The Heron-Allen Society

Newsletter
no. 19
Autumn 2011

Farewell to Clare Island. A View from the O'Grady ferry showing the O'Grady guest house in the middle of the picture.

THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

For its 2011 Annual Symposium the Society returned to the Donaldson Room in the Library of the Royal College of Music where some thirty members and friends gathered on the morning of 25 June. The day's theme was 'Edward Heron-Allen and Music' and after a welcome from Pam Thompson, Chief Librarian at the RCM, and an introduction from the Society's Chairman, Timothy J. McCann, proceedings began with the latter's paper 'Edward Heron-Allen's trip to Downside to visit the Music Library'. As with almost every aspect of his life, Heron-Allen meticulously recorded the details of his May 1886 visit to Downside Abbey and its music library. Drawing on the three available sources – a letter to Constance Mary Foy which records the beginning of his visit, that curious H-A device of a letter *posted* to himself to document the latter part, and his work book which recorded the books he consulted in the library – and a mixture of contemporary and modern images, Tim painted a vivid picture of the occasion. Building of the monastic church had only started in 1880 and at the time of Heron-Allen's visit only the transept of the present monastic church had been completed (1882). But what did EH-A make of the monastic life? His comments suggest that the rather frugal meals were not quite what he was used to nor, I suspect, were the hours the monks kept! Although he usually rose at a 'normal' hour, he clearly felt that he ought to experience life as lived by the monks and on one occasion joined them for Matins at 5am.. I began to wonder what this young man, whose customary surroundings and daily routine were so different, thought of those who had submitted themselves to the Rule of St Benedict. Is there, perhaps, scope for a study of EH-A and religious belief?

The origins of my own paper, 'Edward Heron-Allen as a Music Critic', lay in a serendipitous glance inside one of the volumes from his library, *A Fiddler's Fancies*, and the discovery that it contained some notes on musical criticism. Or, to put it perhaps more accurately, it contained some criticisms of musical criticism. With my appetite whetted I decided to investigate its subject matter – the London visit of the great Spanish violinist Pablo Sarasate in 1890 – further. In so doing I discovered that Heron-Allen, who in the privacy of his study had taken *The Strad* periodical to task over its inadequate coverage of Sarasate's concerts, had nonetheless thrown in his lot with the editor, 'a professional violinist, not of the first rank, named Polonski,' (to use his own words) and contributed several articles and reviews under the pseudonym 'Florian'. Had copies of these not survived in his own hand, the subject matter of some of them – female string players, for example – or a particular turn of phrase would probably have been enough to identify him as their author. In the event, his comments on the all -female Shinner string quartet led to published letters of complaint from readers and probably led to his ceasing to write for the journal. But over and above that, the type of in-depth musical criticism he

The two violins made by Edward Heron-Allen at the Royal College of Music.

advocated only had a limited market: there were simply too few readers who wanted such writing.

The final part of the first session had a particular interest as it consisted of thoughts by EH-A's Australian great grandson, on similarities between his own character and outlook and that of his celebrated ancestor. Even their physical appearances were not dissimilar, but when Bill Coleby spoke about his career, widespread interests, passion for collecting, and success in life, one realised that many of EH-A's defining characteristics were indeed shared by his 21st century descendent.

Members will probably be aware that the two violins made by EH-A and bequeathed to the RCM were unfortunately sold by the College in the financially difficult immediate post-war years. When the Society first met at the College in 2006 we were privileged, thanks to the generosity of its current owner, Pat Naismith, to hear Heron-Allen's first instrument, based on a Stradivarius original, being played. This year an even more significant event took place when the two instruments were brought together for the first time in over 60 years, thanks (again) to Pat Naismith and John and Barbara Mahoney, owners of the second instrument, the Guarnerius copy. The latter featured principally when RCM students Benjamin Norris (violin) and Craig Greene (piano) performed music by Shostakovich and Mozart to an appreciative audience, but Ben and Craig kindly offered to repeat some of the programme on the Stradivarius. Ben explained that it was not easy to gain an accurate impression of an instrument, like the EH-A Guarnerius, that had not been played for a long time, but said that he had much enjoyed the experience and was certain that after 'playing-in' it would be a fine instrument to use.

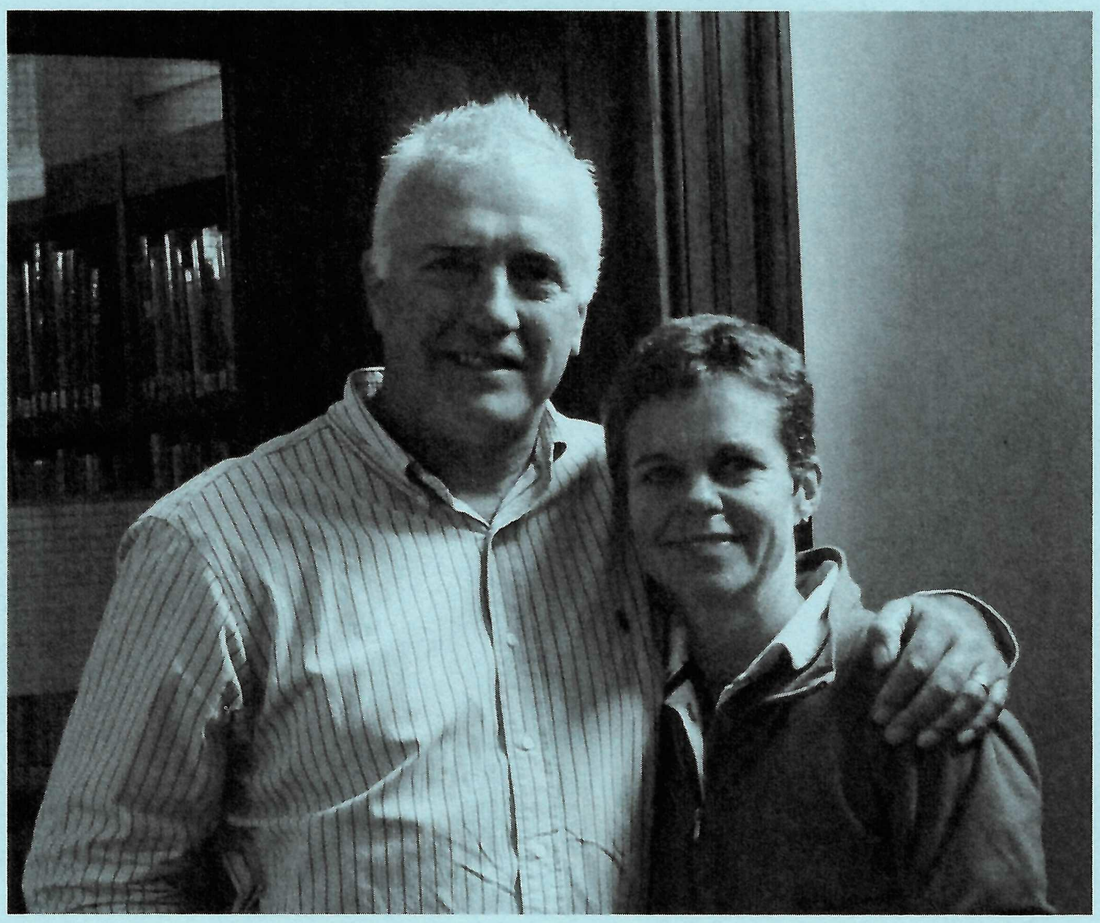
Having heard the two instruments, we were now given a detailed account by John Mahoney of the resurrection of the Guarnerius copy. When he acquired it from a private owner in Dorset in 2009 it had been in a very poor condition, but painstaking work by the luthier Andrew Dipper at his workshop in Minneapolis had transformed it. This was the first time it had been played properly for many years. Andrew Dipper had recorded the progress of the work photographically and John was able to draw on the many photos to illustrate his talk. He had also had the restoration documented in a book, *The Resurrection of the Edward Heron-Allen Violin, No. 2*, a copy of which he kindly presented to the RCM Library.

The session at the RCM closed with the 2011 AGM at which the officers and committee were re-elected unopposed, and the date of 30 June was agreed for the 2012 Symposium. Members were reminded that this would be the last time that Pam Thompson would be welcoming them to the RCM as she was shortly to retire as Chief Librarian, but the Society would still retain links with the College through her deputy, Peter Horton, and successor Peter Linnitt, who had joined today.

The day ended with a most enjoyable late lunch at Pierino's Italian Restaurant, South Kensington (the venue for most committee meetings). With no deadline for returning for an afternoon session we were able to relax and reflect on the wide-ranging and fascinating achievements of a true polymath.

Peter Horton

Pamela Thompson and Benjamin Norris with the two Heron-Allen violins.



Bill Coleby and Armorel Wood at the Royal College of Music

THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM: THE AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION

The decision to attend the 2011 symposium was not a difficult one emotionally but the physical distance is a major consideration without which I would be at all E H-A engagements. My wife Helen and I attended this year at the Royal College of Music with great expectations as you would imagine.

The symposium gave us a chance to not only see and hear violin number 01 thanks to Pat Naismith, (which I missed some years prior) but also thanks the John and Barbara Mahoney we had the treat of seeing and hearing violin number 02. I am sure all who attended were deeply moved by the incredible performance by Benjamin Norris on violin and Craig Greene on piano as they played Mozart: Violin Sonata in E minor and Shostakovich: 4 preludes from 24 Preludes, op.34, arr. Tsyganov for violin and piano. This amazing experience was further enhanced by having Kevin Chanot, the great, great grandson of George Chanot at the symposium.

Edward Heron-Allen's trip to Downside to visit the Music Library expertly delivered by Tim McCann further enforced E H-A's diligence when it came to recording daily happenings. Nothing short of amazing.

Edward Heron-Allen as a Music Critic, delivered by Peter Horton was for me another highlight as Peter expertly delivered an interesting topic which added yet another bow to E H-A's amazing career.

An additional personal treat was the attendance of my cousin Armorel and I am not sure if many of the audience caught the significance of myself (Edward) and Armorel in the same room at E H-A's symposium. For me it was very moving as I had not seen Armorel for more than 32 years. It was for me a feeling which is very difficult to put into words. It also opened up another train of thought for me which is the intensely personal effect E H-A's symposiums has on members of his family. I have the strong opinion this should be considered and must be nurtured and respected for the good of the current and future generations of the family and the society. I am sure all members of the society enjoy and have a natural curiosity to experience living descendents of E H-A.

It is my intention to attend future symposiums when time permits. I am currently working on putting all of the amazing family trees from both sides together in a succinct format to present to the society. I would like to be able to present this and look forward to having that opportunity in the future.

Edward (Ned) Heron-Allen's great grandson,
Peter William Edward (Bill) Coleby

THE HERON-ALLEN SOCIETY VISIT TO CLARE ISLAND, 14-16 AUGUST 2011

On 14 August the Heron Allen Society party of eight – members, partners and friends - left Ronagh Pier on the O'Grady ferry to Clare Island, almost 100 years to the day since EH-A arrived at the island as a participant in the great Clare Island survey. We were met at the Clare Island pier by our landlady for the next few days, Helen O'Grady, with a van to transport the luggage. Her guest house faces across the harbour, just over the road from the white sandy beach, and a few hundred yards from McCabe's, where EH-A stayed. She had suggested that although she does not usually provide a cooked lunch, she could make soup and sandwiches for us when we arrived. This turned out to be a gourmet carrot and ginger soup, and a delicious selection of open

Alan and Minoo Lord and Tim McCann on the O'Grady Ferry leaving Roonagh.

The Abbey on Clare Island with Inez and Muriel Murrey taken by Edward Heron-Allen, 1911

sandwiches. While we were eating, Helen offered us the chance to have a local guide for the afternoon, who could lead us on a walk to some of the many archaeological sites on the island. The tone was thus set for the whole of our stay on Clare Island – great hospitality, wonderful food, and a real thoughtfulness for what we might like – and a lot of O'Gradys.

Our guide for the afternoon was James Murphy, an archaeology graduate, who is trying to encourage interest in the island's heritage, and who also works as crew on the ferry. He led us right over the centre of the island, along green lanes and trackless hills. The weather cooperated. It was windy, but sunny so we could appreciate the magnificent views in all directions. (We also had the chance to appreciate the chocolate cake at the local craft fair. Tim Collins had tasted it before, and somehow ensured that our walk began at the community centre where the fair was taking place.)

We saw a courtyard tomb, beehive huts and cooking pits, and ended up at Clare Abbey, a Cistercian foundation, with very unusual ceiling paintings, which had recently been restored. They are unusual in being of secular subjects – a cattle raid, musicians, animals.. The abbey is also the reputed resting place of Grace O'Malley, the pirate queen, the remains of whose castle is down near the harbour.

After showing us the abbey, our guide had to leave us - he had to be back to take the 6pm ferry out. He had brought along with him on the walk a young girl called Teresa, who was visiting the island to learn how to trim horses' hooves so that they could go without iron shoes. Tim McCann of course decided that she was our "flapper", the equivalent of the two young Murray girls, whom EH-A met when he visited the island, and who feature frequently in his diary and photographs of his visit. I am not sure if Teresa quite understood the idea, but she was very happy to join us, and was a welcome addition to our party.

With all the fresh air and exercise, and the extremely good dinner provided by Helen, it was a tribute to the excellence of Tom Collins' after dinner talk on Praeger and the development of the Natural History Societies that everyone stayed awake to watch and listen. The Natural History Societies flourished in the late 19th century, not only because of the great interest in the subject, but also because they provided an opportunity for unchaperoned encounters between the sexes.

The next day was the Feast of the Assumption, a day when the inhabitants of the islands go on pilgrimage to hear Mass on Caher Island, an uninhabited island with some early Christian remains. So the party split, with Tim and Evelyn Collins, Teresa and myself joining the pilgrimage. Our doings on that day are a story in themselves. Suffice it to say, we somehow missed Mass, got soaked to the skin, and had an unanticipated visit to the community centre on Inish Turk, arriving back at Clare Island several hours later than we had expected.

The rest of the party walked across the island to the lighthouse, only to find it boarded up, and the cliffs where they had hoped to observe some bird life showing alarming signs of landslip. Since the rain was coming on, the party headed back towards the harbour, enjoying a hot cup of tea at Annie's Café, and ending up in the Bay View Hotel, where some of the party warmed up by drinking hot port, much to Alan Lord's disgust. Tim McCann then tried to have tea at the establishment where EH-A had stayed, which was then called McCabe's. Unfortunately, although it advertised teas, it was closed and unwelcoming.

The whole party had been invited for drinks before supper by Irene and Marcus Sweeney, friends of Tim and Evelyn Collins. Marcus took the first car load up to the house, while the Caher Island pilgrims found hot baths and dry clothes. The Sweeney's house stands on the hillside, with magnificent views of the harbour. Their hospitality was equally magnificent, so much so that a very happy party was late back to O'Grady's for dinner.

After dinner, we retired to the sitting room for Tim McCann's talk, to find our hostess' father in law, and one of his brothers and one of his sisters, with spouses, waiting to hear the talk.

The Abbey on Clare Island with Alison McCann and Sylvia Blunden, 2011.

Tim talked about EH-A and the Murrays, the "flappers" family, and used a lot of photographs that EH-A took on the island. He had also brought with him EH-A's diary of his visit (courtesy of Ivor Jones) and the Natural History Museum's copy of EH-A's Clare Island article, bound in with which were tickets, bills etc. about his visit. All these were of great interest to the O'Gradys, who could identify the exact locations of the photographs, and also identify the local people featured in them. Their presence made our last evening on the island very memorable.

Alan and Minoo Lord left after breakfast the next day, as did the "flapper". The McCanns and our friends the Blundens were not leaving until lunchtime, and Pauric O'Grady had promised to take us to the modern Catholic church to see the stained glass window made by the studio of Harry Clarke, an obsession of Tim McCanns. The island telegraph obviously works well, because as we set out from the guest house, his car drew up and he whisked us off to the church. We elected to walk back, and Pauric invited us to call in for coffee as we passed his house. When we arrived, his wife Susan had made some scones for us. So we had coffee and fresh scones, and excellent conversation while looking out at their wonderful views of the harbour. Then Susan drove us down to the guest house to collect our luggage, and then on to the pier. Since we had a little time before the ferry left, she took us down to the secluded beach, under Grace O'Malley's castle, where she swims each day. That was so that we would know the best place to swim when we came again.

And we will certainly go back to Clare Island. It has glorious scenery, fascinating archaeology, and unbelievably welcoming and hospitable people. I am so glad that EH-A gave us the excuse to go there.

Alison McCann

A PILGRIMAGE TO CLARE ISLAND

I often mutter and swear to myself during a rough voyage to Clare Island. The cocktail of expletives is always aimed at the skipper, whose charge may have just ploughed through a marine pothole or danced over a menacing roll of green Atlantic water.

In a most alarming way, I might add. Three decades of crossing and commuting to this ancient outpost have failed to cure my element terror of the whimsical ocean.

It doesn't matter that in recent years, I am ensconced in the bowels of a great heaving mammoth of a 90ft ferry and not atop a corkscrew currach.

Admittedly the pilgrimage always transforms into an odyssey the moment I pirouette onto the breathing and mesmeric hulk of an island likened to a great sleeping whale guarding the entrance to Clew Bay.
My most recent voyage ultimately landed me above the cliffs on the eastern shores, in the village of Capnagower. It was Islander's Night at the annual Bard Summer School and the lounge of the Bayview Hotel was already beating to the drum of traditional airs and music, recitations and rhymes. Up ya boya! Eight year-olds and octogenarians, elder island box-players and apprentice fiddlers, storytellers and poets all gathered to celebrate their ever-unfolding cultural narrative. There was Shoe the Donkey, and the Connemara Set, sean-no's singing and a hilarious recitation about the most imperious of sea captains, pirate Queen, Granuaille. "well the poor crathur would turn in her grave, back in the abbey." In the musical melee of the night islanders and exotic visitors one again created new lore for the epic tale of sea-highway history.

Fifty years ago such visitors were known as Praegers, an echo from the many visits made by Edwardian naturalist, Robert Lloyd Praeger. From 1909 to 1911, he led his army of botanists and geologists, archaeologists and historians, in the ground-breaking Clare Island Survey commissioned by the Royal Irish Academy..

Some time before Clare Island was purchased by the Congested Districts Board in 1895, a deputation of desperate men knocked on the front door of this same building (the hotel). It was then the landlord's lodge and earlier that day McDonnell, the landlord, had sailed into the island with his bailiff. His mission was to collect rents from his impoverished tenants.

However, the islanders had no intention of paying the rents. In fact the deputation had the audacity to demand a reduction. McDonnell flatly refused and the tenants left without paying a penny. Unsurprisingly, they were threatened with the impounding of their scrawny cattle and eviction from their tiny thatched cottages. Like many of their mainland counterparts, the Mayo islanders were still regular victims of potato failure and the general tyranny of ascendancy landlordism in the 1890s. The lazy bed, the loy and the Connaught lumper potato continued to be a staple part of their way of life. The echo of the battering ram pounded through the windswept air. Like phantasms, gunboats carrying an armed constabulary and military personnel emerged through the mist and fog.

Undoubtedly, these men were inspired by the principles of Michael Davitt, the founder of the Land League. The Straide native had often visited them in the dead of winter to check their plight.

McDonnell was extremely angry at the communal defiance and ordered his bailiff to have a boat and crew ready. Up early the following morning, the bailiff discovered that there was neither a mast, sail or oar to be found on his boat, nor in the vicinity. McDonnell was forced to return across a strand and up to his cliff-edge lodge. The next day passed and there was still no gear to be found. The landlord began to feel unnerved as the nonchalant rebel islanders went about their business, as if there was nothing amiss.

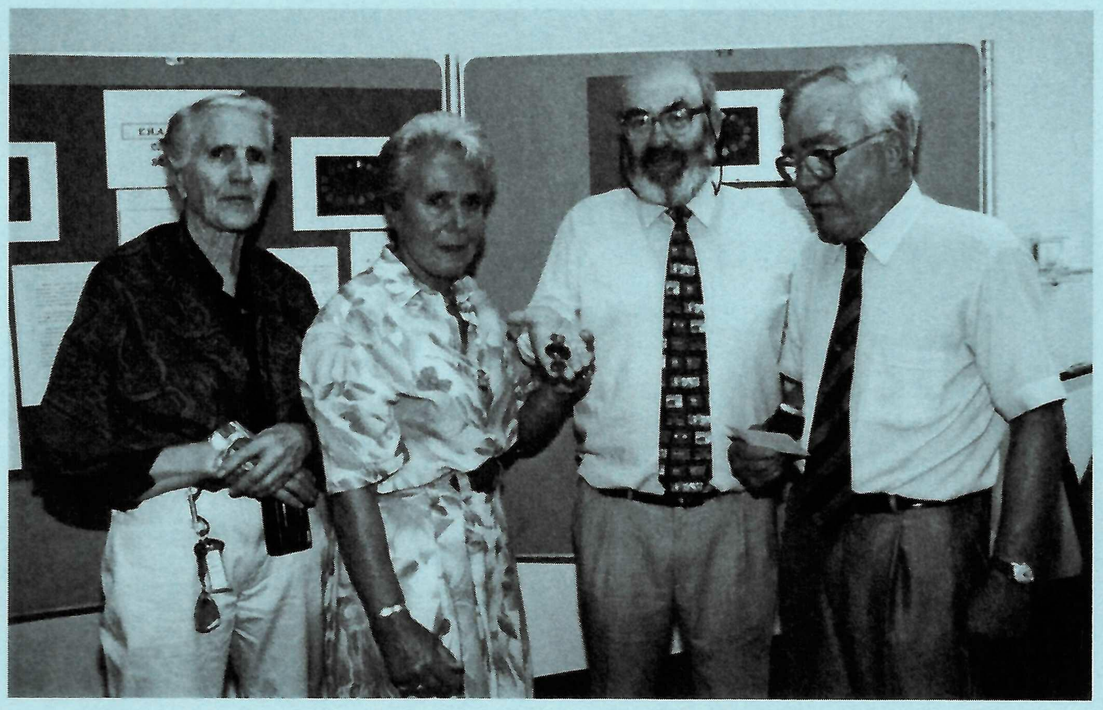
On the third day and islander who had a part ownership in a boat, was prevailed upon to provide a pair of oars. His partner came upon him as he was fitting the oars on the bailiff's craft and, in the presence of the landlord, he smashed the oars against the side of the pier.

By now provisions were getting low at the landlord's lodge and he became convinced that his rebellious tenants were prepared to starve him into submission. However, the following day the bailiff managed to patch the broken oars and McDonnell made his escape back to his mainland home. Despite initial threats of vengeance, soon afterwards he conceded to the reduction in rent.

Ironically, a couple of years later the Congested Districts Board had completed the purchase of the island. And under the pseudonym of Granuaille, an island scribe wrote in the Mayo News: "Joy, Joy Hurrah, we're free at last/Light bonfires on Knockmore,/for ne'er again shall tyranny/Set foot upon our shore.

Aine Ryan

Reprinted from *The Irish Times* of 20 July 2010, with the kind permission of Aine Ryan.



Pat Coleby, Liza Wood, Tim McCann and Ivor Jones with 'The Purple Sapphire'

RICHARD SAVIN HIT BY PURPLE SAPPHIRE CURSE – SHOCK!

On the evening of September 2nd the long awaited television programme on The Natural History Museum, London, in the series **Museum Secrets**, was broadcast. It was shown on Sky's Discovery Channel and also on the Yesterday Channel (Channel 12) on Freeview. Its billing was certainly most inviting. 'In every episode **Museum Secrets** travels to one extraordinary Museum ...[where] secrets of the past and discoveries of the future lurk in galleries and backrooms, waiting to be discovered'.... 'The heavy steel door of the room known as 'the Vault' protects some of the museum's most valuable treasures: a Martian meteorite, a rare crystallized gold nugget, and one of the world's largest uncut emeralds. Here, amidst the glitter, is a gem with a dark side. Known as the 'Blasted Amethyst' or 'Cursed Amethyst' it was stolen from the Temple of Indra during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Ever since, misfortune, sorrow, misery and even death have been said to befall anyone who dares hold it in their grasp. Is the curse real? All is revealed in **Museum Secrets**: Inside The Natural History Museum'.

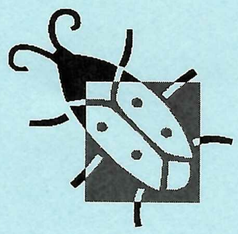
In reality it was rather an idiosyncratic programme featuring some superb images and interesting personalities, but also some rather irritating cartoon-like graphics. The piece on the Purple Sapphire was probably the best item, nevertheless. It featured a short introduction by John Whittaker on Heron-Allen, the man and his beliefs, and then moved to the bowels of the Museum (complete with spooky lighting) to interview the Curator of Minerals, Alan Hart, and our own Ivor Jones. Alan gave the background to the jewel and how the Museum came to own it and something of the curse (which he did not believe). Ivor looked the gentleman that he is, dapper and oozing Heron-Allen-style charisma. He explained what the family thought of it and why they would not touch it. That was, more or less, the gist of it.

Not broadcast, however, but hidden in the **Museum Secrets** website, is a further mysterious interview! To access, type in **Museum Secrets** on Google, click on the site. Go to Episode 5 and click again. Scroll down to 'Cursed Amethyst', click on that and finally click on 'Unexplained evidence'. Here the website states..."While Alan Hart dismisses the gem's curse out of hand, curator Richard Savin does not seem quite so certain. He wonders aloud about the strange experiences he had after touching the stone, in the Web Exclusive Video: Unexplained evidence". If you watch the interview you will notice that not only does this Richard Savin character look strangely familiar, but you've heard his story before. He recounted taking the stone down to the first Heron-Allen Symposium and the savage thunderstorm that struck him on the way home, so bad it was, that he almost abandoned the car. The day before the next two Heron-Allen symposia he was struck down by respectively, a vomiting bug and a kidney stone. Indeed it has already been covered in some detail on p. 46 (and attributed to John Whittaker) in Steve Ferrar's Article 'Out of the cupboard and calling to you: the cursed Delhi Purple Sapphire' in Opusculum X, published by the Heron-Allen Society in 2008.

Could it be, due to some ghastly botch, that this Richard Savin and John Whittaker are one and the same person? I think we need to be told!

John E. Whittaker

The purple sapphire



HERON-ALLEN'S RECIPE FOR PUNCH

Extract from the *Large Acres Visitors Book Volume I*
27th December, 1907

Brooke Sewell and Effie Twiss having arrived to celebrate the Season with us. We have performed the ceremony of Punch-making according to our traditional family recipe, which we have determined to record here for the benefit of future generations – if any. It is as follows:-

Three bottles of Brandy. One bottle of Rum, Nine Lemons. One pound of loaf sugar. Three bottles of boiling water.

Peel the lemons as thin as possible so as to take off no white-inner-rind and pour one bottle of boiling water on the peel in a bowl, let this stand for half an hour.

Pour one bottle of boiling water over the pound of sugar in another bowl so as to dissolve it completely.

Squeeze the juice of the lemons into a convenient vessel.

Pour the Brandy, the Rum and the remaining bottle of Boiling Water into a large bowl.

Then add the Peel-water, with the Peel, Also the Sugar Water.

Then pour in about half the Lemon-juice and stir and mix thoroughly.

Then taste, if the Punch seems to require more Lemon-juice add it to taste.

Let the whole stand for half an hour and then ladle it into bottles through a piece of fine muslin (to separate the lemon pulp) and keep for use.

N.B. If it is desired to 'lay down' any for keeping for any number of years, it should be filtered into bottles through very fine muslin or 'filter-papers'.

Notes by his Grandson. [Ivor E. Jones]

1. Use good brandy (e.g. Cognac), not a "mixer" variety; we tried that after the 1939-45 War and it was *horrible!*
2. A zester works very well for getting fine peel.
3. The oldest I have is 27 years old and is EXCELLENT.
4. We now make it on EH-A's birthday, 17th December to drink over the Christmas/New Year period.

OMAR KAYYAM Quatrain XCVI.
TAMAM SHUD

Ivor E. Jones

THE HERON-ALLEN GRAVES AT CHURCH NORTON, SELSEY

The Heron-Allen graves at Church Norton in Selsey were described in Newsletter No. 12 (Spring 2008) after the Society had generously paid for their restoration by Messrs. F.A. Holland & Son of Selsey. The missing lettering on the stones was replaced, the stones cleaned and the grave generally tidied. Inevitably since that time the grass surrounding the grave has encroached and overgrown the site. Martin Pelling, one of our new members, who lives in Selsey, has very generously offered to tidy up and maintain the graves for the future, and members are extremely grateful to him.

Anna Pelling by the Heron-Allen graves at Church Norton in Selsey

HERON-ALLEN SOCIETY ACHIEVEMENTS – PUBLICATIONS

The objectives of the Society described in our first Newsletter ten years ago included the statement that the Society would encourage the publication of biographical material, perhaps first in separate studies relating to Edward Heron-Allen's different interests. In pursuance of that objective, during the past ten years the Society has published 16 Opuscula, with 630 pages of text, including 44 articles by 28 different authors, and 18 Newsletters with 140 pages of text, including 81 articles by 28 different authors. Quite an achievement I think.

THE HERON-ALLEN BIOGRAPHY

Joan Navarre is writing a biography of Edward Heron-Allen. Any information concerning Heron-Allen (e.g. letters, manuscripts, photographs) will be greatly appreciated. E-mail: jnavarre@hotmail.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND PAYPAL

Members are reminded that their annual subscriptions became due on 1 July. The Society can now accept payment for subscriptions or purchases by Paypal, which is a very safe way to transfer money. We hope that this will help our overseas members in particular. If you do not have a Paypal account, it is very easy to open one. Just go to www.paypal.com or www.paypal.co.uk and follow the instructions. When you send money via Paypal, the e-mail address you need to quote is: heronallen@aol.com. Please ensure that you add details of the purpose of the payment. If you have any queries about such payments, please contact Pam Thompson (pthomp1059@aol.com) who is administering the Paypal account.

THE SOCIETY'S WEB-SITE

The Heron-Allen Society has a website at:
http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/heronallen/
The webmaster, Dr. Andrew S. Henderson, can be contacted through the website or directly by e-mail at: andy.henderson@fugro-robertson.com. Andy updates our web-site on a regular basis, and members are

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