adventuresome works—the *Allegrì Miserere* returned, for example, on March 10, the first Friday of Lent. Among the few surprises was an *Agnus Dei* by Cherubini on Tuesday, April 4, which recurred occasionally. Parry’s recently composed *Never weather-beaten sail* appeared on Friday, July 28. But certainly there were no pieces that would inspire the boy Walton to compose using the exotic harmonic palette he was about to demonstrate.

As news from the front got even worse—such as the beginning of the Battle of Verdun in February—the Cathedral took matters more seriously. Starting in mid-April, the Cathedral began to hold a “Special Service of Intercession” every Wednesday and Friday afternoon, and the “usual Intercessory Prayers” were said during Evensong on the other weekdays; in July the “Intercessory Prayers connected with the War” were heard every weekday at Evensong. Holy Communion on Tuesday, April 11, was a “Special Service for the Women’s League of Honour,” and on Wednesday, May 3, it was a “Commemoration of the Jubilee of Women’s Work Abroad.” The choir continued the tradition, begun the previous year, of singing a concert on the staircase to the Great Hall on their last Sunday before proceeding home for the summer holiday. This time, on July 30, there was a “[c]ollection on behalf of British Red Cross Society.” Unfortunately, there is no record of what they sang, though the Parry motet sung two nights prior is quite probable.

Other musical events in Oxford steadily diminished. For much of this information we are indebted to George Thewlis (1890–1967), a choral conductor in Oxford in the period between the wars. For forty-

¹ Judith Curthoys, in Butler p.120

² Bateson, p.196; Law, p.255

three years, beginning in December 1918,¹ Thewlis had sung bass as a lay clerk in Christ Church² (his time thus did not overlap with Walton's), and over those decades he catalogued Oxford music-making. His extensive researches into several centuries of music-making at Oxford are stored by the Special Collections division of the Bodleian Library. They recount just how rare were musical performances during the war. Balliol College had held concerts on Sunday evenings in years past, but these ceased in 1916. Other than occasional organ recitals at New College and Christ Church with guest organists, there was very little in the way of concertizing. In fact, during 1917 and 1918, the only concerts that Thewlis could discover were those by the Oxford Bach Choir directed by Hugh Allen.

Though music events were rare in 1916, we have rather more documentary evidence of Walton's activities. First is the following letter to his mother, dated January 23. This letter begins in a different tone from his earlier notes home. He gives a day-by-day list of the previous week's events, including sports, weather, and cathedral music. His unconventional approach to spelling, punctuation and capitalization persists.

Dear Mother

Thanks very much for your letter. My weight is 5 st. 12 lbs. my height 5 ft ¼ ins. It rained all day Monday. The non-choir boys came back. We had the first "Gym" on Tuesday. on Wednesday we had a [soccer] game. We won 10–2. On Thursday we had a game. I had solo in "When Jesus our Lord". Bach.

On Friday we had a full practise. It rained all day. We had a game yesterday. I had a solo in Arnold in F. The Dean preached this morning. We are having "When Jesus was born" Mendolssohn. I thing this is all the news this week.

With much love

Billy

P.[S.] Can I be confirmed

The post script, a mere afterthought, may be an indication of how little Walton cared about religion even at this age. A letter from the headmaster, Edward Peake, to Walton's father mentions that the Dean himself was preparing the boys for confirmation.³ Walton was indeed confirmed in the cathedral on March 15, 1916. Dean Strong inscribed a Bible as a commemorative gift to the young man. Walton brought it with him on his next trip to Oldham, probably in the summer, and there the Bible remained. Michael Kennedy reports that "Noel Walton remembered Mrs Walton trying to persuade William to take it into his possession, but he refused to have it."⁴

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.1, p.56, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² B. Smith, p.234

³ Letter from Edward Peake to Charles Walton, February 20, 1916, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.7; see also Burton, p.21

On March 29, 1916, Walton turned fourteen. He had been at Christ Church since September 1912. He was now one of the older boys in the choir and the school. In his three and a half years at Christ Church, he had seen many boys get older, only to have their voices break. Those boys returned to their homes, to whatever life awaited them there. Walton had also observed his older brother Noel, who, at age fourteen, began work as a cotton-mill clerk. For not the first time, young William began to wonder about his own future.

In the 1982 documentary *At the Haunted End of the Day*, Walton recalled his decision-making in the simplest manner imaginable: “I thought ‘I must make myself interesting somehow or when my voice breaks I’ll be sent back to Oldham. What can I do? Write music.’ So I did.”¹ One wonders if the decision was indeed arrived at so quickly. After all, he also once said “I was very lucky. I was so damned stupid all I could do was to write music.”² Did he truly believe that someone so “stupid” could compose at a sufficient level to be kept on at Christ Church? Was his estimation of the composers whose music he was singing daily so low? No, he knew first-hand the challenges that awaited him, having destroyed his early set of variations for violin. He knew the work that would await him to prove successful in this plan. His attribution to “luck” is thoroughly disingenuous.

But he certainly began to compose, and in earnest. As he recalled: “I had begun some tentative compositions—settings of Shakespeare from the plays we happened to be studying, some organ pieces and a march for a wedding. Two pieces from this time were eventually published.”³ Ironically, the two such works that were published during his lifetime—the choral anthem *A Litany* and the art song *The Winds*—represent two genres that Walton failed to list here. Most of the other works do not survive.

If Walton indeed had begun to compose merely in order to keep his post at Christ Church, then an integral part of this plan, from the very start, must have been to show his efforts to his teachers. That Walton felt comfortable doing so is testament to the collegial rapport he felt with the supervising adults. Most accounts indicate that the first teacher to whom he brought the compositions was Basil Allchin, assistant organist of the cathedral. Allchin remembered being shown reams of paper with “motets for double choir”. Evidently they were quite elaborate, with part-writing showing his lack of practical experience. Allchin nevertheless encouraged Walton’s efforts.⁴

The logical next step was for Walton to demonstrate his new interest to the man who truly held the future in his hands: the cathedral Organist, Henry Ley. After all, if Walton was to remain in the choir beyond his vocal change, Ley would have to approve. On one occasion, Walton presented Ley with a choral composition. While playing it at sight, Ley spotted some unorthodox chords and, no doubt thinking that these were errors of notation, rendered them instead as more typical harmonies. The fourteen-year-old boy’s response was simply: “But, sir, that is not what I wrote.”⁵ Imagine the courage it would take for a boy to bring his works to his teacher in this manner, and then to correct the teacher

¹ Kennedy 1989, p.7

² Kennedy 1989, p.279; Tierney, p.178

³ Lloyd, p.4

⁴ Howes 1973, p.xi; Ottaway, p.4

⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.8; Tierney, p.24

outright! More importantly, this simple comment confirms that the oddities which are prominent in Walton's juvenilia were most assuredly not accidental, but rather were conscious experiments in harmonic invention.

In 1932, Walton claimed to his patron, Edith Olivier, that "when he was at school, he wrote to impress the Dean".¹ Thus there was one more hurdle to overcome. Fortunately, Walton had ample opportunity to encounter Thomas Strong each Sunday afternoon after the cathedral service. Hugh Ottaway muses that Strong probably heard about Walton's compositions through Ley and Allchin.² Strong's own recollection was the following:

One Sunday when he was in the Choir he brought with him a large bundle of music-paper covered with his compositions: he was about 15. He asked if he might leave them for me to look at and dumped them on the table in my hall. It so happened that the examinations for music degrees were going on just then and Parry was staying with me. He picked up W[alton]'s MSS and was interested. I remember him saying "There's a lot in this chap, you must keep your eye on him."³

This event must have happened in the spring of 1916, when Walton was aged fourteen, for the boy would send his compositions directly to Hubert Parry, one of Britain's two most eminent teachers of composition, later that year. One wonders which specific compositions formed the folio left casually on Strong's table. What composition was on the top, first catching the eye of the passing Parry? Walton's earliest surviving work, *A Litany*, despite flaws in its early versions, is certainly a contender.

A Litany

Walton's earliest surviving work, *A Litany*, is today the most celebrated and most often performed music he composed before the ground-breaking *Façade* of 1922. In matters of harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm it is an extraordinarily impressive accomplishment for a teenage composer, demonstrating his extensive experience singing in Christ Church's cathedral choir. Most accounts make this claim and leave it at that. However, more recent research indicates that *A Litany* had a rather longer journey than is readily acknowledged.

First Version

Stewart Craggs reported in 1977 that the manuscript⁴ of *A Litany* was in the possession of Oxford University Press.¹ By 1990 it had been transferred to the Frederick R. Koch Collection, currently housed

¹ *Edith Olivier: From her Journals*, March 20, 1932, p.132, quoted in Lloyd, p.128

² Ottaway, p.4

³ Letter from Thomas Strong to Hubert Foss, undated, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio; see also Burton, p.21; Craggs 1977, p.3; Kennedy 1989, p.7; Lloyd, p.6; Tierney, p.23–4; S. Walton, p.43–4. Each transcription differs slightly.

⁴ Craggs 2014, p.2. Housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, catalogued as GEN MSS 601 (FRKF 591a). Photocopies of the manuscript are also held at the William Walton Museum, La Mortella.

at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.² We have conductor and scholar Timothy Brown to thank for providing the first detailed analysis of the manuscript, research undertaken as he edited the volume of Oxford University Press's William Walton Edition devoted to the shorter choral works. This was published in 1999.³

Brown was the first to identify that the manuscript exists in two forms, each representing a different stage of the work's genesis. What appears to be the earliest version is scored for four treble voices. It has been published,⁴ performed and recorded in this format. Its first known public performance took place on March 19, 1999, at the historic St. Mary's Church, the principal Anglican church in Oldham, on which occasion Brown led the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge. Earlier that day, four singers from Clare College sang it privately at Walton's old church, St. John's, Werneth,⁵ which had by then been decommissioned and converted to an industrial warehouse.

Brown describes this manuscript as follows:

No score exists, but seven individual parts are written in pencil on four sheets of twelve-stave paper (36.5 x 28.8 cm.), which have been torn in two. The lower half of the sheet containing Treble I is missing [...]. On the remaining sheets, Trebles II–IV are written on the upper half of each sheet, whilst the lower section contains a second copy of each, written on both sides of the paper. On the reverse of the first sheet are unidentifiable melodic fragments (clef undefined). The sheets are unsigned.⁶

At first glimpse it is odd that the work should survive not as a full score, but in parts. This is the sole indication that Walton had envisaged this composition as more than a theoretical exercise, but that he intended it for public or private performance. This seems the most likely reason why Walton would have written out *A Litany* in four separate parts, laid out perfectly for eight singers.⁷ While no record of such an occasion exists, Walton surely could have arranged for seven of his friends in the cathedral choir to join him informally to sing through the work. Given that Basil Allchin recalled large numbers of works being brought to him for comment, similar partbooks may have existed for pieces that otherwise do not survive. As one copy of the Treble I part is missing, it is tempting to hope that this may surface someday together with similar morsels from other compositions.

Mention must also be made of the "unidentifiable melodic fragments" that appear on the reverse of one part. Unfortunately I have been unable to review these sketches to determine if they correspond to any other pieces among Walton's surviving juvenilia. This would have been difficult for Brown to undertake

Those copies, but not the original manuscripts, were consulted as part of this dissertation. Stewart Craggs (2014, p.1) has assigned this version the catalog number C1.

¹ Craggs 1977, p.43

² Craggs 1990, p.13

³ Brown, WWE v.6

⁴ in Brown, WWE v.6

⁵ Craggs 2014, p.1

⁶ Brown, WWE v.6, p.xv

⁷ Brown, WWE v.6, p.vi

in 1999, since the other works were (and remain) unpublished and their manuscripts housed elsewhere. It is hoped that future research will compare these manuscript fragments with the scores to *Tell me where is fancy bred*, the *Chorale Prelude on 'Wheatley'*, and *The Forsaken Merman*.

Several factors suggest that these four treble parts constitute the earliest of the three forms of *A Litany*. Foremost among these factors are the several notational errors. The most prominent of these is in m.7, where indiscretions of rhythmic notation lead one to believe that a change in time signature is missing (this case will be discussed in detail below). Also, the horizontal layout and spacing are inconsistent, with some half notes occupying as much visual space as quarter notes. Dynamic markings are inconsistent among the parts. The spelling of certain chords indicates that Walton may have devised the harmonies without considering their functional role. Walton resolved several of these problems in the presumed second version, which occupies a middle stage of the work's development.

Second Version

This manuscript is housed together with that of the first version, in the Koch Collection at Yale.¹ It is not in partbooks, but is a full score. Timothy Brown describes the condition of the manuscript thus: "The unbound score is written in black ink on four sides of one double sheet of twelve-stave paper (31 x 24.4 cm.)."² The composer's script on this document is tidy and precise. The horizontal and vertical positioning is clear and easy to read. The bar lines, which transect all four staves, were obviously written with the aid of a straight-edge. Dynamics are written in all four parts. Punctuation is precise and consistent. There are no errors of rhythmic notation. Between the presumed first version and this manuscript, Walton took great care to ensure that the work was ready for public consumption.

The score is dated "Easter 1916", implying that it had been completed by April 23rd. To the left of this indication, the monosyllable "Chris" has been crossed out. This has led Stewart Craggs and John Coggrave to suggest that the first version of the work may date from as early as Christmas 1915.³ It is also worth noting that the year "1916" may be in a hand other than Walton's. Perhaps Allchin or Ley appended this.⁴

Beyond the tidying up of notational indiscretions, there are several fundamental changes from the first version. Most importantly, it is scored for mixed chorus—SATB—rather than four treble voices. To facilitate the men's voices, it has been transposed down from G minor to F minor. The voice-leading is also much improved, though not often modified to take advantage of a lower bass voice. Specific changes between the versions will be discussed below.

¹ Craggs 2014, p.2. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, catalogued as GEN MSS 601 (FRKF 591b). Photocopies of the manuscript are also held at the William Walton Museum, La Mortella. Those copies, but not the original manuscripts, were consulted as part of this dissertation. Stewart Craggs (2014, p.1) has assigned this version the catalog number C1a.

² Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.xv. See also Craggs 1993, p.183.

³ Coggrave, in Craggs 1999, p.22; Craggs 1990, p.13

⁴ Humphrey Burton (p.20–1) pointed out that Easter of 1916 was "a few weeks after the disastrous battle of Verdun, an event which may have contributed to the music's prevailing emotion of tragic loss." However, this is inconsistent with the probability that the first version was composed around Christmas in the preceding year.

Third Version

There is no surviving manuscript for the final version of *A Litany*.¹ Its only primary source is the score published by Oxford University Press on December 31, 1930. It was part of the *Oxford Choral Songs* series, numbered 733, initially selling for four pence.² In that publication the score bears the inscription “Oxford 1917”.³ Timothy Brown suggests that this date “is surely misleading, given the sophistication of the revisions contained in this version”, positing that the revisions were made in 1930.⁴ In fact, it was published while Walton was working on the cantata *Belshazzar’s Feast*, his first attempt in choral writing since his youth. He seems to have revisited this early work as a reminder of how to compose effectively for choir. Brown further suggests that Walton “recalled the little partsong and decided to offer a revised version to OUP”,⁵ another worthy interpretation of the composer’s actions since he was strapped for cash at this time. Christopher Palmer also observed a relationship between Walton’s setting here of the words “In your deep floods” (which had been much changed from the previous two versions) and his approach to “By the waters of Babylon” in *Belshazzar’s Feast*.⁶

Walton made many changes indeed between the second and third versions of *A Litany*. These reinforce Brown’s theory that the revisions were undertaken in 1930 rather than 1917. First of these was to lower the work yet further, to E minor. This presents greater opportunities to use the tenors’ higher range, with one especially notable high A. He also drops the bass line to a lower range on several occasions, in the process creating a new unifying motive. On different occasions he tightens the rhythmic motion and expands the counterpoint. But before a thorough investigation of the music of *A Litany*, it is worth investigating the text.

The Text

The text of *A Litany* is a poem by Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650). Fletcher’s father was a civil servant and courtier to Queen Elizabeth I who fell from grace with the Earl of Essex in 1599.⁷ The family seat was at Cranbrook in Kent, but both Phineas and his brother Giles, also a poet, attended Trinity College, Cambridge. (Their first cousin, John, was also a writer, half of the famed pair of dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher.) Phineas wrote extensively while at Cambridge, including major works pastoral (*Piscatorie Eclogues*, 1606–14), narrative (*Venus and Anchises*, c.1609), epic (*The Purple Island*, 1608–33), dramatic (*Sicelides*, 1615), and even erotic (*Epithalamium*, c.1615).⁸ He spent fifteen years at Cambridge, but in 1615 suffered a reversal of fortune that took him into the employ, probably as chaplain, of Sir Henry Willoughby in distant Derbyshire. Willoughby transferred him in 1621 to the rectorship at Hilgay,⁹ a village in western Norfolk, fifteen miles due south of the port town of King’s Lynn and not far from his

¹ Stewart Craggs (2014, p.1) has assigned this version the catalog number C1b.

² Brown, WWE v.6, p.xv; Craggs 1993, p.183

³ This has led some commentators, writing before Stewart Craggs’s thematic catalog, published in 1977, to inaccurately place the work in that year. See Howes 1973, p.187; Ottaway, p.4; Tierney, p.235.

⁴ Brown, WWE v.6, p.xv

⁵ Brown, WWE v.6, p.vi

⁶ Christopher Palmer, “Walton’s Church Music”, *Church Music*, 3, No. 19 (1973), p.10–13, quoted in Brown, WWE v.6, p.vi. See also Ottaway, p.4.

⁷ Kastor, p.14–15

⁸ Kastor, p.83, 90, 106, 116

⁹ Kastor, p.77; see also Lewis Foreman, in Craggs 1999, p.232

many friends at Cambridge. In the late 1620s his works began to be published in London. Fletcher is an important link between the poetic worlds of Edmund Spenser and John Milton.¹ Fletcher's final published volume was *Poeticall Miscellanie* (1633), which includes twelve religious poems, two of which are titled "An Hymne".² One of these is the text that Walton set as *A Litany*.

This poem's most famous setting is by Fletcher's contemporary, Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625). It is one of the seventeen tunes Gibbons contributed to *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church*, published in 1623. As this volume pre-dates its appearance in *Poeticall Miscellanie*, it supplies the earliest known date for the poem. This setting was, and remains, quite popular in Anglican worship, appearing in *The English Hymnal* of 1906. Walton probably sang Gibbons's hymn either at Christ Church or in Oldham. Gibbons's tune straightforwardly divides the text into three verses. It evokes none of the chromaticism or deep pain that Walton later assigned these words. Henry Ley was definitely familiar with a more recent setting (1897) by the Englishman William Hurlstone, which was, like Walton's first version, scored for treble or female voices.³ I have been unable to locate a score or recording of the Hurlstone setting for comparison, but given Walton's known penchant for imitating other composers' works, this would be a logical route to follow for future study. Stewart Craggs posited another possible source: Henry Ley's *First Album of Songs*, just published in 1913,⁴ which will be compared to Walton's setting below.

Apart from the Gibbons hymn, Walton may have encountered the poem simply as text. It had appeared in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, published by Oxford University Press in 1900.⁵ The first decade of the twentieth century saw rather a resurgence of interest in Phineas Fletcher, with volumes of his poetry appearing in 1903, 1905, and 1909.⁶ When we consider the straightforward nature of Fletcher's religious poetry and Thomas Strong's love for deep though unaffected religious sentiment, it seems likely that Strong owned at least one of these volumes. Perhaps they were among the books borrowed by Walton from the Dean's shelves.

Here is the text, in the version with which it is commonly encountered. This modernizes the spelling and capitalization from Fletcher's original, but is otherwise identical.

Drop, drop, slow tears,
And bathe those beauteous feet,
Which brought from heav'n
The news and Prince of Peace:
Cease not, wet eyes,
His mercies to entreat;
To cry for vengeance,
Sin doth never cease.

¹ Kastor, p.185

² Kastor, p.134–5

³ Ley, "Windsor and the R.C.M." Alan Cuckston (in Craggs 1999, p.21) believes it unlikely that Walton knew Hurlstone's setting, but Ley was especially fond of it, calling "beautiful".

⁴ Craggs 2014, p.1

⁵ Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.xv

⁶ Kastor, p.142

In your deep floods
Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye
See sin, but through my tears.¹

Walton's manuscripts replace the word "mercies" with "mercy", and "floods" with "flood". Probably Walton was recalling the text from memory while composing, and not consulting a printed source. These two textual variants have remained in every published version of *A Litany*. In fact, they are preferable when sung, avoiding two unnecessary sibilants. Punctuation and capitalization are inconsistent among the three versions, which does not surprise given his letters from this period.

Walton made one crucial and inspired change to the text by repeating the opening line ("Drop, drop, slow tears") before the line "In your deep floods". This serves two purposes. Firstly, it underlines that the tears have expanded into "deep floods." And from a musical perspective, the interpolation affords Walton the opportunity to repeat the opening music, providing greater structural unity to the composition, as shall be considered in the analysis below.

The Music

Michael Kennedy describes *A Litany* as "fluently and expertly written for choir and a genuine Waltonian experience, with surprising harmonic progressions. Most significant of all, it is an astoundingly well-developed example of his characteristic bitter-sweet romanticism."² For the purposes of this summary, I shall focus on the work's final version. A more thorough comparison of the three surviving versions will follow.

Walton's penchant for bittersweet harmonies is clear in *A Litany's* very first sonority: an augmented triad. Alan Cuckston hypothesized that "[s]ome Masters of the Choristers [...] might see it as a sort of chorister's prank to begin a piece with what sounds like an out-of-tune chord in E minor!"³ Simultaneous to this triad, the soprano arpeggiates the chord as a gentle downward fall, an obvious bit of text-painting to reflect the falling of tears. In the third measure, the tenor and alto rise by step, changing the harmony to a diminished seventh chord lacking a third: D-sharp–(missing but implied F-sharp)–A–C. The soprano, however, repeats its original arpeggio. The resulting harmony is almost a whole-tone cluster: D-sharp–(missing but implied F-natural)–G–A–B, but with an added C. By omitting F-sharp/F-natural, the composer allows the listener to hear both an incomplete diminished seventh chord and an almost-whole-tone cluster simultaneously. The implied latter harmony reinforces the preceding augmented triad, itself built of course on whole tones. But then there's the added C. Walton certainly could have raised it to C-sharp, resulting in a completely whole-tone sonority and a minor seventh chord in the lower voices. Oddly, this change makes the piece sound far more conventional, more soothing, and not as biting or sorrowful as the text would imply. Walton has clearly digested Debussy's whole-tone scales at Dean Strong's Sunday gatherings—indeed, one wonders if scores of Scriabin were also present—and re-worked an already adventuresome harmony in an original manner.

¹ Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.137; see also Kastor, p.135

² Kennedy 1989, p.8

³ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.2

Walton proceeds to an E minor triad, though in an unstable first inversion. Lest the listener get too comfortable, the very next bar includes an F-natural for a Neapolitan chord in second inversion. There is also a B suspension, giving a tritone between the upper two voices—another conceit to the whole-tone sonority established in the introduction. Prominent whole-tones return in m.6 (E and F-sharp in the upper voices) and m.7 (A and B in the lower voices, and inverted as a minor seventh in the E and D of the upper voices). In the eighth measure, Walton begins another motive that will recur, as an inner voice moves to a dissonance that functions as a suspension, falling by step to resolve. These pseudo-suspensions, however, always last longer than the resolution, which underscores the text's pleading. The "Prince of Peace" in m.11 is greeted with exotic harmonies involving E-sharp and G-sharp, leading to a G-sharp major chord that proves to be merely a weigh station en route to D-sharp minor. Two seventh chords and another pseudo-suspension in the tenor in m.17 invoke an octave G-sharp in the four voices. Walton uses this G-sharp as a pivot point, following it with a descending scale natural minor scale in A minor.

The poet's sin "cries for vengeance" in A-minor triads taken by all four voices in turn. The sonority of A minor is sustained for the longest period of any harmony thus far in the work, but the heraldic arpeggios, two of which end in a sustained F-natural, help to sustain harmonic tension. Falling harmonies take us to an E-flat augmented triad, which shifts to the same D-sharp augmented sonority with which the work began. The opening music returns verbatim in m.26–31. At this point, instead of a progression involving harmonic whole tones, Walton provides a unison B. This unison launches a section which, while the most harmonically conventional in the piece, is still littered with seventh chords and even a passing ninth. The music's tension here is based not in harmony but in a tightened compound rhythm of steady eighth notes. As the tenors leap to a dramatic high A, the sopranos intone the first rising melodic cadence of the work, moving steadily from B, to C-sharp, to D-sharp, and finally to E and a deceptive cadence on C major. The C major remains for five bars as the floods "drown all my faults and fears." In m.40, Walton returns to music very similar to the initial melody, as if the preceding nine measures had been merely an interruption to the recapitulation of the sixth measure. In m.41–49, Walton keeps the harmonic motion slow, with a steady i–VI–III–i progression, essentially prolonging the tonic. One of the reasons why the gentle cascades of "but through my years" are so bitter-sweet is that the work is clearly reaching its conclusion though it has not yet had a true cadence.

As if to acknowledge this deficit, Walton provides what is certainly—together with the opening augmented chord—one of the work's most unusual sonorities. The chord itself is merely a dominant seventh chord in second inversion: nothing too unusual. But it is built on a B-flat rather than the actual dominant, B-natural. A choir could sing every pitch in that chord a half-step higher than written, and the cadence would be thoroughly conventional, if oddly sunny given the prevailing dissonance elsewhere in the piece. By placing a conventional chord at an unconventional pitch level, Walton thwarts any expectation that *A Litany* might end happily. Assigning a *forzato* (marked **fz**) adds poignancy to the sonority. Clearly, in Walton's mind, the tears' appeal to God continues even after the music finishes.

Indeed, Walton conveys the text's general mood of sincere sadness beautifully throughout. This is accomplished in part through several illustrations of word-painting. The sopranos' initial falls on the word "drop" are the most obvious example. The half-note harmonies at the first melodic statement help

to provide a sense of tempo for the “slow tears.” A measure of “beauteous” florid counterpoint leads to a rising line as the sopranos move to “heaven.” The exotic harmonies for the “Prince of Peace” place God in a different realm than the mournful poet. Walton logically repeats the text “cease not,” and “vengeance” is given a series of almost martial arpeggios. The tenors aptly repeat that “sin doth never cease” even after the cadence has concluded. The basses fall and the sopranos rise for the “deep floods,” which also rise quickly but effectively with the inner voices’ flowing eighth notes. The many repetitions in the coda—“but through my tears”—demonstrate the abundance of tears. The penultimate dissonant chord on the word “my” depicts perfectly how lowly the poet thinks of himself. Walton clearly knew examples of word-painting through the many anthems sung in cathedral, and it is remarkable that he could assimilate the technique so fluidly and flawlessly in one of his first attempts in choral writing.

That any English composer in 1916 would begin or end a piece in the manner that Walton does in *A Litany* is striking; for a composer aged only fourteen it is astonishing. While the description above has focused on harmony, *A Litany* also demonstrates Walton’s keen sense of drama in rhythm. The melodic material of the central fugal section (“To cry for vengeance”) consists simply of triads, but the entrances are displaced by a single beat. The masterful counterpoint that approaches the work’s climax (“in your deep flood”) is likewise dramatic and engaging. In both instances the tenors have a gripping upward leap, demonstrating Walton’s instinctual awareness of the strength of that section’s upper register. His structure is innovative, with a new section inserted into the recapitulation. As will be considered below, he uses motivic devices, especially in the bass line, to unify the entire work. This little anthem, lasting barely three minutes, masterfully demonstrates every aspect of the choral composer’s craft.

Current Popularity

In modern use, *A Litany* is often referenced by its first line, “Drop, drop, slow tears”. This is probably because of the specialized definition of the term “litany” as a form of prayer in which the congregation responds to recitations by the presiding clergy. Sometimes this prayer is a lengthy list of requests, hence the modern secular use of the word. Fletcher’s poem, however, is a short list if it is one at all, and Walton’s setting does not involve the congregation or any call-and-response techniques. In fact, Fletcher’s original title, “An Hymne”, seems preferable. I have been unable to determine when the poem first came to be known as “A Litany”, though that is the title used by Hurlstone in his setting.

There is no record of a performance of *A Litany* during Walton’s youth, though it was probably heard during church worship soon after publication in 1930. Its first recording was on an album of assorted twentieth-century English composers, sung by the Choir of St. John’s College, Cambridge, conducted by George Guest, for an Argo album released in March 1962.¹ More noteworthy was its second recording, sung by Walton’s own former choir from Christ Church conducted by Simon Preston. This was released by Argo in 1972 on the first album devoted exclusively to Walton’s choral music; it also included *Set me as a seal upon thine heart* (1938), *Where does the uttered Music go?* (1946), *The Twelve* (1965), *Missa brevis* (1966), *Jubilate Deo* (1972), and the three carols *Make we joy now in this fest* (1931), *What cheer?*

¹ Craggs 1977, p.43; Smith, p.65

(1961), and *All this time* (1970). This album, commemorating the composer's seventieth birthday in 1973, did much to popularize Walton's church music.

Christ Church also presented a special birthday concert during which *A Litany* was sandwiched by *The Twelve* and the premiere performance of *Jubilate Deo*. Of that occasion, William Mann wrote for *The Times* on April 24, 1973: "The technical fluency of the choral writing [in *A Litany*] is explicable though still remarkable; the creative boldness and poetic feeling of the music are much more astounding. It is a real piece of music, no student exercise, and 55 years later it provided a genuine moving experience even in the company of mature Walton, J.S. Bach and Taverner".¹

The work has not wanted for performances or recordings since. According to the website ArkivMusic.com,² which reliably tracks classical-music recordings available in the United States, there are fourteen recordings currently available. Of his choral works without orchestra, only *Set me as a seal upon thine heart* and *What cheer?* have more. Among the available versions of *A Litany* is the important recording made in January 2002 by the professional British choir Polyphony, conducted by Stephen Layton, for Hyperion Records. This album included not one but three performances: thanks to the ingenuity of Layton and Hyperion, we can hear the boy Walton honing his craft in all three versions of *A Litany*.³

Comparing the Three Versions

As a rule Walton destroyed his sketches, so the existence of three versions of *A Litany* affords a unique opportunity to see the composer's mind at work as he refined his initial ideas.⁴ This process will be addressed here in detail. For ease of comparing harmonies in this discussion, all versions will be considered as if transposed to E minor, the key of the final version. Also, all measure numbers pertain to the third version.⁵ The abundance of changes from the second to the third version reinforces Brown's theory that the final version was the work of a fully mature composer.

Let us begin with the simple matter of the initial tempo marking. The first version is marked *Adagio*. Evidently this did not convey a sufficiently slow tempo, and Walton amended it to *Lento* for the second version. For the third version, Walton opted for *Lento assai, espressivo*. Both of the added words make the tempo yet slower, and the *espressivo* allows for interpretive freedom in matters of *rubato*. Most performances of this work last just over three minutes. One version, recorded in 1998 by John Scott and the Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral,⁶ lasts just a few seconds short of four minutes. The tempo may have

¹ Kennedy 1989, p.251

² http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/Drilldown?name_id1=12782&name_role1=1&bcorder=1&genre=43, accessed March 15, 2014.

³ Craggs (2014, p.1) inaccurately states that David Willcocks and the Bach Choir recorded this work for Chandos. In fact, *A Litany* was not among the choral works included on the album that he cites.

⁴ Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.vi, xv

⁵ Brown's edition of the third version erroneously treats the first measure as a pick-up bar. This error is quite logical since that music is indeed a pick-up bar in the first and second versions. The present discussion will use the accurate measure numbers.

⁶ in Hyperion CDA67087

been chosen to accommodate the performers' exceptionally reverberate acoustic, but it might also be closer to Walton's intent.

As has been mentioned, the work's opening sonority—an augmented triad—is one of its most famous features. How remarkable therefore that it exists even in the earliest version. That is, however, the only instance when it is spelled as a triad: E-flat–G–B. For the second version, Walton spells the root as D-sharp. The reason for this cosmetic change is clear in the second bar, when the tenor and alto parts move and a diminished seventh chord is implied: D-sharp–(missing F-sharp)–A–C. When composing the first version, Walton probably hadn't realized that this second chord functioned as a dominant leading to the tonic in m.3. This is a logical observation that a teacher would have made on perusing the score.

Between the second and third versions, Walton made three other changes to the work's starting measures. The most important is the removal of one "drop" from each of the sopranos' descending arpeggios; he quite rightly found that two falling "drops" sufficed to convey his point. Secondly, Walton moved the meter so that the diminished seventh chord landed on the downbeat of the third measure, rather than the fourth beat of the preceding bar. This is possibly a cosmetic change, but it helps attentive performers to place more emphasis on the change of harmony and less on the sopranos' falling statements of "drop." The third change is the removal of a quarter rest after the sopranos' final "drop." Walton instead gives all parts a breath mark before the next downbeat. This change is crucial to a conductor's interpretation. Of the fifteen recordings sampled for this survey, all but five of them interpret this breath mark as a full quarter rest. Clearly Walton wanted something shorter. Four of those recordings insert a quarter rest between the augmented triad and the next measure, which indication Walton could have made if desired. All of these changes are relatively minor, but demonstrate the care that Walton took as he honed his ideas.

The main melody of *A Litany*, as heard in m.4–6, is almost unchanged from the first to the final version. The only difference first appears in the final version; it is an octave drop in the basses, soon followed by a leap of a ninth and a scalar descent. Introduced in the third version, this change becomes a new motive that will appear in slightly different forms throughout the anthem (in m.9–11, 30–32, 35–36, and 37–40). The delicate dissonances in m.6 ("and bathe those") also appear only in the third version. In the early versions all three words are given the equivalent of a B major-minor seventh chord, but the final version has a smooth ii^7-vi^7-IV progression.

The seventh measure is a special case. In the first version, the rhythm of all four parts is a double-dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, which is inconsistent with the prevailing 3/4 meter. In his edition, Timothy Brown has modified this rhythm to fit the meter, interpreting it as a half note tied to an eighth note, which is then followed by an eighth note. Two other possible solutions come to mind. One is to treat the second dot as an error in transcription, and to change that measure's meter to 2/4. It would be quite typical of a student composer to neglect a change in meter, and this solution matches the later versions. However, a third solution is to consider the double-dotted quarter note as correct and should be followed by a sixteenth note, all in 2/4 time. This works musically since a sixteenth-note figure exists in the following measure. This third solution requires the smallest change to Walton's surviving source. One can easily envisage Basil Allchin or Henry Ley commenting that a sixteenth note,

placed on the word “which” and followed by “brought,” would make it difficult to sing the text clearly. The logical suggestion would be a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, which is exactly what we find in the second version.

The episode of m.11–14, for the text “Prince of Peace, of Peace,” demonstrates Walton’s careful consideration of dynamics. In the earliest version, the first “Peace” is marked *p* and the second *pp* in all voices. Between them, only the second treble part has any indication: *diminuendo*. Walton has changed his opinion considerably in the second version: there is a *crescendo* leading to *mf* on the first “Peace” (which is also marked *tenuto*) and the second “Peace” is marked *pp* followed by a *diminuendo*. In the final version, Walton has no dynamic indication whatsoever for this episode. Brown argues that “[t]here is no ready explanation for this, since the removal of dynamics makes the music harder, not easier, to realize in performance (and [Walton], in any case, customarily marked up his scores very fully).”¹ Brown’s solution is to add to the third version the dynamics that appear in the second, clearly marked as editorial suggestions. There is some logic to this, especially given that the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* in m.8–9 that appears in both of the earlier versions is omitted from the published third version. I would propose, however, that Walton—who in adulthood did indeed indicate dynamics and expression abundantly—intentionally left this section without dynamics. This means that the first time God is mentioned in the work, as the metaphorical Prince of Peace, it is gentle, without extra attention being brought. Also, the exotic harmonies that underscore the word “Peace” both times are all the more poignant when delivered gently. Likewise, the *mf* at m.14, for the section beginning “Cease not,” occurs only in the second version, where it is followed by a *diminuendo* in the sopranos, a *crescendo* in the altos, no change at all in the tenors, and a *crescendo* and *diminuendo* in the basses. It seems that Walton was struggling with how to mark the dynamics in this section. Perhaps a teacher told him to consider adding more dynamics in the piece, but later in life he decided against it. Whatever the cause for this change, a sustained *piano* dynamic throughout this section fits the music and the text perfectly, and there is no compelling reason to add abundant change.

The twelfth measure is the first instance of Walton shortening the final chord of a cadence. In this case, he cuts it by half, from six to three beats. Later, in m.31, he not only shortens the cadence by one beat, he then removes two beats of rest during which the chord would have resonated. Likewise he shortens the cadential rest in m.39. These changes, all of which were made between the second and third versions, tighten the anthem’s overall pace considerably. Another change that serves a similar purpose is the bass triplet in m.15, which also strengthens the motivic unity with a scalar descent but renders the text more intelligible. The unison chromatic descent in m.18 (“His mercy to entreat”) is also shortened rhythmically, removing a stress on the first syllable of “mercy” and converting the following eighth notes to sixteenth notes. Walton marks this half-measure *poco rallentando*, ensuring that the text remains clear. All of these changes occur only in the third version, revealing the mind of a mature composer.

The first measure of “cry for vengeance” (m.19) reveals interesting development of thought between all three versions. Initially, the lowest alto part had the first statement of this point of imitation, rising to a G. When transposing the score down a step, Walton re-assigned this statement from the bottom voice

¹ Brown, *WWE* v.6, p.xv

to the tenors, who can rise easily to the F. But in the final version, he returns the first statement to the bottom part, dropping it a fifth. This decision restored the clearer part-writing of the first version while also taking into consideration practical considerations for a work for mixed voices rather than trebles. The added depth helps to establish greater drama in this, the first dramatic section of the work. It also provides another statement of the bass motive by dropping an octave. Leaving this motive unfulfilled here—there is no scalar descent—further heightens the drama. Walton made similar decisions in m.21, at first moving a high alto part lower to facilitate the tenor voices, then compressing its timing so that the tenors' high F comes earlier. What seem like simple practical decisions thus have deeper resonance to the listener's ear, as a more experienced composer could attest.

The pitches of the recapitulation, in m.26–31, are identical in all three versions except for the bass drop mentioned above. Interestingly, the published score removes the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* that had occurred in m.29–30 of the first two versions, and was retained in the exposition. Timothy Brown's edition of the third version adds editorial dynamics here, but, as with m.11–14 discussed above, removing the dynamic swell can be quite effective. This may have been Walton's intent upon revising the work, so that the recapitulation is, in fact, not completely identical to the exposition.

The most dramatic section of *A Litany*, for the text "in your deep flood," was unchanged somewhat in the first two versions but modified substantially for publication. One brilliant stroke in the early versions—the sopranos' first cadential rising scale in the whole work—was retained. But the counterpoint of the lower voices was rendered more elaborate, complete with rhythmically engaging eighth notes. The bass line rises steadily lower, then leaps up an octave and soon back down, thus varying the newly established motive in a dramatic manner. Such craftsmanship suggests it as inconceivable for a student to have written this final revision.

The work's main climax follows, at the text "drown all my faults and fears." In the first version, "drown" is marked *f* on the fourth beat of the measure, and "all" gains more prominence as the downbeat, but the two words have identical chords. Walton tidies this in the second version: "drown" is a downbeat of a 4/4 measure, now marked *ff*. All four words of "drown all my faults" are marked *tenuto*. There is a *diminuendo* on "and" only, leading one to think that Walton wanted the words "fears" to remain somewhat strong. In the third version, "drown," simply *f* again, is still on a downbeat, but now it is the first of several 2/4 measures, providing emphasis for "all" as well. The word "drown" has been re-voiced so that the tenors and altos aren't as high; when they leap up—a third in the tenors and a fourth in the altos—they reinforce Walton's desired emphasis on "all." The *tenuto* marks are removed and instead there is a *diminuendo* over "all my faults and." The basses, unsurprisingly, leap up an octave and then descend stepwise. The new *poco rallentando* at "and" ensures that the altos' new passing sixteenth note will effectively relax the mood. Once again we see a more experienced composer who carefully hones voice-leading, tessitura, meter, articulation, dynamics, rhythm, and tempo.

The following measures, at "nor let his eye see sin," are a third instance when Walton added dynamics to the second version (*crescendo* to "sin" and *diminuendo* away), then removed them for publication. (Timothy Brown preserves this omission.) The following coda, with its several statements of "but through my tears" traded among the parts, is one of *A Litany's* most remarkable accomplishments. It

exists almost unchanged over the three versions. Whereas usually Walton shortened rhythmic values in the revisions, here he prolonged them twice: the basses' and altos' final "tears." He removed two *fermatas* before and during the dissonant penultimate chord. This innovative sonority, detailed above, exists essentially unchanged in all three versions: only a *forzato* sting is added.

Ley's *A Litany*

As mentioned above, Henry Ley had published a setting of this poem in 1913, as the fifth of six works in *First Album of Songs*, opus 6. Walton's setting is very different from Ley's, the latter being almost entirely diatonic and scored for solo voice and piano. There are, however, some interesting parallels. If Walton did gain encounter the text from Ley's setting, as Stewart Craggs has suggested,¹ then it is worth investigating to see if the chorister stole any tricks from his chorusmaster.

In the key of B-flat minor, Ley's setting begins with a dyad of B-flat–D-flat, a much simpler start than Walton's augmented triad. Ley eschews repetition of words from Fletcher's poem, and accordingly states the opening "drop" just twice. However, there are pauses between them and before the rest of the line, as in Walton's setting. A rising line to the word "Heaven" is hardly innovative text-painting, though it is employed by both composers. As it was in the Walton, the word "Peace" is a harmonically special moment in Ley's version, briefly shifting to the dominant, F major. Perhaps the greatest similarity between the two is the handling of the text "To cry for vengeance". In Ley, this is a major triad arpeggio, culminating an octave higher than began; in Walton, it is a minor triad ending a seventh higher. The overall mood of Ley's setting is devotional and humble, with no hint of Walton's bittersweet anguish.

It would seem, therefore, that any similarities between the two could be dismissed as coincidences, or as two intelligent musical minds reaching similar conclusions from the same source. There is, however, one brief moment that hints at Walton's having been familiar with Ley's setting. When Ley arrives at the word "sin," the piano has a dyad of E-natural–G-flat. This repeats for five measures. Walton employs a similar trick in his 1918 Swinburne song, "Love laid his sleepless head", where the piano repeats a dyad of D–E for six measures. It is such an unusual sonority, especially for Ley, whose writing is generally diatonic and harmonious, that it seems possible Walton adapted it for his own uses a few years later. In fact, it brings the interesting possibility that Walton only encountered Ley's setting of *A Litany* after composing his own.

Suggestions to Performers

Walton revised most of his works after their first performances. Sometimes these changes took place before publication, but in other cases new versions were deemed necessary. Even when all he did was make cuts (as for *Crown Imperial*, composed in 1937, with cuts authorized in 1963), he was quite disparaging when performers opted against the revision. In only two cases—the *Sinfonia Concertante* (1927, revised 1943) and the *Viola Concerto* (1929, revised 1961)—did Walton allow both the original and revised versions to be published and performed freely. I am quite certain that Walton himself never would have condoned publication or performances of the two early versions of *A Litany*. That said, we are fortunate that the executors of his estate have taken a broader view in the interest of scholarship.

¹ Craggs 2014, p.1

Yet the fact remains that in nearly every circumstance modern performers should opt to present the third and final version of *A Litany*. The most common exception to this recommendation would be for treble choirs to perform the original version, as Walton made sufficient changes to the bass line to render it unfeasible for female altos even if transposed back to the original key. The second version serves as historical novelty. The only reason to present it would be in the context that Stephen Layton and Polyphony have recorded it—as an aural demonstration of Walton’s development as a composer.

Those ensembles interested in performing either of the first two versions should note that Timothy Brown’s edition transfers dynamics from one version to the other, sometimes without editorial comment. The thorough comparison above indicates those places where this decision is perhaps questionable. There are other cases where he quite wisely renders the dynamics more uniform. One instance is m.7–8 in the first version, where the manuscript has *crescendo* over “which brought from” in the top part, “which brought” in the second part, “brought” in the third part, and “brought from Heaven” in the bottom part. Brown has opted for a logical single *crescendo* in all four parts over “brought from.” Any ensemble wishing to present each version specifically as Walton wrote it is invited to contact the present author, who can supply a list of the requisite changes. That said, the vast majority of Brown’s decisions are musically satisfying and consistent with Walton’s output. Waltonians worldwide owe Brown a great debt of gratitude for bringing these embryonic works to life.

Tell me where is fancy bred

The second surviving work from Walton’s pen is entitled *Tell me where is fancy bred* and scored for soprano and tenor, three violins and piano. Its only surviving source is the autograph manuscript. This is housed at the British Library in London,¹ but it took a rather circuitous route to get there. Henry Ley had possessed the manuscript since Walton’s student days. He gave it to Emily Daymond (1866–1949), the noted student of Parry who was the first woman in Britain to earn a doctorate in music. She had given the manuscript to the composer, pianist and musicologist Howard Ferguson (1908–1999), who in turn gave it to the British Library.² The holograph score of the *Chorale Prelude on ‘Wheatley’*, discussed below, has the same history.

Stewart Bedford describes the manuscript, which is in excellent condition, as follows: “The score is written in black ink on two double sheets of 7-stave paper measuring 18 x 23.5 cm. The paper has been torn horizontally; it was probably originally 14-stave.”³ The manuscript has an elaborately drawn title page that identifies the composer as “W.T. Walton”, using his initials as was common in this period. Interestingly, the date and composer’s name at the end of the score do not appear to be in Walton’s

¹ Department of Manuscripts, Reference Division, catalog number Addenda MS 52384. This manuscript was consulted for the present dissertation and compared with the published version in WWE v.8. Stewart Craggs (1990, p.13; 2014, p.1) has assigned this work the catalog number C2.

² Craggs 1977, p.43; Craggs 1990, p.13

³ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix

hand. I have been unable to identify who wrote them, but comparison with the writing of Henry Ley would be the obvious next step.

The manuscript is dated 'July 2nd 1916'. Michael Kennedy claims that it was written "for the Christ Church choir school's production of *The Merchant of Venice*",¹ but I have been unable to verify any such performance. Walton himself stated that he had written "settings of Shakespeare from the plays we happened to be studying",² but it is unclear if by "studying" Walton means "reading in class" or "performing in public." If this music appeared during a performance of the play, then it was probably the first time any of Walton's music was heard in public. The piece is certainly well suited for presentation in the context of the play, as it lasts barely a minute and a half.

If, on the other hand, the work was not intended for performance, it is an unusual choice of text. I know of no other musical settings that Walton might have known. Alan Cuckston points out: "Peter Warlock set the same text two years later (now lost) and so did Norman O'Neill in 1922, with accompaniment for small orchestra [...]. That inveterate Shakespeare setter, Roger Quilter, did not choose these particular words until 1951."³

It is interesting that Walton listed this piece as being a "4-part song" in a 1932 letter to Hubert Foss.⁴ Walton either remembered incorrectly the nature of the piece—he had, after all, composed other four-part vocal works—or he was remembering an alternate version of the piece that does not survive. While this latter prospect is certainly intriguing, it seems more likely that *Tell me where is fancy bred* was indeed written for a production of the play in its present scoring.

This was not the only time that Walton would tackle these words. When in 1936 he came to write the soundtrack for the film *As You Like It*—the first of his four Shakespeare films that starred Laurence Olivier—the song-text "Tell me where is fancy bred" was interpolated into that play. Walton composed new music on that occasion, rather than revising this student work.⁵

Incidentally, Osbert Sitwell tells an anecdote regarding this work in his memoir which, while of questionable historical validity, certainly represents the kind of humorous touch that Walton himself would have enjoyed:

[H]e had already written several beautiful songs, notably a setting of "Tell Me Where Is Fancy Bred," it being rumored that he had been drawn to it as a hungry schoolboy during years of war

¹ Kennedy 1989, p.91

² Lloyd, p.4

³ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.2

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.7

⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.91. Olivier was thus incorrect in asserting that the music came "from a score he [Walton] managed to scrape out of himself for the production of the school play at Christ Church Choir School". This statement was made in the radio documentary *A Portrait of Sir William Walton*, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on June 4, 1977, quoted in Tierney, p.214.

scarcity by a misunderstanding, reading into the word the more plaintive and pathetic cry, “Tell me where is Fancy *bred*?”¹

The Text

Tell me where is fancy bred is Walton’s earliest setting of words by William Shakespeare (1564–1616), a writer who would later inspire five pieces of incidental music, including three great film scores, that Walton scored between 1936 and 1955. Today Shakespeare is of course hailed as the most noted dramatist of the Elizabethan era, and perhaps the greatest writer in the history of the English language. His father had been bailiff (essentially mayor) of the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon, and thus young William would have attended the local grammar school.² (Notwithstanding this background, the playwright Ben Jonson declared after Shakespeare’s death that the latter knew “small Latin and less Greek”,³ an accusation of which Walton himself would be worthy in his own undergraduacy.) He was acting in London by 1592, or possibly several years earlier, and by the decade’s end was also noted as a playwright. From the accession of King James I to the throne in 1603, Shakespeare’s troupe, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, was favored at court and even renamed the King’s Men. In his final decade, Shakespeare spent more time back in Stratford, and is known to have collaborated with John Fletcher (1579–1625), cousin of Phineas who wrote the text to *A Litany*.⁴

The present text stems from *The Merchant of Venice*, which was probably written in 1596 or 1597⁵ and was first published in 1600.⁶ In the play, the nobleman Bassanio is in love with Portia, an heiress. Unfortunately, Portia’s deceased father left a stipulation in his will that she may only wed the suitor who correctly chooses one of three caskets. Two suitors have come and selected the wrong casket. In Act Three, Scene 2, Bassanio is about to undertake his decision. Portia directs: “Let music sound while he doth make his choice. / Then if he lose he makes a swanlike end, / Fading in music.”⁷ The text set by Walton is titled by Shakespeare as “A song the whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself”:

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?
Reply, reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy’s knell.
I’ll begin it: ding, dong, bell.

¹ O. Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, p.194

² Wells, p.xv

³ Wells, p.xvi

⁴ Wells, pp.xx–xxiii

⁵ William Montgomery, in Wells, p.425

⁶ Wells, p.xxxiv

⁷ This and the work’s text are taken from Wells, p.439.

The text is meant to distinguish between Bassanio's true love and the mere fancy of the previous suitors. The singer questions whether fancy stems from emotion or the intellect and how it develops. The second stanza supplies the answer: fancy is born simply by sight and dies soon thereafter. Thus the singer—followed by the company on stage—sings a funeral knell. Bassanio then chooses a casket, and wisely.

As in *A Litany*, it seems that Walton may have been working with the text from memory, rather than using a printed source, as he omits the word “or” in the beginning of the second line. But it is also quite possible that this apparent error was intentional. Throughout his life Walton rarely hesitated to modify text when necessary, even collaborating extensively on the librettos for his two operas. As we shall see, he makes one definitely conscious alteration later in *Tell me where is fancy bred*. Also, this missing monosyllable helps the music to preserve motivic unity.

The Music

Tell me where is fancy bred has received hardly any mention in Walton scholarship, especially when compared with *A Litany*. It is true that Walton's adventuresome harmonies and contrapuntal mastery are not in display, even in embryonic form. But that is not the purpose of the piece. It is simple and direct, akin to many an Elizabethan art-song. Marked *Allegro vivace*, it takes a mere minute and a half to perform, and would be quite welcome on a recital program of voices, strings and piano, or indeed in a production of *The Merchant of Venice*.

The work's most immediately striking aspect is the unusual scoring: soprano and tenor voices, three violins and piano. Alan Cuckston has theorized: “Just why these particular forces are prescribed may be attributed perhaps to local conditions prevailing at Christchurch that summer, using talent from fellow choristers (and choir-men?).”¹ It may also be an effort to preserve the light airiness of Elizabethan occasional music. The three violins often cross each other and trade principal melodic material in a manner worthy of a Baroque chamber sonata.

Walton begins with a brief instrumental introduction establishing the key of E-flat major. This presents the main melodic motive—a falling fourth and rising step, followed by another falling fourth and rising step—that the soprano will soon sing on the title lyrics. There is also a secondary motive of four cascading eighth notes which will occur periodically in one or another of the violins throughout the work. When the soprano enters, she is given the piano for support, while the strings alternate with them in order to offer a commentary on the text. Two of the violins are instructed to play pizzicato, though it seems for only a brief moment. This is one of the few episodes when the piano doesn't merely expand the strings' harmonies. This first verse ends in m.14–15 as all three violins leap for a low unison cadence.

At the second stanza, the tenor soloist enters with new musical material characterized by rising syncopations as two violins playfully jump around each other in eighth notes. The text-setting here is odd and unpredictable, not unlike fancy itself. A gentle rising figure for the strings, marked *ppp*, fits well with the reference to the cradle. Soprano and tenor sing “Let us all ring fancy's knell” in declamatory octaves as the instruments provide homophonic support. The principal melodic material returns at “I'll

¹ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.2

begin it". There is an unusual pause of two sustained violin notes; perhaps at this moment Bassanio was to make his decision on stage.

The full ensemble returns with music similar, but not identical, to the opening. As both singers are now proclaiming, Walton has modified the text as "Tell us where is fancy bred." He does not repeat the entire first verse, rather the main motive is assigned to the ringing of the bell ("ding, dong, bell"). Thus in retrospect, the question that began the song was itself part of fancy's funeral knell. Walton and his fellow choirboys certainly heard the ringing of bells often, so it does not surprise that he is able to integrate that sonority readily. The end is marked *marcato*, but seems gentle and subdued, with the same unison violin cadence that ended the first verse.

Walton is not trying to be adventuresome here. *Tell me where is fancy bred* exudes the same gentle sweetness that will appear in his setting of *Under the greenwood tree* written for but not used in the 1936 film *As You Like It*. There are almost no dynamic markings, and those few are only *pp* or *ppp*. The work is largely diatonic. The few extended chords are sevenths, though at times an incomplete passing tone almost functions as a chord tone, as in m.26, when the second violin's F appears in a C-minor chord before falling to a C.

Suggestions to Performers

This work remained unpublished until Stuart Bedford's rendition for the William Walton Edition in 2011. According to Stewart Craggs, it may yet await its first performance.¹ However, performing materials are not currently available separately. Bedford also includes a reduction of the instrumental parts for solo piano, which can be used for rehearsal but would also work well in performance when three violins are not available.

Walton's handwriting is much less precise in this manuscript than the score of *A Litany*. Comparison of Bedford's edition with the manuscript is quite enlightening, and I would question some of Bedford's decisions. In other cases, Bedford has made some potentially controversial decisions with which I agree. Below are listed those opinions in which I differ from Bedford's reading and that would have a significant impact on the music itself, such as changed pitch or rhythmic values. This list omits discrepancies in purely notational matters such as stem directions or beaming groups.

- In m.13, violin 2, on the third beat, the manuscript has both F5 and G5. Bedford suggests that this "looks as if it has been changed from G to F",² but both pitches look quite firm to my eye. As the G5 is in the soprano part, and the F5 is doubled in violin 3, I recommend that violin 2 play G5 instead. This creates a wonderful effect as the three unison violins suddenly split into three parts.
- In m.18, the tenor's text is clearly divided as "en-gen-der'd" in the manuscript. Bedford notes that: "The young WW was clearly unfamiliar with the correct stress of the word 'engender'".³ However, either stress is quite appropriate from a descriptive rather than prescriptive view of

¹ Craggs 2014, p.1

² Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix

³ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix

linguistics and diction. I recommend preserving the more colloquial syllable “-der’d”, which is more easily intelligible to the audience and also more vocally satisfying.

- Walton’s accidentals tend to be very small and placed very closely to their respective noteheads. The G-flat in the first violin in m.18 seems suspect on a magnified view of the manuscript. The accidental is large, distant from the notehead both vertically and horizontally, and angled differently than Walton’s other flat signs. There is a similar mark in the tenor staff above it, which is clearly a splotch. And there are several other splotches of various shapes and sizes in this measure and the one that follows. (Bedford has interpreted none of these other splotches as musical notation.) The G-flat accidental and the one on the tenor staff seem to be mirror-images of a quarter note when another page’s ink may have been placed against this page. I suggest that G-natural is the correct reading, notwithstanding the delightful dissonance created by the G-flat.
- In m.22, on the third beat, the manuscript clearly has an A-flat in the left hand of the piano. Bedford omits this pitch. The only reason I can see to remove it—to clear the texture somewhat editorially—is negated by the closed form of the following chord in the same register, which Bedford preserves. (As an aside, given the changes in spelling between the first two versions of *A Litany*, it is interesting to note that Walton spells the C-flat in m.22 as B-natural. He spells it correctly as C-flat in the right hand, however. Also, the right hand chord is inexplicably written as two tied quarter notes. Bedford has wisely modified these indiscretions of pitch and rhythmic notation.)
- Measure 25 marks a very odd case. The manuscript is clear that the first violin has G on beat 3 and A-flat on beat 4. These two notes are slurred. Bedford has instead misinterpreted the slur on these notes as a beam, and thus added an E-flat on beat 3 and converted the G and A-flat to eighth notes. He had made the same error in the third violin part, where the rhythm should be even quarter notes, A-flat–C-flat–B-flat–C-flat. When observing that the third beat in both of these cases lines up directly with the half note on the third beat of the piano, this solution is clearly preferable. It is also more aurally appealing, as the sudden eighth notes corresponded poorly with the *diminuendo* implied as the instrument move higher from *pp* to *ppp*. And finally Bedford has misplaced the *molto rallentando* indication to the downbeat of m.24, though it clearly begins in the middle of m.23. The gentle quarter-note rises in the first and third violins are especially delightful.
- In m.36, for the third violin part, Bedford considers “the D5 on the second beat is unequivocal and just possible harmonically”.¹ I find the D to be quite acceptable harmonically, and preferable to his solution of adding a passing E-flat and thus interrupting the rhythmic flow. In this same measure, the third beat of the second violin part looks to me far more like F than E-flat, especially under magnification. Whereas Bedford’s reading of these two pitches—the third violin’s passing E-flat and the second violin’s following E-flat—renders the harmony quite conventional, following Walton’s actual notation add a mild piquancy that fits well with the piece and with his harmonic experiments in the recently composed *A Litany*.

¹ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix

- In the following measure, m.37, the right hand of the piano, on the second beat, has both A-flat and B-flat in the manuscript. Bedford omits the former. However, the A-flat clearly fits harmonically—it is already in the second violin—and reinforces the mild dissonances of the previous bar.
- In m.39, in the piano's right hand, on the third beat, the manuscript chord seems to be A-flat–B-flat–E-flat. Bedford renders the bottom pitch as G, which is more conventional but at the expense of another moment of harmonic interest. This A-flat also suddenly creates a moving inner voice that is logical for such a contrapuntally-minded composer. It is true that the A-flat should be on the opposite side of the stem, but such a mild notational error is not inconsistent with the rest of the manuscript.
- In m.45, for the third violin, the third and fourth beats look like C's, though Bedford has opted for B-flats. Either is reasonable, though I confess a preference for the C's.
- In m.47, the final measure of the work, Bedford transcribes the written rhythmic values of the violins and the piano's right hand precisely as half notes with fermatas. Meanwhile, the piano's left hand holds a half note on the downbeat, then drops an octave on the third beat with a fermata. It seems more logical that the strings and the piano's right hand would hold the fermata together with the left hand.

Notwithstanding my reservations about the above editorial choices, Steaurt Bedford's edition is a fine one that works very musically. Performers are encouraged to use it, either with or without making the changes I suggest above. It is certainly worthy of hearing. Alan Cuckston has suggested that the strings may be substituted by woodwinds satisfactorily.¹

Lost Works

Sixteen years later, Walton described his output at this time as follows: "However broke loose again about 13 and wrote two 4-part songs, 'Tell me where is fancy bred' and 'Where the bee sucks'. After that fairly went in for it and produced about 30 very bad works of various species, songs, motets, Magnificats, etc."² Of the works that fit this description, only *A Litany* and *Tell me where is fancy bred* have survived.

There is no other mention of a setting of *Where the bee sucks*, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). This lyric is sung by the sprite Ariel in the final scene of the play, as she dresses the magician Prospero in his royal robes as the deposed Duke of Milan, just before he grants apologies and pardons to those he has held captive on his island. These words are among the last that Ariel voices in the play before she is

¹ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.3

² Letter to Hubert Foss, May 17, 1932, in Hinnells, p.54

granted her freedom. Even though the music does not survive, it is worth quoting the text that Walton set:¹

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

Certainly *A Litany* fits the category of "motets". No Walton setting of the *Magnificat* survives until the one he composed in 1974 for Chichester Cathedral.² Walton's earliest song settings are the four Swinburne songs of 1918, which shall be discussed later. It is probable that Walton counted among the "about 30 very bad works" everything he composed before the Piano Quartet. If that is true, then there are possibly as many as twenty miscellaneous works yet to be discovered. Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that they will come to light. Walton was notoriously critical of his early works and even his sketches of later works, which he regularly burned. Many of his manuscripts were probably destroyed when his London flat was bombed during the Second World War.

Attending Opera

In the early months of 1916, Thomas Beecham had founded the Beecham Opera Company, performing first at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London, and then at the Aldwych Theatre. In May, the troupe traveled for one month to the New Queen's Theatre in Manchester, with the Hallé Orchestra playing in the pit.³ Walton is believed to have attended a performance of *Boris Godunov* with his father that spring.⁴ It will be recalled that the boy's relationship with his father was not particularly close. In the spring of 1916 Charles Walton evidently attempted to develop a deeper rapport with his son by taking young Billy to opera concerts and performances of the Hallé Orchestra⁵ in Manchester. The boy had already attended orchestral concerts in Oldham, and of course was well versed in choral music. But this was his first taste of live operatic performance.

¹ Wells, p.1186

² Craggs 1990, p.158

³ Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, p.131–3

⁴ Burton (p.15) reproduces "Walton's programme" of the performance. See also Tierney, p.27; Kennedy 1989, p.12–13; Burton, p.5.

⁵ S. Walton, p.44

What must the fourteen-year-old Billy thought of the grand spectacle of *Boris*, with its massed choral singing; grand, colorful costumes and sets; one of the world's leading orchestras in the pit; and one of Britain's most prominent conductors leading the way? Beecham's visit to Manchester in the spring of 1916 was historic. The works presented were Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and two rarities in Britain: Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and Verdi's *Otello*. Each production was hailed for its dazzling sets and costumes. Though most of the singers were not of an international reputation, some of them later developed to major careers. Among the singers were bass Norman Allin and his wife, the mezzo-soprano Edith Clegg, who sang the roles of the nurse and the hostess in *Boris*.¹ Allin had Oldham connections, having taught at the local Lyceum, and was probably well known to Charles Walton. (Allin later sang the role of Boris at Covent Garden in 1919.²) Another notable singer in the production was Robert Radford, who sang Varlaam³ and would later sing Boris.⁴ Walton had assuredly never heard singing quite like this.

Interestingly, *Tristan* was sung in English—fitting with the company's policy to perform in the local language—but *Otello* was in Italian and *Boris* in French. It was believed that the bass in the title role of *Boris*, the Belgian Auguste Bouilliez, only knew the role in French and was too busy to learn it in English.⁵ Beecham was trying to establish the first truly national British opera company; the critic of the *Atheneum* further believed that the conductor was attempting to rival the opulence of Covent Garden in London.⁶ Certainly Beecham's ambition at this time was great, especially regarding opera in Manchester. This is further testament to the prominence of Manchester in British musical culture during this period. The following year, Beecham even proclaimed: "I will build in Manchester an opera house that shall be of size and importance not less than those of any other opera house in London or any continental towns with the exception of Paris and Petrograd."⁷ Alas, his fledgling company went bankrupt before building commenced.⁸

It is worth interpolating here that Susana Walton wrote: "The first opera he [Walton] had managed to hear was Rimsky-Korsakov's *Coq d'or*. William's father had taken him to the Hallé concerts in Manchester where he had heard Sir Thomas Beecham conduct this work in the 1916 season. *Coq d'or* absolutely transformed William's attitude towards musical life. For years he quoted it in some place or another."⁹ However, *Le coq d'or* was not part of Beecham's season that year. Stephen Lloyd has clarified the issue thus: "Beecham's only staged performance of *Le Coq d'Or* of that period at Manchester was on January 7, 1920, but he conducted excerpts at a Hallé concert on January 11, 1917. At one point in *Le Coq d'Or* the singing was accompanied by dancing, perhaps making the performance more memorable for the young Walton."¹⁰ Susana Walton's statement probably stemmed from the composer's own recollections, but given Lloyd's clarification, it is possible that she misinterpreted his identifying *Le coq*

¹ Burton, p.15

² Blyth, "Allin, Norman"

³ Burton, p.15

⁴ Forbes, "Radford, Robert"

⁵ Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, p.131–3

⁶ Williams, *British Theatre in the Great War*, p.314

⁷ Kennedy 1970, p.107

⁸ Kennedy 1970, p.25, p.107; Lucas, p.141–2

⁹ S. Walton, p.44

¹⁰ Lloyd, p.13

d'or as merely *one of* the first operas he had heard. It seems unlikely that he was recalled to Manchester as a boy for the performance in January 1919. Whether *Le coq d'or* was among the works that Walton heard with the Sitwells in London in the summer of 1919 is unknown. But his attendance at Manchester in January 1920 is quite possible, and at that time Walton was better primed for an experience as transformative as his wife described. I would suggest that Walton probably attended that later performance in Manchester with his father.

During the summer months, Walton returned to Oldham for a period. Here he continued to compose several works, some of which are mentioned in his letters from Christ Church that fall. Unfortunately, only two works from that summer survive.

Chorale Prelude on 'Wheatley'

In the summer of 1916, Walton undertook to arrange the chorale tune 'Wheatley' for organ.¹ His composition is in the genre of chorale prelude, a freely composed embellishment using the chorale tune as its principal melodic material. This is the only surviving organ composition of Walton's student period,² though he is known to have composed several others, including two additional chorale preludes,³ a chorale fantasia, and a wedding march.

The manuscript is dated "August 16th 1916", so we can precisely date the period of composition to the summer month when Walton was home in Oldham, on leave from Christ Church. For nearly a century the prelude's manuscript has been paired together with that of *Tell me where is fancy bred*. The two manuscripts took the same route described above,⁴ from Henry Ley to Emily Daymond to Howard Ferguson and finally to the British Library.⁵ As Stewart Craggs indicates, "[t]he unbound score is written on both sides of a single sheet of 12-stave music paper, measuring 30.5 x 24 cms."⁶ It is in impressive condition, with only a few minor tears around the edges which do not interfere with the musical notation. The manuscript's heading identifies the composer as "W.T. Walton". As for the manuscript of *Tell me where is fancy bred*, the date and composer's name at the end of the score are possibly not in Walton's hand, and were perhaps added by Ley. This manuscript is the only surviving source for this music and, as will be discussed below, it presents certain problems to the modern scholar or performer.

The Hymn Tune

Before progressing to Walton's prelude, it seems prudent to consider the hymn tune itself, which can be found in Appendix B. It was composed by Basil Harwood, Ley's immediate predecessor as organist at Christ Church from 1892 to 1909. The tune appears in the *Oxford Hymn Book* of 1908, of which Harwood

¹ Stewart Craggs (1990, p.13; 2014, p.1) has assigned this work the catalog number C3.

² Malcolm Hayes (p.488) erroneously claims this to be Walton's earliest surviving work in any genre.

³ Kennedy 1989, p.9

⁴ Craggs 1977, p.43; Craggs 1990, p.13

⁵ Department of Manuscripts, Reference Division, catalog number Addenda MS 52384.

⁶ Craggs 1993, p.125

was the musical editor, though it may have been composed some time earlier. It is listed in the “Passion” section of the hymnal, and the tune’s somber mood fits well with its intended text and the occasion of the Easter Vigil. These words, best known by the first line “By Jesus’ grave on either hand”, were penned by Isaac Gregory Smith (1826–1920). They first appeared in his *Hymn Book for the Services of the Church, and for Private Reading*, published in 1855 while Smith was a fellow at Brasenose College, Oxford. He later held clerical posts at Hereford Cathedral and at St. David’s Cathedral in Wales, and in 1887 was appointed an Honorary Canon of Worcester. Smith wrote five hymn texts, of which “By Jesus’ grave on either hand” is the best known. It is a simple devotional text for the Easter Vigil, fitting well with the remaining contents of the *Oxford Hymn Book*.¹ This text also appears in Appendix B.

The tune’s title, ‘Wheatley’, is a tribute to the eponymous village six miles due east of central Oxford. Remains of a Saxon cemetery and a third-century Roman villa have been found there. The manor house and its nearby clump of buildings date to the sixteenth century or earlier. Wheatley was historically along the main road, and later the railway, between Oxford and London, and its reputation was somewhat unsavory into the nineteenth century. Wheatley’s economy had been based on deposits of limestone and ochre, but a timber yard founded in 1881 became the principle employer. By Harwood’s and Walton’s time, its population numbered barely 1,000.² One modern tour book describes the village’s main point of interest as “the church of St. Mary the Virgin rebuilt by [architect George Edmund] Street between 1855 and 1857 in a plain thirteenth century style. He completed the tower and spire in 1868.”³ Street later became a central figure in the Gothic revival through his work restoring several English cathedrals. The town’s curate at that time, Reverend Edward King, rose to become Bishop of Lincoln.⁴ And there ends the fame of Wheatley, which is today a bedroom community for Oxford.

I have been unable to discover any direct connection between Wheatley and Basil Harwood. However, Stewart Craggs has pointed out that “many hymn tunes composed by Harwood were named after places that he liked to visit.”⁵ Walton visited the town later in his student days; perhaps he had some further connection there of which no record now remains.

The Music

William Walton’s *Chorale Prelude on ‘Wheatley’*⁶ is not known to have been performed in public during the composer’s lifetime, and was most likely a student exercise. The manuscript has neither dynamic markings nor indications for registration. There are instances of inconsistent stem directions, imprecise

¹ Julian, p.1062

² Oxfordshire Federation of Women’s Institutes, p.238–40

³ Hammond, p.178

⁴ Hammond, p.177–8

⁵ Craggs 2014, p.2

⁶ Walton’s manuscript indicates the title as “Choral Prelude / on / Wheatley”. The genre is now more commonly known as “chorale prelude”, rather than “choral prelude”, to avoid the confusing implication that it might be scored for choir. I have chosen to adopt the modern genre identification for this work, despite the composer’s use of the old indication and its persistence in current Walton literature.

pitches, inaccurate spacing of ledger lines, and missing stems, slurs, dots, and rests. After the first system, the key signature is missing from the initial bars of subsequent systems.¹

Such omissions and errors might indicate that this is a working score, not intended to be viewed by anyone but the composer himself. But other specific instances give the opposite impression: that this is a fair copy of the variety he might present to an instructor. Foremost among these is that after m.7, the chorale tune is missing two notes. Nowhere else does Walton diverge from Harwood's tune, and the likely problem is that Walton neglected to copy one measure from his original working copy.² Also, in the second system of the manuscript's first page, the pedal line is missing any notes or rests. Here the inference is that Walton simply forgot to copy that line. Further, m.28 seems to be missing one pitch in the second beat for the right hand, and a whole note in the left hand. Thus it appears that this manuscript is a fair copy, but with certain errors of omission. Despite these problems, the manuscript reveals much about the nascent composer's interests and abilities.

Notwithstanding the manuscript's occasional errors in notation, Walton demonstrates a basic understanding of the notation of contrapuntal organ music. For example, in several instances multiple voices, especially the two voices of the right hand, arrive at a unison with different rhythmic values (as in m.6 and 13). At times, however, the notation of the voice-leading can be clunky. In the introduction, for example, Walton clearly indicates a tie from the upper voice's initial E-flat to the middle voice's E-flat that follows.

The manuscript also reveals Walton's understanding of the organ by the manner in which he notates the appearances of the chorale tune's sections. The left hand is generally in the bass clef, and is clearly to be played on the same manual as the right hand. The chorale tune, however, appears only in the left hand, and is moved to treble clef, granted a "Solo" text indication, and enclosed by prominent square brackets. Walton clearly intends the organist to play the chorale tune on a manual distinct from the remainder of the prelude. In a way, he thus also helps the listener to understand which pitches were his own, and which belong to the pre-existing tune.

Beyond this separation of manuals, Walton also brings out the chorale by reserving use of the pedal for those measures when the tune appears. In only one instance (m.9–10) is the pedal silent below the chorale tune. As has been mentioned above, this seems more likely an omission in the process of making a fair copy. When the chorale tune's third and final phrase has ended, Walton indicates the prelude's imminent conclusion by assigning to the pedal a long-held low E-flat until the coda and a falling fifth at the final cadence.

As with *A Litany*, the *Chorale Prelude on 'Wheatley'* reveals a mind curious about unusual harmonies, with an increased interest in chromaticism. The very first measure, for example, includes an inner voice

¹ There is a similar gap at the beginning of m.36, which could lead to the impression that Walton had intended to change the key in the work's final five bars, perhaps to the parallel major. This possibility has been dismissed, however, as musically unsatisfying and uncharacteristic of Walton's output.

² The measure numbers given in the present analysis treat this missing bar as m.8, even though it does not appear in the manuscript. It is hoped that in the future the score may be made available to the public, in which case an editor may conscientiously create material for the missing eighth measure.

moving from B-flat to A-natural to A-flat, as the underlying harmony shifts from E-flat minor, through an E-flat half-diminished seventh chord (re-spelling the A-natural as B-double-flat), to another half-diminished seventh chord on F. These three chords occupy the first measure, arriving at another E-flat minor chord on the second measure; the purpose of those exotic harmonies has been to rise the uppermost voice steadily a fifth. For the remainder of the second measure, the upper two voices always have harmonic tritones. In fact, over the course of the seven chords in the first two measures, there have been seven harmonic tritones between two parts. For another example of Walton's burgeoning interest in chromaticism, we may consider the second beat of the third measure. Here he arrives on an octave of D-natural by approaching it from the E-flat above in the upper voice and from the D-flat below in the lower voice. Walton begins the prelude by establishing that chromaticism and dissonance will be unifying ideas.

In the prelude's introductory measures, Walton also experiments with reduction of voices. On two occasions, all but one voice become silent, and in both instances the remaining inner voice intones a lone B-flat. Those B-flats are all the more striking given the stark, dissonant character of their immediate surroundings. They are also rhythmically displaced—first on the third beat, then on the fourth—thereby rendering the introduction metrically unclear in a manner consistent with his mature works. The choice of B-flat as the prominent pitch is assuredly not accidental: it prepares the listener for the first pitch of the chorale tune when it begins in m.6. The occasional lone pitch becomes a motive unifying the entire prelude. At its first reappearance, in m.13–14, it remains a B-flat, though later it is E-flat, G-flat, and F. Two and a half measures of the coda are also played by a single line, which would seem very odd indeed had they not been prepared by those several instances of lone pitches.

Immediately after the first of these solo pitches, Walton gives another motive that will recur throughout the work. The two upper voices have a striking dissonance of G-flat against F. The G-flat is sustained into the next beat, as the F resolves downward to E-flat. This type of dissonance and resolution returns in m.14 (A-flat against G-flat) and m.21 (G-flat against F), in both cases immediately after he had reduced the texture to a single pitch. These dissonances are thoroughly unprepared, and the resolutions are generally unstable.

In the fifth measure, Walton settles into a pattern of descending parallel thirds, here displaced an octave. This figuration also appears as the first phrase of the chorale tune makes its appearance in m.6. In m.9, he expands the figure to three-voice chords. Parallel thirds return in the interlude before the chorale's second phrase, at which point the full chords return. During this second phrase, the pedal line cleverly reflects the chorale's *first* phrase, modifying only the pick-up pitch and the interval of the fourth note. The next interlude makes use four times of the single-note motive, separated by three-voice chords with falling parallel thirds. This accompanying idea persists through the third and final phrase of the chorale.

After the third phrase, the pedal intones an E-flat to be held for eight bars, during which the upper voices' chords arrive to another half-diminished seventh chord on F, here with the E-flat in the bass. A single voice arpeggiates this chord to culminate in a fully diminished seventh chord on D, with the

persistent E-flat pedal. In the coda, Walton reduces the texture to a single chorale-like voice, closing with two chords: a minor seventh chord on the dominant, B-flat, and a strong final E-flat minor.

If Walton can be blamed for anything in this prelude, it is too many motives. The falling parallel thirds that expand into three-voice chords, the striking solo pitches, the abundance of seventh chords, the sudden high dissonance of a second that resolves downward... perhaps any two or three of these ideas would have proved sufficient to link a full prelude of only three minutes' duration. What all of these motives share is a penchant for unprepared dissonance, especially tritones. The effect befits well an organ work for the dark Passion season.

Here is a composer who is thinking about composition from a structural point of view, uniting motivic consistency with dramatic dissonance to create a remarkable work for a student. Walton avoids several of the pitfalls that typically ensnare young composers, such as the complete cessation of rhythmic and harmonic motion after cadences or an ignorance of chorale prelude traditions in emphasizing the tune. The hand of Bach seems to creep around every corner.

The Forsaken Merman

One additional work survives from Walton's pen of the year 1916. Its scope dwarfs all the other Walton juvenilia combined, excepting the Piano Quartet, and brings lie to the common assertion that the latter was Walton's first attempt at large-scale composition. It is a cantata for soprano and tenor soloists, double women's chorus, and orchestra, titled *The Forsaken Merman*.¹ Sadly, Walton never orchestrated the work, and it has never been performed or published.² There are, in fact, some indications that it was never completed even in an unorchestrated state.

Dated "Summer 1916",³ the manuscript of *The Forsaken Merman* is a vocal score, with the orchestra reduced to a single piano part. It was unknown to scholars when Stewart Craggs wrote his exhaustive 1977 catalog of Walton's works. The manuscript was sold at Sotheby's in London in May 1985 for £3,600.⁴ The current whereabouts of the manuscript are unknown,⁵ but a photocopy can be found in the Koch Collection at Yale University.⁶ Modern scholars must thus be grateful to whoever purchased the

¹ Stewart Craggs has assigned this work the catalog number "C4". (Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 2014, p.2)

² Craggs 1990, p.14; Kennedy 1989, p.302

³ Craggs 1990, p.14

⁴ According to the website fxtop.com, which converts historical currencies, this value was \$4,492.80 in 1985 dollars. Adjusting for inflation through the calculations of westegg.com/inflation, its value in 2012 was thus \$9,435.33.

⁵ Craggs 1993, p.170

⁶ Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 2014, p.2. Housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, catalogued as GEN MSS 601 (FRKF 591a). Craggs 1990 indicates that these are photocopies of the original manuscript, but he does not repeat this statement in Craggs 2014. It is therefore possible that the Beinecke manuscript is indeed Walton's original, which I have been unable to confirm. A photocopy of the manuscript is also

manuscript from Sotheby's for ensuring that the work is still preserved in a public location, making it available for research. Alan Cuckston, in his 1999 essay on Walton's songs, is the only person who has previously written about this music in detail.¹

The Text

Walton set an excerpt of the extended ballad by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888). Arnold's father was the headmaster of the prestigious Rugby School, and their family was friendly with William Wordsworth. Arnold studied at both Winchester and Rugby, where he first wrote poetry. In 1841 he began studies at Balliol College, Oxford; he completed the B.A. three years later, and soon gained a Fellowship at Oriel College.² In 1847 he became private secretary to Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the Marquess of Lansdowne, a prominent Whig statesman. The lyric poem *The Forsaken Merman* first appeared in *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* in 1849.³ This slim collection of twenty-seven poems was the twenty-six-year-old poet's first published volume.

Arnold's poem is based on a traditional Danish ballad that tells of a maiden wooed by a merman. He leads her to the depths of the sea, where she remains and bears several children. One day she hears the church bells from the land and begs to be allowed to go to church. The merman acquiesces and the maiden attends the service with her human family. However, she never returns to the sea, leaving the merman and his children alone. The poem takes place near the end of the story, with the maiden already at church and the merman leading their children away. He invites them to call to her again, knowing it is hopeless. The merman recounts the tale from his perspective. Arnold extends the story, depicting the maiden at her spinning wheel and harboring mixed emotions about having left her aquatic family. The poem ends as the merman and his children sing: "There dwells a loved one, / But cruel is she! / She left lonely for ever / The kings of the sea."⁴

Arnold probably knew this tale from two sources: a review by George Borrow in 1825 and Hans Christian Andersen's autobiography *The True Story of My Life* from 1847. In the latter re-telling, the maiden's name is Agnes, but in Borrow's summary, itself taken from the *Danske Folkesagn* of Just Mathias Thiele, she is named Grethe. This name held special importance for Arnold, as the diminutive form of Margaret.⁵

In September 1848, Arnold had traveled to the picturesque Swiss resort of Thun. There he met a young woman named Marguerite. We know nothing of this lass, other than that she was the poet's first love. Some scholars even claim that she never existed, but the evidence, paltry though it is, implies that Arnold promised her to return to Thun the following year. In the interim, he wrote several poems, not all of which end happily, about a hypothetical love with a woman named Margaret.⁶ In Arnold's telling of

held at the William Walton Museum, La Mortella, Forio. This last copy was consulted directly as part of this dissertation.

¹ Craggs 1999, p.3–5

² Allott, p. xvii–xviii; see also Evans, p.299

³ Murray, p.90

⁴ Allott, p.100

⁵ Allott, p.95–6

⁶ Murray, p.78–87

The Forsaken Merman, which first appeared in February 1849, Margaret is the name of the merman's lost love. The choice was prophetic—when the poet returned to Thun exactly one year after his previous visit, he fell into melancholy and never pursued Marguerite again.¹

By all accounts, Arnold had lived a comfortable life, yet his poetry often deals with more dramatic issues. Regarding Arnold's poem *Resignation*, which appeared in the same volume as *The Forsaken Merman*, the historian James Anthony Froude, a contemporary of Arnold, wrote: "I don't see what business he has to parade his calmness and lecture us on resignation when he has never known what a storm is and doesn't know what he has to resign himself to. I think he only knows the shady side of nature out of books."² Yet even Froude acknowledging liking *The Forsaken Merman* ("There are some things like the Forsaken Merman, that sound right out of the heart."³), as did Tennyson. Reading Arnold's poetry, however, reveals a deeper understanding of his soul, and lends credence to the theory of his lost love in Switzerland.

It is unclear how Walton came to know this poem. One of Arnold's most acclaimed verses is *The Scholar Gypsy*, which tells of an impoverished youth who could not afford the tuition at Oxford and whose ghost therefore roams the city and countryside.⁴ Perhaps Walton was drawn to Arnold's output because of his own relative poverty, akin to *The Scholar Gypsy*, as a displaced Lancashire lad resident at Oxford. After all, Arnold, in his final lecture as Oxford's Professor of Poetry, declared: "Culture ... the study and pursuit of perfection ... does not try to teach down to the level of the inferior classes ... it seeks to do away with classes".⁵ In any case, Arnold was broadly respected during Walton's youth as a leading English poet of the previous century.

Alan Cuckston has reported that Arthur Somervell set *The Forsaken Merman* in 1895 for the Leeds Festival.⁶ While this work never achieved the status of standard repertory among the choral festivals, it did receive subsequent performances, including the 1897 Bridlington Festival.⁷ It is unknown if Walton knew Somervell's setting, though certainly not inconceivable. A comparison of the two scores—Walton's manuscript and Somervell's vocal score as published in 1895 by Novello⁸—reveals almost no similarities. Only in matters of scoring are they similar, with the merman assigned to a male voice (bass in Somervell, tenor in Walton), and his children to the women's chorus. While Walton's manuscript only includes parts for women's chorus, Somervell calls for a mixed chorus. Also Somervell uses his choir much more extensively as a narrator through the work.

¹ Murray, p.98–9

² Murray, p.96–7

³ Murray, p.97

⁴ Evans, p.299

⁵ Veronica Franklin Gould, *G.F. Watts: The Last Great Victorian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), quoted in Evans, p.301

⁶ Craggs 1999, p.5

⁷ Catherine Dale, "The Provincial Musical Festival in Nineteenth-Century England: A Case Study of Bridlington," in Cowgill, p.346

⁸ Reprinted by Recital Publications, 2012, catalog number 1707

Matthew Arnold's original poem comprises 143 lines, of which Walton's manuscript halts after the fifty-ninth line. He thus did not set most of Arnold's poem, and while he ceased at a climactic and reasonably logical moment, there are also indications that Walton had intended more music to follow. Here is the section of Arnold's poem set by Walton. Those words in square brackets are omitted by the composer; any other alterations from Arnold's original are indicated to the right.

Come,* dear children, let us away;
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

WW: "Down"

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
'Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret! Margaret!'

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore,
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away; come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
*We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?

WW adds "That"

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
 Where the winds are all asleep;
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
 Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
 Where great whales come sailing by,
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
 Round the world for ever and aye?
 When did music come this way?
 Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
 (Call yet once) that she went away?
 Once she sate with you and me,
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
 And the youngest sate on her knee.
 She comb'd its bright hair, and [she] tended it well,
 When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
 She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;
 She said: 'I must go, for* my kinsfolk pray
 In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
 ['Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!]
 And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.¹

WW: "to"

At this point, Walton's setting breaks off. Before considering the repercussions of this truncated end of the poem, Walton's occasional alterations seem worthy of mention. All of these are likely errors of memory, as if Walton were not consulting a printed text as he proceeded. Certainly rote learning of poetry was common among schoolchildren, and this poem was one of Arnold's most popular. In the first line, Walton replaces "Come" with "Down," which is the first word of the second stanza. There is no reason that Walton would have preferred to state that word here. Similarly, replacing "for" with "to" in the fifty-sixth line is another logical error of memory, as if Walton were thinking "I must go *to* my kinsfolk, *who* pray," but correctly forgot the "who." The addition of "That" in the thirty-first line is likewise a logical one of error, and serves no added grammatical purpose; the word "when" would have been a more poetic addition. In the fifth-third line, Walton omits the word "she," which is grammatically unnecessary. The real problem lies with his omission of the penultimate line. While it is, strictly speaking, unnecessary to the poem that the church bells ring on Easter, that small fact adds great emphasis to the meaning. It also interrupts the rhyme scheme of the stanza: AABB / BCCB / AABB. The first two of these five errors—"Down" in line 1 and "for" in line 56—should reasonably be corrected in

¹ Allott, pp.96–7

any modern editions. The added “That” in line 31 is unnecessary, and certainly the two eighth notes of “That we” could be converted to a single quarter note on “We,” but in these two cases it would be best to retain Walton’s readings.

An Unfinished Work?

Careful consideration of this manuscript reveals several problems for which the only satisfying solution is that the manuscript is incomplete, or that Walton never finished the work even in short score.

Twenty pages of manuscript survive. The first page includes two indications that reinforce the theory that *The Forsaken Merman* is incomplete. It bears the title “The Forsaken Merman / for / Tenor & Soprano Solo, Chorus & Orchestra”. In the music itself Walton only calls for women’s chorus. Surely if he went to the trouble of identifying the two soloists by part, he would have done the same for the chorus. The later, not-yet-composed sections would presumably have involved men’s voices as well.

Also on the first page is the indication “No 1” (using the Roman numeral), implying that it may be the first movement of an extended work. The bottom of the twelfth page includes Walton’s typical final barline (a series of diminishing vertical lines) followed by the word “attacca”. The next page is marked with a new tempo and the style and mood change considerably. If Walton had wished this to mark the beginning of a second movement, the only thing he could have done to make it clearer was to add a heading “No 2”. But if this manuscript represents a completed work, then its two movements are uncharacteristically lopsided, especially since the chorus appears only in the first movement. Add to this that Walton does not set the entire text, and the logical conclusion is that there was rather more music left to write.

A related issue is that this is not a fair copy, but a working copy. On the second staff of the second page (m.40–41) the rhythm has been changed, but not thoroughly. All of these changes seem to be in a hand other than Walton’s. Though it is impossible to determine with certainty from a photocopy, these changes seem to be written in a thicker pencil than the rest of the score. A time signature of 3/4 is written before m.40, but the “3” has a hook that is unlike any other in Walton’s script. The barline between m.40 and m.41 is crossed out. The eighth rest in m.41 is now preceded by a larger sixteenth rest. To the three eighth notes of m.41, each of which is beamed separately, this new hand has added additional flags. However, the piano’s music has not been altered to fit the new meter. These same changes are written on the third page of the manuscript, in m.64–65. I posit that one of Walton’s teachers—probably Basil Allchin or Henry Ley—suggested that the sixteenth notes in m.41 would better fit the imperative nature of the text “let us away.” The instructor probably wrote his recommendation into the score, which he then returned to Walton to make the necessary adjustments in the piano part. What the teacher failed to realize is that breaking the piano’s motive would be highly unsatisfactory, and the sixteenth notes would be virtually impossible to pronounce clearly at Walton’s marked tempo of *Allegro con fuoco*. Musically speaking, the original score is superior to the suggested changes.

The available photocopy has a large splotch on the final page, which seems to be a spill of ink on the original. This ink occludes what seems to be the final measure (or possibly two), as well as some pitches in the system above. Were the original manuscript available for inspection, scientists might be able to

determine what was written on the page before the ink spill. All that can be seen of the final measure is the barline, a tie or slur on the upper staff, and a series of beams that indicate a *tremolo* in the second staff. The most convincing evidence that this work is incomplete is that the visible barline is atypical of Walton's calligraphy. He always ends his manuscripts from this period with a series of diminishing vertical lines, as he ended the proposed first movement on the twelfth page. The final stroke of Walton's *Forsaken Merman*, however, is merely a single line. This seems to indicate that Walton had not intended the work to end where it does. The apparent slur or tie in the upper staff supports the conclusion that Walton left the work incomplete. If the pitches of the final measure were not occluded, then we would be able to analyze the harmony and determine if the score at least concluded satisfactorily at this stage.

The Music

Walton begins *The Forsaken Merman* with a frenzy of activity, marked *Allegro con fuoco*. The first measure is an arpeggio intended for piano and harp. The A-flat-major key signature is embraced in an unorthodox manner, as the arpeggio builds on consecutive perfect fifths: A-flat, E-flat, B-flat, F, C, and G. The second measure is a chord built on A-flat, with eleventh and thirteenth. The parallel fifths and the wide spacing of this chord bring to mind Ravel. Walton repeats this pattern on E-natural and again on C. He then shifts to 6/16 meter—more easily read as 3/8—and a string arpeggio of C-flat major, with oscillations between B-flat and A-flat in the high treble. Again this pattern repeats, first on E-flat major, then on A major. In twenty-two measures, and using only four intermediary chords, Walton has taken us steadily on an exotic journey from A-flat major to A major.

From m.26, emphatic triplets in the strings combat dramatically descending duples in the winds, culminating in an E-flat minor seventh chord in tremolo strings in m.32. Strings will often be heard tremolando herein, especially on similarly dissonant chords. The work's initial motives—piano and harp arpeggios alternating with woodwind chords—return, and horn and cello prepare the soloist's entry. Walton's manuscript does not indicate whether this is to be sung by the tenor or the soprano soloist, but the former seems the logical choice given that is a merman who speaks and that Walton indicates the first arrival of the soprano quite clearly on the penultimate page.

The tenor depicts the text dramatically, swooping to a high A-flat for "away," and descending to E-flat for "below." The orchestra recalls the descending scales as "the great winds shoreward blow." The 6/16 arpeggios return as "the wild white horses [i.e. the waves] play, / Champ and chafe and toss in the spray."

The drama suddenly stops with two bars of rest (m.74–75) and a new motive occurs, marked *Adagio*. The piano's right hand is marked "clar.," such that this dyad is intended to be performed by two clarinets. The left hand is marked "oboe" in the singular, but the two notes of the dyad share a stem, implying that there should be two oboes. This is the only indication that Walton may have intended the score for double woodwinds. *The Forsaken Merman* was not written for a small chamber orchestra, but a symphony orchestra of early Romantic proportions.

This brief *Adagio* episode for woodwinds is harmonically fascinating, defying tonal analysis. It begins with four falling chords of E-flat minor, D-flat major, C-flat major, and A minor. (The A is spelled as B-double-flat to preserve the melodic integrity of the clarinets' parallel fifths, but the chord is certainly A minor.) This settles on two perfect fifths, G–D-flat and F–C. Inner voices continue the gentle fall, and the final sonority has an octatonic character. The work's opening motive returns, interrupted by a wistful cello line. The *Adagio* episode repeats only its four-chord descent, followed again by a hint of the opening. When the *Adagio* returns for a third statement, the tenor joins: "Call her once before you go." This *Adagio* thus represents the merman turning his thoughts back to the maiden on shore.

The merman instructs his children to call to their mother. Over the next six bars, the women's chorus sings in two groups. The first group sings with "bouche fermée," i.e., humming. They are divided into two soprano parts and two alto parts, with the top alto part dividing further for two dyads. The lowest voice is a steady G, but the upper voices cross each other liberally, with the top voice rising to a high A. This choir's pitches over five measures—G, C, E-flat (or D-sharp), and A—outline a half-diminished seventh chord built on A, in a manner reminiscent of Debussy. That is, however, but half of the music at this phase. The second group of sopranos and altos—similarly divided—repeats the first group's music, displaced by only one measure for a canonic effect. This group calls their mother by name: "Marg'ret!" They also end on a quite different sonority—B-flat, E-flat, F-sharp, and A. Whether this is interpreted as a minor triad with an added sharp fourth, or as a diminished triad with an added perfect fifth, is less crucial than the other-worldly atmosphere it evokes.

The tenor merman returns with his chromatic *Adagio* music, growing in intensity as the "children's voices [are] wild with pain." Tremolos reappear, obviously intended for the strings though not marked as such. Passionate desperation is evident in the tenor's rising line, to a top A-natural. After one more statement of the *Adagio* episode, the sweeping gesture from the merman's first entrance returns. (The question of tempo is problematic here, and will be discussed below.) The women's chorus invoke the 6/16 music of the "wild white horses" again, then repeat their previous call to "Marg'ret," this time extended so there is a third high A and the final sonority is prolonged.

These two interjections—m.114–119 and m.151–159—are the only points in *The Forsaken Merman* when the choir sings. They have been heard for only twenty measures, leaving 404 measures for the soloists and orchestra. While *The Forsaken Merman* is usually classified as a choral piece, it is more appropriately a solo vocal work with a choral section. (Similarly, one would hardly classify Holst's *Planets* as a choral work, notwithstanding the brief appearance of an offstage women's chorus in its final movement.) This leads further reinforcement to the theory that the work is unfinished. Of the text set by Walton, the chorus takes on the role of the merman's children. If Walton had continued, the children would have had more to sing.

The tenor, continuing his role as the merman, again recalls the *Adagio* episode, wistfully looking back "one last [time] at the white-wall'd town." The harmonies here reflect no traditional progression: D major, F major, E major, G minor, C-sharp major with an added sixth, D-flat minor, and E-flat major seventh (spelled as F-double-flat). This is followed by chromatic noodling in what is probably the most dissatisfying moment in the score. The passagework settles onto B-flat minor, which merely initiates

another passage of harmonic adventure, now in tremolos, *accelerando molto*: B-flat minor, D major, C major, F diminished, E-flat major, D diminished, G-flat major, C-flat diminished, D-flat major, C diminished, G-flat diminished, G diminished, and finally a C dominant seventh chord that leads to arpeggios of F major, presumably in the starting tempo. A sudden shift of tempo to “Broad” leads to descending block chords, as the merman and his children arrive at the depths of the ocean. These several pages are aurally reminiscent of Debussy and his free harmonies. A final high wisp signals Walton’s aforementioned final barline and *attacca* indication, hinting that what follows is intended as the second movement.

The opening *Lento*, with its *crescendos* and *diminuendos* that are impossible to represent in the piano, is obviously conceived in orchestral terms. The music here seems to depict the underwater world of the merman. There is no key signature, but either D major or F minor could claim to be tonic based on the harmonies. The upward leap of a sixth in m.242, moving down a step but requiring another step for its resolution, recalls Wagner, or perhaps Debussy in a Wagnerian mood. A whole-tone phrase, marked “bells as if in the distant” [*sic*], depicts the bells that called the merman’s beloved away. This bell-figure descends into murmuring sextuplets. The effect is of a dreamscape, as the tenor enters unaccompanied: “Children dear, was it yesterday”. The movement’s opening figures return at the reference to “the caverns where” the merman and his family live.

Walton next enjoys several opportunities to depict the text in the orchestra. Rising sixteenth-note arpeggios reflect “the surf and [...] the swell”; these are even marked “like waves”. The whole-tone bell-figure returns for “the far-off sound of a silver bell”. The “sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,” are low block chords, with descending parallel fifths in the bass. When “the winds are all asleep”, a wispy rising figure appears, but chords underneath are marked “as if sleeping”. “[T]he spent lights quiver and gleam” with tremolos that rise to *ff* and then fall to *pp*. Scalar flourishes depict “the salt weed [as it] sways in the stream”. (Walton was evidently unsatisfied with this section, as m.291-4 are surrounded by two X marks, with the inscription “alter”.) The tempo broadens with low tremolos as “the sea-beasts, ranged all round, / Feed on the ooze of their pasture ground”. “[T]he sea-snakes coil and twine” in rapid quintuplets, and the “great whales come sailing by” in 7/8 time; the players are instructed to “let it sail”.

The merman’s dreamscape resumes, now marked “pathetically,” in a simple and beautiful progression from an A-flat major seventh chord through D-flat major to F-flat major, both latter chords approached by a suspension resolving to the root. A whole-tone chord interrupts airily in m.327, after which Walton undulates in music similar to the start of the movement. Whole-tone sextuplets, previously connected with the bells that summoned the maiden to church, return as the merman asks once again “Children dear, was it yesterday [...] that she went away?” In this dreamscape, Walton has embraced techniques such as free harmonic progressions and whole-tone sonorities to craft music of heartfelt compassion and true pathos.

Next the tenor, continuing his role as the merman, recalls more specifically the maiden’s departure. The “red gold throne in the heart of the sea” invokes increasingly dissonant chords similar to the work’s beginning, but “the youngest” of the children sitting “on her knee” is treated with great delicacy. The harmonies change but slightly as the melodic line repeats, in a gesture of Grieg-like simplicity and

beauty. As the merman recounts the story, after the maiden heard the bell “she sighed” in a falling semitone that demonstrates Walton’s awareness of this motive from Bach and elsewhere. Walton assigns the merman hesitant rests as “she look’d up” ... “through” ... “the” ... “clear green sea”. His unaccompanied statement, “She said”, is the last we hear of the merman.

The tone changes for the work’s final surviving measures. Ominous bass tremolos persist through the very end. Those few places that do not have tremolos in the right hand, but instead have more melodic material, should probably also have tremolos when orchestrated. The harmony is highly dramatic, with mostly unstable seventh chords, including two half-diminished seventh chords. The soprano sings for the first and only time in the manuscript—further indicating either that there was more music intended to follow, or that Walton had presaged Vaughan Williams’s reservation of one soloist until the end of the work (the tenor in *Sancta Civitas*) by ten years. She rises steadily and dramatically to a top B-flat marked *fff* followed by a *crescendo*. The orchestra sustains a diminished triad on E with a melody—probably for horns or another brass instrument—filling a melody in the middle. This is followed by a tremolo on A major. The large ink splotch covers what once remained.

Suggestions for Performers

Sadly, this work remains unpublished. The surviving manuscript material is, notwithstanding the concerns discussed above, sufficiently clear that a modern edition could be made. But the first question for prospective performers is whether it is worthwhile to present an unfinished work at all. There is, of course, ample precedent of successful outings of incomplete works. The complete piano writings of Schubert, for example, have been recorded satisfyingly, including those that drift off inconclusively into one line. Fortunately, *The Forsaken Merman* is a sufficiently impressive torso to withstand public live performance as well. However, whatever the method of presentation—whether it be live, recorded, or even broadcast—the audience must be made aware that the work was intended for orchestra and was left incomplete by the composer. With those caveats, I believe that the work is thoroughly worthy of a public outing. Certainly an orchestration could be crafted, using Walton’s indications and an understanding of his later compositional style or the style of those works he would have known in 1916. Truly enterprising composers might even undertake to insert the missing line of text, or even to complete a setting of Arnold’s poem, either in his or her own style or mimicking Walton’s student methods.

The initial tempo and its relationship to subsequent *tempi* can prove problematic in this score. The marking of *Allegro con fuoco* implies a tempo very fast indeed, but that could render the piano part unplayable. The problem would persist even in an orchestrated version, as the tenor soloist needs to be able to proclaim the text clearly. An initial tempo of approximately 104 beats per minute would serve all of these purposes. The transition at m.13 to a 6/16 meter is tricky; the latter marking is better interpreted as 3/8. If the previous quarter note equals the new dotted eighth note, the new music seems perhaps too slow. But when this music returns at m.55, anything faster is likely to be impossible for the singer. The writing for the tenor here is extremely difficult at a quick tempo and this section should determine the tempo of the entire opening. Despite the apparent slowness, the preferred metric equivalency is that a quarter note in 4/4 should equal the dotted eighth note in 6/16.

This issue recurs when the *Adagio* episodes end at m.144. Measure 145 should return suddenly to the work's opening tempo. This tempo can remain through the choral interjection in m.151–168, observing the same relationship for the 6/16 section. The women's previous music thus becomes more impassioned, more "wild with pain" as the tenor has requested. Measure 183 could benefit from a gradual slowing, to prepare the "Slower" tempo, which should match the previous *Adagio*. The second indication of "Slower," in m.191, seems merely to re-state the earlier mark, and not to indicate that the beat should slow even further. Measure 346 is certainly lacking an *a tempo* indication to cancel the *accelerando*.

The manuscript also lacks most dynamic markings. An initial *ff* is appropriate, and would render the structure of the work—with its final *fff*—satisfying. The temptation is to contrast the string motive at m.13 by using a softer dynamic, but this lasts so quickly that it seems to impede rather than reinforce the work's structure; it is recommended to remain *f*. The descending woodwind and brass scales that begin at m.26 should surely be *ff* as well, matching the motive's returns in m.44. Dynamics come into play also at m.170, the dramatic introduction to m.175 which should clearly be *ff*, matching this motive's earlier appearance. Generally speaking, especially in the second movement, Walton's *ff* markings can be interpreted simply as *f*. Those places to perform *p* are somewhat straightforward, such as where the texture thins, or at the beginning of the second movement.

In m.13–25, Walton observes a distinctive pattern, but his manuscript seems to make two errors. The A-flat in m.21 should surely be an A-natural. At this time, it was not unusual for Walton to miss accidentals in this manner. Also, m.16 should probably be removed entirely, as it repeats a preceding bar and interrupts the pattern. Elsewhere in the piece, Walton is very careful to keep his patterns logical, and this measure feels like an odd interruption. Perhaps Walton was copying from a previous source—unlikely given the many corrections he makes directly onto the score—or, more likely, he knew the music he wished to write, and simply hadn't kept track of repetitions effectively. Both of these errors in m.13–25 are of the variety that any young composer would easily make, and I see no logical reason that they should persist.

There is another instance when it may be advisable to remove an entire measure. Measure 170 begins a five-bar transition into m.175. It rises chromatically, but repeats m.173 verbatim. This repetition in m.174 halts the drama and the harmonic flow, and I suggest it be omitted in performance. Also, the *accelerando molto* marking in m.209 should lead to the original tempo in m.220, rather than continue to accelerate to the "Broad" mark of m.226.

The women's chorus could effectively be placed backstage, or at the very least should not be prominent. The work is, as has been noted, essentially a showcase for the tenor soloist. There are occasions when the tenor may appreciate some flexibility in tempo; for example, a slight quickening of the pace at m.131–138 would not deleteriously affect the music.

Of course, if performance is envisaged, then a more conclusive ending than the contextually unstable A-major tremolo must be found. I suggest a D-minor tremolo as one possible way to conclude the sketch with sufficient finality to be moderately satisfying in performance. It would also serve to ensure that the

minimal incursion is made; only the final chord would not be Walton's. This D minor simply treats the preceding chords as cadential, and has the added benefit of being the parallel minor of the sonority that opened this movement. (Ending in D major seems far too cheery.) Naturally, ending this two-movement span in D minor when the first movement began in A-flat major is, harmonically speaking, highly questionable. No doubt Walton would have continued the work in a more dramatically dissonant vein.

Using the tempo recommendations above, *The Forsaken Merman* would last about sixteen minutes in performance. It calls for two operatically trained soloists, and the tenor especially should be a competent actor as well. Much of the piano part would be unplayable by one player on one instrument; two pianos—not merely four hands at one keyboard—would be required to ensure that every note is played. The ideal situation would involve an experienced composer to orchestrate the work satisfactorily. It is unfortunate that Christopher Palmer, who brought so many of Walton's pieces back from oblivion and probably understood his style of orchestration better than anyone, did not turn to this impressive if uneven piece of juvenilia.

Walton's Voice Breaks

Walton was obviously quite busy when he returned home to Oldham for six weeks in the summer of 1916. When visiting Oldham he sang in his father's choir at St. John's; Noel remembered "Willie singing the solo in "The Wilderness" by Wesley during one of his holidays, and it was a most wonderful piece of boy's singing and also a demonstration of instinctive musicianship."¹ Composing as elaborate a work as *The Forsaken Merman* probably kept him hunkered down for many hours. As mentioned above, Walton's stated motivation for composing in earnest in early 1916 was to "make myself interesting somehow or when my voice breaks I'll be sent back to Oldham."² During that summer his voice did indeed break.³ What's more, his mother was in poor health, and thus the family's finances were tighter than ever.⁴ We do not have a record of how the responsible powers at Christ Church were informed of these circumstances, but we do have the reply from Reverend Edward Peake, headmaster of the school. Peake wrote to Charles Walton on September 6, 1916:

I have seen the Dean, and he says he does not think it right that we should let Billy go, and he will consult with the canons about settling the account. So I am sure you need not worry about it. I dare say this will be a comfort to Mrs Walton. I am so sorry that she has been ill ... It is just such illness that makes one long for money most, isn't it?⁵

¹ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 9, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

² Kennedy 1989, p.7

³ Hayes, p.5; Kennedy 1989, p.10; Lloyd, p.6

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.10

⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.10

Thus for the second time Thomas Strong, Dean of Christ Church, came to the boy Walton's rescue to keep him at Oxford.¹ According to one account, Strong may have paid the school fees out of pocket, rather than securing funds from the canons of Christ Church's Governing Body.²

Continuing Studies

Letters Home

Meanwhile, the war continued on the European continent, and with greater ferocity. The Battle of the Somme began on July 1 when British and French troops initiated an offensive against the Germans occupying the area of the River Somme, twenty miles east of the city of Amiens in northern France. That day alone saw about 60,000 British casualties. By the time this battle ended in November, over a million soldiers were killed or wounded. It remains one of the bloodiest battles in human history.

In 1916 Oxford ceased to hold gaudies, the annual reunions for alumni. As since the war's start, lights were kept off after dark, and Christ Church's huge bell, Great Tom, was silenced. Young men and grown men alike continued shipping out to the trenches. The airmen of the Royal Flying Corps continued to use Christ Church as their headquarters and Tom Quad at their training parade ground.³ In early October, one of the canons of Christ Church, Henry Scott Holland (1847–1918), who was also Regius Professor of Divinity, described the situation thus: "Oxford begins next week, and we shall be more entirely a Camp than ever. Our 200 flying-men keep Ch.Ch. alive: and now and again Peck[water Quad] wakes to quite its historic noises."⁴

Some young men were returning from the war, severely injured and slowly recuperating. Hospitals flourished in Oxford. The Cathedral did its part to help them; at the services on Sunday, October 22, all collections were made "on behalf of the Hospitals in Oxford." Of course, many soldiers didn't return at all. Movements from the Brahms *Requiem*, not merely the long-time staple "How lovely is thy dwelling-place", appeared more frequently in cathedral worship. More installments of Parry's *Songs of Farewell* also were heard, including "There is an old belief" on Friday, November 3.

The cathedral maintained its schedule of daily services. Walton moved from the trebles to the bass section⁵ and continued his studies at the cathedral choir school. Far more of Walton's letters survive from this period through his remaining time at Oxford, and from them we have a fuller sense of his compositional activities. The first of these letters, which Malcolm Hayes has dated editorially to Sunday, September 10, 1916, makes mention of several of his compositions. While his grasp of standard

¹ Burton, p.21; Hayes, p.5; Howes 1973, p.xii; Lloyd, p.6

² Hayes, p.5

³ Burton, p.21

⁴ Curthoys, p.298

⁵ Burton, p.21

punctuation and spelling has notably improved, there are still some errors, which are, as always, retained in these transcriptions.

Dear Mother,

Thanks very much for the parcel and 1/-. H.G. Ley came back on Thursday. I showed my six part Motet. He said it had wonderful ideas in it. I showed him the others. Those were quite excellent especially the Fantasia which I had'nt finished copying out. A new Choral Prelude and two others did'nt sound well on the organ but were fairly respectable on the piano. He is teaching me harmony free and is going over the motets, and I thing we may sing them both.¹ Machlin and Winnifrith have not yet come back. We went to Wheatley on Wednesday. Some areoplanes have been over. One looped the loop. D^r Sandy preached this morning. By the way, he is taking us to [a newsreel film of] the Battle of the Somme. There is no more news.

With much love

Billy²

From this letter we can safely assume that he had composed several choral works during the summer, one of which was in six parts. *The Forsaken Merman* was perhaps among these pieces, given that the surviving score bears apparent corrections from an instructor. There were also at least three new works for organ, one of which was the *Chorale Prelude on 'Wheatley'*. None of the other works mentioned in this letter have survived. Henry Ley began to teach Walton harmony, and free of charge—evidently his generosity rivaled that of Dean Strong. Walton is seen here to be looking forward to the return of his friends in the choir.

This letter gives some tantalizing hints of possible performances. Ley evidently considered two of the boy's motets as worthy of being sung during cathedral services. Walton's visit to Wheatley is also appealing. Did he perhaps play his prelude on the organ of the eponymous parish church? That the town needed no introduction to his mother suggests that he may have visited there before.

A week later Walton wrote home again:

Dear Mother,

Thank you very much for your letter. We have had a very nice week. On Monday I played tennis with Miss Brookes. We saw two areoplanes. On Tuesday I sent my compositions to Sir Hubert. On Wednesday we went to see the king, I was only about three yards from him. He was inspecting the Flying Corp. Windle and I took invitations to the Sports all round in the town. In the afternoon we went to Negus' for tea. It was quite respectable. The Non-choir boys came

¹ Hayes renders the word "both" as "Cath", i.e. that the works would be sung as part of the cathedral services. The other examples of capital "C" and lower-case "b" found in this letter are markedly similar, likewise the lower-case "a" and "o". I have opted for the reading of "both" since it requires no additional words to make sense, and Walton wrote fewer abbreviations in these later letters.

² Hayes, p.9–10; see also Burton, p.27; Kennedy 1989, p.9; Tierney, p.25

back on Thursday. We began work on Friday. I am in the Senior Class and the work is considerably harder. We practised for the Sports yesterday. There was a practice in the morning at 10.0. We had Communion this morning. Mr Ley played my Choral Fantasia after service. People said it was very fine, but I don't give my opinion. The Dean said he wished he'd been there as he when looking at MSS said it looked very jolly. We are having "Save us O Lord" Bairstow this morning. Dr Sandy is taking us to see the Somme Film. The Sports are next Friday. There is no more news.

With much love

Billy¹

Walton's perpetual self-criticism is here at its most apparent, as he declines to give his opinion of his new organ work. Yet he took the time to underscore the words "played my Choral Fantasia"² in obvious pride. The cathedral worshippers, of course, would never know that they had been treated to what is now the earliest recorded performance of any music by the pen of William Walton.³ Sir Hubert Parry was the recipient of a special parcel that week. Could the copies that Walton made to send to the senior composer someday emerge?

There are other noteworthy events, not necessarily of a musical nature. The indication that the schoolwork of this academic year was to be more difficult is prescient, given that in two years he would be an undergraduate at one of the world's most prestigious universities. It must indeed have been exciting to stand so near the reigning monarch—yet the boy could never have imagined that he would compose music for the next two coronations. And, given Walton's inevitable flirtations, the first evidence of which we saw even while he was a small child, one can only wonder what stories his tennis-partner, Miss Brookes, could tell.

The next surviving letter from Walton's pen is dated October 8, 1916. Walton's grammar is again cavalier; particularly precious are the two different misspellings of the word "two."

Dear Mother.

The weather has been awful this last week. We have had hardly any games. I haven't had a letter this week. Two old boys have been staying at the Deans Garret and Baldwin both fine chaps. The Dean has been saying somethink to me about the Royal College of Music. He says it is unpatriotic to England to let slip such a Musical brain. I haven't heard from Sir Hubert yet but expect to before half term. Half term is on November 2nd, prizegiving on the 3rd. I have got one prize and I might have too [two]. I have to [two] Counterpoint lessons in the week and I expect to be able to do Florid Counterpoint in four parts before half term. Our first match is on the 18th against Magdalen. It rained on Wednesday our free day and so we spent a very dry afternoon.

¹ Hayes, p.9, 11; see also Burton, p.25; Kennedy 1989, p.9

² Stewart Craggs has assigned this work the catalog number "C102". (Craggs 2014, p.2)

³ Burton, p.20; Craggs 1993, p.4–5; Tierney, p.24

On Thursday we had a game. I scored six goals. We are having "Abide with me" by Ivor Atkins for the anthem to-night. There is no more news this week.

With much love

Billy

N.B. Axtell a friend of mine who lives in Oxford is asking me there for half-term.¹

Already we see Dean Strong suggesting that Walton continue his musical education beyond what the choir school could offer. In the following years the prospect of Walton's attending the Royal College of Music in London would again rear its head. Walton's studies in counterpoint seem to have progressed considerably, but he is at least equally interested and accomplished in playing soccer. The invitation of his friend, Axtell, to stay at that family's home in a few weeks is tossed off as a casual request, which was likely granted. Again presaging future relationships with his peers, a precedent was being established that the Sitwell family would later embrace more fully.

On Friday, November 3, the school prizes were announced.² Walton received the school's composition prize, and also the senior award for music and a prize of distinction in history. Based on the complete list of awards on this occasion, Walton was certainly not the star pupil of the school—L.H. Macklin probably held that reputation—but he was evidently quite accomplished. Naturally, awards do not indicate well-rounded academic success. At this time, schools graded in a system very similar to Oxford itself: the top students received a rare "First," and others would receive a "Second" or "Third" honors degree. Walton, however, was granted merely a "Pass", i.e. below third-class.

Two letters home survive from November. The first is dated November 12:

Dear Mother

Thanks very much for your letter. I have had rather a cold since Wednesday. My new composition is a very great improvement, so Mr Ley says, and he has sent it to Dr Allen. It is then going to Sir Hubert Parry. I've just finished a new pianoforte piece. I shall send my new thing to Sir C. V. Stanford [...] in about a fortnight's time. We went to Dr Allens for tea on Tuesday. It was fine. He has my compositions. On Wednesday there was a game. We had Cath[edral service]. We had practise at 2.0 on Thursday. I had a harmony lesson. We should have had a match yesterday, but no team turned up. Dr Sandy preached this morning. We are having "The Wilderness" Goss for the anthem to-night. I had heard from Muriel. She sent two packets of chocolate, toffees and biscuits. It is jolly fine of her

With much love

¹ Hayes, p.11; see also Burton, p.21, 28; Kennedy 1989, p.9; Lloyd, p.6

² Burton, p.27

Billy¹

Here enters a new adult figure in Walton's life, that of Hugh Percy Allen. He was conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir and Organist at New College, and had been instrumental in the training of Adrian Boult. In a few years, Allen would directly oversee Walton's musical training. There is little record of Allen's opinion of Walton's works—as opposed to the opinions of Allchin, Ley, and Strong, which are well known. There is no later indication to confirm that Walton ever sent scores to Charles Villiers Stanford, Parry's only rival as the chief teacher of composition in England. Parry, as we will see, would continue his enthusiasm for the young Walton.

Walton's next surviving letter is from two weeks later, November 26:

Dear Mother,

Thank you very much indeed for the parcel etc. We have had a most successful week. There was no game on Monday. I had a harmony lesson. We went to "Gym" on Tuesday morning. It rained. On Wednesday we had a match with Magdalen. We won 3–0. I got a goal. On Thursday we had another match with Bradfield. We won 7–0. I got some goals. I finished my Composition "For all the Saints"[.] It rained on Friday. We had a game yesterday. I had harmony lessons

The Archdeacon preached this morning. I had a Harmony lesson after Cath[edral]. We are having "Remember now thy Creator" Steggall for the anthem to night. Tell Noel I'm writing, and I haven't a Composition that he could play just now.

With much love

Billy²

Again we see that sports occupy at least as much of Walton's mind as music. Nothing further is known of his composition titled *For all the Saints*,³ though it was possibly based on the hymn tune, and seems most likely to have been scored either for organ solo or for chorus and organ.⁴ Mention is also made that Walton's older brother, Noel, had apparently requested a composition to play. Noel would later become an accomplished pianist, so William had begun to compose for that instrument.

The service sheets for the cathedral continue to demonstrate business as usual, with repertoire from English and German composers. A setting of *Our Father, which art in heaven* by Rachmaninov appeared on Friday, July 6. Special collections for various causes associated with the war continued. On Sunday, February 4, collections taken went to "the Armenian Refugees (Lord Mayor's) Fund." The Holy

¹ Hayes, p.12

² Hayes, p.21; see also Kennedy 1989, p.9

³ Stewart Craggs has assigned this work the catalog number "C103". (Craggs 2014, p.2) See also Craggs 1993, p.4–5.

⁴ Stewart Craggs (2014, p.2) indicates that it was scored "for mixed voices and organ", but I cannot confirm a source for this assertion.

Communion service on the third Sunday of each month continued to be a “Commemoration of Those Fallen in the War”, who became more numerous every month.

No letters survive to describe Walton’s activities between December 1916 and May 1917. Fortunately, we do have one very important primary source from Walton’s hand that dates from early 1917: the manuscript to Walton’s earliest surviving work for piano solo, the *Valse in C minor*.

Valse in C minor

Walton’s only surviving work from the year 1917 is a waltz for piano solo.¹ The manuscript is dated “Feb 2nd 1917”.² It was for many years in the possession of F.D. Ham,³ a contemporary of Walton in the choir school. Ham wrote to Stewart Craggs in 1979: “how the manuscript came into my possession I do not know—perhaps a case of stealing by finding!”⁴ In 1977 Ham donated the manuscript to the historic Library of Christ Church,⁵ which faces the Peckwater Quad where Walton had rooms as an undergraduate. The score remains there today. Also part of Ham’s donation was “a small photograph of Walton seated aboard a rowing boat”,⁶ which may indicate that Walton had begun rowing for the choir school before he eventually joined the college team.

Stewart Craggs has described the manuscript: “Holograph in ink. The unbound score is written on one side of a single sheet of music paper, measuring 44 x 30 cms.”⁷ It is mostly in good condition, though Ham apparently stored it folded in half: the lateral crease is almost a complete tear. There is also a small tear at the bottom of the page, which occludes part of the slur and beams of the left hand in m.87. It would have also occluded the bass note of m.88, but fortunately that pitch was written spaced too far to the right. The work has never been published.⁸ I have been unable to locate any study of it in Walton scholarship, and it is therefore probably the least studied score among Walton’s output.

The Music

This lack of study might imply that the work was sub-standard, but it is in fact an inventive, if uneven, score. The manuscript bears the title *Valse*. The choice of French for the title hints that Chopin is perhaps the intended model. Certainly no one hearing the work, without knowing its composer, would guess Chopin. But likewise it was not in Walton’s nature, even in his youth, to imitate in a slovenly fashion, but rather to embrace older traditions and adapt them to his own ends. Thus there are certain

¹ Stewart Craggs has assigned this work the catalog number “C5”. (Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 2014, p.2)

² Craggs 1990, p.14; Lloyd, p.5

³ Craggs 1990, p.14

⁴ Letter from F.D. Ham to Stewart Craggs, January 8, 1979. Photocopy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ Craggs 1990, p.14. It is catalogued as “Mus. 1278” (Craggs 2014, p.2; Milsom, *Christ Church Library Catalogue*). A photocopy also exists at the William Walton Museum, La Mortella, Forio. Both this copy and the original manuscript were consulted for this dissertation. See also Burton, p.31.

⁶ Milsom, *Christ Church Library Music Catalogue*

⁷ Craggs 1993, p.237

⁸ Kennedy 1989, p.310

cosmetic similarities. Foremost among these is the structure—waltz, followed by trio, followed by a repetition of the initial waltz—codified by Chopin in the waltz as a pianistic genre. Also noteworthy is the manner in which Walton composes for each hand. The right hand is predominantly melodic, more consistently so than in Chopin. The “oom-pah-pah” motion of the left hand, with its prominent downbeats lower than the second and third beats, is always characteristic of the old master. As a third homage, Walton attempts chromatic harmonic progressions; Chopin might have found them ghastly, but certainly they stem from his handling of harmony. A pianist-scholar would be well poised to consider more fully the influence of Chopin and his successors on the young Walton’s waltz.

The manuscript bears the subtitle *in C minor*. It was very unusual for Walton to indicate the key so prominently. While nearly all of his music is tonal, albeit with chromatic or modal adventures, Walton generally avoided assigning his works a particular key. Commentators, performers, and record companies have not necessarily obliged him, however. This subtitle indicates that he is thinking along very tonal terms. It is tempting to wonder if he also wrote waltzes in other keys, or, for that matter, if this work intended part of a pianistic cycle. Perhaps some of the other movements were among those mailed in subsequent months to William’s more pianistically inclined brother, Noel.

There is no introduction, simply a bold start of the main theme, which promptly becomes syncopated and adds non-harmonic tones. The theme is marked by upward leaps with more steady declines. By m.9 Walton shifts away from C minor, flirting with D-flat major before settling in m.18 in B minor. Moving by half step in this fashion is one way in which Walton avoids typical harmonic structural traditions. In m.28, Walton begins to move away, often changing harmony on the second beat of the bar. He spends perhaps more time than is necessary (m.32–35) re-establishing the home key of C minor. The recapitulation in m.36 is exact, other than one passing chord, until m.44. Walton shifts dramatically away from the first statement by landing melodically on A-natural rather than A-flat. However, he does not stray far from C minor, and there is a brief false recapitulation at m.52. He ends the waltz proper firmly in C minor.

The trio is of an entirely different character, dramatic and constantly moving. In the waltz, both hands stayed near to the center of the keyboard, but Walton explores the extremes in the trio. The right hand has the new melody in octaves, moving mostly stepwise. The left hand’s swirling arpeggios clearly delineate a shift to E-flat major, the relative key of C minor. Walton maintains a diatonic harmony until m.67, when he uses C minor and a briefly implied D-flat major to shift fully to C-flat major. Measure 69 begins a dramatic episode as the left hand steals the melody, which is merely a chromatic descent (reminiscent of *The Forsaken Mermaid*). Meanwhile the right hand takes the swirl, which now rises chromatically. When Walton arrives at a G in the bass and E-flat major in the right hand, the arpeggios collapse forcefully to the bottom B-natural of the keyboard; Walton perhaps wished that the piano had an additional low G. The final measure of this descent (m.74) is of harmonic interest, as its falling thirds create a harmony, almost retroactively, of a dominant seventh chord (or even a thirteenth chord) on G. After a brief pause, the chromatic swirl suddenly returns and the bass attempts unsuccessfully to restate the trio melody. The harmony settles onto E-flat major, and the right hand recapitulates *pianissimo*. In the final four bars, the rhythmic values slow to create a natural relaxation back to the chordal texture of the waltz.

The complete *Valse in C minor*, including the repeated first section, lasts about four minutes, the rough duration of several of Chopin's waltzes. No one would claim that it is a masterpiece. But it provides an interesting glimpse between the fourteen-year-old composer of *The Forsaken Merman*, grasping to explore new harmonies, and the sixteen-year-old composer of the more solid, but still adventuresome, Swinburne songs.

Suggestions for Performers

The *Valse* has never been published, though a section of facsimile has appeared.¹ Walton's script is much tidier than the earlier works, and there are very few questions of accuracy of pitches. Naturally, cross-relations (as in m.8, 20, and 23) may indicate errors in Walton's script. But they may also demonstrate familiarity with this typically English device common in Renaissance motets that were sung at Christ Church. They should therefore be retained as Walton wrote them. The lower octave G in the right hand of m.63 is certainly missing in the manuscript, and should be added editorially to any modern edition. Virtuoso pianists—and Walton certainly was not among them—may find it worthwhile to add an upper octave to m.66–67 as well. Otherwise the pitch content of the manuscript is straightforward.

The score's only dynamic indications are the *f* that begins the trio, the *ff* in m.74, the hairpin in m.80–81, and the following *pp*. Performers are encouraged to provide what dynamic contrast they feel appropriate, especially for the first section. Likewise there is little in the way of tempo marking. The initial *Vivace* should perhaps be understated, for the trio is marked "not in same time as valse but a little faster". Given the extraordinary left-hand triplets in the trio, the opening waltz must not be taken too quickly. The *accelerando* marks of m.80 and m.86 are not to be played indefinitely, and in fact it may be interpreted as a brief tightening of the rhythmic motion. Certainly the gradual slowing in the notated rhythm of m.86–88 should be preserved; had Walton wished the music to rush headlong to the final cadence, he would have written the rhythm differently rather than preface this with a mere *accelerando*. Also, the steady oom-pah-pah of the opening waltz would be mollified by generous *rubato*. Performers of course may take this raw score and render it more engaging.

One of the few people familiar with the manuscript told me that Walton's *Valse in C minor* should not be better known, as it was "not a very good waltz." I encourage any pianists with the appropriate skill level to investigate the work more fully, thereby to help more listeners in making a determination for themselves.

¹ Burton, p.31

Spring 1917

That spring, the fifteen-year-old Walton also composed a wedding march for organ.¹ The occasion was the marriage of Henry Ley and Evelyn Mary Heurtley (1879/80–1946), daughter of the vicar of Binsey,² a village not two miles northwest of Oxford. Thomas Strong officiated at the ceremony, which took place on Tuesday, April 10, 1917, at the Parish Church of St. Margaret in Oxford.³ The organist was Noel E. Ponsonby⁴ (1891–1928), then organist at Marlborough College in Wiltshire; he had studied at Trinity College, Oxford, while Ley was also a student. The two were close friends: Ponsonby later became Organist at Ely Cathedral and succeeded Ley as Organist of Christ Church in 1926. The full choir of Christ Church sang the service. The service music included a Brahms chorale prelude on *Praise to the Holiest* and Jacob Handl's *Paternoster*. The *Oxford Chronicle* reported that "[a]s the bride and groom proceeded down the aisle after the ceremony the organist played a wedding march composed for the occasion by Master Walton, a Cathedral chorister."⁵

Sadly, no trace of Walton's wedding march survives. Beyond demonstrating that Walton was continuing to compose for the organ, this wedding march shows the high esteem in which Ley held Walton's student works. Of all of Walton's juvenilia that do not survive, this wedding march is perhaps the greatest loss. Did it include the seventh chords and exploration of the keyboard demonstrated in the *Valse in C minor*, composed just two months earlier? Or did Walton restrict himself to more traditional sonorities, befitting a ceremonial occasion? It would be fascinating to hear the earliest known march by he who composed the official marches for the next two coronations.

The next indications of Walton's activities are three letters home, ranging from June to July. The first is dated June 3. It details the weekly life of a chorister in a straightforward, no-nonsense fashion.

Dear Mother

Thanks very much for the parcel and chocolate. I have quite recovered from my German measles and am much better than I was before. I came down on Tuesday but did not go to Cath[edral]. I worked down at the garden. We had a game on Wednesday. There was no Cath[edral]. I had a lesson on Thursday. There was a game. I went to D^r Allens on Friday. There was a practise at 4.30. We had a game yesterday. It rained. There was a practise at 4.30. I went to early service this morning. Macklin was ill. I had a lesson with M^r Ley after Cath[edral]. We went to the Deans. We went a walk this afternoon round the Parks. We are having "I saw the Lord" Stainer for the anthem to-night. Half term begins next Thursday. There is no more news

With much love

¹ Stewart Craggs has assigned this work the catalog number "C142". (Craggs 2014, p.2). See also Kennedy 1989, p.8.

² Dibble, Jeremy, "Ley, Henry George"

³ Anonymous, "Easter Weddings in Oxford;" see also Craggs 2014, p.2

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.8

⁵ Anonymous, "Easter Weddings in Oxford;" see also Craggs 2014, p.2

Billy¹

The next letter is dated June 17. This was the Sunday after the half-term break had concluded.

Dear Mother.

I am so pleased to have your letter and to hear you are getting on well. Also thank Noel for his, and the fine photo. I enjoyed myself very much indeed. On Thursday we went to "Within the law" at the theatre. It was awfully good. It was free-day on Friday and March took me out. We were on the river all day and had dinner in the evening. I went to Dr Allens on Saturday morning. There was the Dean's tea in the afternoon. On Sunday Winnifrith took me out all day. We went to an Organ Recital at New College. Mr Brooke took us on the river on Monday. It was beautiful. We had prep in the evening. It was hard luck on some of the boys because they had German measles all half term. We settled down to work again on Tuesday. I played tennis in the afternoon. We had a game on Wednesday. There was no Cath[edral]. I had a piano lesson on Thursday. There was a practice at 2.0. We had a game. I went to Dr Allens on Friday afternoon but he being out I met Mr Ley who was going to practise for a recital, so I went with him. I saw Dr Allen yesterday morning. Apparently I am not leaving this term but staying on as NON Choir. I shall learn the Piano and Harmony from Dr Walker. The rest as usual. We had Choral Communion this morning. Dr Scott Holland preached. I went to Dr Allens to be introduced to Sir Hubert Parry; but his car had bust down so am going at 3.30. The anthem to night is "Jesu, joy of man's desiring" Bach. I am going to an organ recital at New College to-night. My Ley is playing. There is a new Parry motet being sung by the Bach Choir. The Exam is on July 13th. I hope to be able to pull through. It is doubtfull with everyone. No more news.

With much love

Billy²

Here Walton once again reported the daily events, with an emphasis on sports and music. During the half-term break two of his friends in the choir school—March and Winnifrith (as always, identified here by their last names only)—took Walton out for an occasion. This is further evidence that he had little cash to spend on non-essentials, but also that his friends were willing to support him in exploring more of what the world had to offer. Among these occasions were organ recitals held at the chapel of New College: Walton continued to soak up any music performances that he could. We also learn that this was to be Walton's last year singing in the cathedral choir, though he would stay in the choir school "as NON Choir." In fact, Walton double-underlined the word "non."

Most important in this letter are the several references to Hugh Allen. As Walton would leave the cathedral choir and Ley's influence would diminish, Allen took that lead in Walton's studies. Allen was a friend of Hubert Parry, and the premiere that Walton heard that Sunday night was "Lord, let me know mine end", the last of the *Songs of Farewell*. This concert marked Parry's final appearance at Oxford. The

¹ Letter from William Walton to his mother, June 3, 1917, manuscript at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

² Hayes, p.13; see also Kennedy 1989, p.9

choir was suffering from the lack of male singers brought on by the war: there were only two first basses in the Bach Choir that night.¹ Perhaps for that reason the choir sang rather little: only the new Parry motet, Bach's cantata *Jesu, priceless treasure* and Vaughan Williams's new hymn, *For all the saints*. (How unfortunate that Allen hadn't chosen Walton's recent setting.) Henry Ley filled out the concert at the organ console, playing the Bach Passacaglia in C minor, Walford Davies's *Solemn Melody*, a canon by Schumann, an interlude by the Danish composer Otto Malling, and Parry's Fantasia on 'St. Anne'.²

Walton's next letter is from the following Sunday, June 24:

Dear Mother.

I hope you are getting on well. The weather has been stormy and a little colder than last week. I went to see Sir Hubert Parry on last Sunday afternoon and had quite along talk with him. He is an awfully jolly old person. We had a game on Monday. I had a lesson at 10.30. I went to see Dr Allen on Tuesday afternoon. He asked Macklin and I to go to a rehearsal of the Bach Choir Orchestra at 8.30. We went and heard Rimsky-Korsakoff's Symphonic Suite. It was grand. We had no Cath[edral] on Wednesday. About ten boys went down with German measles. I had a lesson at 6.0 on Thursday. We had a game. It was the first time we went to the Baths. Beautiful warm water. It rained on Friday. I went round the Broads. We have only five a side in Cath[edral] now. Yesterday we went to the baths. There was a game. Francis Ma[jor] one [of] the boys has had an appendicitis and has undergone the operation successfully.

I went to early service this morning. Dr Cooke preached. We went to the Deans after Cath[edral]. The anthem to-night is "Comfort ye" Handel. The exam is three weeks to-morrow. Will you ask Daddy to sent some of the orchestra MSS from Middletons like he did last time. I don't think there is any more news

With much love

Billy.³

In Walton's matter-of-fact manner, the meeting of Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, one of the leading acolytes of English music and the Principal of the Royal College of Music, is tossed off briefly. Parry is merely "an awfully jolly old person" with whom he shared "quite along [*sic*] talk". Parry was well known for helping younger composers, and perhaps saw this conversation as a method to plant the seed for Walton to study at the College in future years. One wonders what scores Walton brought with him to his meeting with Parry. Perhaps *A Litany* was among them, and some of the revisions that we now believe date from 1930 began to take form.

Hugh Allen continued to take a role in the boy's life. Hearing Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* rehearsed by a full orchestra must indeed have been exciting for a composer who later developed such a fine ear

¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.45

² Per email communication with the Oxford Bach Choir

³ Hayes, p.14; see also Burton, p.30; Kennedy 1989, p.9; Lloyd, p.6; Tierney, p.26

for details of orchestration. Here is also a rare reference to Walton's father, requesting a gift of some orchestral scores. Walton had perfect pitch, and was apparently honing an ability that Thomas Strong was known to have developed: reading a full orchestral score at sight in one's mind.

Another letter exists from July 1, 1917, which does not appear in Hayes's collection.

Dear Mother.

I hope you are getting much better and will be up for the holidays. This week has been comparatively uneventful. On Monday I had a lesson at 10.30[.] We went to the Baths at 12.0. There was a game in the afternoon[.] There was no Cath[edral]. I went to D^r Allens on Tuesday. There was a game on Wednesday. We had a practise at 2.0. I had a counterpoint lesson. The boys who had measles came down[.] I had a lesson on Thursday. There was a game. It turned very cold. It rained all day on Friday. We had a practice at 9.0. There was a game in the afternoon. We went to D^r Hendersons to tea. After we had archery and bowls. There was no sermon that morning. We went to the Dean's. We went down to the field in the afternoon. The anthem to-night is "God is a spirit." The exam is on the 13th.

With much love

Billy

There is one final letter written just at the end of the academic year. It stems from three weeks later, or July 15.

Dear Mother.

I hope you are now up and getting strong after your long sojourn in bed. The weather has been beautiful this week. Plenty of sun but awfully hot. On Monday I had a lesson at 10.30. There was a practise at 2.0. We had a game. I made 45. We had our last 'Gym' on Tuesday. We went to the Baths. Mr Allchin came in the evening. He was very pleased with my compositions. We had no Cath[edral] on Wednesday. There was a game, but I played tennis. We went to the Baths. [...] We went down to the field this afternoon. The anthem to-night is "Te decet hymnus" Schumann.

Tomorrow the exams begin. I shall try very hard to pass. Don't forget to send me the money, by return of post, if not already being sent. There is no more news.

With much love

Billy¹

This is the first of several recorded requests from the fifteen-year-old Walton to send more money. In this case, it was probably to help him purchase a rail ticket home to Oldham for the summer holiday,

¹ Hayes, p.14–15; see also Burton, p.30

rather than for any social or material expense. Walton obviously continued to compose, and continued to show his manuscripts to Basil Allchin, who continued to show his approval.

Hugh Allen

As Walton was beginning to have more encounters with Hugh Allen, it is worth considering the background and personality of this remarkable man. He had studied at Cambridge, conducting Bach cantatas in his college chapel. It was here that he developed a deep friendship with Ralph Vaughan Williams that would remain throughout their lives. Vaughan Williams told a story that demonstrates Allen's approach to music:

One day he rushed (I need hardly say) into my room on some business and happened to see on my table a part-song for T.T.B.B. which I had just finished. He immediately put it in his pocket and arranged for four undergraduates to sing it at one of the Musical Club concerts. At the performance one of the singers went astray and the piece ended in chaos. Allen, determined that the composition should have a fair hearing, engineered an "encore", much to the disgust of the audience, who disliked the work even more the second time than the first. [...] This was Allen at his most characteristic. It displayed not only his kindness of heart but the fact that the human element in music was always uppermost with him. Here was a young composer who would be much helped in his studies by the (possibly unpleasant) experience of a public performance. Allen was determined that he should have that experience—and if the audience did not like it they could lump it.¹

Allen soon became Organist at St. Asaph Cathedral in northern Wales and then at Ely Cathedral near Cambridge. In 1901, he was appointed Organist at New College, Oxford, training the chapel choir, which was one of the most prominent choirs at the university, on par with those of Magdalen College and Christ Church. Within months he also became conductor of both the Oxford Bach Choir, a small ensemble with members drawn mostly from the university, and the Oxford Choral and Philharmonic Society, the (rather larger) principal amateur chorus in the town.² Thus he immediately became a central figure in the musical life of town and college alike. Soon he fused the two "town" choirs and presented the first performance of Bach's B-minor Mass in Oxford.

His tastes in repertoire particularly embraced five composers: Bach (especially the major works), Beethoven (the *Missa Solemnis* was his great favorite), Brahms (*Requiem* and other choral works with orchestra), and his two friends Parry and Vaughan Williams. He had also met Brahms briefly during a visit to Vienna early in 1897, months before the composer's death.³ Vaughan Williams once wrote to his publisher, Hubert Foss, in 1941: "As regards myself I know that I owe any success I have had more to you

¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.17

² Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.40

³ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.24

(except H.P.A. [Hugh Percy Allen] who insisted on shoving the S. Symph [Sea Symphony] down people's throats after it was a complete flop at Leeds) than to anyone."¹ Allen conducted that work several times with the Oxford Bach Choir. He was not such a fan of English music in the pre-Parry mold. When he was newly appointed to Oxford, Thomas Strong informed him proudly that Christ Church had performed John Stainer's *Crucifixion* the previous term. Allen's succinct and definitive reply was: "Believe me, sir, it is for the last time!"²

In 1909 Allen was appointed Choragus of Oxford University, an obscure position that essentially supports the Heather Professor of Music. As Choragus Allen began to thoroughly modernize the training of musical undergraduates,³ a process he continued upon becoming Professor in 1918. He was also quite active as an organist and conductor throughout England, directing the London Bach Choir since 1907.

In personality, Allen was known for his strong will and brusque manner. Neil Tierney called him a "fierce man of dynamic energy, renowned and adored for his rudeness to players and singers at rehearsal," but also pointed out his "rare qualities of compassion and kindness, spiritual strength and leadership, with the capacity to shape the lives and destinies of others."⁴ Frank Howes described him as "the most forceful and influential figure in Oxford music" during Walton's time there.⁵ It was said that he had "the three qualities essential for dealing with young people—sympathy, authority, and a completely spontaneous enthusiasm."⁶

Allen's emphasis was very much on the person, rather than the music. Through his work with amateur choirs and orchestras, he regularly accepted the personnel he was given and assigned them difficult repertoire, not necessarily for the edification of the audience but for the joy of the musicians themselves. This extended to those who studied with him more closely. Douglas Fox, for example, was a promising organist who returned from the war despondently with his right arm amputated. Allen famously played an entire service at New College with his own right hand in his pocket (or tied behind his back; accounts differ) to buoy his student's spirits and to demonstrate that he was still able to play satisfactorily.⁷ However, Walton's remembrance of Allen was limited to having "obtained some insight into the mysteries of the orchestra, as he could bring scores vividly to life by playing them on the organ".⁸ It was also Allen who introduced Walton to Stravinsky's *Petrushka* by playing a piano reduction.⁹ Walton never commented on receiving any personal encouragement from Allen, quite the opposite of the support he received from Thomas Strong and Henry Ley.

¹ Letter from Vaughan Williams to Foss, November 6, 1941, quoted in Hinnells, p.69

² Tierney, p.25

³ Colles, "Allen, Sir Hugh"

⁴ Tierney, p.25

⁵ Howes 1973, p.xii

⁶ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.86

⁷ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.66; Tierney, p.25. Fox had returned to Oxford, without his right arm, by June 9, 1918, on which date he played an organ recital at New College that included Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C minor (George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.5, p.187, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford). He went on to become Director of Music at Clifton College, a preparatory school in Bristol.

⁸ R.M. Schafer, *British Composers in Interview*, London, 1963, p.74, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.8

⁹ Burton, p.21; Coggrave, in Craggs 1999, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.8

Composer and conductor Guy Warrack recalled the pedagogical style that Walton would have experienced at Allen's hands:

Sir Hugh's teaching methods at Oxford were characteristically unconventional. His class was partly score-reading and partly discussion. He would start talking, and suddenly make some statement so outrageous that an argument became inevitable, and I am sure that when he said, "of course the Great War was entirely due to 'The Ring'," his sympathies were with those who contradicted him rather than with those who copied the remark into their note-books slavishly[.]¹

Thomas Armstrong, one of the mid-century's most important English organists and educators, added: "In all his teaching, Allen insisted that music is a living art expressing itself in sound, and only fully alive when being performed. To know music by experience was what chiefly mattered; all that historians or critics had said about it was of secondary importance."² These were the views that Walton heard in his new lessons. As has been mentioned above, Allen had also been a mentor to Adrian Boult while the latter was an undergraduate at Christ Church. Between his crucial encounters with Vaughan Williams, Boult, and Walton—let alone his later influence as Principal of the Royal College of Music—few men had such a major impact on the course of twentieth-century British music as had Hugh Allen.

New Directions

Lessons with University Faculty

There are no records of Walton's activities for the summer of 1917. In the fall, Walton returned to Christ Church Cathedral Choir School. He was now one of the most senior at the school, serving as Head Boy.³ Despite his letter from the spring that he would be "NON Choir" this year, it seems that he did continue to sing in the cathedral choir. As his letters from this period indicate, his studies look more and more like an undergraduate's. Rather than general classes at the choir school, he talks of attending lectures—sometimes several times a week—and of meetings with three eminent members of Oxford's music faculty: Hugh Allen, Ernest Walker, Frederick Iliffe. With few undergraduates around the university due to the war, they certainly had no objection to a promising youngster attending their classes in order to broaden his horizons. But Walton's many activities in sports seem to be with his choir school friends, and he still lived in the school dormitory.

In addition to Hugh Allen, there were now two other new instructors in Walton's life. One was Ernest Walker (1870–1949), who had joined the musical staff at Balliol College when just twenty years old,⁴

¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.64

² Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.64–5

³ Burton, pp.20, 31

⁴ Leach, p.105

rising to become the college's Director of Music in 1901.¹ He was a composer in most every genre except opera, and in 1907 wrote a seminal *History of Music in England*.² Neil Tierney describes the man himself: "Walker, who greatly resembled Brahms in appearance—intentionally, so it was said—was nicknamed 'Pip Squeak' by the students because of his high-pitched voice. When asked for an opinion of the merits of some composition by one of his flock which he had just heard performed, he would trot out his favourite *bon mot*: 'It's bad, but I like it.'"³ One wonders if Walton was to hear those words in short order. They represent well Henry Ley's description: "No kind of insincerity could survive in his presence, and young men in their formative years at Oxford found the acuity, the vigour, and the scrupulousness of his mind, which was somehow suffused with humour and humanity, an inspiration for a lifetime."⁴ Ley believed that Walker's vocal music would survive, but his output is now mostly forgotten; his only works currently available on recordings are two anthems, a cello sonata and a viola sonata.

Walker instructed Walton in harmony. Philip Heseltine had also studied with Walker; his biographer, Barry Smith, described the teacher's "reputation for honesty and integrity".⁵ Thomas Armstrong indicated that these attributes "made him specially effective with the sensitive, sceptical, or rebellious type of young man. There were not a few of this kind who found [...] a sympathetic understanding in Walker which they did not find elsewhere."⁶ Armstrong further described that Walker's

experience as a practical musician had given him immense respect for the classical tradition, as a living art, with its own contemporary masters and obligations. Modern practices with him had to be tested with respect to classical tradition, classical principles had to be interpreted in the light of modern achievements. Any 'rule' had to show its credentials before gaining admittance. Walker was admittedly a better teacher for the gifted man than for the dull one.⁷

Few composers of the twentieth century fulfilled these guidelines—especially the infusion of "modern practices" within "classical principles"—as did the mature William Walton. It is unfortunate that Walton did not devote more energies to remembering the teachers of his youth; we may have found that Ernest Walker had a greater impact on his musical world-view than is currently understood.

Walton's lessons in part-writing were entrusted to a rather little known figure, Frederick Iliffe (1847–1928), the organist at St. John's College. He was also an accomplished composer,⁸ and held the vague post of Organist to the University.⁹ Walton still had contacts with Thomas Strong and Henry Ley, but now three other men—Allen, Walker, and Iliffe—would expand the boy's abilities to a new level.

Walton's first surviving letter from the new academic year is dated September 30, 1917.

¹ Wollenberg, "Oxford"

² Leach, p.105

³ Tierney, p.26

⁴ Ley, "Academic Musicians: Walker and Marchant," an undated and unsourced article in the Henry Ley papers at Christ Church Library. I have been unable to locate the source of the article.

⁵ B. Smith, p.50

⁶ Thomas Armstrong, *Musical Times*, March 1949, quoted in Deneke, p.66

⁷ Thomas Armstrong, *Musical Times*, March 1949, quoted in Deneke, p.66

⁸ Leach, p.57

⁹ Tierney, p.25

Dear Mother

Thanks very much for your letter. We have had beautiful weather this week except on Wednesday which was the day we needed it most. I had a lesson on Monday. We went to practise for the Sports. There was "Gym" on Tuesday. I went to the Bodleian in the afternoon. We had the sports on Wednesday. It was not a very nice day, but the rain held off till just at the end.

I won the Senior Cup. And also the 100 yds 1/4 mile 1/2 mile. And in the Jumps both the High and the Long. For the 100 yds I got a cup for the 1/4 a jam dish, & for the 1/2 mile a silver tray. For the High Jump I got salt & pepper shakers. In the Long jump prize I changed my watch for a 7/6 Ingersoll which could be made into a clock or you can carry it in your pocket[.] It is fine. I went to Dr Allens on Thursday. We began football on Friday. I went to Dr Allens yesterday. He played me most of Otello. I went to early service this morning. Dr Ottely preached. The anthem to-night is "Where thou reignest" Schubert. There is no more news.

With much love

Billy¹

It is hard to gauge the value of this litany of athletic accomplishments, as Walton was older than most of the other boys. But it serves as an interesting vignette of school life that one received with awards an assortment of kitchen goods. Obviously the school was doing its part to prepare the young boy for an eventual family.

This week Walton had two lesson with Allen, including one that focused not on the genres that Walton was composing—songs and works for chorus, piano, or organ—but on opera. Verdi's *Otello* was not yet prominent among the repertoire of English opera companies, so this demonstrates that Allen was staying ahead of such trends, just as Thomas Strong had been ahead of his time in playing bits of Schoenberg for the choir boys. Also noteworthy is Walton's first known trip to the Bodleian Library, which is normally accessible only to University students and other advanced scholars.

The next letter, dating from three weeks later on October 21, includes a sample of Oxford life during wartime.

Dear Mother,

Thanks very much for your letter. The weather has been quite good considering. We have had quite an exciting week. Miss Allchins burial was on Wednesday. Also we had Mrs Peake's birthday treat. Football went on the same. Our first match is on next Sat. We had great fun on Fri[day.] We went to bed at 9.0 & about 9.30 suddenly the lights went out downstairs and the hooter began going. Then Mr Peake came up to us, and the other dormitory which is on the top landing, and told us to go down stairs since there was a raid. Having arrived down in the drawing

¹ Hayes, p.15; see also Burton, p.28

room (there were 11 of us) we sat ourselves round the fire, and had candles for lights. Then the “specials” came round and said all lights out and we were left in the dark. We stayed down till 11.30 but heard nothing. We afterwards heard that they had bombed Bedford station and were coming on further but lost their way. I have enjoyed my lectures and got on well. I take my Mus Bac next June. I went to early service this morning. Dr Ottely preached. The Anthem to-night is “The Lord is my shepherd” Stanford. There is no more news.

With much love

Billy¹

An air raid warning which some might have considered dangerous or frightening is merely “great fun” to the fifteen-year-old Walton. This letter is also the first solid indication that this was to be Walton’s final year at the choir school, as he was going to take the exams for the “Mus Bac,” or Bachelor of Music degree. These exams would qualify him to enter such a study program, probably at the Royal College of Music, not to complete it.

Walton’s letter from November 4 tells of eastern European refugees among his colleagues. As the air raid was the highlight of Walton’s last letter, now it is a sports victory.

Dear Mother.

Thanks very much for your letter. The weather has been much decenter this week. I have been attending my lectures (4 a week) and seem to be getting on well. There is a Serbian also amongst us. On Wednesday we had a match against Magdalen. I got the first goal of the match and just before half-time they equalised. Just after we began they got another, so they were winning 2–1. Then in the last five minutes we got two running. and so defeated them 3–2. [...] Half-term begins on Thursday. Prize-giving on Friday. I have two prizes; The Deans and Choir. Send me some chink to go to the opera with.

With much love

Billy²

From the same date (November 4) there survives Walton’s weekly school report. He is indicated as studying “senior work”, and the instructor remarked that Walton’s efforts were “very fair”.³ According to the annual prize-giving program that Friday, November 9, Walton did indeed receive the Dean’s Prize, given by Thomas Strong, and also an award for “Choir Work” given by Henry Ley. Those are his only two mentions. A sample from the journal of Edward Peake, headmaster of the choir school, indicates Walton’s role in the school and also his precocious musical studies.

¹ Hayes, p.15–16; see also Burton, p.29. My transcription differs from Hayes’s only in the use of “down stairs” as two different words. In fact, in Walton’s original those words are on two lines, and there is no hyphen indicating an intention to link them.

² Hayes, p.16; see also Burton, p.29

³ Burton, p.30

The Dean's prize is awarded to Walton. He is head boy and is helpful to me in that position and shows great promise in music. He has been encouraged in musical composition so far that he attends the lectures of Dr Walker and Dr Allen. When a little while ago we were disturbed by a Zeppelin alarm, he at once proceeded to sit down with his music manuscript. I suppose if there had been a bomb or two dropped, there would have been some discordant crashes in the bass! Walton also receives Mr Ley's prize for work in the Choir.¹

The Heather Professor of Music, then Walter Parratt, gave public lectures every term at Oxford. This was his primary responsibility; otherwise it was a largely ceremonial post. On November 27, the Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Henry Ley, assisted Walter Parratt in his lecture, the subject of which was "Famous Oxford Musicians of the Past." The choir sang works by Henry Aldrich, Philip Hayes, and William Crotch. This was perhaps Walton's first time attending the professorial lecture. As his studies were taking a more professional direction, he may have attended future lectures as well, including "Secular Works of English Church Composers" on March 12, 1918 (perhaps the Cathedral Choir sang on this occasion as well?), and "Recitative" on June 11, 1918.²

One more letter survives from Walton's hand in the year 1917. It is left undated, but comparison with the cathedral service sheets indicates that it must have been written on Sunday, December 9.³

Dear Mother.

I have not much news this week as I only wrote on Thursday. I finished my lectures on Friday. with Dr Walker on harmony. Dr Iliffe says I have done wonderfully at my counterpoint, and thinks I shall easily be able to get through my 1st Mus bac in May.

[...] We did not go to the Deans as he is away. I have a solo in the anthem to-night. It is "Dies irae,["] Mozart. I do hope Noel will be able to come. I told Dr Allen of the possibility & he said he would be pleased to see the brother of such a promising young composer.

There's no more news

With love

Billy⁴

¹ Burton, p.31

² George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.392, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ Hayes dates it merely as some time that December.

⁴ Burton, p.29; Hayes, p.17; see also Burton, p.21; Kennedy 1989, p.9; Tierney, p.25

Toward an Undergraduacy

Three letters from Walton's hand exist from the early months of 1918, dated February 17, March 3, and May 5.¹ Each begins with his standard "Dear Mother. / Thanks very much for your letter" and ends "With much love / Billy". On the first, his usual penultimate line ("There is no more news") is granted an expansion: "There is not much news really, only the same things happen here from week to week." But this subtle distinction masks the imminent major change in Walton's future, for these would be his final terms at the choir school.

William's older brother, Noel, was stationed in London for military service. Noel undertook a brief trip to Oxford, arriving late on Saturday, February 9, and departing the next evening. William wrote to his mother the following Sunday: "I went up to the Peakes' for all meals with him. I took him round the colleges. He was awfully pleased with H.G. Ley. He went up in the [organ] loft with him. I saw him off about 8.30 and so ended a very enjoyable day."² The mild sibling rivalry that was apparent in their youth seems to have calmed, no doubt the result both of maturity and of distance. The March 8 letter indicates that Noel may visit again the following week, to hear Hugh Allen conduct Haydn's *Creation*, so apparently such visits were not extremely uncommon. Noel's recollection includes a useful indication of his brother's compositional routine at the time: "He used to sit at the piano, composing, and usually smoking a cigarette in one of those long black holders. He never could play the piano, though—used to just bang away at it!"³ This memory is the first indication that Walton had begun smoking, a habit which he would continue for most of his life, though presumably not until he had his own rooms at the university.

A death in the family brought Walton's thoughts to Lancashire in March: "I am so sorry to hear about Uncle Tom. I can hardly realise it. When the letter in the parcel came I thought he was going to recover; but your P.C on Friday told me of the end. I am writing Auntie. Grandpa and everyone must be terribly upset."⁴ In May he added: "I hope you got over to [Lytham] St Annes, and had a nice time with grandpa."⁵ This is the only direct indication that a trip to the Lancashire seaside resort of Lytham Saint Annes was not entirely unheard-of for the cash-strapped Walton family, if for no other reason than to visit family.

The war continued to make its presence known. That February, rationing was instituted throughout England. The college, and presumably the choir school, served meat on Tuesdays and Thursdays only.⁶ The Christ Church Meadow, just south of the main group of buildings that included the choir school, had been used as a training ground for the yeomanry, but now was given over to the growing of foodstuffs. "We are all working hard in the garden, sowing vegetables and things. By the way you must get my

¹ Hayes, p.17–18

² Letter from Walton to his mother, February 17, 1918, Hayes, p.17

³ Tierney, p.158

⁴ Letter from Walton to his mother, March 3, 1918, Hayes, p.18

⁵ Letter from Walton to his mother, May 5, 1918, Hayes, p.18

⁶ Judith Curthoys and John Harris, in Butler, p.75

ration card for the holiday. Don't forget."¹ Even those who were too young to fight, like Walton, supported the war effort.

A touching episode at Christ Church took place in March 1918, representing in microcosm how the war had changed the personnel resident in the college. This was the death of Canon Henry Scott Holland, for whose funeral, as Judith Curthoys reports, "the cross placed in his hands was a gift from the Serbian students, a squadron of airmen stood to attention as the coffin was processed into the cathedral, and an aeroplane passed low over the cathedral in salute."² Walton and the cathedral choir would have sung at this very solemn occasion.

An episode rather less touching followed on April 1, though it aptly depicts Walton's playful sense of humor. One of Walton's contemporaries at the Choir School, F.D. Ham, wrote many years later: "My recollections of Walton amount to trivialities – no more – but conversation might bring up memories of little events such as Walton's back side being well and truly walloped for ringing the getting up bell one hour early on All Fools Day."³ No doubt Headmaster Peake didn't approve of awakening the whole school early. According to Frank Howes, this recollection was shared by two other contemporaries, Jack Taphouse, an Oxford music-seller, and Hilary Macklin, secretary of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.⁴

Notwithstanding the war, music continued to feature in Oxford. Allen's production of *The Creation* on March 10 was certainly a highlight, which Walton probably attended. He was definitely present at the Oxford University Musical Club performance of three piano trios: the first, in B major, by Brahms (1854, revised 1889), in which Henry Ley played the piano; the third, in F minor, by Dvořák (1883) in which Ernest Walker took the keyboard;⁵ and Beethoven's trio in E-flat, opus 70 no.2. (Interestingly, only the first two are mentioned in Walton's letter home; perhaps he left the concert early?) This is the first occasion when Walton is known to have attended an event of the Musical Club, but he may have been involved earlier. The Musical Club met in an "old room at the back of 115 High Street".⁶ This organization is best described by Adrian Boult, himself a member before the war:

our eight concerts were almost entirely professional chamber-concerts: mostly quartets, or solo recitals. The fees were preposterously low even for those days, but the artists enjoyed coming: they didn't have to bother with evening dress, and they were entertained in the Colleges by any one of a group of dons whose support of the Club greatly helped matters [...].

One very great help [to the OUMC] was the presence of Dr Ernest Walker, the organist of Balliol, who was always there, and always ready to play anything classical including masterly realization of figured basses, at a moment's notice, and without fee. He appeared at least two or three times a term, for all visiting quartets enjoyed joining him in a quintet, and soloists and

¹ Letter from Walton to his mother, March 3, 1918, Hayes, p.18; Burton, p.29

² Butler, p.121

³ Letter to Stewart Craggs, January 8, 1979, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁴ A handwritten note from Maureen Murray, Archivist at La Mortella around 2000, dates this episode to 1918.

⁵ Letter from Walton to his mother, February 17, 1918, Hayes, p.17. Details of concert from OUMC Programmes, 1917–1924 (Box OUMCU 027), at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁶ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.61

singers were more than happy with his accompaniments, but he was equally helpful at short notice, and in every way an invaluable ally to a Club.¹

Walton continued to focus on his studies, reporting in February: "Have been attending lectures same as ever. Working jolly hard."² According to the Weekly Report from the choir school, he was no longer engaged in "Senior work" but in "Special work", and proceeded "fair".³ The next month he added: "My exam is on 19th. I hope to just manage to scrape through, but it will be a near thing."⁴ At the end of Hilary Term, he did indeed pass his Preliminary Examination, which would allow him to move forward for the next stage of exams.⁵ The next term brought some interesting prospects of music, but Walton continued to be engaged in sports as well: "I began my lectures as usual. I am not going in for the Senior as I don't think I can manage both. We have had two games of cricket on fine days, but the other days were cold or rainy. I am doing nothing else but music now. Next term I hope to be organist at Brasenose College if I can learn enough by October. It will be rather good if it is possible to do it. I shall begin learning after my exam."⁶

The exams proceeded well. On May 20 he matriculated,⁷ and on June 11 he passed the First Examination for a Bachelor of Music degree (B.Mus., or Mus. Bac.).⁸ James Ferguson has written that such exams "may last a week or two. Most take place in the Examination Schools on the High Street [in central Oxford], and students are still required to wear the traditional sub-fusc attire of gowns, dark suits [...] and white bow ties."⁹ Since 1916, the first music examination was conducted in writing.¹⁰ The examiners were the eminent organist Sir Walter Parratt and two of Walton's teachers, Hugh Allen and Ernest Walker.¹¹ One report indicates that "he passed [...] with flying colours."¹² The success on this examination soon opened a crucial door for Walton.

On June 18, Thomas Strong wrote a letter to a soldier, Cedric Glover, that gives an indication of musical life at Oxford during this time. Strong had been very active in the war effort, assisting generals in determining which Oxford recruits would make suitable officers. For this work he had, in the previous year, received the Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (GBE), an order of chivalry created by King George V to honor those who contributed to the war on home ground. (Thus Strong was knighted, but clergymen of the Church of England do not use the title "Sir.") He had also just, at the suggestion of Hugh Allen, become an Honorary Doctor of Music (D.Mus.) at Oxford.

¹ Boulton, p.28

² Letter from Walton to his mother, February 17, 1918, Hayes, p.17

³ Reports from November 4, 1917, and March 3, 1918, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁴ Letter from Walton to his mother, March 3, 1918, Hayes, p.17

⁵ Burton, p.40; Lloyd, p.7

⁶ Letter from Walton to his mother, May 5, 1918, Hayes, p.18

⁷ Burton, p.40

⁸ Burton, p.21, 40; Craggs 1993, p.4; Kennedy 1989, p.10; Lloyd, p.7; Tierney, p.26

⁹ Ferguson, p.42

¹⁰ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.399, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library

¹¹ Kennedy 1989, p.10

¹² Burton, p.21

I was more nervous about the D.Mus. I know that I am a very imperfectly instructed amateur in musical matters, and I felt rather a fraud; but Allen is a high-handed man, and it was the best thing to let him have his way. [...] Bartok has now become a member of the Board of Studies for Music, and so I see him from time to time. [...] You must be very dull without any music out there in France. There is very little in Oxford now. The Musical Club gives three concerts each term. I went to one this term, but was prevented from going to the other times. Last Sunday we had a concert in the Sheldonian, Allen conducted, except that Stanford came and conducted his Piano Concerto in C Minor. It was very interesting. Wounded men from the hospitals were let in free, and the area of the Sheldonian was occupied partly by the band, partly by people in couches and beds.¹

Music and the war thus went hand in hand at Oxford. Walton was also active in the Oxford University Musical Club, and as he had been working closely with Allen was probably present at the concert in Oxford's seventeenth-century Sheldonian Theatre, where Handel himself conducted the first performance of *Athalia* in 1733. Walton would soon become quite familiar with the Sheldonian.

Six days after Walton's examination, on June 17, 1918, Thomas Strong wrote to Hugh Allen. He thanked Allen for letting him borrow a score of Stanford's Second Piano Concerto performed on the preceding evening (the soloist was Benno Moiseiwitsch²), and discussed Franck's Symphony in D minor, which was also performed. He closed the letter:

I am rather anxious to have a talk with you shortly about Walton. I am very much at a loss to know exactly what he ought to do. I do not think Peake quite likes the existing situation, and I can quite understand this, because he is in the school and yet has completely different arrangements, and I expect it is rather a difficulty. But it is not easy to know what else to suggest. However, now that he has got through the first examination for the B.Mus., it is clear that something must be settled.³

Over the next month, Strong and Allen would evidently come to a conclusion that the boy Walton should, as the very young age of sixteen, enter Christ Church as an undergraduate.

On Tuesday, July 16, Walton again wrote to his mother. The letter is infused with urgency. He wasn't willing to wait until Sunday, his usual day for writing letters. The absence of his otherwise omnipresent "There is no more news" underscores that this letter contains big news indeed. Walton's usual clear script looks hasty: the sixteen-year-old boy's mind is racing.

Dear Mother.

I am writing to tell you that my fate hangs in the balance. The Dean is writing Dad to see whether I shall go into Ch. Ch. & get my Mus bac & B.A. or go into an office[.] Mind Dad replies immediately in the affirmative immediately. He will probably [be] asked if I shall be able to get

¹ Anson, p.109

² George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.5, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ Letter from Thomas Strong to Hugh Allen, June 17, 1919, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

on after with piano & you'd better say it would not [be] improbable that I should be able to get a post as organist at a public school if it was possible.

With love

Billy¹

Walton didn't let his haste entirely get the better of him. He seems to have paused to re-read before sending, for the phrase "or go into an office" and the second "immediately" are inserted above the line. The first "immediately" appears on the first page, which Walton apparently didn't notice in his re-reading, finding it necessary to add another one on the second page. But he was attentive enough to want to emphasize the alternatives: either he was to continue his education, or he was to become an office clerk. This remark is somewhat barbed, as William certainly knew the impact this would have on his father, whose own promising career as a singer had been tempered by the necessity to work in a mill office. As Zelda Lawrence-Curran points out, the phrase "Mind Dad replies immediately in the affirmative" is not exactly "brimming with filial affection."²

But Charles Walton's approval was not the only variable that might put young William's future in doubt. The family finances were still tight. Thomas Strong's letter to Charles provided a solution:

He has, as you know, shown considerable gifts in the way of music and he is, he tells me, very anxious to follow music as his profession. I saw him a day or two ago and talked over matters with him, and I have also discussed the prospects with Dr Allen, the new Professor of Music.³ It seems that it is necessary now to take some decision as to his future, as he is now out of the choir and cannot go on indefinitely in the [choir] school. I am anxious that he should have the best chance he can get of doing well in music. I am venturing therefore to make the following suggestion: that he should join the College in October as an undergraduate and continue his musical studies under Dr Allen and the other members of the Faculty. If he did this, he would be able to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts side by side with that in Music ... I have the control (as Dean) of a Fund available for the assistance of undergraduates of the College who need it. Owing to the great lack of undergraduates by reason of the war, this fund is in a rather prosperous position and I could draw upon it in order to repay his university expenses. The boy is young to be an undergraduate, but he seems to me to be a very steady and trustworthy fellow, and I do not think he should come to any harm. Last year I took a boy of 16.3 years and he has done very well: he is aiming at a degree in medicine...[.]⁴

¹ Burton, p.32; Hayes, p.19; see also Kennedy 1989, p.11

² Craggs 1999, p.156. She also states that this is Walton's only mention of his father in these letters from Oxford, neglecting the request, on June 24, 1917, that Charles send more orchestral scores.

³ Hugh Allen was appointed Heather Professor of Music upon the death of Hubert Parry earlier that year.

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.10; see also Burton, p.32. As Michael Kennedy (1989 p.10) points out, "This last sentence seems to dispose of the oft-repeated statement that Walton was the youngest member of Oxford University since the reign of Henry VIII, since in October 1918 he was sixteen years and seven months."

Though no record exists of Charles's written response, the father evidently agreed to the dean's proposal.¹ Strong made the necessary arrangements, not only supplying funds, but waiving the regulations of minimum age.² Without Strong's direct intervention in these matters, William would most definitely have returned to Oldham that summer and followed in his father's path as a promising musician forced by circumstance to work in a mill office.

Though Strong was confident in Walton's abilities, a letter from the Dean written on August 12 reveals that he did not have a full understanding of just how many qualifications he had waived on the boy's behalf:

I gather there was some doubt as to whether you had got exemption from any part of Responsions. Your music examination does not excuse you, but I think some of the things you have passed through the Locals may help. Can you tell me exactly what *subjects* you passed in last summer? I suppose the list will be out soon for this year, and then I shall be able to see what you have done towards exemption. I think you have not taken Greek, so that there will certainly be this subject wanted.... In a way it is rather a plunge from a small school into the University, and some boys might make a great mess of things, but I think this will not be the case with you.³

Matriculation, or formal admittance to the University as a student, thus involved more than the music exam that Walton had passed in June. Already Strong is considering Walton's status as regards Responsions, the exam that was necessary for Walton to proceed to a Bachelor of Arts degree. At the time Responsions involved Greek, Latin, logic and geometry. The paucity of schoolteachers due to the war meant that Walton had not studied such non-musical subjects to any satisfaction. As will be seen, this proved a major complication for Walton during the next few years.

The First World War had loomed especially heavily over England at this time. Historian Brian R. Law summarized: "Grief, sorrow, distress and anxiety remained. 1917 and the first half of 1918 were the most difficult and depressing period of the war [...]. Heavy casualties continued, life became shabbier and harder, there seemed no end in sight."⁴ As the fighting continued, the dearth of university students deepened. It is a cruel historical irony that this circumstance was one of several ways in which Walton's life actually benefited from the war. The atrocity that claimed the lives of such promising composers as George Butterworth, Ernest Farrar and Cecil Coles—and which mentally destabilized Ivor Gurney—ironically aided the development of another major talent in Walton. Other composers, notably Gerald Finzi, Arthur Bliss, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, were able to hone their experiences and feelings from the war in their music, deepening the emotional content of English music in general. Walton never made efforts to depict the war in his music. But without the war, it is highly unlikely that the music of William Walton would exist at all.

¹ Lloyd, p.6–7

² Ottaway, p.4

³ Kennedy 1989, p.11; see also Burton, p.21

⁴ Law, p.256–7

Swinburne Songs

During the post-Cathedral gatherings at the Deanery, Strong observed as the choirboys spent time “messaging about with my books etc.”¹ Steuart Bedford suggests² that these books may not only have been musical scores, but poetry as well, and may be the fount of Walton’s interest in the writings of Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909). During the summer of 1918, Walton set at least three poems by Swinburne as songs for solo voice and piano. A fourth, though its precise date is uncertain, probably stems from the same rough period.

This fourth song, *The Winds*, was among the two scores that marked, in 1921, Walton’s first published works. The other three Swinburne settings were unknown until their manuscripts, all of which are dated “July 1918”,³ surfaced for sale at Sotheby’s in November 1989.⁴ These were purchased for the Frederick R. Koch Collection and are now housed at Yale University.⁵ All four were published by Oxford University Press in March 2002, edited by Alan Cuckston, in a volume titled *Four Early Songs*.⁶ Steuart Bedford then edited them anew for the volume of the William Walton Edition devoted to the composer’s solo vocal works, published in 2011.

Though there is no specific indication from the early sources that the four were intended as an overt cycle, it is nevertheless a logical inference, given that they share a textual source. Cuckston titles the cycle *Four Early Songs*, and Bedford *Four Swinburne Songs*. Both volumes place the songs in the same satisfying order. It is in that order that they are discussed below.

Cuckston suggests that, “[h]ad the lost manuscript reappeared during his lifetime, [Walton] doubtless would have lightly revised them, just as he did with ‘A Litany’ and the discarded *Façade* settings that eventually resurfaced as *Façade 2*.”⁷ I do not necessarily agree with this opinion, though this is not a judgment on the songs themselves, but on Walton’s intense self-criticism of his early works. While all four songs have their artistic merits and deserve to be heard, *The Winds* is considerably more advanced than the other three, and Walton’s decision to publish only that one is not surprising.

The Poet

Swinburne was born into aristocracy and divided his youth between family estates in Northumberland and on the Isle of Wight. After attending Eton College, the illustrious preparatory school, he began

¹ Letter from Thomas Strong to Hubert Foss, January 8, 1938, quoted in Bedford, WWE v.8, p.vii; Burton, p.25; Kennedy 1989, p.7

² Bedford, WWE v.8, p.vii

³ Cuckston 2002, introduction

⁴ Craggs 1990, p.165; Lloyd, p.5

⁵ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, catalog number GEN MSS 601 (FRKF 1334, 1333, and 1351). See also Bedford, WWE v.8, p.vii,xv. Photocopies exist at the William Walton Museum, La Mortella, Forio; these were consulted for the present study. Stewart Craggs (1990, p.14) initially assigned to *The Winds* the catalog number “C6”. He has since (2014, p.2) expanded this catalog number to include the other three as well, under the title *Four Swinburne Songs*.

⁶ Cuckston 2002; Giroud, p.9

⁷ Cuckston 2002, introduction

studies at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1856. In his three years at Balliol he befriended Dante Rossetti, William Morris, and other prominent writers of his own and the older generation.

The 1860s and 1870s were spent in London, living for a time with Dante and Christina Rossetti at 16 Cheyne Walk, in the posh London neighborhood of Chelsea (this address is just two blocks away from Swan Walk, where Walton briefly lived with the Sitwells in the summer of 1919). In London he developed a hedonistic reputation, frequently running nude through the house.¹ His first great success as a poet was the volume, published in 1866, titled *Poems and Ballads*. It was extraordinarily popular, especially among undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge, no doubt in part because of its overtly sexual contents. Later volumes embraced political causes, such as the unification of Italy, sometimes using ancient Greek forms.

In 1879 he settled in the district of Putney, in the southwest of London, where he tamed his alcoholism and other youthful excesses. He continued to write and publish poetry, including the epic poem *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), and also wrote volumes on Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Victor Hugo. He is attributed with the invention of the genre known as the roundel, a fusion of medieval French forms. In his final decade he oversaw the comprehensive collection of his *Poems* (1904) and neo-Elizabethan *Tragedies* (1905).² All four of the poems set by Walton appear in the third volume of *Poems*, and are in the forms found therein. It can thus be reasonably concluded that this volume was Walton's primary source for the text.

Compositional Style

Cuckston has compared these settings favorably to *The Forsaken Merman*, composed two years earlier: "These are much more disciplined compositions, eschewing technical display, the voice part having little more than an octave compass. Although none has a tempo marking, they are easy to gauge from the simple conventions of the rhythmical styles adopted."³ In his preface to their publication, he added:

Their discovery is important in shedding light on the teenage Walton's musical idiom, revealing that he had already at the age of sixteen intuitively developed a predilection for certain technical devices which were to be an individualizing feature in his mature music. This is remarkable enough, but perhaps to be expected in the creative output of a young, untutored, musical genius, working more or less in isolation, even though in a rather special environment.

[...]The songs represent considerably more than might be expected of an average adolescent's essays in word-setting, though the lack of tempo indications and dynamics in all three is surprising.⁴

Walton's attention to the text is also greater here than in *The Forsaken Merman*, the early versions of *A Litany*, and *Tell me where is fancy bred*. His attention to punctuation and capitalization is very sure, matching almost flawlessly the 1904 volume that seems to be his source. It seems that Walton had the

¹ Fuller, p.80–81

² Walsh, "An Introduction to Algernon Charles Swinburne"

³ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.5

⁴ Cuckston 2002, introduction

volume of poetry immediately at hand while composing, or at least while making the manuscript fair copies.

Child's Song

Steaart Bedford describes the manuscript of *Child's Song*, which is dated "July 1918", as follows: "The score is written in black ink on a single double sheet of 12-stave paper measuring 23.5 x 31 cm".¹ The text first appeared in Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads, Second Series*, in 1889. The poem, as it appears in Walton's likely source (volume three of *Poems*, 1904), is as follows:

What is gold worth, say,
Worth for work or play,
Worth to keep or pay,
Hide or throw away,
 Hope about or fear?
What is love worth, pray?
 Worth a tear?

Golden on the mould
Lie the dead leaved rolled
Of the wet woods old,
Yellow leaves and cold,
 Woods without a dove;
Gold is worth but gold;
 Love's worth love.²

The text is perhaps odd to be titled *Child's Song*. The short phrases are certainly fitting for a children's tune, and the simple words—all but four are monosyllables—well within a child's understanding. But the subject matter seems a strange choice. It is a juxtaposition of the relative values of gold and love, with a clear preference for the latter. Gold is compared to the dead leaves of a forest floor. Love is hardly mentioned, though the claim that it might be "worth a tear" implies that the speaker is sad for loss. Perhaps Swinburne's intent in assigning these as lyrics to be sung by children is to help them see at an early age the relative value of life experiences. Swinburne's youthful, hedonistic days are past, but here he recalls them with a hint of innocence and nostalgia. Walton sets the text as two verses which begin identically. In thirty-seven bars, the song lasts barely a minute.

Walton's ability to compose for piano has progressed considerably since the *Valse*, written the previous year. In *Child's Song*, the left hand freely and smoothly moves into the treble clef; the composer clearly perceives the keyboard as an integral whole, not divided between the visual staves. The right hand of the piano moves homophonically, mostly in parallel fifths, the left hand in parallel fourths; Alan Cuckston identifies the resultant sonorities as "seventh and eleventh chords in parallel motion".³ The

¹ Bedford, *WWE* v.8, p.xv

² Bedford, *WWE* v.8, p.xxxiv; Swinburne 1889, p.158; Walsh, *The Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*

³ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.5

key signature is three flats, though it is unclear whether this implies E-flat major or C minor. The cadence that ends the first verse is an F-sharp dominant seventh chord leading to E-flat major, but the song's final sonority is a delicate C minor seventh chord. However, that final chord is spaced so openly—with doubled E-flats (including one in the low bass) and B-flats (including the high treble)—that the effect is of an open fifth on E-flat and B-flat with additional pitches for color. In terms of harmony, the song's most magical moment happens at "Golden on the mould / Lie the dead leaves rolled / Of the wet woods old." Walton chooses Delius-like chromatic chords (Cuckston suggests John Ireland as another inspiration¹). The piano's texture thickens from four to six voices. And the piano appropriately moves low for the first time when the text mentions death.

The vocal part is for medium or high voice, with the range extending from F at the bottom of the treble clef to F-sharp above. The piano doubles the vocal pitches in its treble register, but it could be performed effectively by male or female voice. As Swinburne's lines are short, so are Walton's two-measure phrases. The text-setting is entirely syllabic. There are very few leaps in the vocal part, and in that respect this song differs from the composer's later output. The final line ("Love's worth love.") rises from C to D-flat and E-flat, avoiding a leading tone and further clouding the intended key center. The effect of *Child's Song* is gentle delicacy.

Song ("Love laid his sleepless head")

The second lyric, like *Child's Song*, appears first in *Poems and Ballads, Second Series*, in 1889. In that volume its title is taken from the first line of the text. In the 1904 *Poems*, the title is *Song*; Walton's manuscript includes this title. Swinburne made two substantive changes in the intervening fifteen years: "rose" in the third line has become "rosy," and "as" in the thirteenth line was originally "at." That Walton adopts the later text and its new title reinforces the theory that *Poems* was his source. Walton does make one error in the text, replacing the word "world" with "day." As shall be discussed below, Swinburne's original is the preferred option. Steurt Bedford describes the manuscript exactly as that of *Child's Song*, the only difference being the paper measurement of "23.3 x 30.5 cm."² Swinburne's text is:

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed;
And his eyes with tears were red,
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was overworn,
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,

¹ Cuckston 2002, introduction

² Bedford, *WWE* v.8, p.xv

And the watchers ghostly and grey
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright;
And his lips waxed ruddy as light:
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.¹

Swinburne personifies Love, having wept himself to pallor, resting awake all night on a pillow of thorny roses. Though the poet does not capitalize their names, Fear, Sorrow, and Scorn are also characters in this poem, as they watch Love in his vigil. At dawn, Joy comforts Love with a kiss and the three watchers promptly flee. The final couplet reveals the moral of the story: "Sorrow may reign for a night, / But day shall bring back delight."

The music lacks key signature. Though the voice's first two cadences arrive at A, that pitch does not serve as a reliable pitch center. Whole tones are the song's uniting factor. The piano's lilting 6/8 motive outlines a D minor ninth chord, with the whole step of D–E prominent. The singer meanders on the white keys of the piano, mostly on the whole-tone grouping of C–D–E with a brief foray to G–A–B. When the piano finally changes its harmony in m.5, it is to a pentatonic sonority of A–B–C-sharp–E–F-sharp. When the text shifts to Fear, Sorrow, and Scorn keeping watch, the piano repeats a syncopated whole-tone dyad of D–E. This serves to depict Love's lengthy vigil, and also reinforces the principal sonority of the song.

At the arrival of dawn, the piano livens to what Cuckston considers Scotch snaps.² The voice achieves its highest pitch (G) with the arrival of Joy. The Scotch snaps persist, the harmony grows more dissonant, and as the three watchers flee, the piano quickly rolls a chord that, to Cuckston, recalls Scriabin's "mystic chord." Were this eight-note chord stacked into thirds, it would spell a ninth chord on F (F, A, C, E, and G-sharp), with three octaves of E-flats for color. The piano's syncopated figure returns, no longer a melancholy dyad but a bright high E-flat. The piano's opening figure returns for two measures at the beginning of the final couplet ("Sorrow may reign for a night"), but exuberant Scotch snaps close ("But day shall bring back delight.").

This is probably the least satisfying of Walton's four Swinburne settings, both harmonically and melodically, but it has some curious indications for the future. Its harmonic ambiguities remind one of the song *Tritons* and the early string quartet which immediately follow his Oxford period. And the spare vocal declamation over a repetitive figure presages moments in *Façade*. Positioned as the second in a cycle, it functions well by not drawing too much attention to its weaknesses. Its thirty-five measures last about a minute and a quarter.

¹ Bedford, *WWE* v.8, p.xxxiii; Swinburne 1889, p.133–4; Walsh, *The Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*

² Cuckston 2002, introduction; Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.5

A Lyke-Wake Song

Walton's manuscript of *A Lyke-Wake Song* is unlike those of its two sibling-songs. Steuart Bedford describes it thus: "The score is written in black ink, with additions in pencil, on two separate double sheets. One is on 14-stave paper measuring 36.8 x 33.8 cm and stamped 'B.C./No. 3'; the other is of 12-stave paper with printed clefs for voice and piano measuring 27.7 x 35.7 cm. The 14-stave double sheet appears to be a fair copy." On the second sheet is "a copy in a different script of the first 29 bars", with the following surfaces left blank.¹ Walton not only had prepared a fair copy, but someone else—perhaps a fellow student—had begun to copy it out. Both Bedford and Cuckston correct an error made in this second copy.

In this text Swinburne indulges in a bit of historicism. He was raised largely in Northumberland, the region known to the English as "Borders" because it abuts Scotland. His *Poems and Ballads, Third Series* (published in 1889) includes several poems in the quasi-Scottish dialect of a traditional Border ballad. Both *A Lyke-Wake Song* and *The Winds* appear in this volume. The two had originally appeared in Swinburne's incomplete novel *Lesbia Brandon* (1877), but were revised upon publication. In its original guise, Swinburne titled this poem "A Nursery Jingle."

The text follows. The anglicized versions of dialect terms are confirmed by *The English Dialect Dictionary* published between 1898 and 1905.²

Fair of face, full of pride, Sit ye down by a dead man's side.	ye = you
Ye sang songs a' the day: Sit down at night in the red worm's way.	a' = all
Proud ye were a' day long: Ye'll be but lean at evensong.	
Ye had gowd kells on your hair: Nae man kens what ye were.	gowd = gold; kell = woman's netted cap nae = no; kens = knows
Ye set scorn by the silken stuff: Now the grave is clean enough.	
Ye set scorn by the rubis ring: Now the worm is a saft sweet thing.	rubis ³ = ruby saft = safe, contented
Fine gold and blithe fair face, Ye are come to a grimly place.	

¹ Bedford, *WWE* v8., p.xv

² Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*

³ This word is not found in *The English Dialect Dictionary*; its interpretation is conjectural.

Gold hair and glad grey een,
Nae man kens if ye have been.¹

een = eyes

The grisly poem is told by a dead man, long buried, as he welcomes a female neighbor in the adjacent grave. He describes her as proud and worldly, having passed her time singing songs and focusing on her appearance and possessions. Now, however, she is to be eaten by worms and forgotten by mankind. The poem's form is a series of eight rhyming couplets, the first line of which depicts the woman in life, the second line in death.

Walton has grouped the couplets together into pairs, thus creating four verses. The vocal pitches are identical for each verse, though the rhythm changes slightly to fit the text. The musical form of each verse is AABB, matching the rhyme scheme. The "A" phrase begins on a high F, falling to C, whereas the "B" phrase continues the fall from the mid-range to the lower F. This steady, inexorable descent wonderfully depicts the gradual arrival into the grave. The melodic phrases are simple, akin to a folksong; like a folksong, the text is set syllabically.

The piano part is rather more varied. The texture is almost always in four parts, and the upper line frequently doubles the voice. Most measures are given only one chord per bar (the meter is 3/4), though some have non-chord tones on the third beat. The key signature is in F minor, but the opening sonority is a half-diminished seventh chord on G. The second chord is the tonic with an added seventh; sevenths permeate the song's harmony, as they will Walton's adult works. The second and third verses are given more chromatic harmonies. The chromatic pitches almost always involve falling; in fact, though the work is in F minor, the only E-naturals function not as leading tones, but as chromatic color tones moving downward, usually to E-flat. In both the second and third verses, the bass line includes a purely chromatic descent from G-flat to C, which Cuckston compares to a ground typical of the English Baroque.² The piano part of the fourth verse is identical to the first. To this is appended a coda of only two chords as a cadence into F major.

Lasting about two minutes, *A Lyke-Wake Song* is the finest of the three Swinburne songs that were not published in Walton's lifetime. Alan Cuckston points out the influence of John Ireland,³ Peter Warlock, Frank Bridge, and Rebecca Clarke,⁴ but this is really to say that the work fits well among the great corpus of English art-songs of the time. Zelda Lawrence-Curran has argued that *A Lyke-Wake Song* presages *Beatriz's Song* from Walton's music for the radio play *Christopher Columbus* in 1942, with "the same drooping melodic line and chordal accompaniment, the harmony rendered more piquant by the addition of sevenths and ninths."⁵ It is unlikely that Walton consciously recalled his youthful endeavor in that major wartime score, but in *A Lyke-Wake Song* several of Walton's later fingerprints appear.

¹ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xxxiii; Walsh, *The Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*

² Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.6–7

³ Cuckston 2002, introduction

⁴ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.6–7

⁵ Lawrence-Curran, in Craggs 1999, p.159

The Winds

Historically speaking, *The Winds* should be set slightly apart from the three other Swinburne settings. The location of its manuscript is unknown,¹ having probably been the property of its first publisher, Curwen & Sons. Scholars usually date *The Winds* to 1918, but, as best I can determine, this date is purely conjectural, based on the other Swinburne songs. Given its markedly more sophisticated approach to word-setting and piano-writing, it is probably the last of the surviving Swinburne settings to be composed. Walton may have revised it before publication in 1921.

Swinburne's text, like that of *A Lyke-Wake Song*, is in the dialect of the Border Country. *The Winds* is found immediately before *A Lyke-Wake Song* in the third series of *Poems and Ballads* from 1889, though it also appeared in an earlier version in the 1877 incomplete novel *Lesbia Brandon*. The text is as follows, again with an anglicization of certain words in accordance with *The English Dialect Dictionary*.²

O weary fa' the east wind, And weary fa' the west: And gin I were under the wan waves wide I wot weel wad I rest.	fa' = fall/falls gin = before wot = become; weel = whirlpool; wad = would
O weary fa' the north wind, And weary fa' the south: The sea went ower my good lord's head Or ever he kissed my mouth.	ower = over
Weary fa' the windward rocks, And weary fa' the lee: They might hae sunken sevenscore ships, And let my love's gang free.	hae = have; sunken = sunk gang = go
And weary fa' ye, mariners a', And weary fa' the sea: It might hae taken an hundred men, And let my ae love be. ³	ye = you; a' = all ae = ever/eternal

The text of *The Winds* is somewhat difficult to anglicize, as it is in a heavier Scottish dialect than *A Lyke-Wake Song*. For example, the word "fa'," which appears so often, can have several different meanings, but the most logical is "fall." This usage is identified as being especially common to Scotland and Northumberland. Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns both make reference to the River Nith, in the south of Scotland, "whose distant roaring swells and fa's." One use, referenced to the Orkney Islands but seeming typical of Scotland, specifically applies to the sea, as in "to grow calmer."⁴ The winds, having finished their storm, are now less agitated. Walton's dynamic marking of **mp** becomes clearer: the winds

¹ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xv; Craggs 1977, p.4; Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 1993, p.241

² Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*

³ Bedford, WWE v8., p.xxxiii–xiv; Walsh, *The Algernon Charles Swinburne Project*

⁴ Wright, v.2, p.287–8

themselves, not just the singer, are weary. Later even the rocks against which the singer's love's ship has run aground—and all mariners, even the sea itself—all fall weary.

The third and fourth lines are the most problematic: "And gin I were under the wan waves wide / I wot weel wad I rest." The use of "gin" as "before" is somewhat commonplace in Scotland and the north of England, deriving from "against the time."¹ The "wan waves wide" are the pale waves of the ocean. The poet's insistence on the alliterative "w"—already hinted by the repetitions of "weary"—renders the meaning of the fourth line cloudy. In Scottish parlance, a "weel" is "a whirlpool; an eddy; a deep, still part of a river,"² probably derived from comparison to a rolling wheel. The only Scottish or Northumbrian indication of "wot" that I can locate is "worth," with its obsolete meaning "to become." (This is perhaps more common in the phrase "woe worth," meaning "may woe befall, or become.")³ The final w-word, "wod," has no contextually satisfactory variant in *The English Dialect Dictionary*, but seems to imply "would." Thus the speaker would rather become one with a river whirlpool, there to die by drowning, than to be under the distant ocean. The desperation of a lonely lover is clear.

Harmonically, less happens in Walton's *The Winds* than his other Swinburne songs. He has honed his craft away from harmonic adventures for their own sakes, and instead harnesses them for practical use. His setting is in four verses; the first two are identical except for some modifications to fit the text in a rhythmically appropriate manner.

The key signature has one sharp, but the work is at best only tangentially in E minor; the other likely contender would be A Dorian. The piano's sixteenth-note murmurings outline a steady flux of seventh chords: A minor seventh (with E prominent in the bass), to F major seventh, back to A minor seventh and F major seventh, then to B-flat minor seventh, to G-flat major seventh for a longer period, and finally to F major seventh. The second verse is harmonically identical. The third verse changes after the first two chords, now leading to C-sharp minor seventh, to A major seventh, briefly to E major, and then closing on F major seventh. The episode of an E major chord is especially noteworthy for the sudden appearance of a melody in octaves in the left hand; this falls dramatically in E major, but instead of closing on E, it leaps a tritone from F-sharp to C-natural, which functions as a brief dominant to F major. The fourth verse begins in the same manner, but shifts at the same dramatic juncture to a C-sharp half-diminished seventh chord, rising in the first block chords of the piece, and crashing into an A-flat minor seventh chord. After a final scale in E minor, the closing sonorities are an open fifth of A–E followed by octave E's. Not until this final sonority is Walton's intended tonality of E minor, rather than A Dorian, made clear. Though Walton has simplified his harmonic palette in that he uses fewer chords in *The Winds* than in his previous works, he has maintained a natural taste for harmonic ambiguity and a focus on seventh chords, both of which will remain features of his later works.

What this dry analysis hides is the insistent murmuring of the piano part throughout; the waves, albeit perhaps weary, are still threatening. These murmurs also underscore the frantic nature of the singer's part, which begins with a dramatic octave leap. The first two lines of each stanza circle E (another hint at

¹ Wright, v.2, p.617

² Wright, v.6, p.420–1

³ Wright, v.6, p.547

this tonal center), but each stanza ends on C. The final verse rises to a top A; this song's range of an octave plus a tritone is considerably wider than the other Swinburne settings. After a dramatic high A-flat on "hundred," the voice is left unaccompanied, and marked *ad libitum*, for the final line: "And let my ae love be." The *diminuendo* on the final word is the only dynamic marking given to the voice in the entire song. The temptation is to sing it all rather strong—as is usually done on recordings—but the poem gains greater depth if the singer follows the dynamics given to the piano.

In *The Winds* we see several features of the mature Walton appearing. Vocally speaking, much of Walton's later vocal writing—notably in the opera *Troilus and Cressida* and the two postwar song-cycles, *A Song for the Lord Mayor's Table* and *Anon. in Love*—functions on a juxtaposition of dramatic leaps and stepwise oscillations, both features of *The Winds*. He changes harmonies more slowly—as will be seen especially in his orchestral works such as the Viola Concerto and the First Symphony—but still embraces the seventh chords that are a harmonic fingerprint. *The Winds* hints at the mature Walton in a one-minute microcosm: Classical structure, Romantic mood, a modal harmonic language, and a natural instinct for drama whether in voice or instruments.

Performances and Publication

The history of *The Winds* is interwoven with that of another song, *Tritons*, which Walton composed in 1920, by which time he was firmly ensconced among the Sitwell clan. *Tritons* is a very different song, one of Walton's first forays into atonal writing. It is often said that both of these were performed in 1920.¹ The William Walton Museum at La Mortella in Ischia has a copy of both published scores. The score to *The Winds* reads bears an inscription to Helen Rootham, a close friend of Edith Sitwell: "To Helen, who first sang this song. / Best love. / Willie." That of *Tritons*, however, reads: "To Helen / With love / from / William / Dec 18th 1920". The difference of inscription seems to imply that Rootham may not have sung *Tritons* as well. What's more, the published score was not yet available to the public. It is tempting to wonder if Rootham sang *The Winds* on the night when he inscribed her score to *Tritons*. According to Walton's friend Stephen Tennant, who was associated with the Sitwell family, the venue of any such performance was probably the home of Lady Pamela Glenconner, Tennant's mother, at 34 Queen Anne's Gate, immediately south of St. James's Park in central London.² Angus Morrison, a pianist in the Sitwell circle and a close friend of Walton during this time, likewise believed that Helen Rootham sang *The Winds* on an occasion such as this.³

Publication came to *The Winds* and *Tritons* in early 1921. They appeared under the title *Two Songs*, sold for two pence by J. Curwen & Sons Ltd as catalog number CE 2217.⁴ While the songs share nautical texts, their musical material is so strikingly different that Walton certainly did not consider them as a pair. Rather, their joint publication was most likely the publisher's preference. I do not know of any surviving correspondence between Walton and Curwen which may confirm or disprove this impression.

¹ Hayes, p.489; Kennedy 1989, p.304

² Kennedy 1989, p.304; Lloyd, p.25

³ Craggs 1977, p.44; Craggs 1990, p.14

⁴ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xv; Craggs 1977, p.44; Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 1993, p.241 (which gives the publisher as "J & W Curwen")

A letter that Walton wrote to his mother on December 18, 1921 indicates that *The Winds* was sung the previous Wednesday, December 14.¹ (He added: “I am glad you took a copy of Tritons. How do you like it.”² We can only wonder what this Victorian voice teacher thought of its quasi-Schoenbergian harmonies!) For many years it was believed that this reference was to a private performance, but Stuart Bedford has discovered that the occasion was public. The venue was the Aeolian Hall in London, and the soprano was Dorothy Moulton. This evening of English songs is, in fact, the first known concert performance of any of Walton’s music.³

For several years, it was claimed that the earliest documented performance of which firm evidence survived was on Wednesday, October 30, 1929, also at the Aeolian Hall. On that occasion the singer was soprano Odette de Foras and Gordon Bryan played piano.⁴ They presented both *The Winds* and *Tritons*, together with Walton’s Piano Quartet and the first public performance of Constant Lambert’s *Eight Songs of Li Po*. Eric Blom reviewed this concert in *Musical Times*, when he contrasted the songs favorably to the quartet: “the two early songs left one with a far clearer sense of the composer’s precocious certainty of touch”.⁵ The anonymous reviewer of *The Times* wrote on Friday, November 1, that “the setting of Swinburne’s ‘The Winds’ had real feeling, and as a juvenile composition is really remarkable.”⁶ This performance, of course, belonged to a very different period in Walton’s life, being given just twenty-seven days after the first performance of the Viola Concerto.⁷

The publication rights of *The Winds* and *Tritons* were transferred to Susana Walton in March 1984.⁸ She authorized Oxford University Press to reprint them on April 4, 1985, as *Two Early Songs*.⁹ The following years they were published together with Walton’s other vocal music in the volume *William Walton: A Song Album*, edited by Christopher Palmer. These two early works are reprinted exactly as they appeared in the 1921 Curwen edition. The 2002 edition of *Four Early Songs*, edited by Alan Cuckston, includes *The Winds* newly engraved.¹⁰ Finally, the William Walton Edition volume of vocal music, edited by Stuart Bedford and published in 2011, includes new versions of both *The Winds* and *Tritons*.

The four Swinburne songs were first performed as a group on April 9, 1992, in the northern English town of Darlington at Liddiard Theatre, by soprano Teresa Troiani and pianist Eileen Brown.¹¹ The 1990s saw three albums that were retrospectives of Walton’s vocal music, all of which include *The Winds*. The first recording was made by soprano Yvonne Kenny and pianist Malcolm Martineau for the Etcetera label,

¹ Hayes, p.28. Stewart Craggs (1977, p.44; 1990, p.14) interprets his reference to “last Wednesday” as December 11, an inaccuracy which persists in Kennedy (p.21).

² Hayes, p.28

³ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.viii

⁴ Craggs 1977, p.44; Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 1993, p.14–15; Kennedy 1989, p.304

⁵ Eric Blom, “Mr Gordon Bryan’s Concert,” *Musical Times*, Vol. 70, 1929, p.1125, quoted in Bedford, WWE v.8, p.viii; see also Craggs 1993, p.323; Smith, p.116 (both of these give the reference as Vol. 71, p.1124–5)

⁶ Anonymous, “Recitals of the Week”

⁷ Bedford, WWE v.8, viii

⁸ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xvi

⁹ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xvi; Craggs 1990, p.14; Craggs 1993, p.241; Smith, p.44

¹⁰ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xv

¹¹ Craggs 2014, p.3

recorded on May 2–4, 1992, at Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead.¹ On November 7–8, 1993, tenor John Mark Ainsley and pianist Hamish Milne recorded it for Chandos.² Finally, soprano Felicity Lott joined pianist Graham Johnson for a recording—made on October 2–3, 1996, and May 1–2, 1997—released in 1997 by Collins Classics;³ this has since been reissued by Naxos Records.⁴ Again, all of these recordings include *The Winds*, though sadly the other three Swinburne songs still await their first recording.

Suggestions to Performers

Singers and pianists wishing to perform these works should ideally be aware of both Cuckston’s and Bedford’s editions, and should consider their differences. The Bedford edition is the superior of the two, and should be used if available. It is, however, rather more expensive than the Cuckston version, being currently available only in the William Walton Edition. Discrepancies between the two are discussed here, so that those performers who only have the Cuckston edition available can make informed decisions.

As regards *Child’s Song*, the primary difference between the editions lies in slurs in the vocal part. Bedford restores several slurs that are missing in Cuckston.⁵ In Walton’s manuscript the placement of these slurs is imprecise, but his intention is always clear. The placement of most of these slurs is quite intuitive, matching the musical phrase structure as indicated by rests. Thus Cuckston’s edition is not problematic, merely minimalist; a singer need only observe the slurs written in the piano part. One special case is Walton’s slur over the words “mould / Lie the dead leaves”, indicating that the six-bar phrase of m.20–25 should be sung with one breath. Cuckston instead includes as a slur underneath the text. It is worth noting that the two breath marks, in m.4 and m.14, are encompassed by slurs in the manuscript. These breath marks are therefore indications of articulation rather than physical breathing. This works well with the sentence structure and the musical phrase.

The only tempo indication in the manuscript of *Child’s Song* is the concluding *ritardando*. Cuckston’s suggested initial *Moderato* is effective. Likewise, the *diminuendos* in m.10 and m.26–27 are Walton’s only dynamic markings, but again Cuckston’s editorial interpolations are very satisfying. Other than the issue of slurs, the Cuckston edition of *Child’s Song* can be used without complication.

For *Song* (“Love laid his sleepless head”), the differences between Cuckston and Bedford are more fundamental; in each case Bedford’s reading is preferable.

- The first word of Walton’s manuscript in m.16 is “day” rather than “world.” Cuckston retains this variant,⁶ though Bedford notes that this bar “comes at the top of a new page in [the manuscript], so [Walton] may easily have miscopied this word. ‘Day’ comes in the next line of the poem, so its use in the previous line would hardly be an improvement.”⁷

¹ Etcetera, KTC 1140

² Chandos Records, CHAN 9292

³ Collins Classics, 14932

⁴ Naxos Records, 8.557112

⁵ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix

⁶ Cuckston 2002, p.2

⁷ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix, 10

- The final pitch in m.32 is an eighth note in Cuckston,¹ but a sixteenth note in Bedford.² While the former is certainly easier to sing, the latter is clear in the manuscript.
- Bedford also argues cogently against Cuckston's interpretation³ of accidentals in the piano part in m.34, that the final D-sharp should be D-natural.⁴ The manuscript lacks accidentals for both this and the preceding D-natural.

The only discrepancy between Cuckston's and Bedford's editions of *A Lyke-Wake Song* is the textual error in the last line. Cuckston retains Walton's error of "had" rather than "have." Bedford wisely restores Swinburne's original word. It should also be noted that the **pp** mark in m.49 is not in Walton's hand in the manuscript. Nevertheless, it is a worthy interpretational mark, and as such appears in both Bedford and Cuckston. Another consideration for singers is to what extreme they should adopt the dialect of the Border Country. Swinburne's rhyme scheme helps somewhat, but care should be taken not to sound hackneyed.

As for *The Winds*, there are fewer difficulties given that its only surviving primary source is the original published version. There is one apparent error that Steuart Bedford has changed: he corrects the final note of the piano's left hand in m.44 from G to A,⁵ thereby preserving motivic consistency. The G is so fleeting as to be barely audible and merely renders the work unnecessarily difficult to play. Also, Cuckston's edition inexplicably adds an accent to the piano in m.13, which Bedford removes.

As has been remarked above, *The Winds* is no stranger to record, though it is rarely performed. The other three Swinburne settings still await their first recording. All four are set for high voice, but could be effectively transposed down. The full set, especially in the order presented by Cuckston and Bedford, would be a satisfying addition to any singer's recital, and especially *A Lyke-Wake Song* and *The Winds* deserve to be better known.

¹ Cuckston, p.5

² Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix, 11

³ Cuckston, p.5

⁴ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xix, 11

⁵ Bedford, WWE v.8, p.xx

A Young Undergraduate, 1918–20

Becoming an Undergraduate

Lifestyle

As the war continued, there were only forty-two undergraduates at Christ Church during the Michaelmas term in the fall of 1918.¹ These young men assembled together at the Sheldonian Theatre—as they still do every term—for the formal matriculation ceremony, when each of them, in the words of G.R. Evans, “undertakes to obey the Statutes and the subordinate domestic legislation made under the Statutes, and becomes (for life), a member of the ancient corporation of the University.”²

There is an historical elegance to such an occasion. But the war meant that other luxuries were downsized. Rationing continued, and according to one entertaining letter written in July by the classicist John George Clark Anderson, Christ Church apparently was not handling the difficulty with culinary aplomb:

Turnip soup ... had better be avoided in the future. It is food for cows and there is absolutely no need to serve such stuff. Haddock is a fish that needs far more skilful handling than the Christ Church staff is capable of, to be palatable at all. The spaghetti was solid food but very uninteresting.... I think the Ch. Ch. staff would do well to use a cookery book, as they appear not to have the slightest idea of what to serve.”³

Now that he was an undergraduate, Walton no longer dined in the choir school buildings, but in the historic Great Hall that occupies the south face of Tom Quad. That room, perhaps more than any other at Oxford, proclaims its college’s majestic history. Cardinal Wolsey, King Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I, John Locke, Charles Boyle, John Wesley, Edward Pusey, William Ewart Gladstone, and dozens of other luminaries glared down, in the form of oil portraits, as the young man ate.

And he was indeed young, just sixteen years and six months. He had shifted from being the oldest of the boys in the Cathedral Choir School to the youngest of the undergraduates at the College. But there is some indication that he may have also enjoyed the distinction, as his wife would later report: “he liked to think himself the youngest undergraduate since the reign of Henry VIII, although this was not entirely true.”⁴

Thomas Strong had ensured that Walton’s college fees were paid for by a special fund, but Walton still had other expenses to tend to. Fortunately, in the mid-nineteenth century Oxford began to offer

¹ Curthoys, p.301

² Evans, p.30

³ Judith Curthoys and John Harris, in Butler, p.75

⁴ S. Walton, p.45

scholarships, called Exhibitions, which, as educator Mark Pattison phrased it in 1846, were “to be conferred, not upon grounds of literary merit, but of poverty, character, and economical habits”.¹ Walton certainly fit these qualifications, though the third criterion would become problematic. On November 13, the Governing Body of Christ Church, consisting of the same canons for whose liturgies he had sung since 1912, voted to approve an Exhibition to Walton for £85 per year, for two years.² His official status was that of Commoner,³ as he did not come from the landed classes.

Walton had been assigned quarters in the Peckwater Quad,⁴ probably in the upper floors. These buildings were completed in 1713, originally intended to house noblemen.⁵ “Peck,” like the larger and older Tom Quad to the immediate southwest, is organized by staircases. Each staircase had a scout, a kind of servant who filled the needs of the students with rooms there. Trevor Kerlake’s description of meeting his own scout as an undergraduate probably mirrors Walton’s experience:

I unpacked my trunk and a box of crockery, boiled the kettle and made some tea. A little later, my scout, Humphreys, arrived and told me most of what I needed to know about the daily routine in College. He sold me a gown and a surplice which had belonged to one of his “gentlemen who went down last year”. I was equipped; all I had to do now was to become fully-fledged as a member of the House. Humphreys was a great help to me; he didn’t need to be told that I was rather out of my depth, but simply made the sort of suggestions which were appropriate from time to time. [...] He was one of the most senior scouts and had charge of twelve sets of rooms[.]⁶

Judith Curthoys, the archivist at Christ Church, recounts Henry Smith’s time as an undergraduate. Walton’s experience a few years earlier would have been similar.

Coming up to Christ Church in the 1920s and 1930s was as mixed an experience as it had always been. The staircases were, as ever, populated by a diverse group of men from the wealthy on the ground floor, down through the social ranks the further up the stairs one went. Henry Smith, later a Civil Service economist, arrived as an extra-mural scholarship boy from industrial Portsmouth, and was given rooms in the attic of Peckwater Quad where he ate his breakfast and lunch, saving every spare penny of his scholarship money to send home to his mother. Lunch was according to one’s pocket: either bread and cheese or a five-course meal with wine, served by one’s scout.⁷

On October 23, Walton wrote to his mother regarding his finances and accommodations: “The Dean has made all arrangements about sheets etc. And I can go to him for money when I am without. I have a

¹ Pattison, *Suggestions on Academical Organization*, p.57, quoted in Evans, p.306

² Burton, p.21; Craggs 1993, p.4; Hayes, p.21; Kennedy 1989, p.11; Lloyd, p.7; Tierney, p.26

³ Tierney, p.26

⁴ Burton, p.21–2

⁵ Ferguson, p.12

⁶ Butler, p.146

⁷ Curthoys, p.306

most lovely Bechstein upright [piano] in my rooms.”¹ A week later, on the 29th, he added: “I am getting on splendidly now. It has been quite an eventful week [...] I have got everything in now. Cups & knives etc. And I have a kettle & make coffee etc.”² The jam dish, silver tray and salt and pepper shakers he was awarded the previous year probably came in handy. Not all rooms had pianos, and several basic modern luxuries were missing also: indoor plumbing did not arrive until the 1950s, whereas “hitherto, running water [had] come only through the roof”.³ The colleges generally supplied little in way of furniture or decoration.⁴ Dining at the Great Hall required the students to wear semiformal dress, including a collar, tie and gown.⁵ No doubt a fair amount of Walton’s Exhibition stipend went to mundane matters, even with Strong’s help. Money was still tight, for he wrote on November 27: “Thanks very much for the letter & [£]10/- [note] (I expected another)”,⁶ and, the following week, “Thanks very much for the letter & £11.”⁷

One undergraduate, arriving at Christ Church in the late 1970s, has written that “on the whole, the ambience of the place spoke as much of the 1870s as it did of the 1970s, with a strong dash of the medieval thrown in.”⁸ He further explains that:

the undergraduate culture, by and large, was still in a state of heroic denial about most of the previous century of British social history. My first awed impression of life at Christ Church, during freshers’ week, was of a great, dark place where in the evenings there were always lots of fine, strapping, well-bred young men around in immaculate evening dress, companionably and fraternally vomiting over each other; and every upstairs window in Peckwater always seemed to have a sofa flying out of it just as I was walking past.⁹

Given such behavior of drunkenness and wanton destruction, perhaps the college could be forgiven for not supplying much furniture!

Academia

Walton’s training was intended to take him on a path to receive both a Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Arts. Receiving both degrees would open up career paths in music. The goal was, as Walton later phrased it, to “have been a B.A. at the age of nineteen and then a schoolmaster, a sort of organist schoolmaster”.¹⁰ Certainly there was no reason to consider life as a full-time composer, a job which

¹ Burton, p.33; Hayes, p.19; see also Burton, p.22; Kennedy 1989, p.13; Lloyd, p.6; Tierney, p.26

² Hayes, p.20

³ Curthoys, p.320

⁴ Evans, p.18

⁵ Oswald Shuffrey, in Butler, p.144–5

⁶ Hayes, p.21

⁷ Hayes, p.21

⁸ Butler, p.185

⁹ Butler, p.185

¹⁰ Ottaway, p.4

hardly existed in England at the time. Rather soon it became clear how daunting his studies would be. The adult Walton confessed: "I could do the [Mus. Bac.] but not the [B.A.] as we were not very well taught at [the choir] school owing to the shortage of masters during the first war; consequently I knew little Latin and no Greek and no Algebra".¹

The system of education then in place at Oxford focused on a one-to-one relationship between the student and his tutor. As he was intending to receive a B.A., Walton was assigned a tutor not only in music, but also one in Greek (a Mr. Young²) and probably in Latin and mathematics. The tutorial system of education has existed at Oxford for centuries but seems thoroughly foreign to one educated in today's modern universities. G.R. Evans summarizes: "A student's task was to 'read'. His tutor's role was to direct his reading."³ To that end, tutors had markedly different styles of instruction. Some, such as the tutor of explorer Apsley Cherry-Garrard before the war, were merely "content to live like gentlemen, passing to the younger generation the knowledge that had been amassed by others".⁴ James Ferguson describes the system's expectations:

undergraduates are usually expected to attend lectures or practical science lessons outside the college in their subject-specific faculty but are also taught within the college by their Tutor.

The weekly tutorial is one of the distinctive and most treasured aspects of the University's academic traditions. It involves a face-to-face meeting, often an hour long, between the Tutor and normally one or two students. They are expected to have completed a piece of work, an essay in arts subjects, which is then discussed. Some Tutors expect the undergraduates to read the essay aloud or may read and mark it beforehand.⁵

A student might be expected, say, to bring an essay written in Latin about an aspect of Ovid, or written in Greek about Aeschylus. To a boy educated at Eton, Westminster, Harrow, Charterhouse, Rugby, or another prominent preparatory school, these expectations were a mild development. But the sixteen-year-old Walton, who had only studied at an understaffed choir school, must have found such tasks daunting in the extreme. Perhaps this reinforced his desire to focus his energies on musical tasks.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, attaining the degree of Bachelor of Music at Oxford University was a remarkably casual accomplishment. As Percy Buck wrote in 1918, "any musician could come to Oxford, pass an arts test, pay certain fees, and sit for his musical examinations."⁶ Candidates would simply add their names to the university immediately before examinations, then pass or fail and immediately remove their names. In the period of 1901 to 1910, 168 students had sat for the First Examination of the Bachelor of Music, a total of 338 times. Only 107 of these passed the examination, and only 65 completed the degree, averaging about seven per year. Music degrees were not taken as seriously as, say, the Bachelor of Arts.

¹ Ottaway, p.5

² Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse*, p.183, quoted in Lloyd, p.7

³ Evans, p.247

⁴ Curthoys, p.320

⁵ Ferguson, p.41–2

⁶ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.400, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

In 1911, Oxford's Congregation—the large body of persons responsible for the government of the university—approved a new statute relating to music studies. Matters suddenly became more standardized and rigorous, largely thanks to the efforts of Hugh Allen, then the university's Choral Director. New students to the degree of Bachelor of Music were required to pass certain preliminary exams or to have followed studies approved by the newly established Board of Studies for Music. This Board consisted initially of figures—including Hubert Parry, Thomas Strong, and Ernest Walker—who were not necessarily easy to appease, and Strong must have convinced these men that Walton's experience in the Choir School was sufficient. Another new requirement was that the Third Examination, the final step for completion of the degree, demanded that the student had been a member of the university for twelve terms, i.e., four years. While this did not require physical residency at the university, and the period was later reduced to nine terms, it was nevertheless clear that the degree of Bachelor of Music at Oxford University would mean something far more substantial than in years past.¹ The system evidently filled a demand, for in 1913 there were fifteen recipients of the Bachelor of Music, Adrian Boult among them. The year 1914 saw thirteen, including Henry Ley's friend Noel Ponsonby. These numbers plummeted, of course, during the war: there were only five new Bachelors of Music from Oxford in 1915, none at all in 1916, three in 1917, three in 1918, and but one in 1919.²

As Walton sought both the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Music degrees, he had a lot of work ahead of him. His musical instruction was under the general supervision of Hugh Allen, with whom he had already worked during the previous academic year. Frank Howes indicates that “[i]t was not Allen's way to give systematic teaching”.³ Hugh Ottaway expands this notion:

It is hopelessly difficult to assess the value of an academic musical training of the kind that Walton received under Hugh Allen. Looking back, a composer will usually recall the inspirational benefits rather than the technical ones, which means personalities rather than paper-work. It is noticeable that Walton's reminiscences of Allen always have to do with insights, even revelations. “It was from him that I obtained some insight into the mysteries of the orchestra, as he could bring scores vividly to life by playing them on the organ.” And it is clear that Allen's playing of *Petrushka* on the piano was the start of a major formative experience: *Petrushka* has a way of popping up in Walton's earlier music, at least as far as the *Sinfonia Concertante* (1927).⁴

In the summer of 1918 Allen had succeeded Walter Parratt as Heather Professor of Music.⁵ In that capacity he immediately set about to raise the standards required for the Bachelor of Music degree, both by adding special courses to the curriculum and by being more demanding in the examinations

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.344–6, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.463–5, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ Howes 1973, p.xii

⁴ Ottaway, p.5–6

⁵ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.63; West, p.167. His immediate predecessor was not Sir Hubert Parry, as was reported by Hinnells (p.8). Parry had resigned this post in 1908.

themselves.¹ Thus the education that Walton received was far more exacting than that undergone by his predecessors seeking that degree.

Among the lectures that the undergraduate Walton was expected to attend were those given by the new Professor. Allen's presentation on November 13, 1918, was titled "Music in the University of Oxford since 1626, a survey and a forecast."² This was largely an homage to Hubert Parry, who had figured so prominently in Oxford's musical life for several decades. It was not a topic likely to engage the young Walton.

Performing and Attending Concerts

Another commitment that Allen retained was his directorship of the Oxford Bach Choir, which Walton joined³ as a bass. Rehearsals took place on Monday evenings, in the lecture theater of the University Museum of Natural History. Cyril Bailey described these occasions:

The steep semicircle of seats rising from floor to window, close-packed with men and women, the conductor perilously placed on the narrow demonstrating table, divesting himself as he warmed to his work of coat, waistcoat, tie, and collar; and the sense of urgency and importance felt by everyone. When he tackled a new chorus he would usually let the choir sing it through roughly, laughing at their endeavours in a difficult section, and then stop. Then began the detailed analysis and the rehearsal of the chorus bit by bit. [...] He wanted each phrase to be sung in a particular way and again he secured this, not often by technical expositions of voice-production—though this was sometimes emphasized too—but by insistence on the meaning of the words or the spirit of the music. This he would convey almost always by metaphor or a striking phrase, often negatively by way of a rebuke: 'Tenors, you are making a noise like a squashed shrimp'; 'Sopranos, why are you singing like chickens drinking?' as they looked down, then lifted their eyes from the book and sang.⁴

Such occasions must have piqued Walton's penchant for humorously colorful turns of phrase. As a well-trained singer, he was no doubt one of the most prominent voices in the bass section, especially with its membership depleted by the war. Bailey clarified that the Oxford Bach Choir "has permanent members both of the City and the University as its core—the 'old stagers' who know the traditions and methods and are experienced singers. But the bulk of the Choir is comprised of a floating population of undergraduates. They are in residence for three or at the most four years and then they disappear and their places are taken by a new generation."⁵ Walton fit in perfectly.

¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.67

² George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ S. Walton, p.45

⁴ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.51–52

⁵ Bailey, *A Short History of the Oxford Bach Choir*, p.[12]

As best we can ascertain, the first Bach Choir performance in which Walton sang took place on December 1, 1918. The repertoire included two carols by Hubert Parry and two works by Bach: the *Magnificat* and *Sleepers, wake* (whether the whole cantata or simply one section is unknown). On February 23, the Bach Choir sang the complete *Songs of Farewell* during a memorial service for Parry at Exeter College Chapel. The orchestra presented Parry's *Lady Radnor* Suite and Third Symphony, and Henry Ley played two Parry chorale preludes. Another singer was George Thewlis, who had, like Walton, come from the north of England. Thewlis's recollection of this special concert is so deeply personal that it merits quoting at length:

This was my first appearance at a concert in Oxford, having been appointed to Christ Church [as a lay clerk] the previous December. Coming straight from a war hospital where I had been for eighteen months recovering from wounds, the effect of this concert was shattering. The emotional reaction prevented me singing more than half the notes in the 'Songs of Farewell', to me the finest things Parry ever wrote. I had been used to the full-blooded Yorkshire Choralism, but here was something different. Here in the Chapel where Parry had spent his youth there was delicacy and refinement such as I had never known. The effect of that Memorial Service is still with me as one of the outstanding things in my musical career.¹

Walton's reaction was unlikely to have been as potent as Thewlis's, but the young boy was now surrounded by returning servicemen who felt in this manner. His natural reserve no doubt intensified.

Walton had not entirely lost his contacts with the Cathedral Choir or his old teachers. A letter from October 23 indicates: "I am taking both organ and piano lessons from Mr Ley now as Mr Allchin is too busy with the military. The 'flu' is getting quite the rage round here, I don't know what it is like at home. Mr Marshall one of the choirmen got it and died last night."² F.A. Marshall had, according to the Christ Church service sheets, sung bass as a lay clerk since 1914; Walton had sung in that section after his voice broke, and thus would have known Marshall well. A week later he wrote: "Mr Marshall's funeral was on Sat morn. It was in the Cath[edral]. On Sunday I sang bass just to help them out. I made a hell of a shindy. I go to Mr Ley now for my piano lessons. I like it much better."³ On the following week he confirmed that he was still helping out in Cathedral, now as a soloist: "I sang a verse in Cath last Sunday."⁴ Lessons from Ley, one of the great English organists of the era, were no doubt helpful in an important aspect of Walton's practical training.

Nevertheless, we know from his brother's various recollections that William was a dreadful pianist. Walton referred to himself as "the world's worst pianist and second worst singer".⁵ But any hope of an eventual career required practical experience. He had written to his mother that spring that he hoped to fill in for the organist at Brasenose College. He did indeed fill that capacity, for just three weeks at the

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.5, p.539, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² Burton, p.33; Hayes, p.19; S. Walton, after p.18; see also Lloyd, p.5–6

³ Hayes, p.20

⁴ Hayes, p.20

⁵ Cuckston, in Craggs 1999, p.7

beginning of the term, until the regular organist returned from the Army.¹ He earned £2 per service,² and seemed rather more interested in the financial help than the musical opportunities, writing to his mother on October 29: “Mr somebody or other real organist of Brasenose is coming back from the army for next Sunday, so I shall get six guineas for 3 services. Short but sweet.” Unfortunately, records do not exist indicating what music he played. All we have is his recollection from 1977 that he once “played half a page at the beginning of [Elgar’s oratorio *The Dream of*] *Gerontius* because it was in the manuals, so I hadn’t to use the pedals”.³ In typically self-deprecating fashion, he tossed off the decision, citing the ease of the work, but Walton also deeply loved Elgar’s music, even when it fell out of fashion in the interwar years.

Walton stated that during those late war years concertizing at Oxford was limited to “only the Bach choir and a miserable orchestra”.⁴ This was something of an understatement. The letter of October 23 confirms that Walton was active at the Oxford University Musical Club and other endeavors: “I went to the Musical Club last night. It was a fine performance. The Catterall quartett is coming soon. We are having a memorial service to Parry. Everything goes very smoothly. We havent had any fun worth speaking of. Except our Musicall quartett make a ‘hell’ of a din.”⁵ Two weeks later, on November 6, he had attended another concert: “I went to the Musical Club last night. The[re] was a trio by Brahms & one by Beethoven”.⁶ He also mentioned a recent Bach choir performance: “Last Sunday we had a big concert in the Sheldonian. We had Bach’s Magnificat & other things.”⁷

A touring company passed through Oxford in November, and Walton got to experience opera first-hand, which had been quite rare: “I went to hear three operas at the Carl Rosa [Company]. Madam Butterfly, Faust, & Mignon. They were done very well for a travelling company.”⁸ What a mixed assessment from a lad of sixteen who had only previous heard live opera once or twice before, and that from Beecham’s traveling troupe in Manchester!

Exploring the Library

Walton had hardly any access to the volumes and documents in Christ Church’s famed Library. Undergraduates were not generally permitted to study in the building, though a few books were moved to a Reading Room for them. This arrangement held until the late 1920s, long past Walton’s time.⁹ Fortunately, undergraduates were admitted to the historic Radcliffe Camera, located in the center of

¹ Aston, WWE v.20, p.v; Brown, WWE v.6, p.viii; Kennedy 1989, p.9; Tierney, p.26. Brown mistakenly claims that this was at Balliol College.

² Burton, p.22

³ Interviewed by Arthur Jacobs, BBC World Service, December 9, 1997, quoted in Tierney, p.26

⁴ Tierney, p.26

⁵ Burton, p.33; Hayes, p.19; see also S. Walton, after p.18

⁶ Hayes, p.21

⁷ Letter to his mother, postmarked December 5, 1918, in Hayes, p.22

⁸ Letter to his mother, November 27, 1918, in Hayes, p.21; see also Burton, p.22; Kennedy 1989, p.13; Tierney, p.27

⁹ Butler, p.81

Oxford, near the Sheldonian Theatre. It was one of two noteworthy libraries devoted to the entire university, rather than just to one college. Thanks to the efforts of Hugh Allen, the Radcliffe Camera housed, since 1910, an extensive music library that undergraduates were able to explore. Even before the war, the collection held, according to an appeal in May 1913, “more than 1,300 volumes of scores, and several thousand separate compositions.” Among these were “standard editions of the complete works of Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, Schutz, D. Scarlatti, Bach, Handel, Purcell, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, [and] Brahms”, as well as “full scores of the chief choral and orchestral works of modern composers, such as Richard Strauss, Bruckner, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Franck, Verdi, Debussy, Reger, Glazounow, Stravinsky, Scriabine, &c.” Further, the library received, in accordance with copyright law, copies of any scores published in Britain. Thus scores of homegrown talent, such as “Parry, Stanford, Elgar, Mackenzie, Bantock, Walford Davies, Holbrooke, &c.” were also available to students.¹ Music studies had become standardized, and donors were providing the university with the necessary scores.

Though he was supposed to be studying Greek and algebra, Walton recounted in 1948 his true priorities: “For my part I felt time not devoted to music in one way or another (browsing in the Ellis Library in the Radcliffe Camera, for instance) was a waste of time”.² Martin Holmes, of the Bodleian Library’s Music Section, clarifies that “[t]he Ellis collection formed part of the ‘Music Student’s Library’ which was, at that stage, located in the Radcliffe Camera and from which students could borrow scores [...]. F.B. Ellis was a friend of Butterworth and, like him, died in the trenches in 1916. His music collection became absorbed into the Music Faculty Library but some of it still survives, though not as a separate entity.”³

Here we see another way in which Walton directly benefited from the atrocity of war. Francis Bevis Ellis (1883–1916) was a wealthy young man who had studied at Christ Church in 1901–05, and during that time had built a friendship with Hugh Allen.⁴ In the years before the war, Ellis used his wealth to promote concerts of new English music in London, including the first performance of Vaughan Williams’s *A London Symphony* in 1914. He was also himself an amateur composer. Ellis had clearly retained his Oxford connections: Allen was one of the executors of his estate.⁵ Ellis’s extensive collection, according to the *Oxford University Gazette*, included “a valuable series of full scores of foreign music and about 200 printed books on musical subjects”, which Allen deposited in the Radcliffe Camera.⁶ Other contributors, including Allen himself, continued to expand the Ellis Library in the following years.⁷

The library also continued to purchase the newest scores by continental composers, which Walton pored over. He was able to read full orchestral scores in his head, having seen the value of this ability in Thomas Strong. He honed the skill by reading scores of, among others, Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, and

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.397–8, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² Anson, p.117; see also S. Walton, p.45

³ Email communication to the author, August 13, 2013

⁴ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.68

⁵ Anonymous, “Francis Bevis Ellis”

⁶ *Oxford University Gazette*, February 27, 1918, p.305

⁷ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.68

Stravinsky.¹ And Walton continued his casual meetings with Thomas Strong, who allowed him to borrow scores from his private collection.²

Of the Radcliffe Camera, Walton said: “I fear I spent too much time there, to the detriment of my scholarly studies in Latin, Greek and Algebra.”³ In addition to his studies, Walton found social activities also infringed on his time. But these non-musical encounters, through which he developed some of the friendships that remained for the rest of his life, proved far more crucial to his eventual path than knowledge of Greek.

Rowing and Social Activities

A recent Dean of Christ Church, John Drury, has written: “then as now, Christ Church was such a nursery of friendships”.⁴ This certainly proved to be the case even for an undergraduate much younger than his fellows. The staircase layout of Peckwater Quad, with the wealthier students at the lower floors and poorer students higher up, certainly helped him to mingle. Charles Murray, a wealthy Australian graduate student who arrived in 1924, described the collegial atmosphere. While there were of course rather fewer students in Walton’s first term, this situation would soon change to make Murray’s description quite apt:

I am more and more impressed at the polish and easy manner and general savoir faire of these undergraduates. Often they become most amazingly childish but even then in a quite distinctive way. They are much more men of the world, with an air of assurance than our Melbourne people. Home and school training no doubt combine to produce it. They take the deference of servants etc. quite for granted. Yet in other ways they are most democratic. Youthful earls and lords are on exactly the same footing as others, except for the quite substantial advantages that larger purses bring, in the way of standard of living.⁵

As Dean of Christ Church, Thomas Strong had strived to maintain just this kind of environment which had existed before the war, wherein people of different classes and with different intentions—including former soldiers who had special shorter courses—could fraternize freely.⁶

Walton’s first such newfound friend was the future poet Roy Campbell (1901–1957), whom he later described as “my great pal”.⁷ Campbell was just six months older than Walton, and both were geographical outsiders: Campbell from South Africa and Walton from Lancashire. Walton’s letter of

¹ Burton, p.21; Cuckston 2002, introduction; Kennedy 1989, p.8; Lloyd, p.6; Ottaway, p.6; S. Walton, p.45

² Burton, p.22; Howes 1973, p.xii

³ Burton, p.31; Kennedy 1989, p.8

⁴ Butler, p.102

⁵ Curthoys, p.307

⁶ Curthoys, p.295

⁷ Lloyd, p.7

October 23 informs his mother that “I have been out to tea with Campbell and he has been round to me.”¹ Campbell described Walton in his autobiography, *Light on a Dark Horse*:

The first person I met in Oxford was one of the greatest men who have been there this century, a real genius, and, at the same time, one of the very finest fellows I ever met in my life ... We walked out with two young ladies, who were also good friends, and who were employed as waitresses. Of course, needless to say, Willie’s one eventually became a countess. Something magical seems to happen to everything he touches.²

Would that the countess in question had ever been identified! Walton and Campbell shared a tutor in Greek and a knack for failing in this study. Walton again recalled that Campbell “wasn’t quite so ... well, he was a bit quieter in those days. We neither of us did any work”.³ Campbell phrased their profligacy more delicately: “it was soon apparent to both William and myself and to our excellent tutor Mr Young that we were not cut out for scholars of the routine sort.”⁴

Campbell’s assessment of Walton was immediate: the phrases “a real genius” and “one of the very finest fellows I have ever met” also appear in a letter from February 12, 1919.⁵ He commented on Walton’s “sense of vocation and how a man can live for his art”,⁶ and that Walton “was already equipped for greatness, with a metaphorical self-starter and internal combustion.”⁷ Walton had within him “a sort of inward exhilaration, as if lifted by invisible wings. His accent varied according to his mood, and sudden animation or excitement was sure to reveal the traces of a broad Lancashire accent underlying the more polished accent he had acquired at Oxford.”⁸ These two young outsiders bonded together, and remained friends for the rest of their lives.

On a letter of December 5, Walton reported a meeting that had some importance on his compositional activities: “I met Mr Howells the great composer. and have had him to tea with Dr Allen.”⁹ Herbert Howells (1892–1983), ten years Walton’s senior, had recently graduated from the Royal College of Music. His recently composed quartet for piano, violin, viola and cello had gained some notoriety—one recent writer has called it “astonishingly precocious”.¹⁰ Walton himself was beginning a composition for the same forces.¹¹ In fact, Walton later attributed the choice of genre to rivalry: “because he’d had a great success with his ... and I thought I’d have a go”.¹² Hugh Allen no doubt also had a say in choosing

¹ Burton, p.33; Hayes, p.19

² Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse*, p.181, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.15; Lloyd, p.7

³ *Sunday Times*, March 25, 1962, quoted in Lloyd, p.7

⁴ Campbell, *Light on a Dark Horse*, p.183, quoted in Lloyd, p.7

⁵ Tierney, p.27

⁶ Tierney, p.27

⁷ Kennedy 1989, p.20

⁸ Burton, p.22

⁹ Letter to his mother, postmarked December 5, 1918, in Hayes, p.21

¹⁰ Paul Andrews, “Lost, Remembered, Mislaid, Rewritten: Documentary Study of *In Gloucestershire*”, in Cooke, p.150

¹¹ Kennedy 1989, p.13; Tierney, p.26

¹² *The Listener*, August 8, 1968, p.177, quoted in Tierney, p.26

the genre.¹ Certainly all those concerts of chamber music with piano at the Musical Club meant that Walton was familiar with the instrumental sonorities and their possibilities and challenges. In fact, Howells's Piano Quartet was performed at the OUMC the previous fall, on November 6, 1917;² perhaps Walton had attended this performance.

Other social activities took place. He socialized with the adults from his choir days, reporting on October 23: "I have also been out to Mr Peakes and Mr Leys to tea."³ On October 29 he mentioned involvement in a non-musical club: "We have started a literary society. Last night we read Sheridan 'Rivals'. I took a part."⁴

Walton also joined one of the many rowing teams in the college, mentioning on November 6: "I have started rowing. It is a great sport. Next term I shall cox the 'House' eight. I don't know whether there will be any races."⁵ Rowing was the height of athletic sophistication at Christ Church, ranking above cricket and rugby. Christ Church had been "Head of the River" often before the war,⁶ though races had been suspended after 1914. The cox has great responsibility. He sits at the head of the boat, hunkered out of the way, calling out to keep the rowers in time. As he doesn't row himself, the cox is preferably small and thin—a perfect role befitting a lad two years the junior of his classmates, especially one who weighed 8st. 9lbs.,⁷ or 120 lbs. He was involved in the bumping races,⁸ called Torpids, wherein one boat approaches another from behind and literally bumps them, not in an attempt to capsize, but to require that they move over and let the rival pass. Susana Walton recounted a story from her husband's memory: "He once ran [the boat] aground at the curve of the river and it amused him to tell how he was admonished from the shore over the megaphone: 'Cox, you've buggered that boat' came over loud and clear."⁹ It was a great honor to be chosen for a rowing team,¹⁰ but no doubt the fact that there were so few undergraduates available forced the hand of those making decisions. Boys coming up to Oxford from, say, Eton, would have been rowing for years, so Walton was fortunate that his size made him a worthy contender.

Walton reported to his mother on November 27: "Rowing is going on well. We are going to have races, next week."¹¹ And a week later, on December 5, he acclaimed: "We have had races for the last two days. We beat Champion Hall in the heats, St Johns in the Semi final & Balliol in the final[.] So we are the victors. We are having a [£]15/- [celebration] in the Mitre tomorrow night."¹² Certainly an event such as this would have ensured that Walton, though younger than his classmates, was respected as an equal.

¹ Burton, p.22.

² OUMC Programmes, 1917–1924 (OUMCU 027), at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

³ Burton, p.33; Hayes, p.19

⁴ Hayes, p.20

⁵ Burton, p.34; Hayes, p.21

⁶ Gerald Parkhouse, in Butler, p.129

⁷ Burton, p.34

⁸ Burton, p.22

⁹ S. Walton, p.43

¹⁰ Charles Williams, in Butler, p.123–4

¹¹ Hayes, p.21

¹² Hayes, p.22

All in all, the fall of 1918 was one of great change for Walton, even though he was still in the world of Christ Church. He was growing both mentally and physically. The contradictory opening and closing statements of his letter on October 29 conveniently and amusingly summarize his mindset and experiences:

Dear Mother.

I am getting on splendidly now. It has been quite an eventful week.

[...]

I cant think of any more news. Nothing much happens.

With love

Billy

Will you please hurry and send my boots as my shoes won't last much longer.¹

End of the War

On November 11, 1918, Germany and the Allied forces agreed to a ceasefire that ended fighting during the First World War. Diplomacy continued for some months—the Treaty of Versailles was not signed until June 28, 1919—but soldiers began to return home immediately. Oldham was deeply scarred: of the 30,000 men from the area who served in the war, over 5,000, or about 16%, never returned.² (Fortunately, William's older brother, Noel, remained relatively unscathed.) Likewise about 16% of the Christ Church men—including those who had attended in previous years—were killed, including nearly 29% of those who entered the college in 1913, the year before the war began.³

The celebration of the Armistice was a grand occasion at Oxford. A special commemorative service at the cathedral was delayed, as Henry Ley and the choristers were suffering from the global influenza epidemic. But, as usual, a service of "Commemoration of Those Fallen in the War" was held on the third Sunday, November 17. The daily Evensong ceased to include "Intercessory Prayers connected with the War" from December 8. Walton explained a delay in his letter-writing home: "I am so sorry not to have written before. But what with Peace demonstrations & making up for lost time also toothache in both sides (for which I have lost two teeth) I have had no time whatsoever."⁴ He was lucky that the only ailment of which he could complain was toothache.

¹ Hayes, p.20

² Law, p.257

³ Judith Curthoys, in Butler, p.121

⁴ Hayes, p.21

Now that he was no longer singing in the Cathedral regularly, Walton was free to return home to Oldham for Christmas. He wrote to his mother on November 27: "I come home a week on Saturday so remember to send my fare & something extra. [...] I wonder if Noel will be home when I am." The next week, on December 5, Walton revised his estimate: "I shan't be coming home on Sat as there are 'Collections' & other affairs but shall arrive on Monday".¹ Noel, his older brother by two years, had been fighting in the war, but had evidently not returned home yet. While the details of Noel's military service are not generally known, he evidently had some struggles upon returning, for William wrote to their mother on February 12: "Thanks very much for your letter. I am glad to hear that Noel is getting on better."² If the war continued for another year or so, William himself might have been in Noel's situation.

On returning to Oldham during the Christmas holiday, William continued his studies, bringing scores with him. Noel remembered him "making horrible noises for hours, playing from scores of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and Bartók—especially *Allegro barbaro*".³ The family of the artist Helen Bradley (1900–1979), noted for her paintings of Edwardian Oldham, knew the Waltons well. Humphrey Burton reports that "Bradley often saw young Billie running between their houses with armfuls of music sheets, desperately trying to avoid the puddles."⁴

When Walton returned to his rooms at Christ Church in January, he found that the cessation of hostilities resulted in a rather different Oxford. Oswald Shuffrey, who began studies there in October 1920, described the major change:

Two outstanding matters created an unusual atmosphere. First of all the number of undergraduates was vastly inflated. Added to the normal intake of boys from the schools was the four-year backlog of those who had survived the war. The percentage of those who had survived the appalling slaughter of the war was small for a large section of that generation had been annihilated. Nevertheless, the actual number of undergraduates coming up was considerable.⁵

The prominent academic John Cecil Masterman described the "speed and determination with which Oxford resumed its peacetime life" and the "wide and healthy tolerance of the returning warriors which enabled them to continue and coalesce easily and amicably with the younger men".⁶ In the fall of 1918 there had been only forty-two undergraduates at Christ Church. By the end of 1919, 245 new students had arrived.⁷ This is likely representative of the other colleges as well, and thus the new Oxford was a bustling hive of activity, its student population increasing fourfold in just one year.

¹ Hayes, p.21

² Hayes, p.22

³ Kennedy 1989, p.8; Ottaway, p.6

⁴ Burton, p.11

⁵ Butler, p.144

⁶ Judith Curthoys, in Butler, p.121

⁷ Judith Curthoys, in Butler, p.121; also Curthoys, p.301

Meeting “Great Men”

Returning Heroes

Sir Hubert Parry died in October 1918, and the following January, Hugh Allen succeeded him as Director of the Royal College of Music.¹ Allen is said to have “resigned practically all his other commitments, making only rare appearances as a professional conductor.”² He resigned his post at New College, but kept the Professorship, passing weekends in Oxford to fulfill his duties.³ After the fall term, Walton saw considerably less of his new mentor. This lack of oversight coincided with an increase in distractions.

One of those was increased involvement in the Oxford University Musical Club, to which he was formally elected a member, on the nomination of Hugh Allen and Henry Ley, on January 21, 1919. His involvement, however, seemed at least somewhat limited, for in October, the secretary identified him not as “W.T. Walton,” but as simply “T. Walton;”⁴ apparently the young composer wasn’t extraordinarily well known at the OUMC, even if he attended their concerts with frequency. He had been attending OUMC events at least as early as the previous February; those concerts which he is known to have attended are described above. Some others, for which there is no specific evidence of his presence, offer some tantalizing curiosities. For example, the concert of May 12, 1918, had included a performance of *Rosa solis* from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, the same tune that Walton would incorporate into his film score for *Henry V* in 1944. On November 5, 1918, the solo clarinetist was Haydn Paul Draper, who in 1923 played the first public performance of Walton’s *Façade*.

Walton continued composing with voracity. Herbert Howells commented in his diary on January 28, 1919: “found W T Walton in his rooms at the House, busy with his highly-coloured chords. He showed me the first movement of a Piano Quartet. If he gets in the right hands, he’ll be an interesting musical personage.”⁵ For the next several months, Walton continued to occupy himself with the Piano Quartet. This rhapsodic, almost Romantic work, which shall be discussed in detail below, is that which he showed to his various friends that he met at this time. With so many soldiers coming to Oxford, Campbell and Walton were soon to have many more friends indeed.

First among these was the Canadian poet, Frank Prewett (1893–1962), ten years Walton’s senior, who also rowed for Christ Church.⁶ Through Prewett,⁷ Walton met two already celebrated poets, Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) and John Masefield (1878–1967). A letter to his mother on February 12 dates the

¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.138

² Colles, “Allen, Sir Hugh”

³ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.63

⁴ OUMC Membership Election Book, 1901–1924 (OUMCU 017), at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁵ Christopher Palmer, *Herbert Howells: A Celebration*, London: Thomas Publishing 366, p.349, quoted in Lloyd, p.25; Macdonald, *WWE* v.19, p.v

⁶ Burton, p.34

⁷ Burton, pp.22, 34; Lloyd, p.9

occasion specifically: "I went to the Musical Club last night. We had a fine concert. I met John Masefield & Siegfried Sassoon the poets. They are great men."¹

The friendship with Siegfried Sassoon was to become one of his most important. Sassoon had received the Military Cross "for conspicuous gallantry" during battles in France, but subsequently gained controversy for his pacifist writings. In 1917, he penned a private document titled "A Soldier's Declaration," in which he accused the leadership of deliberately prolonging the war. This made its way to *The Times*, apparently without its author's permission or foreknowledge. He avoided a court martial when his friends intervened to claim that he suffered from shell-shock, and was sent back to fighting. A head wound permanently invalidated him for the remainder of the war. His poetry collection *Counter-Attack*, published in 1918, brought him even greater notoriety than the *Times* controversy.² Sassoon was independently wealthy and moved in illustrious circles. In a few years Walton would be the direct benefactor of Sassoon's wealth.

Sassoon was well known to attend musical performances at Oxford. His poem *Sheldonian Soliloquy*³ recounts one such experience in such a way as to indicate why Walton might have been drawn to this man's all-encompassing honesty of thought:

My music-loving Self this afternoon
(Clothed in the gilded surname of Sassoon)
Squats in the packed Sheldonian and observes
An intellectual beehive perched and seated
In achromatic and expectant curves
Of buzzing, sunbeam-flecked, and overheated
Accommodation. Skins perspire—But hark!
Begins the great *B-minor Mass* of Bach.

The choir sings *Gloria in excelsis Deo*
With confident and well-conducted brio.
Outside, a motor-bike makes impious clatter,
Impinging on our eighteenth-century trammels.
God's periwigged: He takes a pinch of snuff.
The music's half-rococo... Does it matter
While these intense musicians shout the stuff
In Catholic Latin to the cultured mammals
Who agitate the pages of their scores?

Meanwhile, in Oxford sunshine out of doors,
Birds in collegiate gardens rhapsodize
Antediluvian airs of worm-thanksgiving.

¹ Hayes, p.22; Kennedy 1989, p.14

² Lloyd, p.9

³ George Thewlis papers, v.9, between pp.365–5, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

To them the austere and buried Bach replies
With song that from ecclesiastical cries
Eternal *Resurrexit* to the living.
Hosanna in excelsis chants the choir
In pious contrapuntal jubilee.
Hosanna shrill the birds in sunset fire.
And *Benedictus* sings my heart to Me.

Notwithstanding these new connections, Walton continued to study scores and to compose. Hugh Ottaway paints the portrait best:

The study of musical scores is a lonely pursuit, especially when you are trying things out on a piano in a way that is intelligible to you alone. If we add to this Walton's shyness and the fact that most of his fellow-students were ex-service and a good deal older than himself, the picture that emerges is a somewhat solitary one.¹

Much of Walton's daytime assuredly would have been passed in such pursuits—together with rowing practices—but in his evenings he seems to have kept good company. He continued to attend concerts. The D'Oyly Carte opera company, famous worldwide for their productions of operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan, passed through Oxford. According to his letter of February 12, he was "going to see the 'Mikado' tomorrow & the 'Yeoman of the guard' on Sat."²

The Sitwell Family

Roy Campbell, Frank Prewett, John Masefield, Siegfried Sassoon... the list of Walton's new literary friends is already impressive. Soon he also befriended Raymond Mortimer (1895–1980), who was at Balliol College.³ But the most crucial impact on his life was felt by another writer, to whom he was introduced by Sassoon.⁴ This was Sacheverell Sitwell.

The aristocratic Sitwell family dates back centuries, tied to the manor of Renishaw Hall in Derbyshire. (Renishaw is just southeast of Sheffield, not fifty miles across the Pennines from Walton's Oldham.) In the mid-nineteenth century their wealth was based on the coal deposits on their estate, which kept them thoroughly comfortable for another hundred years.⁵ The eccentric and somewhat tyrannical paterfamilias was Sir George Sitwell (1860–1943), fourth Baronet. In 1886 he married the beautiful, young Ida Denison (1869–1937) of the elite Londesborough family. Susana Walton described an episode from William's recollections that demonstrates the degree of Sir George's eccentricity:

¹ Ottaway, p.6

² Burton, p.38; Hayes, p.22

³ S Walton, p.47

⁴ Burton, p.22; Craggs, *WWE* v.7, p.v; Kennedy 1989, p.14; Lloyd, p.268; Tierney, p.28

⁵ Aston, p.6

It amused him to recall that the three siblings, Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell, were supposed to be the result of exceptional family planning on the part of their parent, Sir George, who spent months preparing for each act of procreation. He would read books of especial beauty and artistic merit, recite poetry, and contemplate flowers, trees, and exotic colours for hours. Then, having eaten what he thought was the appropriate diet, he would announce to his wife, Lady Ida: "I am now ready," and the great act would be undertaken. Hence, Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell."¹

The first result of this comically elaborate process was, to Sir George's dismay, a daughter, Edith (1887–1964), who wrote of her childhood: "I was in disgrace for being a female, and worse, as I grew older, it was obvious that I was not going to conform to my father's standard of feminine beauty."² Two sons followed: Osbert (1892–1969) and Sacheverell (1897–1988), who everyone called "Sachie." Around 1900, John Singer Sargent painted the Sitwell family portrait. Young Osbert calmly pets a puppy near toddler Sacheverell, who gazes and points alertly away. Lady Ida stands above them inattentively, in a grand, white dress and fancy hat, gazing forward with confidence. Sir George is bored in his riding boots, looking past his wife as his hand rests uncomfortably on the shoulder of Edith, who glares forward with the disdain that only a misunderstood teenager can muster. Nothing about them exudes warmth or familial unity. It is, according to all accounts, an apt description of their relationship.

In 1909, Sir George used Osbert's name to purchase the Castello di Montegulfoni, fourteen miles southwest of Florence, Italy. He wrote to his son, the alleged new owner: "The roof is in splendid order [...] and the drains can't be wrong, as there aren't any."³ Yet Sir George refused to accept similar profligacy from the rest of his family. Finally, in 1913 Edith fled the family home for London, living in a small, unattractive fourth-floor flat in unfashionable Bayswater with Helen Rootham (1875–1938), who had been her governess and would remain her companion for life.⁴ The following year, the family came under public scandal when Sir George famously refused to pay Lady Ida's substantial debts, sending her to prison for three months.⁵ Osbert and Sacheverell, having completed their education at Eton,⁶ also traded Derbyshire for London. Sir George, whom the three siblings called "Ginger," continued to try to run their lives. Susana Walton recalled:

William found the quarrelling particularly trying, but certainly took notice of their cunning in dealing with their father. He told me the story of how, to avoid Sir George's never-ending stream of instructions and admonitions reproving Osbert for his expensive tastes and so on, he [Osbert] had invented a yacht, had a letterhead printed on stationery with the name of the

¹ S. Walton, p.55–6

² Lloyd, p.10.

³ Burton, p.47

⁴ Craggs, WWE v.7, p.v

⁵ Lloyd, p.10

⁶ Lloyd, p.10

fictitious yacht, and told Sir George that Sachie and he could write to him but that he could not write to them, because the vessel's ports of call were not known in advance.¹

Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell received little support from their father, and found some small income from writing. In order to redeem the family name, they banded together, determined to leave a mark on the artistic world by supporting newfound geniuses.² Through a series of six annual poetic anthologies titled *Wheels* (1916–21) they promoted young, unknown writers, including, it must be said, themselves. Osbert especially was well known to T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.³ The aristocracy looked on them with a kind of amusement; Lady Frances Colvin commented drily “[t]hey are quite nice and amusing young people if only they would not write poetry.”⁴

The Sitwells' musical proclivities tended toward the modern and away from the Germanic. Osbert and Sacheverell were both close friends with Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian impresario whose Ballets Russes returned to London in September 1918 as the war neared its end.⁵ A letter by Sacheverell, dated March 27, 1919, indicates an attempt to organize a festival to feature a string quartet by Bernard van Dieren (1887–1936); songs by Delius, van Dieren, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg; and piano music by Bartók, Kodály, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky.⁶ They were special champions of van Dieren, a Dutch-born composer resident in London during the war. His contrapuntal, atonal style is now largely forgotten, but he had his staunch supporters, foremost among them Philip Heseltine. Susana Walton avers that, “[a]ccording to William, the Sitwell brothers were not at all musical, but they knew if they liked what they were listening to.”⁷

Sacheverell had published *The People's Palace*, his first volume of poetry, in 1918, earning praise from Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) as “Le Rimbaud de nos jours”:⁸ the Rimbaud of our day. After his war service, Sitwell arrived at Balliol College, Oxford, in January 1919, and found the experience exceedingly dull. He sought new intellectual and artistic horizons, and was disappointed instead to find a large number of his fellow ex-servicemen whose only intention was to get a degree and then find reliable work.⁹ (Philip Heseltine had also complained of Oxford's unstimulating environment during his brief undergraduacy before the war.¹⁰) He even found the food to be terrible.¹¹ But he asked his friends if there were any other worthies around, and was duly informed of a young musical “genius”.¹²

¹ S. Walton, p.54

² Lloyd, p.10

³ Burton, p.38

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.19

⁵ Lloyd, p.12

⁶ Lloyd, p.12

⁷ S. Walton, p.48

⁸ Giroud, p.9

⁹ Burton, p.22; Lloyd, p.9

¹⁰ B. Smith, p.60

¹¹ Tierney, p.28; S. Walton, p.48

¹² Lloyd, p.11

The youngest Sitwell's first thought on meeting Walton, who was one month away from his seventeenth birthday, was that "[h]e certainly gave the impression of not having had very much to eat."¹ He also found that Walton "had a very intelligently shaped head. I felt he needed support and help."² An enthusiast of the already discredited field of phrenology, he compared Walton's head to that of John Wesley.³ He had also observed that Walton's profile was rather similar to the Sitwell family likeness. Indeed, Edith Sitwell later commented that "[h]is profile and mine (he probably will not thank me saying this) were so much alike in character and bone structure that many people who did not know us thought my two brothers, William and I were brothers and sister."⁴

Susana Walton described Sacheverell's physique and personality in adulthood: "Tall, scholarly, kind and humorous, he always seemed to me to be above such things as their family quarrels."⁵ She recounted how he and Walton quickly bonded:

Sachie, according to William, had not attended a single lecture the whole of the time he spent at Oxford. He was in a rebellious mood, and had become extremely left-wing. He had often declared his admiration for Trotsky, only because Trotsky had promised to take the Russians out of the War. This he was most concerned about, since 60 per cent of his friends had been killed in the War. William would repeatedly stress to me how tragic it had been for the country to have a whole generation of young talent blotted out. It had been a blood-bath. Therefore, Sachie was interested in meeting anybody talented and he discovered that William was supposed to be the most talented undergraduate in Oxford. William was then young and inarticulate; he was pale, very thin, and looked delicate and quite unworldly. He told me that he had been fed so little during those War years that he had started to grow in height only after the age of sixteen. Sachie used to ask William out to luncheon, despite the food shortage and what Sachie termed the fearful nastiness of it.⁶

Walton was mostly silent in their conversations, which probably suited Sitwell just fine.⁷

Osbert Sitwell recalled being accosted by his younger brother about the newfound genius:

One day, when [Sacheverell] came up to visit me, he mentioned, I remember, the sole redeeming point of Oxford for him: that he had met in a—as it seemed to him—leaden city, the only English musical genius it had ever been his lot so far to encounter, a boy of sixteen, called W.T. Walton—and that was the first time I heard the name. I did not pay much attention, since we already possessed among our friends an undoubted and more mature musical genius,

¹ Burton, p.38

² Kennedy 1989, p.14

³ S. Walton, p.47

⁴ *Sunday Times*, March 18, 1962, quoted in Lloyd, p.12

⁵ S. Walton, p.47

⁶ S. Walton, p.47–8

⁷ S. Walton, p.48

Bernard van Dieren. [...] We must, Sacheverell continued, find some way of being of use to him, and of advancing his chances and genius.... But what could we do?¹

Sacheverell summoned Osbert to Oxford so that he too could meet Walton. The two of them, together with Siegfried Sassoon, assembled in Walton's rooms at Christ Church. Osbert Sitwell described the occasion in such detail and with such sublime touch of language that he is worth quoting at length:

We arrived at Christ Church in the early afternoon. The room was very dark, blue-papered, with a piano opposite the window, and in the middle a table, laid for tea, with, in the center of it, thrown in for the sake of the almost ostentatious sense of luxury it would inevitably evoke, an enormous plate of bananas. (These I think were a symbol to William [...]: for if you provided bananas it signified that, a man of the world, you knew how to treat friends, were pleased to see them, and anxious for them to have a good time!) Our host, not quite seventeen years of age, we found to be a rather tall, slight figure, of typically northern coloring, with pale skin, straight fair hair, like that of a young Dane or Norwegian. The refinement of his rather long, narrow, delicately shaped head, and of his birdlike profile showing so plainly above the brow the so-called bar or mound of Michelangelo that phrenologists claim to be the distinguishing mark of the artist—and especially of the musician—even his prominent, well-cut nose, scarcely gave a true impression either of his robust mental qualities or of the strength of his physique. Sensitiveness rather than toughness was the quality at first most apparent in him. He appeared to be excessively shy, and on this occasion spoke but little, for I think he was rather in awe of us as being his elders. Talk was desultory, though there were sudden determined bursts of amiably intentioned conversation from his guests. The atmosphere was not, however, easy; music showed a way out of the constraint, and after tea, we pressed him to play some of his compositions to us. Accordingly, he got up from the table and then sat down at the piano, the few steps between clearly indicating the burden of his hospitality, a feeling of strain, almost of hopelessness, combined with that of a need for intense concentration. As he began to play, he revealed a lack of mastery of the instrument that was altogether unusual, and as a result it was more difficult than ever to form an opinion of the music at a first hearing. I forget what he played—no doubt compositions which have since disappeared[.] [...] It was, indeed, as impossible that afternoon to estimate his character or talents as it was to foresee that for the next seventeen years he would constitute an inseparable companion and friend, and an adopted, or elected, brother to Edith, Sacheverell and myself.²

Another edition of Osbert's memoir indicates that among the works played was the slow third movement from the Piano Quartet.³ Somehow, the nervous and instrumentally challenged Walton impressed Osbert sufficiently.

¹ O. Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, Macmillan 1949, quoted in Lloyd, p.9–10

² O. Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, p.193–4

³ O. Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, p.172, quoted in Lloyd, p.11–12; see also Burton, p.22; Kennedy 1989, p.14–15; Ottaway, p.7–8; Tierney, p.28

We have no record from Walton of this afternoon tea, or of his early impressions of Osbert. But Susana Walton recalled her first meeting him, some years later:

I thought that Osbert had Hanoverian features, as with his large nose and heavy chin he might well have been an early nineteenth-century royal duke. He dressed much more conventionally than his brother Sacheverell, [...] and was extremely well-mannered when he felt inclined to be courteous.¹

As the term ended, Walton's activities wound to a close. On March 11, he wrote to his mother that his rowing had been quite successful: "We have won both our races so far, but the 1st boat have lost theirs. We beat Queens yesterday by 2 yds but B.N.C [Brasenose College] by about a 100. My wonderful coxing undoubtedly. I must now trot off to dinner."² That same letter indicates that his friendship with Sitwell had quickly cemented, in this discussion of his plans for the break between Hilary and Trinity terms: "I shan't be coming home till about next Monday week. You need not trouble Auntie Rose about my staying there as I am going to stay with Sitwell at Chelsea. I am meeting a great many distinguished people. You can please send the railway fare (it ought to be a big'un)".³ This trip to London, however, apparently didn't materialize.

There is no record of the specific occasion when Walton first met Osbert and Sacheverell's older sister, Edith, but it was most likely on one of his visits to London in the coming months. Edith was more musically trained than her brothers, having studied piano in her youth from Frederick Dawson, who also taught at the Royal Manchester College of Music.⁴ Again Susana Walton's description of physique and character is colorful and worthwhile:

Edith, immensely tall, looked to me exactly like one of those elongated statues around the main portal of Chartres Cathedral. But, in spite of her dramatic experience, her conversation was very down to earth. She would interrupt a reading of her latest poem to talk about a quarrel with a neighbour who had a barking dog.

She did not appear ugly, as some people had described her to me, but extraordinarily elegant. Certainly she did not look like anyone else I had ever met. She had very fine hair, and always wore the most striking head-dresses to complement her long oval features, prominent nose, high forehead, and almost complete lack of eyebrows—they were so fair that she painted a line high above the eye. Her jewels seemed barbaric: Mexican breastplates in gold, with rings of large aquamarines encased in high settings. She also seemed to eat very little; a couple of lightly boiled eggs, served in a soup plate, was all she had for lunch. She chattered endlessly, and I came to think that she often invented situations to get her own back on whoever was not in her good books.⁵

¹ S. Walton, p.51

² Letter to his mother, March 11, 1919, in Hayes, p.23; see also Burton, p.38. Burton dates this letter to June 29, 1919, but the manuscript clearly reads "March 11th".

³ Letter to his mother, March 11, 1919, in Burton, p.38; Hayes, p.23

⁴ S. Walton, p.57

⁵ S. Walton, p.61–62

Edith, ten years older than Sacheverell, was the most accomplished poet of the three. Already she had edited the first three volumes of *Wheels*, gaining some notoriety. Some of the poems that soon found their way into Walton's *Façade* in 1921 had already been published. Evidently she too was impressed by the young Walton, for the fourth volume of *Wheels*, published that November, includes her poem "What the Goose-Girl said about the Dean" and its dedication to Walton.¹

Soon Walton met other writers in the Sitwell circle, including the novelist Ronald Firbank (1886–1926), who lived reclusively in Oxfordshire. Walton remembered the meeting simply: "He was so shy he couldn't speak, simply put a bowl of peaches in front of me. I was so shy I simply sat and ate the lot."² Notwithstanding this hesitant start, their friendship somehow developed and continued for many years.³ Another luminary met around this time was the author and artist Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957), whose geometrically abstract paintings had been described by Ezra Pound as "Vorticism," a self-conscious fusion of Cubism and Futurism.

Planning a Recital

In the Trinity term, that is the spring of 1919, Walton continued his studies at Oxford. A letter that does not appear in Malcolm Hayes's collection, dated April 27, reads as follows. Walton had evidently returned to Oldham between terms.

Dear Mother.

I have now settled down to the ways of this place again. I had a very good journey.

The college is absolutely packed to the neck and all old customs are being revived. I saw D^r Allen yesterday. He was in great form.

There is no more news and will write at greater length later in the week. Must hurry for chapel

With much love

Billy.⁴

Walton wrote to his mother on May 15 that rowing proceeded well, and that Oxford was returning to normal: "The weather has been really wonderful for the last few days and it has been lovely on the river. The races begin on the 20th. It will be quite like it was before the war."⁵ On June 1 he followed up: "I am just about beginning to breath after the turmoil of 'eights' week. By the way my boat was very

¹ Craggs, *WWE* v.7, p.v; McBeath, in Craggs 1999, p.37

² *Sunday Times*, March 25, 1962, quoted in Lloyd, p.11

³ Kennedy 1989, p.14

⁴ Letter from William Walton to his mother, April 17, 1919, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ Hayes, p.23

unfortunate in getting 'bumped' every day."¹ Apparently, as more soldiers returned to Oxford, Walton the underage cox found sporting more difficult. Perhaps these rowing difficulties led to an event he also described in the June 1 letter: "There was a bit of a 'scrap' with some Magdalen fellows the other night. We sank about ten of their punts."² Such pranks assuredly were among the "old customs" Walton found himself engaged in. Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) tells of life at Oxford, and specifically of Christ Church, between the wars, and of the follies of characters there. Was this when Walton began smoking? Did his furniture find its way out an attic window?

He continued to attend concerts, including the Musical Club performance on May 13 that featured Elgar's Violin Sonata,³ Bach's Violin Sonata in B minor, and the Brahms Violin Sonata in D minor; the violinist was W.H. Reed and Walton's harmony teacher, Ernest Walker, was at the piano.⁴ He frequented the concerts held on Sunday nights at Balliol College for University members only.⁵ These were given under the general direction of Ernest Walker, having been suspended during the war.⁶ He also, according to a letter from June 29, "went to Gloucester for the day last Saturday. It is the most wonderful cathedral I have ever see[n]. I also heard a service."⁷

The Bach Choir held a major concert on June 19 at the Sheldonian Theatre; Walton likely attended, and perhaps sang in the choir for, this occasion. Hugh Allen conducted three works: *O bone Jesu* by William Child, *A Sea Symphony* of Vaughan Williams, and the late Hubert Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*.⁸ The program commemorated not only the 250th anniversary of the Sheldonian Theatre in 1669 (the motet by Child had been sung at its opening⁹), but also an Honorary Doctorate awarded to Vaughan Williams by Trinity College,¹⁰ no doubt in part at the recommendation of his friend and champion, Hugh Allen.

Allen gave two more lectures as the Heather Professor of Music that spring. The subject in March was "The Orchestra in the time of Bach and his use of it", an historical subject matter of great interest to Allen. Walton, however, was more interested in current compositional trends, and cannot have been thoroughly engaged. (Assuming he retained anything from the occasion, he likely found use for such information when orchestrating Bach movements for the ballet *The Wise Virgins* in 1940.) The lecture of June 4, two weeks before the anniversary concert, considered "The Sheldonian Theatre and its connection with music", another historical topic that Walton probably found less than inspiring.

Formal music-making at Oxford was centered on historical trends and establishment figures such as Parry and Vaughan Williams. Sacheverell Sitwell continued to feel disdain for nearly all matters in

¹ Hayes, p.24

² Hayes, p.24

³ Hayes, p.23; Kennedy, in Craggs 1977, p.15

⁴ OUMC Programmes, 1917–1924 (Box OUMCU 027), at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁵ Hayes, p.23–4

⁶ George Thewlis papers, Box 5, v.4, p.991, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁷ Hayes, p.24. Christopher Jeens, archivist at Gloucester Cathedral, informs me (via email, August 7, 2013) that there is no record of a service at the cathedral on that date, but that a special service may not have been entered into the official register.

⁸ Concert programs, Mus. 311 c.1 (1800–1929), at Duke Humfrey's Library, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁹ George Thewlis papers, Box 6, v.5, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

¹⁰ Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.*, p.135

Oxford. In fact, he decided to travel instead. Walton wrote to his mother on May 15: "Sitwell came back the other day from Spain. I went to dine with him last night. We are busily arranging about the Van Dieren concert which we hope to come off about June the 10th."¹ This is the first indication of an enterprise of some interest. The Sitwells had championed Bernard van Dieren, of whom Osbert Sitwell wrote that "both his livelihood and his health were precarious and the promotion of his music was largely dependent on the efforts of a handful of devotees".² Evidently Sacheverell and Walton joined this handful in their efforts.

On June 1, Walton reported to his mother that "Sitwell & myself have arranged a terrific concert for the 13th of this month. We are doing a lot of Van Dieren, and new songs by Delius & myself. If it is a success We ought to make about £20. But that is a mere detail."³ The inclusion of Delius is interesting in hindsight, as Walton later referred to him as "my most detested composer".⁴ Of even greater interest is the possibility of "new songs" by Walton. Presumably "new" meant more recent than the Swinburne songs composed the previous summer, which Louie Walton would already know of. No other mention exists of any such works.

Sadly, as Walton reported to his mother on June 29: "Our concert never came off. We had everything ready, bills out & everything and at the last moment Helen Rootham who was going to sing was taken ill so there was nothing else to do but to postpone it."⁵ The fact that Helen Rootham was to sing the concert may imply that *The Winds* was scheduled to be heard, given the aforementioned inscription on Walton's score to her: "To Helen, who first sang this song. / Best love. / Willie."

The letter of June 29 continued: "Anyhow the picture Exhibition has been going tremendously. However as a consolation some of my songs are going to be sung at Lady Glenconnor's concert for "Slava week" in London on Friday. Also I shall be conducting two pieces for orchestra at the Russian Ballet".⁶ His definitive-sounding statement about conducting the Ballets Russes cannot be verified; the event probably never transpired. And there is no indication that any of Walton's songs were performed in London at this time, though Lady Pamela Glenconner was to prove a supporter of Walton's music. She was the mother of Stephen Tennant (1906–1987), who was at the center of the "Bright Young Things" of London during the next decade and a future close friend of Walton.

Back in May, Sacheverell wrote to Osbert: "Little Walton is coming up for a day or two to hear Opera etc.: he has never been to London before."⁷ There is no other record of this trip; like the proposed jaunt between terms, it may never have come to fruition. Or perhaps it was merely postponed, as Walton wrote to his mother on June 1: "I shant be leaving here till about July 3rd then I shall go to London for a month to see the best of the operas & ballet. One is unable to get a passport for Italy or France."⁸

¹ Hayes, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.14

² Burton, p.53

³ Hayes, p.24

⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *WWE* v.23, p.v

⁵ Hayes, p.24; see also Kennedy 1989, p.15; Tierney, p.30

⁶ Hayes, p.24; see also Kennedy 1989, p.15; Tierney, p.30

⁷ Sarah Bradford, *Splendours and Miseries*, p.93, as quoted in Lloyd, p.13

⁸ Hayes, p.24

Already the boy is considering distant travel with the Sitwell brothers, an eventuality for which he merely had to bide some time. When the term ended on June 21, Sacheverell left Oxford for good. On June 29, Walton again wrote to his mother about the impending excitement of London: "I am going to London on Wednesday to stay with the Sitwells. I shall be staying probably to the end of the month, as there will be a great deal to be seen at Covent garden and the Ballet."¹

Walton neglects in this letter to indicate another event earlier in June: exams. He took the Responsions exam, a requirement to receive the Bachelor of Arts. It involved nothing musical, merely matters such as Latin, Greek and algebra. He did not pass.² It was his first attempt, and the first indication that he was devoting far more time and energy to his musical development than to his classical education.

Meanwhile, in Oldham, Walton's brother Noel was adjusting to civilian life. William's letter of May 15 to his mother indicates: "Thanks very much for your letter [...]. I am glad Noel is getting on well. Tell him I will write soon."³ Noel had received "a grant of £80 a year from the Navy" to study at the Royal Manchester College of Music.⁴ The Register of Students there indicates that he formally entered the school as a piano student on April 29. He is listed as living at 93 Werneth Hall Road, the family home in Oldham. He would continue to study at the RMCM for nine terms, through the summer of 1922. Over the course of 1919, England slowly tried to return to its pre-war state. Oldham's cotton and manufacturing businesses began to pick up that summer. But Noel managed to escape the fate of a mill worker and instead furthered his formal musical education. Over the next two years, William's and Noel's educational paths would greatly diverge.

Quartet for Piano and Strings

Composition, Revision, Publication, Performance

By December 1918, Walton had begun to compose a quartet for piano, violin, viola, and cello.⁵ Throughout his life, Walton was often spurred to create because of the success of another. Just as *Belshazzar's Feast* responded to Constant Lambert's *Rio Grande*, or as *Troilus and Cressida* was composed after Benjamin Britten's many operatic successes, this Piano Quartet owes its inspiration to a gentle rivalry. Walton said in 1968: "I wrote it really to emulate Herbert Howells, to be quite honest, because he'd had a great success with his Piano Quartet and I thought I'd have a go. It got the Carnegie Award like his did, so I was justified to a point."⁶ That said, Hugh Allen probably contributed to the

¹ Hayes, p.24; see also Kennedy 1989, p.15; Lloyd, p.13

² Craggs 1993, p.4

³ Hayes, p.23

⁴ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ Stewart Craggs (1990, p.15; 2014, p.3) has assigned this work the catalog number C7.

⁶ Interview with John Warrack, *The Listener*, August 8, 1968, p.177, quoted in Lloyd, p.24–5; see also Macdonald, *WWE* v.19, p.v; Tierney, p.26

decision,¹ and Walton had heard chamber works for piano and strings at performances of the Oxford University Musical Club.

On January 28, 1919, Herbert Howells wrote in his diary that Walton was “busy with his highly-coloured chords. He showed me the first movement of a Piano Quartet.”² On the next month, he played the slow third movement for the visiting Sitwells.³ The printed score is dated “Oxford 1918–19”,⁴ from which we can gather that it was completed sometime in 1919. Unfortunately, these are the only facts we have regarding the chronology of the work’s initial composition.

Walton revised the work on several occasions over the next fifty-five years.⁵ The story of the quartet’s passage from 1919 to the present is a convoluted one. In the spring of 1920, Walton was visiting Italy with the Sitwells and had brought the manuscript with him.⁶ He said in 1962: “For some reason I sent it back to England by post. I don’t remember why—and of course it got lost.”⁷ Walton also recalled that the manuscript “didn’t turn up till about 1921; then I rewrote it a bit ... most of the last movement I rewrote a lot of times”.⁸ Perhaps this last statement about revisions refers to later efforts, for he claimed in 1932 that it was “published not very much revised [...] in 1924, though written in 1918.”⁹ There is no record of an early performance, though certainly one may have occurred in informal circumstances—such as a party of Lady Glenconner— between 1921 and 1924.

In 1924, Walton submitted the score to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.¹⁰ This organization had for several years subsidized the publication of new British music;¹¹ they had chosen the Piano Quartet by Howells in 1918. This time the adjudicators were Hugh Allen (Walton’s former teacher), the already eminent composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (Allen’s close friend who had been an examiner for Walton’s

¹ Burton, p.22.

² Christopher Palmer, *Herbert Howells: A Celebration*, London: Thomas Publishing 366, p.349, quoted in Lloyd, p.25; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

³ Craggs (1993, p.4–5) hypothesizes that the complete work was done by February, but I know of no evidence to support this claim.

⁴ Craggs 1977, p.476; Craggs 1990, p.15; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

⁵ Hayes, p.489; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

⁶ Lloyd (p.25) claims that Walton “finished the quartet [...] in Amalfi” when visiting there with the Sitwells in the spring of 1920. But all other data imply that it was completed in 1919, and Walton had merely brought the manuscript with him to Amalfi the following year. By 1920 Walton had begun the String Quartet; it would have been highly atypical for him to begin one major work before having completed its predecessor. Also, it seems that Walton had not begun to have his usual crisis of creativity (as would impede the progress of *Belshazzar’s Feast*, the First Symphony, and *Troilus and Cressida*), so composition flowed quickly. I can find no external data to support Lloyd’s statement, whereas the score published in 1924 dates the work as having been completed in 1919.

⁷ Walton in interview with J.W. Lambert, *Sunday Times*, March 25, 1962; quoted in Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.xiii; see also Lloyd, p.25. It is generally said that the manuscript was “lost for two years” (Craggs 1990, p.15; Howes 1973, p.2; Tierney, p.243), but that seems to be a slight exaggeration given Walton’s later claim that it turned up “about 1921”. Perhaps the figure of two years was based on the work’s completion in 1919, but Walton had not visited Italy until the spring of 1920.

⁸ Ottaway, p.8; see also Lloyd, p.25; Tierney, p.243

⁹ Letter from William Walton to Hubert Foss, May 17, 1932, in Hayes, p.75; see also Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

¹⁰ Tierney, p.243

¹¹ Howes 1973, p.2

Oxford degree), and Henry Hadow (1859–1937).¹ Hadow was a prominent writer, having edited *The Oxford History of Music* from 1896 to 1905, and educator, at the time Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University.² The adjudicators' report hailed Walton's quartet as "a work of real achievement, clear and transparent in texture, restrained in feeling, well-written throughout, and rising at moments of climax into a strain of great beauty and nobility".³

The score was duly published, with funding from the Carnegie Trust, by Stainer & Bell in 1924.⁴ Walton added the dedication: "To The Right Rev. Thomas Banks Strong, Bishop of Ripon".⁵ Walton wrote to Strong on September 30, 1924, to inform him of the dedication, adding: "I fear that I but ill express myself in speech or writing, and I hope that my quartet will express more clearly than I can my gratitude and affection for you. So I hope you like the quartet."⁶

The manuscript was probably used in preparation of the first published version, but its current whereabouts are sadly unknown.⁷ Walton wrote in 1957 to Alan Frank regarding the "vast amount of mistakes in the sc[ore] & parts. (I was only allowed one proof & it was my first experience!)"⁸ Hugh Macdonald reports the condition of the first score and its complications:

Score and parts: Published by Stainer & Bell Ltd. in September 1924 at 9s [9 shillings] as part of the Carnegie Collection of British Music. Score 74 pp., with buff stiff paper wrappers, lettered in maroon; three separate parts. There are a considerable number of obvious printing errors, especially in the last movement. The bar-count in the first movement is adrift from b. 70 onwards.⁹

The earliest documented performance took place in Liverpool on September 19, 1924. The pianist was J.E. Wallace and the string players were members of the McCullagh String Quartet:¹⁰ violinist Isabel McCullagh, violist Helen Rawdon Briggs and cellist Mary McCullagh. It was part of a broadcast called "Carnegie Night" which also included music by George Dyson and Ivor Gurney.¹¹ The same performers presented the quartet's first public hearing on October 30, 1924, at Rushworth Hall in Liverpool.

For many years it was believed that the premiere had not taken place until five years later, on October 30, 1929. This was the same concert that featured what was then the earliest known performance of Walton's two songs *The Winds* and *Tritons*. The performers included pianist Gordon Bryan, violist James

¹ Craggs 1990, p.15; Kennedy 1989, p.13; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v; see also Burton, p.22

² Nigel Fortune, "Hadow, W.H."; Hinnells, p.3

³ Macdonald, WWE v.19, pv.; see also Lloyd, p.25; Tierney, p.26

⁴ Craggs 1977, p.47; Craggs 1990, p.15; Craggs 1993, p.198; Howes 1973, p.2; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

⁵ Craggs 1977, p.47; Craggs 1990, p.15; Craggs 1993, p.198; Howes 1973, p.3; Lloyd, p.25; Tierney, p.243. Strong's relocation from Oxford to Ripon will be discussed below.

⁶ Kennedy, in EMI CDC 5 55404 2, p.5

⁷ Craggs 1990, p.15; Craggs 1993, p.198; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.xiii; Smith, p.31

⁸ Letter from William Walton to Alan Frank, November 21, 1957, quoted in Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.vi

⁹ Macdonald, WE vp.19, p.xiii

¹⁰ Hayes, p.489; Lloyd, p.25; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

¹¹ Macdonald (WWE v.19, p.v) notes that "Percy Scholes previewed the broadcast with an analytical summary of the work in *Radio Times*, 12 September 1924".

Lockyer, and cellist John Gabalfa, though it is unknown whether Pierre Tas or William Primrose played the violin part.¹ The first recording of the Piano Quartet dates from 1938,² released on a 78-rpm LP by Decca Records (AX 238/41) the following year. The performers were the Reginald Paul Piano Quartet, comprising pianist Reginald Paul, violinist George Stratton, violist Watson Forbes, and cellist John Moore.³

The second recording has some historical importance given its role in the subsequent development of the composition. In 1955 there appeared a 33-rpm LP, released by Argo (RG 48), recorded by the Robert Masters Piano Quartet: Robert Masters, violin; Nannie Jameson, viola; Muriel Taylor, cello; and Robert Kinloch Anderson, piano.⁴ Before this occasion, Anderson had contacted Walton regarding the work. Stewart Craggs quotes Anderson's letter to him, dated March 23, 1976, at length:

We took up Walton's *Piano Quartet* shortly after the war ... at which time it probably hadn't been heard for many years. In the early 1950s we recorded it for Argo ... and either then or when we were preparing it for our first performance of it, I got in touch with Walton to ask his advice about certain things. I had found in working at the piano part that a few bits were virtually unplayable, mainly due to his obvious lack of experience at the time he wrote it. ... He was characteristically helpful when I asked him if he would agree to some alterations of a purely practical nature and we had one or two long and interesting conversations (mainly on the telephone as far as I can remember) about it. At this time I remember being astonished that he should still remember so exactly a work which he had written more than 30 years before.⁵

Anderson and Walton together sorted out several revisions, most of which applied to the piano part, and the composer left the pianist to make the changes into a score. Not long after this exchange, on November 21, 1957, Walton wrote to his publisher, Alan Frank, who had evidently asked about the work: "To answer your questions now. About the Pfte Qt, I don't know what to say. Best perhaps leave it as it is except for correcting the vast amount of mistakes in the sc[ore] & parts. [...] Otherwise one might get involved in all sorts of cutting & re-writing & it might emerge (& is it worth it?) as an entirely different work!"⁶ There the matter remained for another fifteen years.

June 30, 1973, saw a performance of the Piano Quartet at the Aldeburgh Festival,⁷ after which Walton decided to undertake a formal revision. Stainer & Bell had transferred the copyright to Oxford University Press, who wished to publish a new edition. Walton enlisted Anderson to assist, and the revision took

¹ Craggs 1977, p.47; Craggs 1990, p.15; Craggs 1993, p.14–15; Kennedy 1989, p.309; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v–vi. In 1993, Craggs reported that Tas was the violinist, dropping the mention of Primrose in his earlier accounts. Macdonald has accepted this conclusion as well, though I cannot locate any data to corroborate such a firm declaration.

² Kennedy 1989, p.13

³ Craggs 1977, p.48; Craggs 1990, p.15; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.vi

⁴ Craggs 1990, p.15

⁵ Craggs 1990, p.15; see also Kennedy 1989, p.13–14; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.vi; Tierney, p.243

⁶ Hayes, p.305; Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v1

⁷ Craggs 2014, p.4

place between December 1973 and 1975.¹ Hugh Macdonald reports that a “copy of the first edition on which Walton entered his revisions is now in the OUP Archive.”² The final score, published in 1976 by Oxford University Press, bears the note: “The composer is grateful to Ronald Kinloch Anderson for his valuable help in the preparation of this edition.”³ Of the final piece, Walton wrote: “It was written when I was a drooling baby, but since my ‘2nd childhood’ I’ve revised it a little and it is a very attractive piece”.⁴

Thus the Piano Quartet has existed in at least four different versions:

1. The original version, composed between 1918 and 1919, the manuscript of which was for a time lost in the mail between Italy and England, and which is now lost again;
2. The second version, which Walton revised at some point before 1924, when it was published and performed;
3. The third version, initiated by Ronald Kinloch Anderson in the early to mid-1950s; and
4. The fourth version, published in 1976, which incorporated Anderson’s changes and was based on the composer’s emendations written on a copy of the original score.

With such a convoluted history, it is no surprise that Hugh Macdonald’s edition for the William Walton Edition, which appeared in 2008, is different from all of the above. It incorporates all of Walton’s known changes, including some which were not incorporated into the 1976 score, and also corrects errors that had persisted since the first version. (It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to study the three surviving versions in detail; discussion below is thus limited to the final version.) Notwithstanding the editorial challenges in preparing performances, the Piano Quartet has gained in popularity over the past thirty years. Since Walton’s death in 1983, at least eleven more recordings have been released commercially.⁵ It has come to be recognized as an early flowering of Walton’s mature, Romantic style.

The Music

The Piano Quartet was Walton’s first completed major composition in any genre. It consists of four movements, lasting just under half an hour. On May 17, 1932, Walton described the quartet to Hubert Foss as his “first composition to show any kind of talent”.⁶ While this was certainly an understatement—

¹ Accounts differ as to the precise date of the revision. Michael Kennedy (p.259) states “during 1973–4”. Stewart Craggs (1990, p.16) states “between 1974 and 1975”, which he amended (in 1993, p.92) to “December 1973”. Hugh Macdonald (WWE v.19, p.xiii) opts for “in 1974–5”.

² Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.vi. Unfortunately, I have been unable to consult this copy of the score.

³ Craggs 1977, p.47; Craggs 1990, p.16

⁴ Letter from William Walton to Diana Rix, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.259

⁵ (1) Dorian Ensemble, 1986, Phoenix (per Craggs 1990, p.16); (2) English String Quartet with pianist John McCabe, 1987, Meridian; (3) pianist Hamish Milne with Kenneth Sillito, Robert Smissen, and Stephen Orton, 1991, Chandos; (4) pianist Israela Margalit with Janice Graham, Paul Silverthorne, and Moray Welsh, 1995, EMI; (5) Maggini Quartet with pianist Peter Donohoe, 1999, Naxos; (6) Nash Ensemble, 2002, Hyperion; (7) Marcato Piano Quartet, 2005, Etcetera; (8) Ames Piano Quartet, 2007, Albany; (9) Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, 2007, CMS (10) Frith Piano Quartet, 2010, Nimbus; (11) Cappa Ensemble, 2013, Nimbus. Of these, only the first was never released on compact disc.

⁶ Macdonald, WWE v.19, p.v

as attested by *A Litany* and *The Winds* alone—it is true that the Piano Quartet is a major accomplishment, not only for a composer aged sixteen, but even for a mature craftsman.

This work is also the first major demonstration of two characteristics that became central to Walton's mature style. First is the melancholy lyricism found in the third movement, which later infuses the three concertos, the third movement of the First Symphony, the String Quartet in A minor, much of *Troilus and Cressida*, and even sections of the Second Symphony and the Hindemith Variations. Second is a pungent rhythmic drive found especially in the second and fourth movements, and later in *Façade*, *Portsmouth Point*, the scherzo of the First Symphony, *Belshazzar's Feast*, the later overtures such as *Scapino*, and the Partita for Orchestra. In the Piano Quartet, the youth Walton has begun to mature.

Walton was a poor pianist and violinist, though he had been modestly trained in both instruments. He was certainly no novice, as this quartet attests. The instruments are handled in varied manners. The piano, for example, has full chords, arpeggiated flourishes, and lyrical melodies in octaves. The part is also extremely difficult to play, even after Walton and Kinloch Anderson had codified their revisions. The strings too are handled in varied fashion: *pizzicato* and *arco*; *sul tasto* and *sul ponticello*; harsh, rhythmic jabs and long, lyrical lines. The cello begins with a perfect-fifth drone, the slow movement with mutes and harmonics. Each of the four instruments is given moments in which to come to the fore. Certainly Christopher Palmer is correct to identify “the occasional overloading of the piano part or fussiness in the strings,” but to dismiss them as being of no consequence “compared with the sweep and brilliance of the whole.”¹

Throughout Walton's life, his music is consistently well structured. None of the four movements of the Piano Quartet treats a traditional form in a historically typical manner. In matters of a multi-movement tonal structure, too, he is both classical and innovative. Though the opening and closing movements bear no key signature, the key is essentially D minor, or more accurately D Dorian. The melodies never return verbatim, but are always slightly modified, eschewing literal recapitulation for extended development. Yet the entire quartet is based on a melodic and rhythmic cell found in its second measure. Ernest Walker's maxim that modern music should live up to classical traditions found welcome ears in the boy Walton.

Reading the various commentaries and liner notes about the Piano Quartet can be a comic experience. So many composers are invoked as influences—including Howells, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Ireland, Bridge, Brahms, Fauré, Ravel, and Stravinsky—that one wonders whether Walton himself can be found at all. The root of the matter is that Walton has already developed in himself certain proclivities which he shared with those composers. There is only one instance (as will be discussed below regarding the third movement) of overt influence. Otherwise, Walton had collected the thoughts of master composers of the present and recent past and already made them his own.

Previously in this document, great attention has been taken to consider the harmonic structure of each piece. The Piano Quartet provides no major change from what has already been said: the emphasis on seventh chords and non-harmonic tones persists, though better integrated into a harmonic framework.

¹ Palmer, in Chandos CHAN 8999, p.5

Since this quartet is Walton's earliest surviving major work, we will consider here the manner in which he treats larger forms, rather than focus on specific sonorities. A few other highlights and their significance will also be mentioned.

First Movement

The first movement is marked *Allegramente*. By the time the quartet had been published, Walton had learned more than the rudiments of Italian. He could simply have marked *Allegro* and any player could infer an apt tempo. But no, Walton uses an adverb form—"Joyfully"—to describe not only tempo but mood. Many performances of the Piano Quartet emphasize the harshness and angularity of some of the writing, ignoring the joy to be found in the *marcato* articulations and the grand, sweeping second statement of the main theme. The recording that proceeds closest to Walton's written metronome marking—made by the English String Quartet and John McCabe in 1987—conveys this sense perhaps the best. Rather than a frenzied three-in-a-bar, McCabe and company present a vibrant romp in one.

The core motivic material of the entire quartet is found in the second measure of the first movement. The quartet's first sound is *pianissimo* cello on an open-fifth drone of D and A. The violin intones a melody that is often compared to English pastoralism, though this description neglects its joyful bounce. After two rising pick-up notes, we hear the germ motive that unifies the quartet: a pattern of quarter note, two eighths, and quarter, on F, E, F, and D. This motive is followed by an octave leap typical of his later, soaring style; this will recur throughout the first movement. The melody is in the Dorian mode, built from D with occasional resting points on A. The melody is essentially ten bars long, with a busy, repetitive six-measure extension that rushes headlong into the piano's *forte* and *staccato* cascade, again with groupings of quarter notes and eighth notes. The opening melody returns forthwith in joyous lyrical octaves, featuring triple- and even quadruple-stops in the strings and swirling thirty-second notes in the piano.

This introduction includes several elements characteristic of Walton's style. We have already encountered—for example, in the *Valse in C minor*—an upward leap that is counterbalanced by a steady fall. Also, Walton's themes typically do not have a formal conclusion; rather they meander away, often with many repetitions of the theme's final segment. Modality only occurs occasionally in Walton's later music, but here it is quite evident. This is likely a result of familiarity with the chamber music of Howells and Vaughan Williams. Finally, Walton was an expert at including vibrant filigree around a lyrical theme, as included in the opening melody's first *tutti* statement. In the pieces that follows this Piano Quartet—such as the First String Quartet, *Façade*, and the Toccata for Violin and Piano—these features are not as prominent, but they return to the fore by the Viola Concerto of 1929.

The first movement is in a mostly straightforward sonata form. The divergence from the anticipated form mostly takes place in the frequent episodes of development that are littered throughout the structure. If this structure is to be faulted, this may be the result of Walton's including too many motivic ideas. The principal themes—labeled A1 and B2 in the chart below—certainly predominate, but the

other melodic material also occurs frequently. This chart succinctly indicates the major structural divisions of the first movement.¹

	EXPOSITION: FIRST GROUP
m.1	Theme A1, violin, in D Dorian, over cello drone; m.2 germ motive; octave leap
m.17	Bridge A2, piano, in four octaves, cascade in quarter notes and eighth notes
m.21	Theme A1, tutti, in D Dorian, violin and viola octaves, piano flurries
m.34	Bridge A2, strings and piano alternating
m.40	Bridge A3, cello, in A-flat Dorian, based on A1's closing figure, with added triplet
m.46	Bridge A3, violin, in D Dorian
m.52	Bridge A4, based on A1's octave leap
	EXPOSITION: SECOND GROUP
m.60	Bridge B1, viola, steadily rising with fall of seventh
m.68	Theme B2, piano, in G-sharp minor, in octaves, pentatonic, rising quarters, falling eighths
m.78	Theme B2, strings in octaves
m.81	Theme B2, tutti, in A minor
m.85	Falling eighths from B2
m.90	Germ motive from A1 in viola and violin, followed by falling eighths from B2
m.103	Falling eighths from B2, alternating with piano upward arpeggios
m.111	Bridge B3, quarter notes with rising fourth and suspensions
	DEVELOPMENT
m.120	Theme A1, violin, in B Dorian
m.125	Theme A1, viola, in A Dorian; m.127: Theme B2, violin, whole-tone
m.130	Theme A1, violin and viola, in D Dorian, then in A-flat Dorian
m.136	Bridge A2, piano, augmented variant, in 5/4; m.138 violin based on Bridge B3
m.146	Atmospheric sequences, based on Bridge B3
m.152	Sequences, based on A1 germ
m.163	Theme A3, piano right hand, in D Dorian
m.168	Sequences, based on octave leap and m.1 rise
	RECAPITULATION: FIRST GROUP
m.177	Theme A1, violin and viola in canon, in D Dorian, marked <i>tranquillo</i>
m.182	Bridge A2, piano, violin, viola, variant
m.187	Hints of B2 as bridge, on A, then C, then A
m.198	Bridge A2, chordal in piano
m.204	Bridge A2, piano, then strings, then piano
	RECAPITULATION: SECOND GROUP
m.212	Theme B2, strings, in A major, pentatonic, with chords in piano
m.222	Theme B2, viola and violin in canon, in A minor
m.237	Falling eighths from B2, alternating with piano upward arpeggios
	CODA
m.248	Theme A1 falling motive after octave leap, in piano, in D Dorian
m.252	Theme B2 opening motive, in violin and viola in canon, in D Dorian
m.261	Theme A1 octave leap and falling motive, in viola and violin in canon, in D Dorian; then cello
m.269	Drone in cello and viola; m.272, Theme A1 opening in violin, ends with A1 germ

¹ Howes 1973, p.3–6, provided some of the basis for this chart.

Of the elements mentioned above, one is especially noteworthy. While many commentators claim that the first theme (A1) is based on English pastoralism, none have pointed out the essentially pentatonic nature of the second main theme (B2). For its entire ten-bar duration, nearly all pitches are B, C-sharp, D-sharp, F-sharp, and G-sharp. There are three very brief E's, moving away from the prevailing pentatonic sonority, but they are brief passing or neighbor tones that occur near the end of the melody. Taken on its own, the second theme sounds like a moment of Ravel in an eastern mood. The scoring of its first statement—simple octaves in the piano—reinforces this affinity. Pentatonic or mostly pentatonic tunes will appear in later movements as well.

Since the Howells Piano Quartet in A minor was allegedly the inspiration for Walton to compose his, we should consider the similarities between the first movements of each work. The most blatant parallel deals with thematic material. Walton's first theme bears a certain superficial similarity to Howells's second theme (at [2] in the score). Both begin on the second beat in 3/4 with its steady rise and fall of a third (major third in Howells, minor third in Walton). Howells descends with a single eighth note passing tone, but Walton adds another brief turn upward, creating his germ motive. Walton also uses a similar descending pattern after his octave leap in m.3. When this motive is developed, as in m.51–57, it sounds strikingly similar to several measures after [4] in Howells. These motives are used so frequently in their respective works that several moments sound like they could be lifted from one to the other.

Other similarities abound in the way that the two composers handle the instruments. Howells and Walton both often give the piano accented, closed-position chords in the right hand with more open sonorities in the left; one difference, however, is that Walton's left-hand chords tend to be more widely spaced and require a larger span. Both composers assign melodies to the three string instruments in octaves for a particularly rhapsodic mood. Both occasionally cut short a melody with sudden silence, only to resume after a brief pause with full forces. The last moments of Howells's first movement invoke several repetitions of its primary motive and drift away softly; Walton does the same. Perhaps most importantly, just as Walton's germ motive re-appears in all four movements, Howells's second theme serves a similar unifying purpose over his quartet's three movements.¹ An extended study could compare these two works, the first large-scale efforts by two great English composers, written just three years apart from each other. Yet somehow, despite borrowings and homages, Walton's music doesn't sound like anyone's but his own.

Second Movement

Throughout his life, Walton composed only three works in four movements: the present Piano Quartet, the First Symphony (1932–5) and the String Quartet in A minor (1945–6). Each of them embraces the same pattern in that the second movement is a quick scherzo. The present movement is marked *Allegro scherzando*, and though it is possible to interpolate an element of the First Symphony's *con malizia*,² the work functions much better when keeping in mind the *scherzando* adverb—"jokingly."

¹ Cooke, p.188

² Bratby, in *Nimbus Alliance NI 6183*, p.4

This rhythmic, energetic scherzo balances the lyrical, dramatic first movement very effectively. In the first movement, the four instruments are treated more or less equally, though the cello presents less melodic material than the others. Here, as Frank Howes observed, “[t]he strings do most of the propulsion [...], the piano has the tunes.”¹ The structure of this movement can be encapsulated as follows:²

	EXPOSITION: FIRST GROUP
m.1	Motive A1, “scratchy” ³ string chords, in roughly A Lydian
m.12	Bridge A2, slowly rising line in piano, with leaps in strings (recalling germ motive)
m.18	Theme A3, piano, sweeping, on C–G pedal, with augmented chords above
m.26	Variant of A1 developed
m.41	Variant of A2 developed
	EXPOSITION: SECOND GROUP
m.52	Theme B1, cello, on D Dorian, fugue built on germ; m.56, viola; m.60, violin
m.69	Episode in 5/8
m.78	A2 varied as bridge, focus on germ
m.84	Theme B2, piano, in C major, in 3/4, lyrically sweeping
m.91	Theme B2, strings, in octaves; piano with block chords
	DEVELOPMENT
m.103	Falling eighth notes shift in m.107 to repetitions of germ
m.114	A1, in piano
m.119	Beginning of B1 melded with leaps of A2, in strings
m.127	A2 variant, viola, rising line and leaps coalesced into one part
m.131	A1, violin alone, preparing for the recapitulation
m.142	A2, piano, in the conjoined variant of m.127
	RECAPITULATION
m.144	A3, violin, again with C–G pedal in piano and augmented chords
m.160	Variant of A2, akin to m.41, focus on germ
m.178	B1, cello, on D Dorian, over G pedal in piano; m.182, viola; m.186, violin, to B-flat pedal
m.195	B2, piano, in E-flat major
m.202	B2, violin and viola, in octaves; piano with block chords
m.208	B2 developed
	CODA
m.215	A2 germ augmented
m.219	B2 spliced
m.223	A1 expanded, then spliced
m.235	A1 closes firmly in E-flat–B-flat open fifth

The opening string motive unites the movement’s structure. Its first appearance is harmonically difficult to decipher. The first two chords are G-sharp, A, D-sharp, and G-sharp, all in the treble range. The resolution—or something akin to one—is on the essentially quartal chord of F-sharp, B, C-sharp, and F-

¹ Howes 1973, p.6

² Howes 1973, p.6–7, provided some of the basis for this chart.

³ Howes 1973, p.6

sharp. The piano then enters with a vaguely octatonic cascade of F-sharp, D-sharp, C-sharp and A, repeated an octave lower. The piano's strong arrival on a lower A implies that all of these pitches have added up to a Lydian scale on A, though this certainly doesn't function as a tonic for the remainder of the movement. Not until the strong C–G bass motion in the first principal theme, at m.18, is there a hint of tonal stability and even that is foiled by augmented chords above. Harmonic ambiguity on this scale is atypical of Walton, and perhaps shows the influence of Bartók.

The second principal theme is the earliest surviving fugue by Walton, he who would master the form in the finale of the First Symphony and the *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*. Like the fugue of the First Symphony, the quartet's fugal subject doesn't so much conclude as propel headlong into the answer. This is a skill that Walton perhaps adopted from the many Bach preludes and fugues that were played in recitals after cathedral services. The fugue subject is the principal location where the germ motive of the first movement is found in this second movement.

The third principal theme, classified above as "B2," is often compared to tunes of Elgar, even being called "Elgar crossed with Howells"¹ or "written by Elgar and harmonized by John Ireland".² In fact it is also typical Walton, especially in its second statement in the full strings, with its wide leaps and prominent metric displacement. This second movement is sometimes commented upon as a harbinger of the acerbic, energetic style that the mature Walton explored in *Portsmouth Point*. To many this is one of the two principal facets of the mature Walton's sound. The other principal facet—the bittersweet melancholy which existed as early as *A Litany*—is given its first full fruition in the third movement.

Third Movement

Some commentators find the slow third movement to be the core of the entire quartet. Stephen Lloyd has mentioned its "melting beauty".³ Christopher Palmer hailed its "deep-carved [...] lusciousness".⁴ At the work's 1929 London performance, however, this movement was considered the weakest. The critic of the *Times*, for example, described the quartet as a "finicking and unbalanced work whose slow movement pitilessly exposed the weakness that is not so evident in the swifter movements".⁵ This criticism should not perhaps be taken too seriously, since Walton's public at that time was used to the quicksilver vibrancy of *Portsmouth Point* and the humor and delicacy of *Façade*. This movement belongs in a category with the Viola Concerto, the third movement of the First Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the Cello Concerto, for its melancholy suppleness. Walton's sudden predilection for harmonics in the strings, and the fact that this movement employs the germ motive less than the others, set it apart further.

Before progressing to the movement as a whole, one should consider the source of the principal melodic material. The opening chords of the first three measures are cribbed from "Le Martin-pêcheur" from Ravel's *Histoires naturelles* (1906). They derive from the contrasting middle section of that song

¹ Burn, in Hyperion CDA 67340, p.4

² Howes 1973, p.6

³ Lloyd, p.25

⁴ Palmer, in Chandos CHAN 8999, p.5

⁵ Lloyd, p.25

(m.12–15). This is not simply a matter of similar contour or harmonies: the pitches are identical, and the only change in the rhythm is its augmentation. Even the piano’s left hand open fifth of E–B, shifting to C-sharp–G-sharp, are directly lifted from the Ravel song. The only substantive difference is the instrumentation: in the first bar, Walton divides Ravel’s piano chords among the strings, before assigning the remaining sonorities to the piano alone. The similarity was first identified by the pianist Angus Morrison, a great friend of Walton during the Sitwell years.¹ This tribute to Ravel is especially noteworthy as the earliest solid proof that Walton had encountered the Frenchman’s works, having probably perused their scores in Thomas Strong’s private collection or at the Radcliffe Camera.

Even if Walton’s opening sonorities were adapted from another composer’s work, the structure of the movement is Walton’s own.²

	FIRST THEME
m.1	Theme A1 (after Ravel), in E major, initially strings, then piano from m.2
m.6	Theme A2, piano (more accurately the second phrase of A1, though treated separately later)
m.13	Theme A2, strings
m.20	Variant of A1, strings alone
m.25	Theme A1, cello, still in E major (in original version, this was in the piano’s left thumb)
m.30	Theme A2, piano
m.34	Theme A1, as at the start
	SECOND THEME
m.49	Bridge: syncopated harmonics in violin, exotic chords falling in piano
m.53	Theme B, viola, in F Dorian; begins pentatonic; bridge motives continue in violin and piano
m.61	Theme B, three-part string counterpoint, piano silent
	THREE INTERLUDES
m.69	Interlude C, marked <i>agitato</i>
m.76	Interlude D, piano alone, based on mvt 1: Theme A1, in C minor, closing in E minor
m.79	Interlude D, cello alone, in E minor
m.83	Interlude D, piano alone, in D minor, closing in F-sharp minor
m.86	Interlude D, viola alone, in F-sharp minor
m.92	Interlude E, violin, in F Dorian, sweeping melody with piano undulations
m.101	Variant of Interlude E, in C major
	RECAPITULATION AND CODA
m.105	Theme A2, in E major, bridge into recapitulation proper
m.109	Theme A1, in E major
m.112	Theme A2, violin, with string tremolo chords
m.118	Theme B, piano, in A minor
m.121	Bridge into coda, string quarter notes falling
m.125	Second half of A1, piano; ends in E major

Herbert Howells did not include a scherzo in his piano quartet, but his central slow movement can be compared to Walton’s third movement. Stephen Lloyd argues that “the parallels are very close,

¹ Kennedy, p.13

² Howes 1973, p.7–8, provided some of the basis for this chart.

especially their harmonic affinity”,¹ but Howells’s harmonies are rather tame compared to those that Walton borrowed from Ravel. The real point of comparison between the two works is not harmonic, but structural. This is especially relevant to the central section titled above as “three interludes.” Walton’s second interlude, beginning at m.26, directly references the main theme of the first movement, and is heard in the piano only. Likewise, Howells’s slow movement at [26] includes an interlude wherein the piano alone plays the main theme from its first movement. In both cases, the reference is interrupted by strings, but then taken again by the piano. Also, both instances resolve the melody in an unorthodox manner reminiscent of Vaughan Williams. Further, this section is followed by a soaring violin tune with a moving piano accompaniment. This is the only direct influence of Howells on Walton’s third movement, but it is a striking one.

Fourth Movement

The finale of the Piano Quartet presents special challenges when one considers its structure. It is usually described as a sonata-rondo form and indeed could be analyzed as either a sonata or a rondo. The fundamental problem with analyzing this movement’s structure is described by Frank Howes: “Walton’s tunes are not, like folk tunes or Schubert’s tunes or even Beethoven’s, developable themes in the nature of statements. Rather are they self-developing ideas, which grow as they go.”² The chart below attempts to follow the flow, with headings that blend sonata and rondo.³

	EXPOSITION: FIRST GROUP
m.1	Piano swirl, C-sharp in bass, G major/minor seventh chord above
m.2	Theme A1, syncopated, rhythmic motive in strings (B minor seventh chord)
m.3	Motive A2, piano downward plunge in D Dorian
m.11	Theme A2, in D Dorian, repetitive with four pitches (C, D, E, F); varied immediately
	EXPOSITION: SECOND GROUP
m.42	Theme B, cello, in C-sharp minor, pentatonic, leading to B minor (m.50), <i>cantando</i>
m.58	Theme B, violin, others harmonize
m.75	Theme A3, cello, in B-flat; m.80 piano swirl; other strings join in A2
m.91	Theme A3 extended and varied
	DEVELOPMENT
m.107	Theme B, violin, in B-flat, two motives compressed, <i>piano</i>
m.110	Theme A3, rhythmic in strings
m.118	Theme B, violin, in C-sharp, compressed version, <i>forte</i>
m.123	Development of A3 and similar motive from B
m.132	Development of A3 continues, shifting meters, settling to 5/4
m.144	Theme B, violin, in G-sharp, compressed version, expansive and sweeping
	FIRST EPISODE
m.154	Theme C, viola unaccompanied, based on A3, rhythmic, in E-flat major, fugal
m.163	Theme C, violin joins fugato, in C minor
m.172	Theme C, cello joins fugato, in F Dorian
m.185	Theme C, piano joins fugato, more chordal than rhythmic, in F minor

¹ Lloyd, p.25

² Howes 1973, p.9

³ Howes 1973, p.8–9, provided some of the basis for this chart.

m.197	Downward sequence
m.203	Theme C, first motive in strings, second motive in piano
m.207	Downward sequence, then snippet of C, then repetition of sequence motive
m.218	Theme B, violin, on D
m.228	Brief snippet of C
	SECOND EPISODE
m.232	Theme D, based on A2, strings, in 3/4; syncopated chords in piano, in 5/4; in D Dorian
m.242	Theme C, piano, rhythmic, <i>martellato</i>
m.257	Theme A1, strings; variant of A2 briefly in piano; A1 varied, with arpeggio triplets
m.270	Theme B, violin, compressed version
	MODIFIED RECAPITULATION
m.275	Theme B, viola, extended version, in D Dorian/pentatonic
m.291	Theme B, violin and viola, in octaves, in D Dorian/pentatonic
m.308	Theme C hinted in cello
m.311	Piano plays germ motive over rhythmic E pedal; strings have Theme C
m.326	Theme B hinted in piano
m.330	Extended sequence
m.352	Violin and viola trade germ; m.357: start of mvt 1: Theme A1 in piano
m.361	Germ, piano, over D pedal
m.377	Theme A1, strings, as at start
m.378	Theme A2, piano, as at start
m.388	Strings hint Theme C with germ motive; close on octave Ds

The musical language in the finale is more modernistic than in the previous movements. Walton marries English modality—especially a preference for the Dorian—with the jaunty, biting rhythms of Stravinsky. The supreme influence over this movement, combining rhythmic drive with modality, is perhaps a composer whose name is not generally associated with this work: Bartók. The Hungarian master certainly would have appreciated the form's frequent and free connections between different themes. Walton had indeed studied Bartók's *Allegro barbaro*. Stravinsky's *Petrushka* is often cited in the piano writing of this movement. Walton was beginning to try out his more modernist instincts; note that the previous movements' similarities to the Howells Piano Quartet are not to be found here. One miracle of this movement is that it coheres so satisfyingly to its partners, and does not sound detached from the rest of the quartet.

The most important aspect of this movement—and indeed of the Piano Quartet as a whole—is the clear evidence of Walton's genius for constant evolution of themes. Themes A and C are closely linked not only to each other but to the germ motive that has appeared in all four movements. He gives these various thematic ideas so many permutations as to defy traditional structures. Frank Howes describes the importance of this observation:

This thematic identity in differences is a basic element in Walton's style. It is so natural to him that he seems hardly conscious of it. In this quartet we see both the conscious recapitulation of

the main idea [...] and a more pervasive unconscious persistence of the quaver germ. Which is interesting both as musical thought and as showing how an intensely musical mind works.¹

One could question, of course, whether these connections are truly unconscious, or whether they were carefully wrought by an intelligent and insightful mind. In any case, the Piano Quartet demonstrates that Walton, aged only seventeen, had begun to think like a fully mature composer. As Christopher Palmer summarizes, "Walton could easily have produced the finale at the height of his powers and been proud of it."²

With the Sitwells in London

The diary of prominent novelist Arnold Bennett (1867–1931) includes an account of a dinner at the Sitwell residence on June 5, 1919. This particular dinner occurred before Walton's arrival, but represents well the personalities and lifestyle that the seventeen-year-old boy became surrounded by.

Dined at Osbert Sitwell's. Good dinner. Fish before soup. Present, W.H. Davies, Lytton Strachey, Woolf, Nichols, S. Sassoon, Aldous Huxley, Atkin (a very young caricaturist), W.J. Turner, and Herbert Read.... A house with much better pictures and bric-à-brac than furniture.... But lots of very modern pictures, of which I liked a number. Bright walls and bright cloths and bright glass everywhere. A fine Rowlandson drawing....³

It was quite a line-up: William Henry Davies (1871–1940), the Welsh poet; Lytton Strachey (1880–1932), writer of Bloomsbury fame, for whose play *The Son of Heaven* Walton would compose music six years later; Leonard Woolf (1880–1969), one of the centerpieces of the Bloomsbury clan, the husband of Virginia Woolf; Robert Nichols (1893–1944), the war poet; Siegfried Sassoon, who had already befriended Walton at Oxford; Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), another Bloomsbury writer whose dystopian novel *Brave New World* would shake literature to its core twelve years later; the artist William Park "Gabriel" Atkin (1897–1937); Walter J. Turner (1889–1946), the Australian writer; and finally Herbert Read (1893–1968), poet, art critic, and anarchist. Such was the company that the Sitwell brothers regularly kept in their fashionably decorated home. If Bennett felt that Atkin, five years Walton's elder, was "very young," no doubt the set was even more surprised to meet the Oxford composer in a few weeks. Given that Sassoon was present at this occasion, and Walton was about to visit, the musical Wunderkind was perhaps mentioned in conversation.

¹ Howes 1973, p.9

² Palmer, in Chandos CHAN 8999, p.5

³ *The Journals of Arnold Bennett*, selected and edited by Frank Swinnerton, Penguin Books 1954, p.300, quoted in Lloyd, p.18

On July 2, Walton arrived in London for the first time. He stayed at 5 Swan Walk, in Chelsea. Sacheverell Sitwell had already arrived, forswearing Oxford for good.¹ Osbert described Walton's arrival in London:

The young composer seemed more shy and silent than ever. Most of the summer days he appeared to spend in his room at the top of the house, where he sat by the window for long periods, eating blackheart cherries from a paper bag, and throwing the stones out of the window, down onto the smooth, brown-tiled pavement outside the door. Swan Walk was so quiet that there was only to be heard a distant booming of traffic, and, nearer, this dry, staccato rattle of cherry stones. [...]

Soon a piano was hired for him, and in consequence, he remained in his room for longer periods even than before, at intervals being peered at cautiously through the door by Mrs. Powell [the housekeeper], "to see he was all right"; for she had quickly become attached to him, and possessed great faith in his talent. [...] The piano, though he attacked it so often, was seldom, through some process of personal magic, heard downstairs. If it were, I would sometimes advise him to have a dumb-piano to practice upon, when he would grow very indignant. He had, it may be noted, always to be near a piano, though his playing of it, I apprehend, never very much improved.²

Walton's work ethic in such surroundings was quite impressive. Osbert even commented that "[s]ince William spent so great a part of his first weeks at Swan Walk in his room, it was not easy at first to grasp his very definite character."³

Osbert also described Walton as being more religious than is broadly believed to have been the case:

As a result of the ecclesiastical influence in his upbringing at Oxford, he was then extremely and conventionally religious. That my brother and I did not go to church on Sunday certainly shocked him, and it was believed afterwards that some part of the each morning was spent on his knees, praying to the Lord to forgive us: but this I must own to be speculative and conjectural.⁴

July of 1919 was a crucial month in the development of Walton's musical world-view. With Sacheverell he attended concerts as often as possible. Susana Walton reported that "they heard Cortot play and they became admirers of Busoni. Together they attended every one of his recitals."⁵ Composing on the piano by day, attending concerts with Sacheverell by night, dining with literary luminaries... this was a lifestyle that Walton could hardly have imagined six months previously. He had complained about the poor musical opportunities in Oxford, and now he partook in a veritable smorgasbord, devouring concerts as a famished dragon might devour a medieval village.

They probably also heard performances of the Ballets Russes, whose impresario, Sergei Diaghilev, was a friend of Osbert and Sacheverell. The troupe's season continued until July 30, including Stravinsky's

¹ Lloyd, p.9

² O. Sitwell, p.198–9; see also Kennedy 1989, p.20

³ O. Sitwell, p.199

⁴ O. Sitwell, p.198

⁵ S. Walton, p.48

Petruchka, Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat*, Respighi's *La Boutique fantasque*, and shorter works by Borodin, Mussorgsky, Chabrier, Dukas, Ravel, Roussel, Satie, and many others. The English composers represented with symphonic interludes in the performances were Arnold Bax, Lord Berners, Eugene Goossens, and Herbert Howells.¹ There are two primary factors that all of these works and composers have in common: their brilliant orchestration and their tonal, yet adventuresome, harmonic language. These were features that Walton embraced fully in his maturity.

Walton's own comments on this visit are best found in a letter not to his mother in Oldham, but to Thomas Strong in Oxford, dated July 25. We also learn that Walton was, notwithstanding his musical activities, also preoccupied with his academic progress. Most tantalizing, however, is the revelation that Walton had begun to compose for his true medium, the symphony orchestra.

My dear Mr Dean.

Thanks very much for your kind letter, which I have just received. I am still in London and I have been hearing a great deal [of] music, including a wonderful opera by Ravel 'L'heure Espagnole', which I heard last night. Also I am going to Borodine's opera "Prince Igor" on Saturday night. I return to Manchester on Monday.

I have been working hard for respensions ever since I heard that I had failed. [...]

It has been so unfortunate that my pieces for the orchestra have not been played at the Russian Ballet.

But it has been impossible owing to the shortness of the time, and the amount of other work which had to be rehearsed. However it is most probably that they will be performed in Paris at their season next month, which is really much better. Also Mr Goossens is doing them in Manchester in October.

Lastly I must express how grateful I am to you for enabling me to stay in London and to hear so much music. And you may be certain that I shall go on working my hardest for respensions which I am most anxious to pass.

Yours very sincerely,

W.T. Walton²

What can have happened to these first attempts into orchestral composition? No orchestral manuscript by Walton survives from this period. No performance is known to have materialized, either in London, Paris, or Manchester. Later Eugene Goossens, the conductor who was in the Sitwell circle and a close associate of Thomas Beecham, continued to express interest in an overture titled *Dr. Syntax*—could it possibly have been written as early as 1919? Noel Walton confirmed that his younger brother had begun thinking orchestrally: "When W was about 16, he left some Manuscripts with Hamilton Harty, who was conducting the Hallé at the time. They were returned with a note to the effect that 'composition did not

¹ A.L. Bacharach Programme Collection, 1916–1919, at Duke Humfrey's Library, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² Hayes, p.25–26

consist of making strange noises'! I often wonder what those manuscripts were."¹ We may still wonder what "strange noises" Walton was requesting of the orchestra in these initial forays.

Exams Again

Another letter from Walton to Strong, this time written at his parents' house in Oldham on August 7, confirms his desire to succeed academically: "I have now been home for quite ten days, and I am getting on rapidly with the work for responsions. [...] I shall most certainly try to make sure of getting through in September. One thing is, that I know what I am weak in, and hope to make my weaknesses strong enough for a pass."² There are no records of compositions from this period, so perhaps Walton, with encouragement from his parents, focused on his studies of Latin, Greek, and algebra. Perhaps he was spurred on to success given his elder brother's studies at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Rivalry always brought out the best in William.

In September, Walton left Oldham for Oxford. He made a second attempt at Responsions, but failed again.³ He needed to pass this exam in order to proceed forward with the Bachelor of Arts. The feedback from his instructors was contradictory: "While I had to endure innumerable castigations from my tutor and the late Sir Hugh Allen, the Dean was very tolerant, and was but gently stern about my scholastic failings, as long as I got along with my composing."⁴ Walton did indeed continue composing. He began a string quartet to fulfill the requirements of his Exhibition scholarship.⁵ The two movements that are believed to have been written around this time—the first movement and the fugal finale⁶—are in a remarkably different style than his previous works, thus demonstrating the wider musical horizons that London and the Sitwells had presented to him.

In the Michaelmas (autumn) term of 1919, Walton was resident in Oxford. He probably attended the special service at Christ Church on All Saints' Day, November 1, a remembrance for the many Oxford soldiers lost in the war.⁷ Life was steadily returning to normal, but a service such as this reinforced that the very definition of normalcy had changed irreparably. Certainly Oxford had changed for Walton. In the spring, both Sacheverell Sitwell and Siegfried Sassoon, dissatisfied, had left the university. One would think that having fewer friends at hand would have allowed Walton to focus on his academic studies, but the evidence is quite the opposite. His letter to his mother from November 17 documents three extraordinary events, each of which merits special consideration in turn. He prefaces these

¹ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

² Hayes, p.26

³ Craggs 1993, p.4

⁴ Anson, p.116–7

⁵ Kennedy 1989, p.21

⁶ Kennedy 1989, p.21

⁷ Curthoys, p.301

statements with a comical understatement of cosmic proportions: “Nothing much in particular has been happening.”¹

Walton wrote: “Lady Ottoline Morrell asked me over to her house last Sunday. It was very entertaining.”² The society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell (1873–1938) held court at the sixteenth-century Garsington Manor. The village of Garsington is five miles from central Oxford—had he wished, Walton may have even walked the distance to save a small expense. Sassoon introduced them,³ and was almost certainly present on this occasion. We do not know who else made their way to Garsington on that Sunday, November 9, but we do know the company that Lady Morrell kept. The painting *Umbrellas* (1917) by Dorothy Brett (1883–1977) depicts Lady Morrell surrounded by Lytton Strachey, Aldous Huxley, Brett herself, short-story writer Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) and her husband the essayist John Middleton Murry (1889–1957), portraitist Mark Gertler (1891–1939), and Lady Morrell’s young daughter, Julian (1906–1989).⁴ Also among her devoted coterie were the American poet T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), painter Augustus John (1878–1961), and novelist D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930).⁵ Lady Morrell was so famously flamboyant that even the Sitwells tended to be put off.⁶ This was the earliest documented visit of Walton to Garsington Manor, but probably not the last.

Walton also told his mother: “I went to hear Cortot give a recital last Monday. He is simply magnificent. His programme consisted of a Concerto by Vivaldi, the Chopin Preludes some Debussy & the Liszt Rhapsody No. 2.”⁷ The French-Swiss pianist Alfred Cortot (1877–1962) was then at the height of his popularity, a professor at the Conservatoire in Paris and, as of the previous month, founder of the École Normale de Musique de Paris. He frequently gave recitals in London. While Hugh Allen, Henry Ley, and Ernest Walker were certainly excellent keyboardists, Walton would on this occasion have heard a style and level of pianism that was unique in the world. He was obviously sufficiently intrigued to make the occasional jaunt to London for concerts, probably staying with the Sitwells for the evening or longer. At some point during this November, Osbert and Sacheverell relocated to a rather larger residence at 2 Carlyle Square.⁸ This address was to become Walton’s home as well in the 1920s, and witness to the first performance of *Façade*.

The third major event in Walton’s letter of November 17 is arguably the most important: “I went to London yesterday for the afternoon, and saw the ballet ‘Parade’. It was very marvellous, especially the scenery. The music was by Erik Satie, a Frenchman.”⁹ The Ballets Russes presented Jean Cocteau’s ballet *Parade* to music of Satie and décor by Pablo Picasso.¹⁰ *Parade* had a great impact on Walton’s post-

¹ Hayes, p.27

² Hayes, p.27; see also Burton, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.15; Lloyd, p.13; Tierney, p.30

³ Burton, p.37

⁴ Burton, p.37

⁵ Burton, p.37

⁶ Lloyd, p.13

⁷ Hayes, p.27; see also Burton, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.15; Tierney, p.30

⁸ Lloyd, p.26

⁹ Hayes, p.27; see also Burton, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.15; Lloyd, p.13; Tierney, p.30

¹⁰ Foreman, in Craggs 1999, p.231

Oxford work: Sacheverell commented on its “bellowing megaphone” and “fairground curtain”, two elements that would appear in *Façade* in 1921. Kevin McBeath has suggested that “Edith’s poem ‘Clowns’ Luck’, ‘vaguely suggested’ by ‘Parade’, presents the reader with a remarkable inventory of that ballet’s surreal components, in addition to providing a rich source for a ‘Scotch Rhapsody’ to come.”¹ The Sitwell influence in London continued strong.

In addition to these three events, Walton’s letter of November 17 includes two predictions about the immediate future. One seems not to have come to fruition, but is worth noting nonetheless from a lad of seventeen who was deeply in the thrall of *Petruška*: “I am to meet Stravinsky next month or perhaps before, so that will be too ex[c]iting for words.”² The other prediction probably did happen, but we have no record of verification: “I am sending Noel the music etc by the next post.”³ Was Walton composing another work for piano, which Noel could play? Or was this simply an indication that the brothers were sharing published scores?

Score study in fact continued to be a major component of Walton’s time. The Bodleian Library at Oxford has the Borrower’s Book that begins with November 1919 (sadly, earlier volumes have not survived). On the 18th, Walton checked out the scores to Schoenberg’s “3 piano pieces” and Satie’s “piano pieces”. The next day, he was back to check out *Le chasseur maudit* by Franck. He returned all of these on December 1, and returned the next day to check out Mozart’s quartets. Given that he was currently engaged on writing a rather dissonantly atonal string quartet, it is fascinating to consider that he may have considered the Mozart quartets as models. Further analysis of Walton’s score from a Mozartian point of view may reveal deeper understanding of the process whereby he learned his craft. Walton’s next entry in the Borrower’s Book does not appear until June.

He also continued to attend concerts in Oxford. According to a letter of December 6, Walton was “just off to hear Bach Mass in B mi[nor] under D^c Allen.”⁴ As he was about to “hear” rather than to “sing,” it seems that he no longer participated as a member of the Bach Choir. Yet the occasion on the sixth was only a rehearsal; the performance itself took place on the twelfth.⁵ Walton probably also attended Hugh Allen’s lecture about Bach’s Mass in B minor on November 29.⁶

Amid such hubbub of activity, Walton continued to prepare for his third attempt at Responsions. Against his name in the official register had been inscribed the words “Pass or Go”.⁷ In December, he donned his formal gown and white tie to sit for the exam over several days. Perhaps unsurprisingly given how much time he spent studying scores, composing, and attending concerts in London, he failed Responsions yet again.⁸ In 1978 Walton recalled: “Some time I’d pass in Algebra and fail in Greek; otherwise I’d pass in

¹ McBeath, in Craggs 1999, p.42

² Hayes, p.27; see also Burton, p.23; Kennedy 1989, p.15; Lloyd, p.13; Tierney, p.30

³ Hayes, p.27

⁴ Letter from William Walton to his mother, December 6, 1919, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ Bailey, *A Short History of the Oxford Bach Choir*, p.[24]

⁶ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

⁷ Kennedy 1989, p.11

⁸ Burton, p.22; Craggs 1993, p.4; Howes 1973, p.xii; Kennedy 1989, p.11; Lloyd, p.7; Tierney, p.27

Greek and fail in Algebra. I could never do them all at the same time. So I was sent down finally”.¹ The turn of phrase “sent down” is a delightfully British way of putting things. In the parlance of the United States, he was expelled by the university authorities. On this occasion, the expulsion was to be merely temporary—he was not present in Oxford during the Hilary and Trinity terms in early 1920.

Sent Down

The year 1912 had marked a major shift in Walton’s life, as he shifted from Oldham to Oxford. The year 1920 was no less momentous. Having been ejected from Oxford, Walton was embraced by Sacheverell and Osbert Sitwell. He moved in with them in London. Given the limited purview of the current study, Walton’s Sitwellian experiences of the year will be given only the briefest account.

Having failed the exams on his third attempt, Walton considered his options very carefully. He was seventeen years old. Noel, his older brother, had at age fourteen been removed from school to work as a clerk in a cotton mill office.² Noel believed that “if Willie had come home at the end of his choir school days, no doubt the same would have happened to him.”³ Presumably that fate awaited a thwarted undergraduate as well. William had become accustomed to the spires of Oxford and the concerts of London, and found a mill-worker’s future to be unacceptable. Susana Walton described the early weeks of 1920 beautifully:

When William was sent down from Oxford he did not want to go back to Oldham to be, as he termed it, a cotton clerk. “What the hell *am* I going to do” he asked Sachie, and was told to come and stay with them in London, until he could find something more permanent. In fact, he stayed with them for almost fifteen years.⁴

On February 10, 1920, Walton wrote to Thomas Strong from the Sitwells’ home in London. This letter demonstrates Walton’s mindset after leaving Oxford. Strong had evidently offered to give Walton a regular monetary allowance to help.

I am so much touched by your kindness in writing to me again. I realize only too well how much I owe you in the past, and whatever I do in the future will be thanks to you.

In answer to your question, I must tell you that I have no prospects, and absolutely no means of my own. After thinking it all over very carefully, I believe that a sum, if possible, of £3 or £3.10 a week would be enough to cover my expenses as they are at present.

¹ Interview with John Pearson, November 13, 1978, quoted in Lloyd, p.7

² Oldham Hulme Grammar School records indicate he finished studies in “Summer 1913,” one year before the war began, but it is usually said that the war was the reason Noel was pulled from school. See also Burton, p.20; Ottaway, p.3; Tierney, p.22–23.

³ Ottaway, p.3

⁴ S. Walton, p.50

It makes me very ashamed to ask you after all your kindness in the past, and the disgraceful way in which I have disappointed your expectations over the matter of examinations. But I am working very hard at my music and I think I am making a great deal of progress.¹

In fact, Strong's support was far more substantial than Walton's indication here. He gave Walton £50 to pay for a trip with the Sitwells to Italy.² In those days that was a considerable gift, equivalent to roughly £1200 (or \$2000) today.³ But Strong recognized that a Mediterranean voyage was worth the investment in this young composer; as Walton wrote: "I somehow suspect that he knew it was much more worthwhile to me than passing examinations."⁴

Walton and the Sitwells stayed briefly at Montegulfoni, the Sitwell estate near Florence. But the young composer especially enjoyed his stay at the Albergo Cappuccini, a former monastery at Amalfi.⁵ He later said: "We all worked in our cells. It was ideal. I had a piano ... and a room with a view"⁶ overlooking the Bay of Naples. They also journeyed to Catania in Sicily, where Walton heard street-music that found its way into *Façade*.⁷ This Italian sojourn, as Walton reminisced, "changed my whole attitude about life and music".⁸

After this experience, Walton lived in London with the Sitwells. On June 8–9, 1920, he returned to Oxford to take the Second Examination for his Bachelor of Music. Two of the examiners—Hugh Allen and Ralph Vaughan Williams—were the same as on his passing the First Examination. The third was now Percy Buck⁹ (1871–1947), composer, organist, and at the time director of music at the prestigious preparatory school, Harrow, and professor of music at Trinity College, Dublin.¹⁰ Unlike the First Examination, which was written, the Second was *viva voce*, given orally in the style of past centuries. Cyril Bailey has described Hugh Allen's style of examination:

He would always set the candidate at his ease and give him confidence and a feeling that they were starting together to find out the truth on some matter of vital common interest. At the same time he was severe on anything like pretentiousness; if a candidate said that he 'knew' a certain work, Allen would question him minutely, not so much on technical details as to make certain that he knew what the tunes were, what happened in the various movements, and what instruments took part. Similarly he would jump ruthlessly on a colleague whom he suspected of asking a 'catch' question in the *viva voce* or in any way taking an unfair advantage of a candidate.¹¹

¹ Hayes, p.27–28

² Tierney, p.27. Burton (p.42) erroneously states that this gift was given "in the spring of 1921".

³ According to currency conversion calculations at DollarTimes.com, Google.com, and LikeForex.com

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.15

⁵ Burton, p.47; S. Walton, p.49

⁶ Burton, p.47

⁷ Kevin McBeath, in Craggs 1999, p.42–43

⁸ Kennedy 1989, p.15–16

⁹ Kennedy 1989, p.11

¹⁰ Colles and Turner, "Buck, Sir Percy"

¹¹ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.65

Once again, Walton demonstrated that he had no trouble with his music exams: he passed.¹ Among the works that he was asked about were Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*, Parry's *Job*, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Stravinsky's *Firebird*.² Writing in 2012, Richard Bratby notes how recent these works were, inviting us to "[i]magine a modern exam panel expecting undergraduates to have a working knowledge of *Doctor Atomic*, *Tevot*, *Into the Little Hill*, and *Sonntag aus Licht*".³ Evidently all that time studying scores had not gone to waste if Walton succeeded at satisfying such a rigorous process.

J.F.A. Mason, a former Librarian of Christ Church, wrote to biographer Michael Kennedy regarding Walton's exam progress at this stage:

Walton's preparations for examinations are not easy to understand, for ... he did not have to pass both the Music Prelim and Responsions but only one or the other in order to be eligible for a B.Mus. yet he seems to have been sent down for failure to pass Responsions. But he would in any case have had to pass one of the four groups Greek or Latin, French, German, or English Literature ... We have no means of knowing for which particular one he prepared, and his name does not appear in any list of candidates. Walton did not submit a musical exercise (the third part of B.Mus.) because he never entered upon his ninth term of residence.⁴

Mason brings up the question of why Walton was trying to take Responsions, when it was unnecessary for the B.Mus. (Walton continued to compose the String Quartet, which was intended as his exercise for the Third Examination.) The answer may lie simply that the B.Mus. may have been sufficient to gain him an entry post as an organist or choir-master—as had been the case for Hugh Allen⁵—but he lacked the keyboard skills to be an effective organist. The B.A. would have been necessary for any other regular, respectable post, musical or not. Further, at the time knowledge of French, German, or English literature was considered second-class to knowledge of Greek and Latin. If Walton was destined to become a schoolmaster—as apparently Strong and Allen had considered desirable—then he would have to master the ancient languages.

Though he was only back at Oxford for a brief period, Walton made good use of his time in the library. He returned to the Radcliffe Camera, checking out the score to Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* and Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs* on June 10, the day after his exam. He kept them only overnight, however, perhaps as a quick study or simply something with which to pass the evening as his closest friends were no longer at Oxford. On June 14, he checked out the *Faust Symphony* of Liszt and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. These two scores he kept for over a month, not returning them until July 22. It seems likely that he took them with him back to London. Did he have occasion to hear performances of these works, and want to study them in advance? Ravel's extended harmonies were certainly typical of Walton's output, revealing a natural interest in the composer. The name of Liszt, however, is more

¹ Burton, pp.23,39–40; Craggs 1993, p.6; Kennedy 1989, p.11; Lloyd, p.8; Tierney, p.27

² Kennedy 1989, p.11–12

³ Gratby, in *Nimbus Alliance NI 6183*, p.4

⁴ Kennedy 1989, p.11–12

⁵ Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.15

unusual in connection with Walton's, and demonstrates his broader understanding of music from the preceding half-century.

Since Walton had re-located to London, Thomas Strong and Hugh Allen had hoped that he would proceed to study at the Royal College of Music. Strong recalled: "He had made up his mind to make music his profession and I gave him, I think, introductions at the R.C.M. But he did not get on with the people there".¹ Perhaps the prospect of the RCM is the reason why Walton had taken the Second Examination for the B.Mus. Certainly Walton would have been granted admission, as Hugh Allen was its new Principal and the College was already flush with less promising post-war students.² After the RCM, he would be able to gain a post as a schoolmaster; said Walton: "That was my career as mapped out by them, and I saw that coming and withdrew."³ The temporary arrangement with the Sitwells became, bit by bit, permanent.

Walton's teachers at Oxford still had not given up hope. Henry Ley wrote to Adrian Boult in London, requesting help in securing Walton a post. Boult recalled:

I fixed up an interview (with Goodwin and Tabb, the publishers) and I thought W.W. nicely started proof-reading for a go-ahead publisher etc., etc. A few days later a letter arrived: 'Thank you for the introduction but I'm afraid I have decided to starve in a garret and compose all day rather than enjoy a nice job.' Three weeks later he took up residence with the three Sitwells!! Some starving! And the 'garret' was a jolly little house just off Chelsea Embankment.⁴

The Sitwells continued to nurture their fledgling composer. They introduced him to such musical luminaries as the scholar E.J. Dent (1876–1957), the Italian pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), and the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet (1883–1969). From these men Walton continued a kind of informal education, getting feedback on his works. Mention has already been made of the conductor Eugene Goossens, who had hoped to perform Walton's earliest orchestral works. The eccentric composer-novelist Lord Berners (1883–1950) was also a prominent figure in the Sitwell circle. Walton met the clique that revolved around the critic Philip Heseltine, himself a former Christ Church man; these included Bernard van Dieren, the music critic Cecil Gray (1895–1951), and the pianist-composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988). Eventually the young composer Constant Lambert (1905–1951) came literally knocking on the Sitwells' door. The Sitwells expanded Walton's knowledge of painting and architecture as well.⁵ Walton again recalled: "If it hadn't been for them, I'd either have ended up like Stanford, or would have been a clerk in some Midlands bank with an interest in music. Life would have been a great deal duller."⁶

¹ Letter from Thomas Strong to Hubert Foss, undated, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

² Bailey, *Hugh Percy Allen*, p.72

³ Burton, p.23

⁴ Letter from Boult to Michael Kennedy, September 1, 1977, quoted in Kennedy 1989, p.16; see also Lloyd, p.8

⁵ Burton, p.42

⁶ Tierney, p.29

Financially, Walton found an unconventional way to ensure himself some degree of stability: he was a scrounger.¹ Thomas Strong, Lord Berners, Siegfried Sassoon, and the Sitwells banded together to ensure Walton an annual income of £250 per year.² Susana Walton stated that his separate income as a composer was barely £50 per year.³ It is unclear exactly when this arrangement began; he certainly had no independent income as a composer yet.

So Walton spurned efforts of his Oxford supporters to continue a traditional education and to find a regular job. However, he still had to appease Oldham. Noel wrote in 1970 that there was some “consternation” among the family,

because the Sitwells were an entirely ‘unknown quantity’ and I remember my parents inability to understand the whys and wherefores of the ‘abduction’. They really knew very little about Willies promising ability. It had only been mentioned in letters from the Head of the Choir School and perhaps a word from H.G. Ley, the Organist. Willie had had very little of his music performed and also he had written comparatively nothing completely ready for performance.⁴

Osbert Sitwell recounted a circumstance that could have spelled doom for Walton’s newfound life in London—a visit from his father: “Mr. [Charles] Walton, very busy though he always was, came up to London especially to investigate, but failing to find my brother or myself, instead called on my aged Aunt Blanche, then rising eighty, who was speedily able to reassure him.”⁵ The Waltons, back in Oldham, quite impressively, entrusted their capable son to sort out his own path.

Loose Ends

There were still a few loose ends to be resolved in Oxford. He was back at Christ Church in October. On the ninth, he checked out a large stack of scores from the Ellis Library. As if those volumes were not enough to satisfy several weeks of study, he was back in the following weeks for more. Most of these were recent works, representing a fascinating cross-section of the era’s musical frontiers, albeit with a special emphasis on Richard Strauss. These are the scores that Walton checked out, according to the surviving Borrower’s Book:

Oct. 9 Strauss: *Symphonia domestica* (1903)
Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 2, opus 10, with soprano (1908)
Schoenberg: Five Orchestral Pieces, opus 16 (1909)
Stravinsky: *Fireworks* (1909)
Delius: *Paris: A Nocturne* (1899)

¹ S. Walton, p.50

² Kennedy 1989, p.18

³ S. Walton, p.55

⁴ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, copy at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ O. Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, p.192

Bartók: *Two Portraits*, opus 5 (the record does not specify if this is the piano version from 1907–8 or the orchestral version of 1910)

Oct. 14 Elgar: *Falstaff* (1913)

Ravel: *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (again, it is not clear if this is the piano score of 1911 or the orchestral version of 1912)

Oct. 19 Bartók: *Two Portraits* (he still had the score of one version from ten days prior)

Debussy: *La mer* (1905)

Schubert: an unspecified volume of chamber music

Oct. 20 Stravinsky: *Rossignol* (this entry is confusing; the opera wasn't published until 1923, and the orchestral *Chant du rossignol* until 1921¹)

Delius: *Sea Drift* (1904)

Nov. 7 Mozart: quartets, presumably string quartets

Nov. 9 Strauss: *Don Quixote*, piano score (1897)

Strauss: *Symphonia domestica* (1903) (he had just returned the score on the 1st)

Nov. 10 Strauss: *Don Juan*, piano score (1889)

Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, piano score and full score (1895)

Strauss: *Don Quixote*, full score (1897)

Stravinsky: *Le sacre du printemps* (1913) (at this point only the score for piano four-hands had been published; the orchestral score followed in 1921²)

Nov. 23 Rimsky-Korsakov: *Le coq d'or* (1907)

These scores also hint at Walton's compositional activities of the time. We know he had embarked on the early string quartet. This is the second time he investigated the quartets of Mozart, and possibly those of Schubert as well. (Schubert remained one of his favorite composers for the rest of his life.) On October 9, Walton had checked out more than just a stack of scores: he had added the extended orchestration textbook by Cecil Forsyth. Combine this with the large collection of both piano and orchestral scores by Richard Strauss, the great orchestrator of the period. Add the last score he ever checked out from Oxford: the opera *Le coq d'or* of Rimsky-Korsakov, which, as has been discussed above, he had heard, perhaps in Manchester that January, and which remained a favorite throughout his life. The inference is clear. If Walton had dabbled in orchestral composition the previous year, he was now beginning to undertake it more seriously.

Other concerts took place at Town Hall in Oxford during Walton's brief span there. On October 21, Hugh Allen conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* in F; the posthumous premiere of Parry's Suite for Strings; excerpts from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The*

¹ S. Walsh, "Stravinsky, Igor"

² S. Walsh, "Stravinsky, Igor"

Banks of Green Willow by George Butterworth, who had been killed in the war; and Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto with Myra Hess. On November 4, the Bohemian String Quartet passed through Oxford, presenting works of Dvořák and Haydn, with, more unusually, Smetana's *From my Life* Quartet. Given his interest in orchestral composition and the genre of the string quartet, it seems likely that Walton attended both of these events.

Another event which may have fascinated the budding composer was a lecture given at the University Museum by Gustav Holst on October 30. The subject was: "Is a Composer born or made?" Here an establishment figure was considering a metaphysical topic that might have held some interest for the essentially pragmatic Walton. Among Holst's remarks was the following: "Genius is a divine spark, but composition within limits short of genius is possible to any student. There is too much of the bated breath attitude towards those who compose."¹ Did Walton hear those words that night? Walton's friends had already liberally and prematurely conferred upon him the title of "Genius." Did he wonder that night if they were right? Did he feel bound by "limits short of genius?" Or inspired to give voice to his personal "divine spark?" Had he, too, felt that composers were to be approached with "bated breath?" Or had his no-nonsense Lancashire attitude, plus encounters with Parry and others, taught him already that composers were just people? Did Holst's words encourage Walton to give up on Oxford, with the logic that, if he had the genius, he would find his way somehow? On the other hand, Walton was never one to discuss such personal matters. Perhaps he never even considered such questions to be of any importance, and simply wrote music because he could.

There were also financial loose ends to tie up. On October 20, the Governing Body of Christ Church postponed renewal of Walton's Exhibition scholarship, waiting "for the dean and Censors to make a definite proposal as to the amount".² The Governing Body demonstrated great generosity, however, on November 10, when they paid Walton £150 "to clear him from his reasonable liabilities".³ No indication is known of the nature of these liabilities; perhaps Walton had debts to resolve in Oxford, or it merely covered the present term's fees. It certainly seems unlikely that they would continue to support their failed student without question. But matters at Oxford had changed as well. Thomas Strong was no longer Dean, having relocated to the north of England as Bishop of Ripon, near Leeds. Hugh Allen retained his post as Professor of Music, but the previous year had become Director of the Royal College of Music, and reduced his engagement with Oxford accordingly.

Walton was now clear of his liabilities at Oxford and began his new life in London. A brief letter to his mother survives, dated November 24:

Dearest Mother.

Thanks for sending my passport so quickly. I am going to Paris a week on Friday, only for a week meeting Osbert & Sachie there.

¹ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.407, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

² Kennedy 1989, p.12; see also Craggs 1977, p.5–6; Craggs 1993, p.6

³ Craggs 1993, p.6; Kennedy 1989, p.12; see also Burton, p.23

I am alright about clothes shoes, etc. So don't worry.

I have not yet heard about the exam. I had a very long 'viva voce' exam which is rather a bad sign. Anyhow I can only hope for the best.

Yrs ever.

Love.

William.

P.S. Hope to be home for Noel's birthday.¹

This charming letter, not previously mentioned in Walton scholarship, indicates that Walton had tried yet another attempt at the exams at Oxford. One presumes he failed yet again, though his tone of voice seems rather unconcerned: he had, after all, been through all of this before. But now he had a journey to Paris to look forward to, and new friends to accompany him. The timing of the journey—departing on Friday, November 26—indicates that he had not intended to attend the Oxford Bach Choir's performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* the following Sunday.² Walton had moved on.

Next Compositions

Walton continued composing. The year 1920 saw the completion of at least three or four works. There is no clear record of the exact time or order in which the works were composed.

One of these was the song *Tritons*, on a text by the seventeenth-century Scottish poet William Drummond, the manuscript of which is dated merely "1920".³ This was soon to be published by Curwen, together with *The Winds*. The String Quartet, begun the previous year for his Exhibition at Oxford, was performed in two movements in March 1921, with a third movement added in November 1922. This was performed to mixed acclaim at the International Festival of Contemporary Music in Salzburg in 1923, the first time Walton's music was heard outside of England.⁴ Walton later withdrew the work from publication, citing its unconvincing modernisms, though in recent years it has returned to public knowledge.

There were also two works of which not a note survives. One was *The Passionate Shepherd*, a setting of a text by Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's famed contemporary, scored for tenor voice and ten instruments.⁵ There was also the orchestral overture *Dr. Syntax*, which the conductor Eugene Goossens

¹ Letter from William Walton to his mother, November 24, 1919, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

² Bailey, *A Short History of the Oxford Bach Choir*, p.[24]

³ Bedford, *WWE* v.8, p.viii

⁴ Craggs 1990, p.18–19

⁵ Craggs 1990, p.17

hoped to perform.¹ As has been noted, very little of this output survives. Walton himself described how he passed the time in 1920 and 1921: he “produced some rather bad works in various styles now mercifully in the fire”.² Not until the first public performance of *Façade* in early 1922 did Walton begin to gain a degree of notice among England’s musical establishment.

¹ Craggs 1990, p.17

² McBeath, in Craggs 1999, p.37

Conclusion

On Oldham

Oldham Fallen

The year 1920 saw another building boom in Oldham as the economy recovered after the war. However, such optimism ignored the impact of the war and a growing preference for countries to manufacture,¹ rather than import, essentials such as the fabrics for which Oldham had grown famous. The “Mill Boom” led to a “Cotton Landslide”.² Oldham’s economy plummeted and has never recovered.

The Walton family remained in Oldham. William’s older brother, Noel, gained a piano teacher’s diploma from the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1922³ and promptly began teaching privately in Oldham and Chorlton-cum-Hardy⁴ and more formally at the School of Music in nearby Hyde.⁵ Charles Walton continued to teach at the Hulme Grammar School into the 1920s.⁶ He also remained chorumaster at St. John’s Church, with Noel assisting as organist.⁷

Noel recalled Charles Walton’s final years: “My father developed cancer and lived for two years in bed at home and hospital, had several operations before he died. He suffered greatly. I think he heard one or two of Willies compositions by ‘Cat’s Whisker’ Radio. Yet I think he was incredulous to the end.”⁸ If his father heard any of William’s music, it would have been the Piano Quartet, which was broadcast on September 19, 1924;⁹ none of William’s other works is known to have been broadcast before Charles’s death. Charles died in a nursing home in West Didsbury, south of Manchester, on the afternoon of Saturday, November 1, 1924. On the following Tuesday, his funeral was held at St. John’s Church, where he had served as choirmaster for two decades. The entire family, including William, was present. The three Sitwell siblings sent wreaths.¹⁰

William’s youngest brother, Alec, had begun studying at Hulme Grammar School on January 15, 1918, and remained through Christmas 1925. Noel was hired there as a part-time singing teacher in June 1923,

¹ Fowler, p.39

² Bateson, p.199; Law, p.262

³ Enrollment records at Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester

⁴ Anonymous, “Mr. Charles Walton”

⁵ Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys’ Staff Register, 1895–1943

⁶ Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys’ Staff Register, 1895–1943

⁷ Westley, p.23–4

⁸ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 11, 1970, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio; see also Kennedy 1989, p.6; Ottaway, p.3

⁹ Craggs 2014, p.3

¹⁰ Anonymous, “Mr. Charles Walton”

taking his father's place. He was appointed as the full-time Music Master for both the boys' and girls' schools in 1937 (one of his students was reportedly the great contralto Marjorie Thomas).

Oldham first took notice of its composer son in 1923, when the two local newspapers commented on Walton's String Quartet being performed in Salzburg.¹ The *Oldham Chronicle* interviewed him in 1926. During this interview he summarized the positive environment that his parents had provided when he chose to embark on a musical career:

I expect I have been singularly fortunate for home influences have been the greatest possible aid in a career such as mine. My father, the late Mr C.A. Walton, was a well-known local musician, and my mother, Mrs Louisa Walton, who now lives at Werneth Hall Road, still teaches singing. In some households it is dangerous to dabble with art, and to sit down and write music often meets with a good deal of ragging and bullying. In fact, most people, I think, will agree that an artistic career is a very difficult one, but my parents never raised any objections and from both I have had every possible encouragement in my work.²

Walton occasionally traveled to Manchester for performances of his music. The Hallé Orchestra performed his Viola Concerto in January 1932, immediately after which their conductor, Hamilton Harty—who had dismissed the “strange noises” of Walton's earliest orchestral efforts—commissioned a new symphony.³ On November 7, 1939, Walton reported to Hubert Foss: “I go to Manchester on Saturday to conduct *Facade II* [the Second Suite] & shall be back on Monday.”⁴ We can be certain that he visited his mother in Oldham on these occasions. He certainly stayed in contact with his brother, Noel, whose two children—Michael (1925–2001) and Elizabeth (1928–1994)⁵—were the dedicatees of his *Duets for Children*, composed in 1940. The two youngsters (and his wife, dedicatee of *Troilus and Cressida*) were the only members of Walton's family to receive a dedication from the composer.⁶

The wealthy families of Oldham steadily moved away, seeking more beautiful regions. After the death of Dame Sarah Lees, her family granted Werneth Park to the town. It was opened to the public on June 5, 1936.⁷ This park was just a five-minute walk south of the Walton home and offered welcome respite during the closing years of the Great Depression. Over the previous decades, live theater and even music halls had disappeared from Oldham. Brass bands, choirs, and the Oldham Orchestral Society suffered as well, though the large chorus known as the Oldham Musical Society continued strong.⁸ The Second World War brought another reversal to Oldham. The town suffered from two bomb attacks that had been aimed at Manchester: on October 12–13, 1941,⁹ and on Christmas Eve, 1944.¹⁰ One of these

¹ Lane, *Profile of a Composer*, p.2

² *Oldham Chronicle*, May 1, 1926, quoted in Lloyd, p.3

³ Lloyd-Jones, *WWE* v.9, p.v

⁴ Hayes, p.124

⁵ Genealogical chart, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁶ Aston, *WWE* v.20, p.vi

⁷ Bateson, p.212; Law, p.273

⁸ Law, p.280

⁹ Bateson, p.219

¹⁰ Hylton, p.258

bombs landed in Werneth Hall Road, just north of the Walton home; the nearby church of St. Thomas was damaged.¹

Walton married Susana Gil Passo in Argentina on December 13, 1948. She was twenty-two years old, less than half his age. The couple returned to England on January 29,² but it was only “after much pleading”³ that William brought his young wife to visit the family in Oldham. This visit entertainingly confirmed that his family remained staunchly Anglican, or at least anti-Catholic. Susana recalled: “On the journey north William told me how strong anti-papist feeling remained in parts of England, and that his mother would naturally worry as I was a Roman Catholic and we had married in a Catholic church. [...] It was a tricky encounter. Maybe she was shy too, but his mother’s only question to me was, ‘Has the Pope got him?’”⁴ Despite such initial reticence, Louie Walton and her daughter-in-law got along splendidly. The *Oldham Chronicle* reported on March 1, 1949, that Noel described his new sister-in-law as “‘lively’ and ‘the independent type’”,⁵ a mixed assessment of which both Susana and William would have approved. On this visit William had promised to return to Oldham to conduct a concert with the Hallé that fall, a pledge he kept on October 2. The program was the suite from the Bach-based ballet *The Wise Virgins*, the *Sinfonia Concertante* with pianist Phyllis Sellick, selections from the *Façades Suites*, and the coronation march, *Crown Imperial*.⁶

Walton’s next trip to Oldham was probably in June 1952, when he received an honorary doctorate from Manchester University.⁷ And he certainly traveled to Oldham for his mother’s funeral in 1954⁸ amid the final stages of composing *Troilus and Cressida*. Noel and his wife, Enid, had looked after Louie for some years, though William helped financially. Noel attested: “It would be churlish of me to omit to mention that he made his Mother financially comfortable for the greater part of her widowhood—she lived until the age of 84—my father died at 54—and he has been a very generous brother to me.”⁹ Noel continued working at the Hulme School until his retirement in 1961.¹⁰

The town awarded William the Freedom of Oldham on April 22, 1961,¹¹ for which occasion he made a special trip from Ischia and his sister, Nora, traveled from her home in New Zealand. In some respects Oldham was rather behind the times: Walton had already been knighted and received six honorary doctorates plus other honors. Neil Tierney reported that Walton “promised at an early date to dedicate a piece of music to the town of his birth, a promise which was never fulfilled.”¹²

¹ Beever, p.12

² Craggs 1993, p.52

³ S. Walton, p.40

⁴ S. Walton, p.40

⁵ *Oldham Chronicle*, March 1, 1949, quoted in Lane, *Profile of a Composer*, p.17

⁶ *Oldham Chronicle*, October 3, 1949, quoted in Lane, *Profile of a Composer*, p.17

⁷ Craggs 1993, p.54

⁸ I have been unable to discover more specific details regarding her death.

⁹ Letter from Noel Walton to Hugh Ottaway, April 8, 1970, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

¹⁰ Oldham Hulme Grammar School Boys’ Staff Register, 1895–1943

¹¹ Law, p.315

¹² Tierney, p.144

On November 2, 1967, Walton returned to Manchester to hear a performance of his Violin Concerto conducted by John Barbirolli. The soloist on this occasion was the Hallé's concertmaster, Martin Milner,¹ Noel Walton's son-in-law. Another special trip to Oldham took place in March 1972, when, for the first time in forty years, William, Noel, and Alec Walton all met together.²

Alec by this time was resident in Vancouver as a director of the Bank of Canada. Some letters imply that in 1935 William had helped to secure him a job there.³ They kept in contact, and Alec was evidently friendly with Sacheverell Sitwell, Laurence Olivier, Yehudi Menuhin,⁴ William Primrose, and Jascha Heifetz.⁵ Alec died suddenly on March 20, 1979.⁶

Nora Donnelly (née Walton) married, had two children, and settled in New Zealand. William enjoyed visiting her on his tour to the antipodes in early 1964.⁷ The surviving letters from all four siblings confirm that they remained close. They and their children occasionally visited William and Susana at Ischia. My personal email communications with some of the next generation of Waltons indicate that they have mostly drifted apart. Alec's family remained in Vancouver, Nora's in New Zealand, and Noel's in the Manchester area; William and Susana had no children.

Noel lived in Oldham all his life, much loved as a teacher of piano.⁸ One local women's choir, now known as the Saddleworth Singers, was initially named the Walton Ladies' Choir, not for the famed composer, but for the conductor's music teacher at Hulme.⁹ Susana Walton stated that after his retirement in 1961, Noel began composing twelve-tone music "because he had nothing better to do".¹⁰ William wrote Noel a postcard on April 19, 1968—by which time Noel lived at 67 Windsor Road, around the corner from the old family homestead—with some friendly compositional advice: "You've gone & got your tone-row wrong. Can't allow that an A^b & G[#] in the same row. Get Alan F[rank, William's publisher] to send you a copy of 'Serial Composition' by Brindle. After all if it has a fundamental mistake is very little worse than the rest of the 'faceless' stuff. Continue the good work." William and Alec helped Noel financially as well.¹¹ Noel died in 1979,¹² a few months after Alec.

The postwar years were unkind to Oldham. In 1972, one television pundit even declared that "it is impossible to talk about Oldham in anything but the past tense."¹³ Residents started going to

¹ *Oldham Chronicle*, November 2, 1967, quoted in Lane, *Profile of a Composer*, p.32

² Tierney, p.158

³ Hayes, p.97–8

⁴ Letter from Jo Walton to William and Susana Walton, May 20, 1979, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁵ Letter from Alec Walton to William and Susana Walton, June 6, 1977, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁶ Letter from Jo Walton to William and Susana Walton, May 20, 1979, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁷ Hayes, p.349

⁸ Burton, p.9

⁹ Anonymous, "Saddleworth Singers"

¹⁰ Burton, p.9

¹¹ Letter from Jo Walton to William and Susana Walton, May 20, 1979, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

¹² Genealogical chart, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

¹³ Law, p.318

Manchester for entertainment. Cinema and sports in Oldham suffered, but oddly the local theater company survived.¹ This is not to say that Oldham was completely obscure: in July 1978, the first human baby conceived by *in vitro* fertilization was born at Oldham and District General Hospital.² And there were other mild improvements. For example, as industry declined, pollution abated.³ Derelict sites were cleared and developed, a process that continues today with the new Spindles Shopping Centre in the heart of town. Yet the town of Walton's birth was still in a lowly state upon his death in Italy on March 8, 1983.⁴

Over the past century, the Coppice neighborhood of Walton's youth has changed only superficially. The terrace houses of a bedroom neighborhood remain. 93 Werneth Hall Road, the home where Walton was born, bears the standard blue plaque denoting its historical importance. Because of easy transport links to Manchester, the neighborhood became flooded with an immigrant population, mostly from Pakistan, during the 1970s.⁵ The local Methodist church on Ross Street, a block from Werneth Hall Road, was in 1984 converted into a mosque.⁶ A two-hour stroll through Coppice on a sunny summer Sunday afternoon in 2013 revealed just how much the ethnic makeup has changed: among the dozens of children playing and adults chatting on their porches or going about errands, I saw only four white people, two of whom seemed to be merely passing through. Local storefronts all bear south Asian names: Naveed's Jewelers, Mamzy News, Haji & Sons Market, and so forth. The community remains very pleasant and friendly. Mr. Khan, the current resident of 93 Werneth Hall Road, has lived there for thirty years. He told me of visits from Lady Walton and from schoolchildren at the nearby council school, and he was very kind to this unknown scholar visiting from America.

In the late 1970s, St. John's, Werneth, the church where the Walton family had been devoted musicians and worshippers, closed its doors. It was briefly a community center, then, as John Beever writes, for a time it "was converted to work units to help the struggling small industries of Oldham,"⁷ including use as a carpet warehouse. In recent years tenants lost interest and St. John's became unoccupied. Over time, holes gaped in the roof, a tree grew from the tower, and pigeons infested the former church. The town council had intended to demolish the building. A local citizen, Mohammed Tufail,⁸ remembered St. John's fondly from his youth, during the brief period when it was a community center, and was granted a two-year lease to improve the building and energize it for community use. Tufail and his volunteers have since removed the tree and masses of pigeon guano, repaired the tower and roof, painted the interior, stripped the exterior of many creeping vines, and removed most of the warehousing paraphernalia. Remarkably, the stained glass window installed in October 1909—for the dedication of which Walton would have sung as a seven-year-old boy—has remained in good condition. As of my visit

¹ Law, p.315

² Law, p.336

³ Law, p.317

⁴ Craggs 1993, p.106

⁵ Law, p.344–5

⁶ Beever, p.38

⁷ Beever, p.10

⁸ The Mohammed Tufail that I met at St. John's in 2013 does not match the physical description of others with that name in Oldham that I have located via Internet searches.

in August 2013, work continued apace at St. John's, though there was much left to do. The same hard-working, self-sufficient attitude that made Oldham prosperous in the nineteenth century is present today.

Oldham Not Forgotten

Approaching age eighty, Walton described Oldham as “home of cotton mills, brass bands and other things ... not my favourite part of the world”.¹ Walton's life story is a steady journey south, fleeing the dour and sooty Oldham for the halls and towers of Oxford, the glitz and glamor of London, and finally the sun and repose of the Italian island of Ischia. Yet, though Walton had left Oldham at age ten, its smokestacks and terraced houses, but especially its citizens' character, remained with him.

Oldham had always been a home of hard-working individuals, and Roy Campbell observed this trait in Walton at Oxford. The typical Oldhamer is frugal and financially sensitive. Certainly through his Oxford period Walton demonstrated this trait, and after that as well. He also embraced a sense of independence that stemmed from Oldham, for even though Walton lived on the generosity of others for several years, his appeals for funding were appropriately humble and he was always grateful. When Walton's means became more comfortable, he then demonstrated generosity liberally, by helping his aging mother and his elder brother financially just as Thomas Strong, Siegfried Sassoon, Lord Berners, and the Sitwells had helped him. Many young composers commented on his generosity as well, even those like Humphrey Searle² whose music shared little affinity with Walton's.

Perhaps the most intrinsically Lancashire-esque quality that Walton retained in his character was his contrarianism. This is found not only in his personality, but also in his music. When he decided to leave Oxford and pursue life as a composer in London, he stuck solidly to this decision, despite its apparent folly at the time, turning down opportunities to study at the Royal College of Music or work in a music-publishing firm. His first pieces to gain public notice—*Façade*, first heard publicly in June 1923, and the early String Quartet, prominently performed at Salzburg two months later—are decidedly contrarian, avoiding sonorities typical among English composers. The music he had previously composed, especially *A Litany* with its unusual dissonances and the Piano Quartet with its strains of Ravel and Bartók, reveal a composer thinking inventively and originally about innovative material. Walton may not have loved Oldham, but the town had left its mark on the composer.

¹ Palmer, *At the Haunted End of the Day*, quoted in Lloyd, p.6

² Lloyd, p.264

On Oxford

Oxford Friends

When Thomas Strong left Oxford to become Bishop of Ripon, a northern diocese centered on the city of Leeds, he gave an eloquent speech which was also printed privately. Strong inscribed a copy to Walton, dated June 18, 1920. Walton had not kept the Bible that Strong gave him for his confirmation in 1916, but he kept this speech; the signed copy still exists in the William Walton Archive at Ischia. In the mid-1920s, Thomas Strong was helpful¹ in gaining Walton a contract with Oxford University Press that served for the rest of the composer's life. Later, when Strong became Bishop of Oxford, Walton was occasionally his guest at the bishop's residence in Cuddesdon. Strong was in turn Walton's guest to sit beside him at the first performance in London of *Belshazzar's Feast*, in 1931.² Soon thereafter Strong wrote to a friend: "I went, some time back, to the Queen's Hall (for the first time in my life) and heard W. Walton's 'Belshazzar's Feast'. It impressed me very much—and also astonished me. Some years ago he was a small quiet boy in our Cathedral Choir at Christ Church. It was very interesting to think of then and now."³ Walton and Strong remained on excellent terms until the retired bishop developed a dementia so extreme that he could remember little other than "I was Vice-chancellor of Oxford during the last war."⁴ Strong died peacefully in 1944.⁵

Walton and Hugh Allen remained in contact and on good terms,⁶ though neither was known for their letter-writing. In 1937 Allen had recommended that Walton leave Oxford University Press in favor of Boosey and Hawkes,⁷ though Walton did not follow this advice. Two years later, Allen, as Principal of the Royal College of Music, invited Walton, an internationally established composer, to visit him in London: "He particularly wants me to meet some admiring undergrads & give them a good talking to, & I think it might be as well to keep in with the young [...]. It sounds from the way he puts it, that the symphony may be down as a score to be studied for one of the music examinations".⁸ Allen retained his post as Heather Professor of Music until his death. He was killed crossing the street in Oxford in 1946 when a motorcycle struck him.

Walton's third great influence from Oxford was Henry Ley, who left Oxford in 1925 to become Precentor at Eton College,⁹ overseeing the chapel music at the prestigious preparatory school. Ley and Walton probably crossed paths at the coronation of King George VI in 1937, for which occasion the former was organist and the latter had composed the official coronation march, *Crown Imperial*. (Ley did not,

¹ Ottaway, p.4

² Letter from Thomas Strong to Hubert Foss, undated, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

³ Letter from Thomas Strong to Edward Lyttleton, December 29, 1931, quoted in Anson, p.106

⁴ Anson, p.39

⁵ Anson, p.92

⁶ Letter from John Veale to Lady Walton, September 27, 1984, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

⁷ Hayes, p.467–8

⁸ Hayes, p.124

⁹ George Thewlis papers, Box 7, v.2, p.408, at Special Collections, Bodleian Library, Oxford

however, play the organ part in the march; this task was assigned to Ernest Bullock.¹) Ley retired from Eton in 1945, but kept up with Walton's works, arranging the passacaglia, "Death of Falstaff", from the film *Henry V*, for organ; Oxford University Press published the arrangement in 1949. Two weeks after Walton was knighted, in January 1951, he wrote the following letter to Ley from Ischia. It merits quoting in its entirety as it remains unpublished but demonstrates the respect and lifelong friendship these two men maintained:

Dear "Henry" (I can't, though I should call you Dr. Ley!)

Thank you for your congratulations

I am indeed grateful for your shrewd judgement, for heaven knows what my life would have been without it.

We are here till the end of June living very quietly while I am working on "Troilus and Cressida", my opera which I am finding very uphill work—but it progresses.

When we return, a special effort shall be made & we will if we may, come & see you in Devonshire. I must show my young wife the beauties of England.

I did indeed approve of the "Falstaff" arrangement.

With kindest regards to your wife & yourself

Yours ever

William Walton²

The two men were also involved in the next coronation, that of Elizabeth II, in 1953, when Walton's *Coronation Te Deum* and march *Orb and Sceptre* were first heard, and Ley again played the organ. (The organist for the *Te Deum* was Osborne Peasgood;³ I cannot locate a record of who played for the march.) Ley died in 1962.

Of course these three great men—Strong, Allen, and Ley—were not the only influential characters who Walton met at Oxford. His lifelong friendship with Siegfried Sassoon and the three Sitwell siblings has gained much attention, and will not be dealt with further here. Before meeting those, Walton had already met John Masefield, who became Poet Laureate in 1930. The two collaborated on *Where does the uttered Music go?*, written for a memorial service in honor of the conductor Henry Wood in 1946.⁴ Another important collaboration followed when Walton set words by W.H. Auden (1907–1973) at the request of Cuthbert Simpson, then Dean of Christ Church. The resulting anthem—*The Twelve* (1965)—was a unique collaboration of two former Christ Church undergraduates: the eminent poet and equally eminent composer. Walton's original dedication of the work was simply: "To Christ Church, Oxford".⁵ Also, the orchestral version of *The Twelve*, composed later in the same year, was originally intended for the Oxford Bach Choir.⁶ The choir at Christ Church also offered the first performance of Walton's *Jubilare Deo* (1972), and soon thereafter made a crucial recording of his choral music, as has been

¹ Craggs 2014, p.44

² Letter from William Walton to Henry Ley, January 16, 1951, at William Walton Archive, La Mortella, Forio

³ Craggs 2014, p.82–3

⁴ Craggs 2014, p.76

⁵ Craggs 2014, p.104

⁶ Craggs 2014, p.104

discussed above. Even though Walton had left the university without a degree, it is clear that he bore no grudge against Oxford or the people he met there.

Remembering Christ Church

Unlike Oldham, Christ Church has preserved its identity between Walton's time and the present, notwithstanding some fundamental changes. The choir school, still occupying the premises at 3 Brewer Street, now includes, since 1994, the Sir William Walton Centre, with classrooms and a recital hall.¹ The cathedral is largely as it was, though it has undergone some renovation.² The buildings south of Tom Quad, including the former classrooms of the choir school, were demolished in the 1920s to construct the Memorial Garden. Peckwater Quad, where Walton had his rooms during his undergraduacy, remains largely unchanged, and the only substantive change to the iconic Tom Quad is the arrival of a new statue of Mercury in the central pond. The Blue Boar Quad, west of Peckwater, was completed in 1968, taking the place of a bath house and tennis courts.³ Undergraduates at Christ Church still live in the same rooms and dine daily at the Great Hall. Perhaps the greatest difference between Christ Church then and now is the diversity of its population: not only tourists and conference attendees, but especially the women students.⁴ The city itself continues to meld old and new—centuries-old building facades are disrupted by modern plumbing climbing its way outside. To walk through Oldham today, one is deeply aware of the passage of time over the past century; to walk through Oxford, one sometimes wonders if the present is merely an amalgam of many pasts.

While a chorister at the cathedral, Walton was inundated with religion and sometimes grew bored with church music. Osbert Sitwell recalled that Walton continued to worship into his early London years, but we know that later in life he disavowed any religious practices. He declined to keep the Bible that Thomas Strong had given him after confirmation. He even wrote to Malcolm Arnold in 1965, after composing *The Twelve* for Christ Church and *Missa brevis* for Coventry Cathedral: "But don't think I've got religious mania!"⁵ Yet Walton's childhood in the choir loft remained close to his heart. In April 1982, he selected Wesley's anthem *The Wilderness* as one of his ten "Desert Island Discs" in a BBC interview.⁶ And the scenes filmed at Christ Church in the 1981 documentary *At the Haunted End of the Day* show Walton clearly affected by the boys singing the *Litany* he had composed almost seventy years previously.

Musically speaking, mention has already been made of the instinctive music education that a choirboy learns from daily singing. Timothy Brown has summarized nicely:

¹ Lloyd, p.4

² Curthoys, p.328

³ Ferguson, p.64

⁴ Curthoys, p.328

⁵ Hayes, p.351; see also Lawrence-Curran, in Craggs 1999, p.165

⁶ Bowen, in Hyperion Records CDA 67330

Indifferent as the fledgling composer might have been to Renaissance polyphony, constant exposure to its sonorities left an indelible mark. By the time he found his mature style, those transparent vocal textures that he had earlier absorbed were re-created anew, albeit in an idiom very different to that of the Renaissance masters. From the sinuous lines of *A Litany*, through ‘Where does the uttered Music go?’, to *Cantico del Sole*, the part-writing is as important as any harmonic gestures. Even in the more overtly homophonic pieces, the inner vocal lines often have a linear independence, and are invariably rewarding to sing.¹

A Litany certainly demonstrates a thorough understanding of choral singing and choral composition. But this work and its contemporaries show how much Walton is trying to think outside of Tallis, Mendelssohn, Stanford, and the other composers who made up his steady musical diet. His adventuresome, even outrageous, harmonies—such as the initial and penultimate chords of *A Litany*—are the fruit of a highly creative mind. In *Tell me where is fancy bred*, we hear a youngster who is trying to recapture the then still little known art of the Elizabethan song. The *Chorale Prelude on ‘Wheatley’* shows him considering motivic elements more deeply. *The Forsaken Merman* demonstrates an ambition of scale and a keen ear for text-painting. From the *Valse in C minor* we hear a continuing interest in harmonies, such as successive seventh chords, that were uncommon for an English composer to indulge in to such a degree. In some of these cases his music suffers from overreach: the prelude has too many motives, *The Forsaken Merman* indulges in a teenager’s heightened sense of drama, and the waltz is too harmonically adventuresome for its own good. This alleged problem simply reflects the process through which an imaginative mind honed its craft.

To investigate these early works is to investigate the craft behind Walton’s later works as well. What Frank Howes describes as Walton’s “use of dissonant harmony as a form of pungent consonance”² pervades all of his output, from *A Litany* to the final orchestral *Prologo e Fantasia* (1982). *Tell me where is fancy bred* demonstrates an interest in neo-Elizabethan textures that led to four excellent scores for Shakespeare films. His handling of voices in an ensemble situation—always natural, always logical, even when unconventional—remains from *A Litany* to the late *Antiphon* (1977).³ Even the grand sextet-with-chorus in *Troilus and Cressida* (1954) shows signs of someone for whom ensemble writing came naturally. A large quantity of his vocal writing, from *Belshazzar’s Feast* (1931) to the opening chorus of *Troilus and Cressida* to *Cantico del Sole* (1974), calls for double-choir, as if the natural division between *cantoris* and *decani* at Christ Church was simply the way that choirs should behave by default. In the 1970s, when Walton’s compositional efforts were mostly limited to re-hashing early works in *Façade 2* (1979) and the Sonata for String Orchestra (1971), he still managed to compose six convincing works for choir. The very fact that Walton constantly composed for voices throughout his life, though his fame and fortune stemmed from orchestral works, shows a keen interest in vocal music that stemmed from his boyhood.

¹ Brown, WWE v.6, p.xii

² Howes 1973, p.225

³ The brief carol *King Herod and the cock* (1977) postdates *Antiphon*, but since its final form is actually a conflation by John Rutter of three versions penned by Walton (Craggs 2014, p.116), and as I have not analyzed Walton’s original versions, it seems unwise to make too many assumptions about Walton’s compositional style based on that work.

Walton's period as an actively studying undergraduate lasted less than two years, but should also rightly include the year prior, when he began attending university lectures and other events. From this period date the Swinburne songs and the Piano Quartet, works of surer mastery than those written just a year prior. Frank Howes isolated a characteristic of Walton's mature works that is strongly to the fore in the Piano Quartet, which he termed, "in a horrific mouthful of description, his thematic polymorphism; plain repetition is so antipathetic to him that he cannot bring himself to give a definitive form to his themes for their various appearances; they must have new heads or new tails or must vary their intervals, but they retain their identity nevertheless." This even exists to a more limited degree in his motivic treatment in *Tell me where is fancy bred*, where the closing bell motive is a modified re-statement of the opening melody; or perhaps the opening is a *pre*-statement of the bell sounds. Walton constantly makes the listener question the very idea of form, even from the interruption in the recapitulation of *A Litany*. As an undergraduate composing the Piano Quartet, he tested structural considerations even more extremely, especially in the finale. Throughout his life, he continued to play with the idea of form, as in the compressed recapitulation of the First Symphony's (1935) opening movement or the quasi-variations of the *Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten* (1969). The metaphorical mental motives that Walton applied to his compositional technique throughout his life first appeared, in germ form, in his earliest surviving works.

Epilogue

Just as his father had left the Royal Manchester College of Music without a degree or diploma, William Walton left Oxford with nothing tangible to show for his time. This is, in some respect, ironic, since he could have passed the pre-1911 requirements handily, or passed the Bachelor of Music without also attempting the Bachelor of Arts. Walton's name remained on the books at Christ Church, languishing without interest from either party, until Christmas 1934.¹ But eight years later, the university tacitly acknowledged that there were more important matters than passing exams: Walton became an honorary Doctor of Music at Oxford on February 12, 1942. This was the second of his six honorary doctorates—the first came from the University of Durham in 1937—but no doubt the one that meant the most to him. Christ Church also elected him as an Honorary Student, a distinction akin to being a Fellow at other Oxford colleges, in 1947.

Much has been written about the influence of the Sitwell clan on Walton's musical life. Certainly the Sitwells opened his ears to new sonorities and demonstrated to him a way in which he could, in the words of Roy Campbell, "live for his art."² However, too often the influence of Thomas Strong, Henry Ley, Hugh Allen, and Ernest Walker is tossed aside as a mere pre-show entertainment. The impeccable taste of Ley, the broad world view of Strong, the human approach of Allen, and the historical context of

¹ Kennedy, p.12

² Tierney, p.27

Walker were integral parts of Walton's musical mind. To deny these influences is to ignore a central core of Walton's personality and therefore his music.

Walton's next step was to find his own voice. In the post-Oxford years, he tried many approaches: free atonality in the early String Quartet (1922) and the Toccata for Violin and Piano (1923), jazzy experimentalism in *Façade* (1922 through 1928), rhythmic bite in *Portsmouth Point* (1925), pastoral idyll in *Siesta* (1926), and a self-conscious imitation of Diaghilev-esque French scores in the *Sinfonia Concertante* (1927). Not until the Viola Concerto of 1929 did he arrive at a truly mature style, a blend of Classical structure, Romantic phrases, and Modernist harmonies, rhythms, and orchestration. These elements, in disparate amounts in various pieces, can be found in his early works as well. The experimental, curious mind of Walton helped him to shape those initial impressions, but his eventual mature voice had already been heard in the Piano Quartet and even at times in the early versions of *A Litany*.

This story has been about more than just William Walton, and more than his music. It is a story about those people who helped fashion him in his early years, about his family, his teachers, and his fellow students. Each of them played a part in shaping the man William Walton, and therefore in shaping his music. May this story—for it truly is a story, albeit a factual one—help to give credit to those remarkable individuals, each of whom was remarkable in their own way, and not only because of their connections with the composer. May it also draw attention to the immediate fruits of their interactions, the compositions from Walton's youth, inspiring performers to dust off these little known efforts and allow other scholars and the public at large to consider their merits. Many influences—whether of personality or of musical content—combined to help shape a remarkable individual. Through them we better understand Walton's mature voice and better appreciate the craftsmanship and musicality of an extraordinary composer.

Appendices

Appendix A: Works of William Walton, 1902–1920

The following list summarizes all of Walton’s known compositional efforts through the year 1920. This includes works that were left incomplete and those that do not survive. Some information about each work is given here, but more detailed discussions, including referenced footnotes, can be found in the text above. Stewart Craggs has assigned the surviving juvenilia a catalog number (“C”) in his 1990 volume and its 2014 update.

1	c.1913?	Choral works for upper voices Susana Walton suggested “pieces for the choristers to sing”, written around age 11. Nothing matching this description survives.
2	1913/14?	Variations for Violin and Piano on a Chorale by J. S. Bach Walton wrote in 1932: “didn’t progress [...] more than a dozen bars. Not very interesting and wisely decided to stop.” No manuscript survives.
3	Christmas 1915?	A Litany, C1 Original version, for four treble voices. Survives in manuscript.
4	Easter 1916	A Litany, C1a First revised version, for four mixed voices, SATB. Survives in manuscript, dated Easter 1916. Later revised, probably soon before publication in 1930.
5	July 2, 1916	Tell me where is fancy bred, C2 For soprano and tenor voices, three violins and piano. Possibly performed as part of school production of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> . Survives in manuscript, dated July 2, 1916.
6	early 1916?	Where the bee sucks Described in 1932 as a “4-part song”, possibly inaccurately. No manuscript survives. Possibly performed as part of school production of <i>The Tempest</i> .
7	early 1916?	Various choral works and songs Walton wrote in 1932: “about 30 very bad works of various species, songs, motets, Magnificats, etc.” This number probably includes several works listed elsewhere.
8	August 16, 1916	Chorale Prelude on ‘Wheatley’, C3 For organ. Based on the hymn tune by Basil Harwood. Survives in manuscript, dated August 16, 1916.
9	Summer 1916	The Forsaken Merman, C4 For soprano and tenor soloists, double women’s chorus, and orchestra. Survives in manuscript short score only, dated Summer 1916. Probably never orchestrated, possibly never completed.
10	September 17, 1916	Chorale Fantasia, C102 For organ. Mentioned in letter of September 10, 1916. Performed by H.G. Ley at Christ Church, September 17, 1916. No manuscript survives.

11	September 1916	Various choral works and works for organ Including six-part motet and other works for organ. Mentioned in letter of September 10, 1916.
12	November 1916	Work for piano Mentioned in letter of November 12, 1916.
13	November 1916	For all the Saints, C103 Mentioned in letter of November 26, 1916. Scoring unknown.
14	February 2, 1917	Valse in C minor, C5 For piano. Survives in manuscript, dated February 2, 1917
15	April 10, 1917	Wedding march for organ, C104 Performed by Noel Ponsoyby, April 10, 1917, at the wedding of H.G. Ley.
16	July 1918	Four Swinburne Songs, C6 "Child's Song", "Song" (Love laid his sleepless head), and "A Lyke-Wake Song" all survive in manuscript, dated July 1918. "The Winds" was published in 1921, and may have been written after the others.
17	Spring 1919	Other songs Mentioned in letter of June 1, 1919. May include or be limited to Swinburne songs above.
18	Summer 1919?	Quartet for Piano and Strings, C7 First version, composed 1918–19. First movement begun by January 28, 1919; third movement by February 1919. Revised, c.1921–4. Further revised c.1955 and c.1973–5. Manuscript lost. Earliest source is first edition, 1924.
19	Summer 1919?	Works for orchestra Mentioned in letter of July 25, 1919.
20	1920	Tritons, C8 Song for voice and piano. Survives in manuscript, dated 1920. Published 1921.
21	1920?	The Passionate Shepherd, C9 For tenor voice and ten instruments. Lost.
22	1919–20	Quartet for Strings, C11 Two movements performed March 4, 1921. Later revised and third movement added, 1922. Survives in manuscript.
22	1920–21	Doctor Syntax, C10 Overture for orchestra. Mentioned in letter of September 24, 1921. Possibly begun 1920, or even 1919. Lost.

Appendix B: *Wheatley* by Basil Harwood

Here follows a new edition of *Wheatley*, the hymn tune by Basil Harwood on which Walton's organ prelude is based. The source was a copy of the *Oxford Hymn Book* from 1908. Harwood's music was intended to accompany text by Isaac Gregory Smith, which is also included.

Wheatley

Basil Harwood

Slow



By Jesus' grave on either hand,
While night is brooding o'er the land,
The sad and silent mourners stand.

At last the weary life is o'er,
The agony and conflict sore
Of him who all our sufferings bore.

Deep in the rock's sepulchral shade
The Lord, by whom the world were made,
The Saviour of mankind, is laid.

O hearts bereaved and sore distressed,
Here is for you a place of rest,
Here leave your griefs on Jesus' breast.

— I. Gregory Smith (1826–1920)

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Recordings

(only recordings of Walton's juvenilia and other recordings with liner notes referenced; also include video recordings)

Ainsley, John Mark, tenor; Kenneth Sillito, violin; Carlos Bonell, guitar; Hamish Milne, piano; Gretel Dowdeswell, piano. *Walton: Anon in Love and Other Chamber Works*. Chandos Records, CD, CHAN 9292 (1994). Includes *The Winds*, performed by Ainsley and Milne. Recorded May 29, 1991, at Blackheath Concert Hall, London; and January 11–12, 1992, and November 7–8, 1993, at the Faculty of Music Concert Hall, Cambridge. Liner note by Christopher Palmer.

- Ames Piano Quartet. *British Piano Quartets*. Albany, CD, TROY910/11 (2007). Recorded December 18–19, 2005, March 12–13, 2006, and May 5–6, 2006, at the Martha-Ellen Tye Recital Hall, Ames, Iowa. Liner note by Karl E. Gwiasda.
- Cappa Ensemble. *Piano Quartets: Bridge, Bax, Wilson, Walton*. Nimbus Alliance, CD, NI 6230 (2013). Recorded August 27–29, 2012, at Curtis Auditorium, Cork School of Music, Cork Institute of Technology, Cork. Liner note by Paul Conway.
- Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. *Elgar: Piano Quintet; Walton: Piano Quartet*. CMS Studio Recordings, CD, 6 5373 82505 2 2 (2007). Recorded April 2007 at The Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio, Lincoln Center, New York. Liner note by Richard E. Rodda.
- Choir of Belfast Cathedral; David Drinkell, director. *Peace I Leave with You: A Sequence of Music for the Holy Eucharist*. Guild Music, CD, GMCD 7126 (1996). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded at St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.
- Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge; Christopher Robinson, director. *Walton: Choral Music*. Naxos Records, CD, 8.555793 (2002). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded July 10–12, 2001, at St. John's College Chapel, Cambridge. Liner note by Barry Holden.
- Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge; Richard Marlow, director. *William Walton: The Sacred Choral Music*. Conifer Records, CD, CDCF 164 (1989). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded June 25–27, 1988, at Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge. Liner note by Christopher Palmer.
- Choir of Winchester Cathedral, Waynflete Singers, David Hill, conductor. *British Choral Masterpieces: Vaughan Williams, Walton*. Decca Eloquence, CD, 467 613-2 (2001). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded May 1991, Winchester Cathedral, Winchester. Liner note by Diana McVeagh.
- Christ Church Cathedral Choir; Stephen Darlington, director. *Taverner to Tavener: Five Centuries of Music at Christ Church, Oxford*. Nimbus Records, CD, NI 5328 (1992). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded November 18–19, 1991, at Dorchester Abbey, Dorchester. Liner note by Andrew Carwood.
- . *Walton: Choral Works*. Nimbus Records, CD, NI 5364 (1993). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded July 13–14, 1992, at Leominster Priory, Leominster. Liner note by Christopher Palmer.
- English String Quartet; John McCabe, piano. *William Walton: Piano Quartet; String Quartet in A minor*. Meridian Records, CD, CDE 84139 (1987). Recorded at St. Olave's School, Kent; and St. Edward the Confessor's Church, Nottingham.
- Finzi Singers; Paul Spicer, director. *Walton: Choral Works*. Chandos Records, CD, CHAN 9222 (1993). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded March 31 and April 1, 1992, at Marlborough College, Wiltshire. Liner note by Christopher Palmer.

- Frith Piano Quartet. *Walton, Bridge, Lekeu Piano Quartets*. Nimbus Alliance, CD, NI 6183 (2012). Recorded October 24–26, 2010, at The Oak Hall, Rhos-y-Gilwen Mansion, Pembrokeshire. Liner note by Richard Bratby.
- Gabrieli Consort, Paul McCreesh, conductor. *A Song of Farewell: Music of Mourning & Consolation*. Gabrieli, CD, SIGCD 281 (2012). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded November 8–10, 2009, at Lady Chapel, Ely Cathedral, Ely. Liner note by Paul McCreesh and Greg Skidmore.
- Graham, Janice, violin; Paul Silverthorne, viola; Moray Welsh, cello; Israella Margalit, piano. *Walton: Chamber Music*. EMI Classics, CD, CDC 5 55404 2 (1996). Recorded September 29, 1995, at All Saints' Church, East Finchley, London. Includes Piano Quartet. Liner note by Michael Kennedy.
- Kenny, Yvonne, soprano; Malcolm Martineau, piano. *William Walton & Constant Lambert: Complete Songs*. Etcetera Records, CD, KTC 1140 (1992). Includes *The Winds*. Recorded May 2–4, 1992, at Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead. Liner note by David Blackwell.
- Lott, Felicity, soprano; Martyn Hill, tenor; Craig Ogden, guitar; Graham Johnson, piano. *The English Song Series, Volume 2: William Walton*. Collins Classics, CD, 14932 (1997). Includes *The Winds*, performed by Lott and Johnson. Recorded October 2–3, 1996, and May 1–2, 1997, at All Saints' Church, East Finchley, London. Liner note by Michael Kennedy.
- —. *The English Song Series, Volume 1: William Walton*. Naxos Records, CD, 8.557112 (2003). Reissue of Collins Classics 14932. Liner note by Keith Anderson.
- Maggini Quartet; Peter Donohoe, piano. *Walton: Piano Quartet; String Quartet*. Naxos Records, CD, 8.554646 (2000). Recorded May 30–June 1, 1999, at Potton Hall, Suffolk. Liner note by Keith Anderson.
- Nash Ensemble. *Walton: Violin Sonata; Piano Quartet; Anon in Love*. Hyperion Records, CD, CDA67340 (2002). Recorded February 1–3, 2002, at Potton Hall, Suffolk. Liner note by Andrew Burn.
- Oldham Tinkers. *Best O' T' Bunch*. Pier Records, CD, PIERCD 506 (2003). Reissue of recordings originally released in 1971 and 1974.
- —. *For Old Time's Sake*. Pier Records, CD, PIERCD 507 (2006). Reissue of recordings originally released in 1968, 1971, and 1975.
- —. *Sit Thee Down*. Pier Records, CD, PIERCD 505 (2002). Reissue of recordings originally released in 1968 and 1977.
- —. *That Lancashire Band*. Pier Records, CD, PIERCD 504 (2000). Reissue of recordings originally released in 1979.
- Palmer, Tony, director. *At the Haunted End of the Day...: A Profile of Sir William Walton*. Kultur, VHS, 1159 (1981).

- Pianokwartet Marcato. *Bridge; Devreese; Walton*. Etcetera, CD, KTC 1267 (2004). Includes Piano Quartet. Recorded December 14, 23, and 28, 2003, and January 4, 2004. Liner note by Dirk Gabriels, translated by Anne Van den Bergh.
- Polyphony; Stephen Layton, conductor. *Walton: Coronation Te Deum and Other Choral Music*. Hyperion Records, CD, CDA 67330 (2002). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded January 3–4, 2002, at Hereford Cathedral, and January 6, 2002, at St. Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead. Liner note by Meurig Bowen.
- Sillito, Kenneth, violin; Robert Smissen, viola; Stephen Orton, cello; Hamish Milne, piano. *Walton: Violin Sonata & Piano Quartet*. Chandos Records, CD, CHAN 8999 (1991). Liner note by Christopher Palmer.
- Solti, Sir Georg; Simon Preston; Heather Harper. *Walton: Belshazzar's Feast; Coronation Te Deum; Choral Works; Songs*. Decca Eloquence, CD, 480 4972 (2012). Includes *A Litany*, performed by Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Simon Preston. Recorded April 1972, at Chapel of Merton College, Oxford. Liner note by Alan Frank.
- St. Paul's Cathedral Choir, John Scott. *The English Anthem*, volume 7. Hyperion Records, CD, CDA67087 (1999). Includes *A Litany*. Recorded July 6, 7, 9, and 10, 1998, at St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Liner note by William R. McVicker.
- Various artists. *Deep Lancashire*. Topic Records, CD, TSCD 485 (1997). Reissue of recordings originally released in 1968 and 1970. Liner note by Harry Boardman and Leslie Boardman.

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