

CONCERTS FOR THE 1979-80 SEASON

Saturday, 8th December: GALA CONCERT

Overture: Crown of Diamonds Auber
Violin Concerto Tchaikovsky
Solo Violin — RALPH HOLMES

"The Newbury Races", a specially commissioned work, with music by David Haslam and words by Johnny Morris, which will be given its first performance with narration by Johnny Morris.

Enigma Variations Elgar

Sunday, 9th December: AFTERNOON CONCERT

Overture: Crown of Diamonds Auber
Second Piano Concerto Shostakovich
Solo Piano — SURENDRAN REDDY

Enigma Variations Elgar

Sunday, 23rd March: SPRING CONCERT

Overture: Der Freischütz Weber
Songs of a Wayfarer Mahler
Solo Contralto — KATHRYN HARRIES

First Symphony Sibelius

Sunday, 18th May:

CONCERT in the NEWBURY SPRING FESTIVAL

Overture: Il Seraglio Mozart
"Jack o' Newbury", a specially commissioned work, with music by John Leach and words by Judith Eykyn, which will be given its first performance.

Seventh Symphony Beethoven

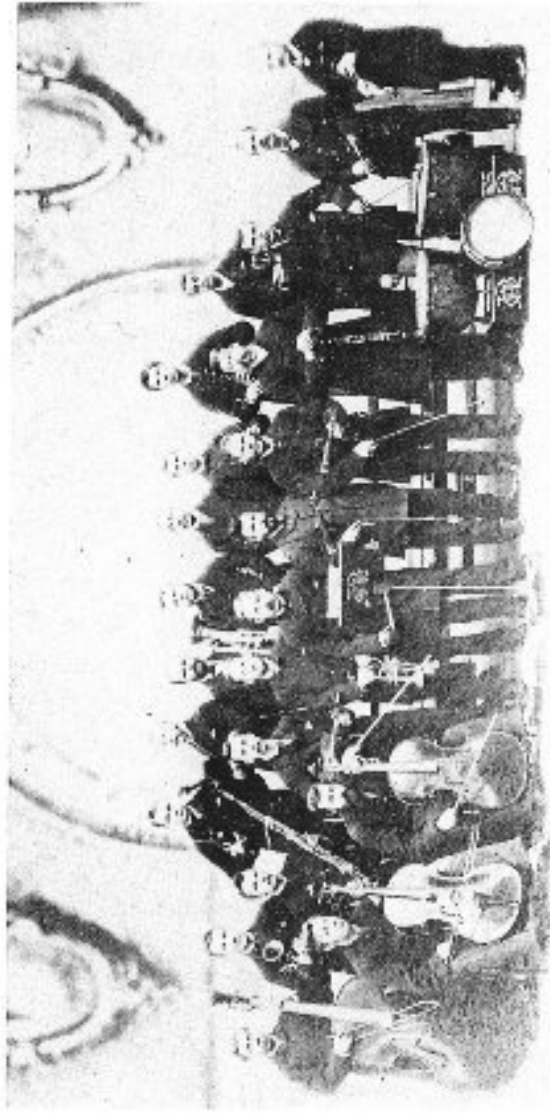
NEWBURY SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA



A
CENTENARY
HISTORY

1879 — 1979

The N.A.O.U. in 1881



C. Weecombe W. Busdick C. Bailey W. W. Penford W. Ogden W. Collis J. Studding Brown

A. Stradling W. Davies J. H. Hopson E. L. Staples T. Mathews A. Cary F. C. Seymour W. T. Toms C. W. Robinson W. Treen W. Godfrey

T. Busdick P. E. Davies W. Dines Eatwell (conductor)

May music live for ever, whether as a rousing march or as a melody to soothe the savage breast! For music is part of our heritage and flourishes throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, in orchestral societies, in choral societies, with solo instrumentalists, and in modern discotheques.

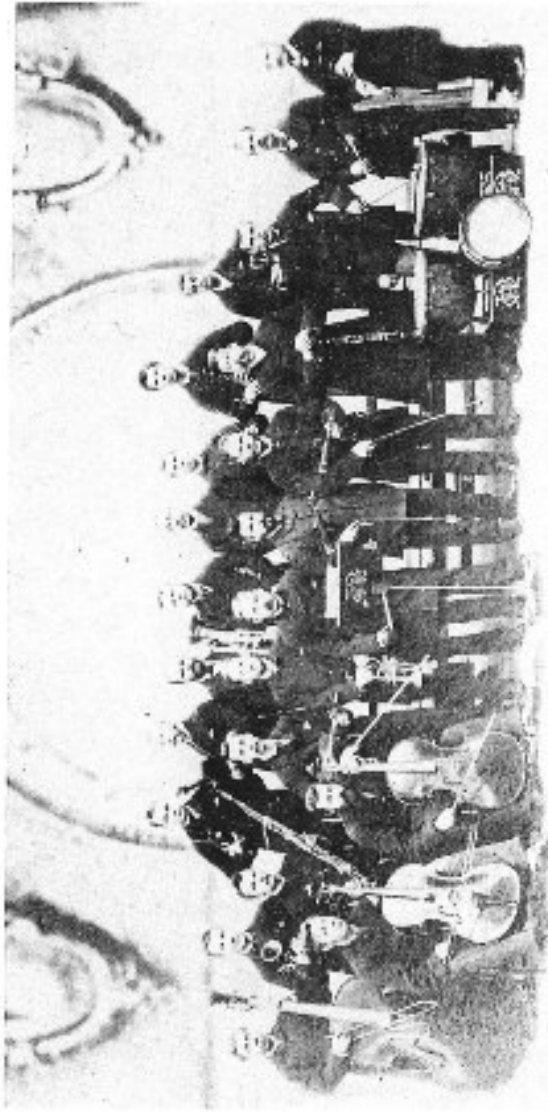
A hundred years ago this year saw the birth of one such society, the Newbury Amateur Orchestral Union (N.A.O.U.), as it was then called, although since 1964 it has been known as the Newbury Symphony Orchestra (N.S.O.). It started with the meeting of six enthusiastic instrumentalists who began their rehearsals in the loft above Pickfords' Removal office in the yard of the Queen's Hotel, Newbury, on 27th November, 1879. Who amongst those men could have foreseen that their efforts were to last a hundred years and more? The founders were G. H. Bates (conductor), W. Dines Eatwell, T. B. Mathews, F. C. Seymour, E. L. Staples and W. T. Toms, but by the following week they were joined by seven more players; one of these was P. E. Davies, whose son Arthur, grandson Peter, and great-grandson Nicholas have made the Davies family. The only family with an unbroken connection with the Orchestra for the past hundred years.

By 1880 the N.A.O.U. was well established, with a membership of fifteen, and gave its inaugural concert on 13th April, 1880 in the Old Town Hall. By 1881 the membership had grown to twenty-five and was to increase as the years passed. The earliest concerts were given to aid such local causes as the Steam Fire Engine and the Berkshire Volunteers.

Mr. Bates retired and it was probably in Mr. Hopson's carpet showroom in West Street, where they rehearsed, that Mr. Eatwell took over as conductor; he was succeeded by a professional conductor, J. S. Liddle. There is little doubt that Mr. Liddle was a remarkable man and was held in great esteem by all the members. He was very persuasive in getting people with ability to join the Orchestra and learn particular instruments; his vast enthusiasm was infectious. He had come to Newbury as organist of St. Nicolas' Church, with his wife and four daughters, all musically inclined. Magdalen played the violin, May the clarinet, Molly the 'cello, and Monica the horn—the last possibly thought an unusual instrument for a lady!

Very soon Mr. Liddle was conducting the Newbury Choral Society, which was formed in 1884; he was its first conductor.

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2

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3

1981

The orchestra for the Choral Society was of course the N.A.O.U., and with the same conductor for both societies one can imagine it was a very happy alliance.

Mr. Liddle managed to arrange concerts for the N.A.O.U. in towns which included Wantage, Basingstoke, Reading and as far away as Bath. To Wantage they went by car; it was of course the early days of the automobile and, although there were only two or three cars available, they managed somehow. When giving a concert in the Town Hall in Reading, the whole Orchestra left Newbury in the morning by the Great Western Railway, in specially reserved coaches. Somewhat naturally, the train seethed with excitement and one can picture the scene on the platform with the porters anxious to assist the players with their more cumbersome instruments, watched with great interest by other passengers awaiting their own trains. Arthur Davies, in his notes, remembered that the instruments were loaded on to a truck at Reading, to be taken to a waiting van, and on the top of the truck reposed a valuable 'cello belonging to one of the players, Miss Dorothy Kingsmill (later to become Lady Sperling). To his horror, the porter rounded a corner too sharply and the 'cello fell off! Mercifully it was in a strong wooden case, so no damage was done. There must have been many hazards for any orchestra travelling in those days; yet how cheerfully they set forth, knowing that their project would give not only themselves but others much pleasure.

The outing to Bath took place twice a year: the Spring Concert would take place in Bath Abbey, but the Autumn Concert took place in the Assembly Rooms. There would be about twenty performers all told, and possibly more singers than players. The journey to Bath necessitated a change at Westbury, with a five minute scramble across the footbridge to catch the waiting train. The timpani were carried across the lines, however, as, not being in cases, it was considered safer; one can imagine Joe, as J. H. Hopson was affectionately called, bringing up the rear with his bassoon. During all those years the connection to Bath was never missed. Frequently the singers, being together in one carriage, would start to rehearse, much to the joy of passengers and porters at wayside stations, for regardless of their strange audience they would continue to the song's conclusion.

The rehearsals took place at 11.00 a.m., followed by an excellent

lunch at Fort's in Millsom Street, then one of the leading restaurants in Bath. The Orchestra was the guest of the Bath Society, whose members were most hospitable; a favourite item on the menu was a very good veal and ham pie. The Spring Festival in the Abbey invariably opened with 'The Church's One Foundation', and on one occasion Mr. Liddle, after an excellent lunch, was heard to remark that he had come to the conclusion that the Church's one foundation was veal and ham pie!

One of the players who always went to Bath was the Reverend Weekes, who was Chaplain to Devizes Jail, so it was at Patney and Chirton Junction that he joined the train. On one occasion Arthur Davies was sitting next to another player named Henry Flint, who was leader of the Orchestra for thirty years, and, not seeing the reverend player at the junction remarked, "Good heavens, Henry, Weekes is not on the platform. He'll miss the train". To which Henry Flint replied in his well-known slow drawl, "Don't worry, old chap. Weekes isn't coming today. They are hanging a man, and he has to help". Obviously the inmates of Her Majesty's jail took precedence over music!

W. Dines Eatwell, always known as 'Dines', had a great faculty for attending to details and worked untiringly for the good of the Orchestra and individuals: he was joint conductor with J. S. Liddle until his death in 1893.

Mr. Liddle had that great gift of being able to instil into his players a love of the best music. He brought them to a higher proficiency of playing, which encouraged a regular and appreciative audience: by now, 250 could always be counted on for support.

It would be impossible to name every instrumentalist in the ranks of the Orchestra, but Dr. Marian Arkwright must be mentioned. She played the double bass and joined the Orchestra in 1885, giving unstinted and devoted service to the N.A.O.U. It was she and Dame Ethel Smythe who were the first women in England to be made Doctors of Music. Marian Arkwright received her Doctorate, the highest musical distinction that England can confer, in 1913, and the honour cast not only its lustre on herself, but a reflected glow fell on the Orchestra.

With the first World War over, there were some sad gaps in the Orchestra. Due to the determined efforts of its supporters, however, by 1919 the Orchestra was once more on its feet with 53 players and subscribers numbering 110. About this time the Orchestra suffered two shattering blows, the deaths of J. S. Liddle and Dr. Arkwright within a short space of time: they had been close friends. Just before Mr. Liddle's death, the Choral Society had chosen Brahms' Requiem for their concert, which he was to conduct, but, alas, he died not long before the date fixed for its performance. Dr. Arkwright, who succeeded him, took the practices, one can imagine with a very heavy heart, but as in so many other cases the show went on. Finally she conducted the concert, which was given in St. Nicolas' Church, and no better place could have been chosen, for Mr. Liddle had been organist there almost from the day of his arrival in Newbury.

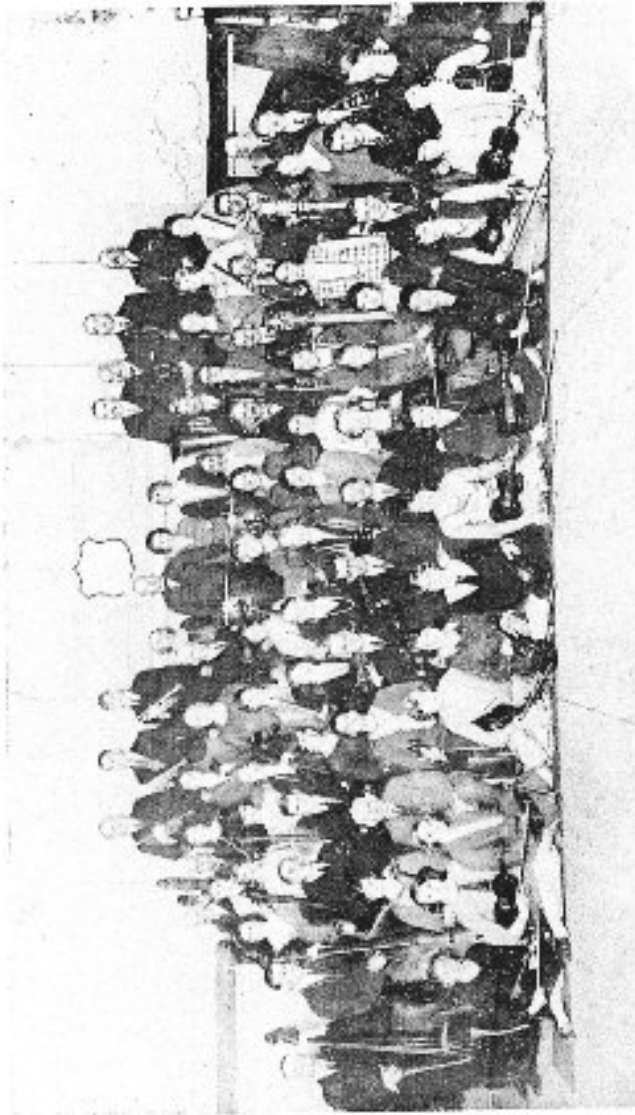
"Popular" concerts were given in Newbury's Old Town Hall, which was comfortable and more or less free from draughts, and it had a very friendly atmosphere about it. There was a platform at the Bartholomew Street end and opposite this was a gallery; on the Mansion House Street side there were long attractive windows. During the winter, once a month on a Saturday night, the N.A.O.U. gave a popular concert. The charge was 6d. for the hall and 2d. for the gallery. Needless to say, such was their popularity that the N.A.O.U. played to a full house, with the audience in the gallery occasionally becoming a little too enthusiastic.

Henry Flint recounted an amusing incident. As the platform was flat, it was necessary to erect temporary staging and the exit to the platform was down a few steps at the back. On this occasion, in the programme was the 'Farewell Symphony'. To give it the necessary atmosphere the lights were lowered and on each musician's stand there burned a solitary candle. The players one by one blew out the candles and left the stage by the back exit steps, but, alas, as Herbert Comyns blew out his candle and proceeded to leave he dropped his horn with a deafening crash and fell down the steps at the back. As one can readily appreciate, this was met with howls of delight from the gallery and shouts of "encore!".

Another anecdote recounted by Arthur Davies must have been equally amusing to the audience. At this time he played the bass drum, and at one of these Saturday night concerts they were to play a piece called 'Gamerra', in which there was a bass drum solo. When the orchestra was assembled with Mr. Liddle conducting, he beckoned Mr. Davies to come down to the front of the platform. Horrified at such a notion, Mr. Davies shook his head emphatically, but Mr. Liddle beckoned again, with a very purposeful look in his eyes. Thereupon Mr. Davies succumbed and, picking up his bass drum, carried it like a bandsman, clasped in front of him. Of course he was unable to see too well, and so ended up by knocking his music stand off the platform down into the hall. This too was greatly appreciated by the gallery audience, who shouted raucously for an encore—and that was before 'Gamerra' had even started!

But what a change was in store for the Orchestra when the Old Town Hall was pulled down in about 1906 and the Corn Exchange was then the only building large enough for concerts and shows. Although we have gone backwards a little in time, it is interesting, remembering the Corn Exchange today, to have an idea of what it was like in those days before the first World War, so picture this large room, covered with advertisements illustrating the various trades connected with the corn merchants. The roof was composed of a single thickness of glass, to give the farmers and merchants a good light in which to test the samples, with little or no heating and two huge exit doors (in case of fire) and with a few desks scattered around, at which the merchants sat conducting their sales. But this was the only hall available to the N.A.O.U. for their concerts, and hardly the warmest or most comfortable of venues.

There was a platform twelve feet from the end wall, to allow trucks of corn to pass to and from the back doors, and under the platform were stored sacks of this and that. One can imagine the scene on an evening when a concert was to take place: kindly helpers sweeping the floor the moment the market was over; desks pushed behind the platform to take up the twelve-foot space; chairs (which had to be hired) quickly placed in rows; and the general bustle of preparation for the forthcoming concert.



Back Row: J. Davey, W. Rodd, R. Seaward, Mrs. Arthur Davies, Mrs. Ashby, Mrs. Macdonnell, S. Carter, H. Commins
 A. Hill, H. Page
 Second Row: Major Bramwell, Miss E. Wilkes, F. J. Staples, Miss Walczam, Miss Craft, Mrs. Frank Neave, V. Cordean, Miss Nall,
 D. F. Ostrington, Miss Newell Smith, Miss Strinati, Miss Norman, Miss Minns
 Third Row: Miss Russell, Miss Leake, Miss Sparrow, Miss Loke, Miss de Vries, Miss I. Pine, Miss Huxel, Miss Holding, J. H. Hopson,
 Col. Macdonnell, T. M. Hurrely, Major Ashby, S. Rowlinson
 Fourth Row: A. Carne, G. H. Keen, R. W. Simpson, R. W. Harris, Miss G. English, Mrs. M. Sivola, Mrs. W. Lawrence, Mrs. Bramwell,
 Miss W. Morrow, Miss Green, Miss Wood, Miss Staples, Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Walter
 Fifth Row: Mrs. P. Thomas, J. H. Roseman, Mrs. P. Hogson, W. H. Flint, D. G. A. Fox, W. Evers, Mrs. Medlicott, Mrs. Moberney,
 Miss Pittfield, R. Alster, H. Webb, Miss M. Stewart
 Front Row: Miss H. Clegg, Miss M. James, Miss Mathewson, Mrs. W. Moberney, Miss Sly, Miss Little, Miss Seaton,
 Mrs. Lupton, Miss Newbold, Miss Farnes, Miss Greenwood
 ABSENT MEMBERS: Mrs. Dailin, Mrs. Ken, Miss Hodges, Capt. P. M. White, Mrs. H. B. Jones, Mrs. Poffley, Dr. Miles, Miss M. Little,
 Miss Collins, Mrs. Hurmester, Miss Rothwell, H. Redford, L. Robblee

(Washington photograph by E. Longmonte, Newbury)

There were, of course, no changing rooms, so the players left their coats and wraps on top of the desks. One assumes that on very cold nights they kept them on, for the heating was very inadequate; the air, slightly warmed in the hall, merely rose to the icy glass roof only to descend again as very cold air indeed. Some of the artistes and soloists used the Queen's Hotel, and one can visualise the scramble on a wet night for them to reach the hall without appearing like drowned rats — rather a reflection on the Town Council of that day for their lack of interest in the Arts! It was not until well into the twenties that things were changed, and that was due chiefly to the campaigning of Councillor Reginald Clifford, to whom the Orchestra owed a debt of gratitude. In this writer's opinion, the N.S.O. richly deserves its own well designed concert hall: it would prove a great amenity to the town and might encourage famous musicians to come more often to Newbury!

In 1922 Douglas Fox followed Dr. Arkwright as conductor; he was Head of Music at Bradfield College and had been a pupil of Sir Hugh Allen, who thought very highly of him and predicted that he would eventually be a most outstanding pianist and organist. But tragedy overcame him, for he lost his right arm in the 1914-1918 War. After his Army discharge the poor man felt his musical career had ended, but not so Sir Hugh Allen, who encouraged him to persevere and regain his keyboard facility, using only his left hand. Such was his ability on the organ and his brilliant playing of specially composed piano pieces for the left hand that anyone listening to him would have been hard put to it not to think he was playing with both hands.

As well as being an outstanding musician, Douglas Fox was a great individualist. He would sometimes halt the Orchestra during a practice, go to the piano and show them exactly what he wanted, without reference to the score. Building on the foundations laid for him, Douglas Fox was able, after the N.A.O.U.'s difficult time of loss, to perform in nine years a considerable and impressive slice of the classical orchestral repertoire. He was a conductor with a deep and original insight into music, and an enthusiasm so white hot as to make almost equal demands on the players as on himself. Under his direction the technical standard rose amazingly, and the playing took on a polish and precision such as it had never known before. Lectures and notes on the

works gave an added interest, and he appears to have had the support of his players in every way. Highlights of his period of conductorship were performances of Beethoven's 9th (Choral) Symphony in 1925 and 1929 (for the Orchestra's Golden Jubilee Celebration).

One outstanding event was the founding of the Newbury Music Festival in 1928 by Mrs. Bramwell and Mrs. Dallin, both players with the Orchestra. It was a three day event and distinguished soloists and conductors have included Sir Henry Wood, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent. It was a great privilege to be conducted by such eminent conductors and gave the Orchestra a wonderful boost.

In 1930 Douglas Fox was appointed Director of Music at Clifton College and his departure was felt keenly by the N.A.O.U., who had become very fond of him and appreciated how greatly he had enriched the musical life of the Newbury district. George Weldon was the next conductor. He was a young man in his twenties, his first appointment having been with the Tunbridge Wells Orchestra. The N.A.O.U. chose the 'Enigma Variations' as his test piece and he was so good that they unanimously decided to engage him. Weldon's other interest in life was driving fast sports cars: he owned a Fraser-Nash open two-seater with a large exhaust pipe and he drove in all weathers, well wrapped up as if about to set forth for the North Pole. He lived in Bexhill and whether he had been there or at Tunbridge Wells he never missed a practice in Newbury.

It was obvious that George Weldon enjoyed the Orchestra and, conscious of the financial difficulties in running an amateur orchestra, he did his best to keep down expenses. During his time the Orchestra reached its largest size—nearly 100 players. The passing of time since Fox's departure caused the Orchestra to lose most of its brass players, but this did not deter the redoubtable George who, liking strong brass and percussion, promptly engaged players from the Royal Mounted Artillery Band in Aldershot, most of them men from Kneller Hall; they came for a fee of one guinea, which included transport. On one occasion Arthur Davies had a Kneller Hall man as his partner on the drums and recalled, being himself self-taught, how revealing it was in Ravel's 'Bolero' to hear the beautifully close and even rolls on the side drum—the crescendos and diminuendos were perfect.

It was noticeable that George Weldon had a slight limp, and on occasions he would sit to conduct a practice, but he never complained and was always cheerful. One evening they were rehearsing Mussorgsky's 'Night on a Bare Mountain' when Mr. W. A. D. Morris, at the back of the second violins, enquired of George, "Can you tell us what happened on the mountain, Sir?" Keeping a dead straight face, George replied, "I would rather not!"

One outstanding event took place during his conductorship—a concert in 1937 of music entirely by local composers—and it is doubtful if any other town the size of Newbury could have done this. Naturally it caused enormous interest and was very well attended. The programme contained pieces by Robin Milford, Gerald Finzi, Geoffrey Hartley, Peter Burges, Guy Graham, Nellie Fulcher, Anthony Scott and George Weldon. The Comedy Suite "Mice", based on "Three Blind Mice", by George Weldon, was extremely amusing and roundly encored and applauded.

A few peaceful years passed, with many excellent concerts and some visits to other towns; then once more there were rumours of war. By 1939 it was a reality, with all the horrors to come, but at first it was the black-outs that had to be contended with and they, of course, were somewhat disastrous as regards attendance at concerts. But such was the Britishers' outlook on inconveniences—which exists even today with the numerous strikes they have to face—that they were soon out and about again, groping their way with sticks and tiny torches, leaving their blacked-out homes and forgetting their natural anxieties, to come and listen to the soothing strains of the Orchestra which for two hours could at least alleviate the horrors of a country at war. One soloist at this time was Denis Matthews, who played Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto.

Of course the Orchestra was beginning to lose its younger members, but nevertheless it carried on valiantly. It was at this time that the Committee decided to start Sunday afternoon concerts, as an experiment. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams and the Corn Exchange was crowded to overflowing, with people even standing at the back. One can imagine how glad were the evacuees to get out from their billets, not to mention the landlords being delighted to see the backs of their visitors for a few hours!

George Weldon was fast becoming an outstanding conductor and the Orchestra realised they would not be able to keep him for much longer. Eventually in 1942 he accepted a post as Deputy Conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, under Sir John Barbirolli. He finally became the conductor of the City of Birmingham Orchestra, but never completely severed his links with, or interest in, the N.A.O.U. After the war he went on conducting tours, and it was while on such a tour to South Africa that he contracted an illness which resulted in his death—the tragic loss of a very talented and lovable musician.

He was followed by Colin Ross, who unfortunately was able to remain with the Orchestra for only one season; in 1944, just before the end of the Second World War, Arthur Dennington succeeded him. He had an orchestra in North London and the N.A.O.U. found him a very acceptable conductor for an amateur orchestra. But this was not to last, for Mr. Dennington found the train services too difficult to cope with, so he reluctantly gave up his post; once more the Orchestra was without a conductor. Fortunately Dr. Bernard Robinson, who was well known in the Newbury district for his annual Music Camp at Bothampstead, stepped into the breach and offered his help as honorary conductor until the arrival of John Fry.

John Fry was a violin professor at Trinity College, London; he conducted the Reading Symphony Orchestra, taught at Bradfield College and also coached a quartet of string players from the N.A.O.U.; so the Committee invited him to conduct the Orchestra, which fitted in very well as he came to practices after teaching at Bradfield. His wide experience of teaching amateurs made him an ideal conductor for an orchestra such as the N.A.O.U.. He was an extraordinary man for he had lost the sight of one eye; yet this in no way prevented him from reading his score and, at the same time, spotting any string player using the wrong fingering. If after several attempts the Orchestra was not playing a passage correctly, he would take the leader's violin and demonstrate exactly how he wanted it played. He was a great believer in coaxing and not driving, which endeared him to the Orchestra.

The N.A.O.U. celebrated the start of its seventy-fifth year with a wonderful concert given with John Fry as conductor on 27th November, 1953, with works of Wagner, Elgar, Chabrier and Borodin in the programme, which must indeed have been a feast

for the music-loving Newburian. Sir Frank Spickernell was then the President and he wrote in the foreword to the programme, "I understand the Orchestra has been singularly fortunate in its conductors and its management . . ." Indeed they had been and how proudly must some of the older members have played, such as Miss Joan Denis de Vitre ('cello) and Mrs. Mary Parkins (violin), who both joined in 1924, also Miss Mary Young (double bass) and Mr. Jack Taylor (bassoon), and no doubt many others who had long been valued members of the N.A.O.U.

The Davies family frequently entertained soloists and artistes before the concerts in their house, and these invitations were soon to become fixtures. It was towards the end of the summer of 1956 that the Orchestra heard that John Fry had died suddenly. The Davies family could hardly believe this news to be true, remembering his smiling, cheerful face as he waved them good-bye after the dinner party that had taken place before the last concert.

During the next season Arthur Davies decided to retire; his hearing and sight were diminishing and causing him some concern. It must have been a very painful decision, for he had played in the Orchestra for more than fifty years and had been Treasurer for thirty of them. The Davies family's connection with the Orchestra continued through Arthur's son Peter, who took over from his mother as Secretary to the Orchestra, a post he still holds, while his wife and son also play in the Orchestra today. The interest of other families also continued down the years, but alas with the inevitable breaks. There are, of course, many players who can 'clock up' half a century and more, and the town should feel proud of such long service in creating enjoyment for thousands of Newbury's citizens.

William Rutledge took over John Fry's place for a period of two years until, in 1958, Frank Shipway became the conductor. Frank set the Orchestra a very high standard, and although he was very exacting he was exciting to work with. During his nine years of conductorship the Orchestra gave a number of memorable performances. In 1959 the second act of 'Tosca' was performed with soloists from the Royal Opera Company, Covent Garden; this must have proved no ordinary treat for the citizens of Newbury, and on such occasions it is small wonder that there

was often "standing room only". One ambitious concert included Elgar's Second Symphony, and on another occasion John Lill came to play Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto.

It is rather nice to note that despite all the hard work, the long hours and often bad weather to contend with, romance also bloomed in the Orchestra's ranks. No less than four couples come to mind. They all met in the Orchestra and although music was very much to the fore there seems also to have been a little spare time left for romantic overtures: Sue Spickernell (flute), daughter of Sir Frank, and Sebastian Pease (clarinet); Ann Bremridge (viola) and Peter Davies ('cello); Judith Jones (clarinet) and Peter Denny (violin); and Elizabeth Abbott (violin) and John Gillings (timpani). Maybe Shakespeare was right when he wrote, "If music be the food of love, play on". Indeed that is just what we all hope they will do.

It was in 1964 that the members of the Orchestra decided that a change of name was necessary to present a truer image of the Orchestra. Thus the Newbury Amateur Orchestral Union became the Newbury Symphony Orchestra.

When the Orchestra bade farewell to Frank Shipway in 1967 David Littaur took up the baton until the end of the year. Then the Orchestra was fortunate enough to have the services of Eugene Danks, a professional violinist. He was the son of the well known viola player Harry Danks. He too kept the Orchestra on its toes and there were many splendid concerts under him; on one occasion 'Harold in Italy' was performed with his father as soloist. Eugene was a smallish man, bursting with enthusiasm, and he was inclined to walk very fast. At concerts he would emerge from the side at all but a run until he reached the rostrum, almost taking the Orchestra by surprise with the speed he had achieved.

In 1967 Lord Sieff became President of the N.S.O., and a very generous and sympathetic one he proved to be. On the occasion of one Annual General Meeting, at which he had agreed to take the Chair, Lord Sieff found himself on business in Israel. Horrified that he should not be at the meeting, he sent the Committee a

cable full of apologies—adding, "I have lined myself £200". Shortly afterwards a cheque duly arrived on the Secretary's table: a generous President indeed. In 1969, on his eightieth birthday, the Orchestra gave a concert for him, which Eugene Danks conducted; Lord Sieff chose Elgar's 'Cello Concerto, with Douglas Cummings as soloist, and Brahms' Second Symphony.

Eugene relinquished the baton in 1973, with more exacting commitments to undertake, and was followed by Peter Susskind, the son of Walter Susskind, the well known conductor. In 1975 his place was taken by Ralph Allwood, who had experience of choral conducting and was the Director of Music at Pangbourne College. He was a very lovable character, with an encouraging and engaging presence on the rostrum. In 1977 the Orchestra gave a concert in St. Nicolas' Church to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee, joining forces with the Newbury Choral Society; the conducting was shared between Ralph Allwood, John Russell and Gillian Lovett; one notable feature of the concert was the performance of a concerto by a member of the Orchestra—Peter Denny deserted his violin to play Handel's Fourth Organ Concerto.

In 1978 Ralph Allwood resigned on being appointed Director of Music at Uppingham. Once more the N.S.O. fell on its feet, however, finding Adrian Brown for its new conductor. He is a very talented young man, who trained under Sir Adrian Boult, with a great understanding of amateur orchestras. One of his attributes, which the Orchestra finds most endearing, is his delightful sense of humour, such a very necessary ingredient in life and most especially when conducting amateur instrumentalists. At rehearsals Adrian greatly encourages his players; for instance, on one occasion when the ensemble was not particularly good he told them: "That sounds like an **ordinary** amateur orchestra. Now play it like a **real** orchestra!".

Thus have passed the first hundred years of the N.S.O., from a humble beginning of a few instrumentalists who met together to make music for themselves and others to enjoy. After many years rehearsing in the Congregational Church Lecture Hall, the Orchestra has rehearsed as a class at the Newbury College of Further Education for the past twelve years. The Orchestra is



Back Row: Peter Davies, Brian Moulds, Ernest Deacon, Gordon Carr, Geoffrey Rosses, Richard Carter, Richard Whitlock, Adrian Brown, Tom Prater, Anthony Ruselli, John Sanderson, Clifford Frouse, Ted Smith, Sebastian Pease, Neil Streete.
 Second Row: Nicholas Davies, James Sandiford, Andrew West, Martin Symons, Norman Percival, Ron Oakley, Gerald Bellan, Peter Denny, Andrew Morse, Steven Caserio, Nicholas Beedham.
 Third Row: Elizabeth Burgess, Ann Davis, Ann Allen, Gabrielle Seth-Smith, Carol Boyd, Judith Denny, Mary Maggs, Julia Rowan, Jenny Davies, Valerie Newman, Wendy Gillman, Mary Parkins, Iveta Fibwick.
 Front Row: Caroline West, Christine Daker, Helke Bishop, Susan Pease, Joyce Siplin, Clare Humphreys, Mary Young, John Marshall, Catherine Wright.

registered as a charity with the benefits such status brings, and has been fortunate to have the enthusiastic support of local people—once called Vice-Presidents, but known since 1978 as Friends of the N.S.O. The Orchestra has been affiliated to the National Federation of Music Societies since the 1940's and obtains some financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain via the Federation.

It is encouraging that, despite the growth of the radio and the gramophone, the love of live music still continues. The town of Newbury should be proud to have such a thriving amateur symphony orchestra in its midst. Long may the Orchestra continue, not only for the players' enjoyment but for the enormous pleasure given to hundreds of people living in Newbury and the surrounding district.

May the next hundred years be just as rewarding.

OFFICERS OF THE ORCHESTRA FOR THE 1979-80 SEASON

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Hon. Secretary | Mr. Peter Davies |
| Hon. Assistant Secretary | Mrs. Judith Denny |
| Hon. Treasurer | Mrs. Christine Ostler |
| Hon. Assistant Treasurer | Mr. Martin Symons |
| Hon. Librarians | Mrs. Mary Parkins, Miss Mary Maggs |
| Hon. Equipment Officer | Mr. Tom Prater |
| Hon. Publicity Officer | Mrs. Catherine Wright |
| Hon. Concert Manager | Mr. Ken Williams |

Committee Members :

Mr. Ernest Deacon (Chairman), Mrs. Carol Boyd, Mr. Ron Oakley, Mrs. Susan Pease, Mr. James Sandiford, Mrs. Gabrielle Seth-Smith, Mr. Ted Smith, Mr. Richard Whitaker

Conductor: Mr. Adrian Brown

Leader: Mr. Peter Denny

Hon. President: Mr. Johnny Morris

NOTE: This text is OCR scanned. I have proofread it in a desultory sort of way, but the idea is that it is Google searchable, not readable- You are advised to read the scanned in PDF version of the original. D Cooper 13/8/2008.

CONCERTS FOR THE 1979-80 season

Saturday, 8th December: GALA CONCERT

Overture: Crown of Diamonds Auber

Violin Concerto , Tchaikovsky

Solo Violin - RALPH HOLMES

"The Newbury raceway, a specially commissioned work, with music by David Haslam and words by Johnny Morris, which will be given its first performance with narration by Johnny Morris.

Enigma Variations Elgar

Sunday, 9th December: AFTERNOON CONCERT

Overture: Crown of Diamonds Auger

Second Piano Concerto Shostakovitch

Solo Piano - SURENDRAN REDDY

Enigma Variations Elgar

Sunday, bird March; SPRING CONCERT

Overture: Der Freischütz Weber

Songs of a Wayfarer , Mahler

Yolo Contralto - KATHRYN HARRIES

First Symphony Sibelius

Sunday, 18th May:

CONCERT in the NEWBURY SPRING FESTIVAL

Overture: 11 Seraglio Mozart

"Jack o' Newbury" a specially commissioned work, with music by John Leach and words by Judith Eykyn, which will be given its first performance.

Seventh Symphony Beethoven

May music live for ever, whether as a rousing march or as a melody to soothe the savage breast! For music is part of our heritage and flourishes throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, in orchestral societies, in choral societies, with solo instrumentalists, and in modern discotheques, A hundred years ago this year saw the birth of one such society, the Newbury Amateur Orchestral Union (N.A.O.U.) , as it was then called, although since 1964 it has been known as the Newbury Symphony Orchestra (N.S.O.) . It started with the meeting of six enthusiastic instrumentalists who began their rehearsals in the loft above Pickfords' Removal office in the yard of the Queen's Hotel, Newbury, on 27th November, 1879. Who amongst those men could have foreseen that their efforts were to (as! a hundred years and more? The founders were (1. H. Bates (conductor) , W. Dines Eatwell, T. B. Mathews, F. C. Seymour, E. L.

Staples and W. T. Toms, but by the following week they were joined by seven more players; one of these was P. E. Davies, whose son Arthur, grandson Peter, and great-grandson Nicholas have made the Davies family. The only family with an unbroken connection with the Orchestra for the past hundred years.

By 1880 the N.A.O.U. was well established, with a membership of fifteen, and gave its inaugural concert on 14th April, 1880 in the Old Town Hall. By 1881 the membership had grown to twenty-five and was to increase as the years passed. The earliest concerts were given to aid such local causes as the Steam Fire Engine and the Berkshire Volunteers.

Mr. Bates retired and it was probably in Mr. Hopson's carpet showroom in West Street, where they rehearsed, that Mr. Eatwell took over as conductor; he was succeeded by a professional conductor, I. S. Liddle, There is little doubt that Mr. Liddle was a remarkable man and was held in great esteem by all the members, He was very persuasive in getting people with ability to join the orchestra and learn particular instruments; his vast enthusiasm was infectious. He had come to Newbury as organist of St.

Nicolas' Church, with his wife and four daughters, all musically inclined.

Magdalen played the violins May the clarinet, Molly the 'cello, and Monica the horn-the last possibly thought an unusual Instrument for a lady! ' Very soon Mr. Liddle was conducting the Newbury Choral Society, which was formed in 1884; he was its first conductor.

The orchestra for the chorally Society was of course the N.A.O.U., and with the same conductor for both societies one can managing it was a very happy alliance Mr. Liddle managed to arrange concerts for the N.A.O.U. in towns whitlow precluded Wantage, Basingstoke, Reading and as far away as Bath. To Wantage thtly went by car', in was of course 1110 early days of the automobile and although there were only two or three cars available they managed somtlltlw. When giving a concert in the 'Town Hall in Reading, the wattle Orchestra left Newbtlry in the moulting by the Great Western Railway, in specially reserved coaches. Somewhat naturally, the trails splashed with excitement and one can picture the scene on Lyle platform with the porters anxious to assist the plaiters with 11) later more cumbersome instruments, watched with great illtllrest by other passengers awaiting their own trains. Arthur Davies. in his notes. rememberers that the instrlrlntlns were loaded on to a truck at pleading, to be taken to 11 waiting van, and (,11 (he top of Lyle truck reposed :.1 valuable 'cello htllonging to out) of the players, Miss Dorothy Kingsrll (later to btllcolne Lady Sparling) . To his htlrrol, the porter Collided a cornier too shlrply and the 'cello fo11 off! Mercifllly in was in a strong wooden case so no dunnage was done. Tllere must havt) been mildly placards for any orclleslra travelling in those days', yet flow cltllrlully they set fortes knowing that tlltlr project would give not only thlrlselves blit others much pleasure. 1'111) stating to Bath look plao twice a yeller: the Spring Concert would take place in Abbey, the Autumn Concert took ullage in the Assembly rooms Tiler would be about twenty performers all told and possibly mllre singers salary players. Tho jotrney do badly nectllsilatd a change at Weslbtly, will a five minute scramble across tll footbridge, to catch the waiting train. Tho tilnpani were carried across the lises IRowevtlr, as (lot being ill cases, it was considered safer' ono can imagirle Joc as I. H. during all choose years the connection to Bath was never anised. Frcquellty (he singers being together if) one carriage, would Stuart to rehearse, McCall to the joy of passengers and porters 111 wayside stations, (or regardless of their strange Jllldienca they would continue to the song 's concltlslon. Tile l'ehearsals look place at 1 1.00 a.r!1., followed by all excellent lunch at Forl's in Millsom Street, then one of the leadirg restaurants in Bath. -r110 Orchestra was the guest of the Bath Society, whose meddlers starch most hospitable', a favourite item on the menu wits a very good veal and ham pie. Tile Spring Festival in the Abbey invariably optalltd with time Churcll's One Foundation' I) rl (1 o it o a, I) o o (; (1 I io rl ill. l-i (1 (1 I'm (if (o1' 11 in in of (l')11o rl t 111 rl o 11 circle; heard to remark that he had come to the conclusion 'hat the Chufch's one fotlndalion was veal and ham pie! Ono of llle plaiters who always went to Bath was the Rllvercnd Wheres, who ills Chaplain to Devizes Jail, so it was at Patney 1111d Chiffon

Junction that he joined the train. On one occasion Arthur Davids was sitting next to another player named Henry Flint who was leader of the Orchestra (or thirty years, and, not seeing the reverend player at the junction remarked *'Goo(1 heavens, Henry, Wotkes is not on the platform. I'll miss the train. To which Henry Flint replied in his well-known slow drawl, don't worry, old chap. Wotkes isn't coming today. They are hanging a man, and I'll help. Obviously tell inmates of Her Majesty's jail that precedents over music! W. Dinars Ealwell, always known as 'Dines' had a great faculty for attending to details and worked untiringly for the good of the Orchestra and individuals: he was joint conductor with I. S. Liddle until his death in 1893.

Mr. Liddle had the great gift of being able to instill into his players a love of the best music. He brought them to a higher proficiency of playing, which (discouraged a regular and appreciate - tive attention: by now, 250 could always be counted on for support.

It would be impossible to name (every instrumentalist in the ranks of the Orchestra, but Dr. Marian Arkwright must be mentioned. She played the double bass and joined the Orchestra in 1885, giving devoted and devoted service to the N.A.O.U. It was she and Dame Ethel Smyth who were the first women in England to be made Doctors of Music. Metrical Arkwright received her Doctorate the highest musical distinctions that England can confer, in 1913, and she has cast not only her lot on herself, but a reflected glow on the Orchestra.

With the first World War over, there were some sad gaps in the Orchestra. Due to the determined efforts of its supporters, however, by 1919 the Orchestra was once more on its feet with 53 players and subscribers numbering 110. About this time the Orchestra suffered two splintering losses, the deaths of I. S. Liddle and Dr. Arkwright within a short space of time they had been close friends. But before Mr. Liddle's death, the Choral Society had chosen Brallms' Requiem for their concert, which he was to conduct, but, alas, he died not long before the date fixed for its performance. Dr. Arkwright who succeeded him, took the practices one can imagine with a very heavy heart but as in so many other cases the show went on. Finally the concert, which was given in St. Nicolas' Church, and no other place could have been chosen for Mr. Liddle had been organist there almost from the day of his arrival in Newbury.

Another anecdote recounted by Arthur Davies must have been equally amusing to the audience. At this time he played the bass drum, and at one of the Saturday night concerts they were to play a piece called 'Gamerra' in which there was a bass drum solo. When the orchestra was assembled with Mr. Liddle conducting, he beckoned Mr. Davies to come down to the front of the platform. Horrified at such a notion, Mr. Davies shook his head emphatically, but Mr. Liddle beckoned again, with a very purposeful look in his eyes. (Hereupon Mr. Davies succumbed and picking up his bass drum carried it like a bandsman clasped in front of him. Of course he was unable to fill too well and so ended up by knocking his classic stand off the platform down into the hall.

This too was greatly appreciated by the gallery audience who shouted raucously for an encore...--and that was before 'Gamerra' had even started! "Popular" concerts were given in Newbury's and Town Hall, which was comfortable and more or less free from draughts, and it had a very friendly atmosphere about it. In front was a platform at the Bartholomew Street end and opposite it was a gallery, on the Mansion House Street side there were large attractive windows. During the winter once a month on a Saturday night, the N.A.O.U. gave a popular concert. The charge was 6d. for the hall and 2d. for the gallery. Needless to say, such was their popularity that the N.A.O.U. played to a full house, with the gallery occasionally becoming a little too enthusiastic.

Henry Flint recounted an amusing incident. As the platform was flat, it was necessary to erect a temporary staging and the exit to the platform was down a few steps at the back. On one occasion, in the programme was the 'Farlow's Symphony'. To give it the necessary atmosphere the lights were lowered and on each musician's stand there burned a solitary candle. The players one by one blew out the candles and left the stage by the back exit steps. but, alas as Herbert Comyell blew out his candle and proceeded to leave he dropped his horn with a

deafening crash and fell down the steps as the back. As all could readily appreciate, this was met with howls of delight from the gallery and shouts of "encore!"⁶ But what a change was in store for the Orchestra when the Old Town Hall was stalled down in about 1906 and the Corn Exchange was then still only a building large enough for concerts and shows. Although we have gone backwardly a little in time it is interesting, remembering the Corn Exchange today, to have an idea of what it was like in those days before the first World War, so picture this large room covered with advertisements illustrating the various leases connected with the corn merchants. The roof was composed of a single thickness of glass to give the farmers and merchants a good light in which to test the samples with little or no lighting and two huge exit doors (in case of fire) and with a few desks scattered around, as which the merchants sat conducting their sales. But this was the only hall available to the N.A.O.U. for their concerts, and hardly the most comfortable of venues.

There was a platform twelve feet from the end wall to allow trucks of corn to pass to and from the back doors and under the platform were stored sacks of this and that. One could imagine (the scene on an evening when a concert was to take place) kindly helpers sweeping the floor the moment the market was over' (desks pushed behind the platform to take up the twelve-foot space; chairs (which were then brought in) quickly placed in rows' and the general bustle of preparation for the forthcoming concert.

There were, of course, no changing rooms, so the players left their coats and wraps on top of the desks. One assumes that on very cold nights they kept them on, for the heating was very inadequate; the air, slightly warmed in the hall, merely rose to the icy glass top only to descend again as very cold air. Indeed.

Some of the artistes and soloists used the Queen's Hotel, and one can visualise the scramble on a wet night for them to reach the hall without appearing like drowned rats - rather 'R reflection on the Town Council of that day for their lack of interest in the Arts! It was not until well into the twenties that things were changed, and that was due chiefly to the campaigning of Councillor Reginald Clifford, to whom the orchestra owed a debt of gratitude. In this writer's opinion, the N.S.O. richly deserves its own well designed concert hall: it would prove a great amenity to the town and might encourage famous musicians to come more often to Newbury! In 1922 Douglas Fox followed Dr. Arkwright as conductor; he was Head of Music at Bradfield College and had been a pupil of Sir Hugh Allen, who thought very highly of him and predicted that he would eventually be a most outstanding pianist and organist.

But tragedy overcame him, for he lost his right arm in the 1914- 1918 War. After his Army discharge the poor man felt his musical career 'had ended, but not so Sir Hugh Allen! who encouraged him to persevere and regain his keyboard facility, 'using only his left hand. Such was his ability on the organ and his brilliant playing of specially composed piano pieces for the left hand that any listener; to him would have been hard put to it not to think he was playing with both hands.

As well as being an outstanding musician, Douglas Fox was a great individualist. He would sometimes halt the orchestra during a practice, go to the piano and show them exactly what he wanted, without reference to the score. Building on the foundations laid for him, Douglas Fox was able, after the N.A.O.U.'s difficult time of loss, to perform in nine years a considerable and impressive slice of the classical orchestral repertoire. He was a conductor with a deep and original insight into music, and an enthusiasm so white hot as to make almost equal demands on the players as on himself. Under his direction the technical standard rose amazingly, and the playing took on a polish and precision such as it had never known before. Lectures and notes on the 9 B

works gave an added interest and he appears to have had the support of his players in every way. Highlights of his period of conductorship were performances of Beethoven's 9th (Choral) Symphony in 1925 and 1929 (for the orchestra's Golden Jubilee Celebration).

One outstanding event was the founding of the Newbury Music Festival in 1928 by Mrs. Bramwell and Mrs. Dallin, both players with the Orchestra. It was a three day event and distinguished soloists and conductors have included Sir Henry Wood, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Malcolm Sargent. It was a great privilege to be conducted by such eminent contractors and gave the Orchestra a wonderful boost.

In 1930 Douglas Fox was appointed Director of Music at Clifton College and his departure was felt keenly by the N.A.O.U., who had become very fond of him and appreciated how greatly it had enriched the musical life of the Newbury district. George Weldon was the next conductor. He was a young man in his twenties, his first appointment leaving behind the Tunbridge Wells Orchestra. The N.A.O.U. chose late 'Enigma Variations' as his best piece and he was so good that they unanimously decided to engage him.

Weldon's other interest in time was driving fast sports cars: He owned a Fraser-Nash open two-seater with a large exhaust pipe and he drove it well wrapped up as if about to set forth for the North Pole. He lived in Boxhill and whether he had been there or at Tunbridge Wells he certainly missed a practice in Newbury.

It was obvious that George Weldon enjoyed the Orchestra and, conscious of the financial difficulties in running an amateur orchestra, he did his best to keep down expenses. During his time the Orchestra reached its largest size--nearly 100 players.

The passing of time since Fox's departure caused the Orchestra to lose most of its brass players, but this did not deter the redoubtable George who, liking strong brass and percussions, promptly engaged players from the Royal Artillery 'Band in Aldershot, most of them men from Kneller Hall' they came for a fee of one guinea, which included transport. On (viii.) occasion Arthur Davies had 1, Kneller Hall as his partner on the drums and recalled, being himself self-taught, how revealing it was in the first 'Bolero' to hear Lyle bow so closely and effort rolls on the side drum. --that the crescendos and diminuendos were perfect.

It was noticeable that George Weldon had a slight limp, and on occasions he would sit to conduct a practice, but he never complained and was always cheerful. One evening they were rehearsing Mussorgsky's ('Night on a Bare Mountain' when Mr. W. A. D.

Morris, at the back of the second violins, enquired of George, "Can you tell us what happened on the mountain. Bird's keeping a dead straight face, George replied, "I would rather not!" One outstanding event took place during his

conductors--a concert in 1937 of music entirely by local composers and it is doubtful if any other town the size of Newbury could have done this. Naturally it caused enormous interest and was very well attended. The programme contained pieces by Robin Milford, Gerald Finzi, Geoffrey Hartley, Peter Burges, Guy Graham, Nellie

Filcher, Anthony Scott and George Weldon. The Comedy Suite

"Mice", based on "Three Blind Mice", by George Weldon, was extremely amusing and rotundly enjoyed and applauded.

A few peaceful years passed, with many excellent concerts and some visits to other towns' then once more there were rumours of war. By 1939 it was all real, with all the horrors to come, but at first it was the black-outs that had to be contended with and they, of course, were somewhat disastrous as regards attendance at concerts. But such was the Britishers' outlook on inconveniences which exists even today with the numerous strikes they have to face--that they went out and about again! groping their way with sticks and lit torches, leaving their blacked-out homes and forgetting their natural anxieties to come and listen to the soothing strains of the Orchestra which for two hours could at least alleviate the horrors of a curfew hour. One soloist at this time was Denim Matthews, who played Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto.

Of course the Orchestra was beginning to lose its younger returners. but nevertheless it carried on valiantly. It was at this time that the Committee decided to start Sunday afternoon concerts, as an experiment. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams and the Corn Exchange was crowded to overflowing with people even standing at the back. One can imagine how glad were the evacuees to get out from their billets, not to mention the landlords being delighted to see the backs of their visitors for a few hours!

George Weldon was fast becoming an outstanding conductor and the Orchestra realised they would not be able to keep him for much longer. Eventually in 1942 (ill.) accepted a post as Deputy Conductor of the Halle Orchestra, under Sir John Barbirolli. He finally became the conductor of the City of Birmingham Orchestra but never completely severed his links with or interest in the N.A.O.U. After the war he went on conducting tours, and it was while on such a tour to South Africa that ISO contracted an illness which resulted in (his death 1946) tragic loss of a very talented and lovable musician.

He was followed by Colin Ross, who unfortunately was able to remain with the Orchestra for only one season, in 1944 just before the end of the Second World War, Arthur Dellington succeeded him. He had an orchestra in North London and the N.A.O.U. found him a very acceptable conductor for an amateur orchestra. But this was not to last for Mr. Dellington found (the train services too difficult to cope with so he reluctantly gave up his post, once more the Orchestra will without a conductor. Fortunately Dr.

Bernard Robinson (will) was well known in the Newbury district for his annual Music Camp at Bothamstead stepped into the breach and offered his help as honorary conductor until the arrival of John Fry'.

John Fry was a violin professor at Trinity College London, he conducted the Reading Symphony Orchestra at Bradfield College and also conducted a quartet of string players from the N.A.O.U. so the Committee invited him to conduct the Orchestra, which filled in after work as he came to practice after teaching at Bradfield. His wide experience of teaching children made him an ideal conductor for the orchestra such as the N.A.O.U. (It) was an extraordinary man for he had lost the sight of one eye; yet this in no way prevented him from reading his score and at the same time, spotting any string player idling the wrong fingering. If after several attempts that the Orchestra was not playing a passage correctly, he would take the leader's violin and demonstrate (exactly how he wanted it played. He was a great believer in relaxation and riot driving, which endeared him to the orchestra.

*1950 N.A.O.U. celebrated the start of its twenty-fifth year with a wonderful concert given with John Fry as conductor on both November, 1953. with works of Wagner, Elgar, Chabrier and Borodin in the programme, which must have been a feast for the music-loving Newburian. Sir Frank Spickernell was then the President (and he wrote) in the foreword to the programme.

"I understand the Orchestra has been singularly fortunate in its conductors and its management . . .". Indeed they had been and how proudly must some of the older members have played such as Miss Sloan Denis de Vitre (cellist) and Mrs. Mary Parkins (violin), who both joined in 1924, also Miss Mary Young (double bass) and Mr. Jack Taylor (bassoon) and no doubt many others who had long been

voluted members (or the N.A.O.U.

The Davies family frequently entertained soloists and artists before the concerts in their home and close surroundings were so close to the fixture's. Of was 'towards the end (in the summer of 1956 that the Orchestra heard that John Fry had died suddenly.

The Davies family could hardly believe this news to be true, remembering his smiling, cheerful face as he waved them good-bye after the dinner party that had taken place before the last concert.

During the next season Arthur Davies decided to retire; his hearing and sight were diminishing and causing him some concern. He had been in the Orchestra for nearly fifty years and had been Treasurer for thirty of them. The Davies family's connection with the Orchestra continued through Arthur's son Peter, who took over from his father as secretary to the Orchestra a post he still holds while (his wife and son also play in the Orchestra today.

The interest of other families also continued down (his) years, but alas with the inevitable breaks. There are, of course, many players who can 'clock laps half a century and before, and the town should feel proud of such long service in creating enjoyment for thousands of Newbury's citizens.

William Rutledge took over John Fry's place for a period of two years until in 1958, Frank Spillway became the conductor.

Frank set the Orchestra a very high standard and although he was very expecting he was exciting to work with. During his nine years of conducting the Orchestra gave a number of memorable performances. In 1959 the second act of 'Tosca' was performed with soloists from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden', this must have proved no ordinary treat for the citizens of Newbury, and on such occasions it is small wonder that there 13

was often standing room only. One ambitious concert included Elgar's Second Symphony, and on another occasion John Lill came to play Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto.

It is rather nice to note that despite all the hard work, the long hours and outcry bad weather to contend with romance also bloodied ill the Orchestra's ranks. No less I'll four couples come to mind. They all met in the Orchestra and although music was very much to the fore there seems also to have been a little spare time for romantic overtures: Sue Spickernell (flute), daughter of Sir Frank, and Sebastian Pease (clarinet); Ann Bromridge (viola) and Peter Davies ('cello); Judith Jones (clarinet) and Peter Denny (violin), and Elisabeth Abbott (violin) and John Gimpings (timpani). Maybe Shakespeare was right when he wrote, 'Music be the food of love, play only. Indeed that is just what we all hope they will do.

It was in 1964 that the members of the Orchestra decided that a change of name was necessary to present a truer image of the Orchestra. Thus the Newbury Amateur Orchestral Union became the Newbury Symphony Orchestra.

Allen the Orchestra bade farewell to Frank Shipway in 1967 David Liltaur took up the baton until the end of the year. Then the Orchestra was fortunate enough to have the services of Eugene Danks, a professional violinist. He was the son of (the well known viola player Harry Danks. III) too kept the Orchestra on its toes and there were many splendid concerts under him on one occasion 'Harold in Italy' was performed with (his father as soloist.

Eugene was a smallish man bursting with enthusiasm, and he was inclined to walk very fast. At concerts he would emerge from the side at all but a run until he retitled the rostrum. almost taking the Orchestra by surprise with the speed he had achieved.

In 1967 Lord Sioff became President of the N.S.O., and a very generous and sympathetic one he proved to be. On the occasion of one Annual General Meeting, at which he had agreed to take the Altair I-ord Sielj found himself on business in Israel. Horrified that he should not be at the meeting, he sent the Committee a cable full of apologies ...adding, 'I have fined myself (£700".

Shortly afterwards on the Secretary's table: a venturesome President indeed. In 1969, on his eightieth birthday, the Orchestra gave 11 concert for good which Eugene Danks conducted, I-ord sheaf culture altar's 'Cello Concerto, with Douglas Clamming as soloist, and Brailms' Second Symphony.

commitments to undertake, and was followed by Peter Susskind, the son of Waller Susskind the well known conductor. In 1975 his place was taken by Ralph Allwood wife (with experience) of choral conducting and was the Director of Music at Pangbourne College. He was a very lovable character with 111 (encouraging

and engaging presence on the rostrums. In 1977 the Orchestra gave its concert in St. Nicolas' Church to commemorate the butler's Silver Jubilee, joining forces with the Newbury Choral Society; leadership was shared between Ralph Allwood, John Russell and Gillian Lovett, one notable feature of the concert was the performance of a concerto by a member of the Orchestra Peter Deftly deserted his violin to play Handel's Fourth Organ Concerto.

In 1978 Ralph Allwood resigned and was appointed director of music at Uppingham. Originally the N.S.O. fell on its feet, however, fielding Adrian Brown for its new conductor. He is a very talented young man, who has learned from Sir Adrian Boult, with a great understanding of amateur orchestras. One of his attributes whilst the Orchestra finds most endearing, is his delightful sense of humour which is a very necessary ingredient in life and most especially with amateur instrumentalists. At rehearsals Adrian greatly encourages his players, for instance, on one occasion when the ensemble was not particularly good he told them: "This sounds like an ordinary amateur orchestra. Now play it like a real orchestra."

Thus have passed almost a hundred years of the N.S.O. from a humble beginning of a few instrumentalists who met together to make music for themselves and others to enjoy. After many years performing in the Congregational Church Lecture Hall the Orchestra has rehearsed as a class at the Newbury College of Further Education for the past twelve years. The Orchestra is now in

Registered as a charity with the benefits such status brings, and has been fortunate to have the enthusiastic support of local people-once called Vice-presidents, but known since 1978 as Friends of the N.S.O. The Orchestra has been affiliated to the National Federation of Music Societies since the 1940's and obtains some financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain via the Federation.

It is encouraging that, despite the growth of the radio and the gramophone, the love of live music still continues. The town of Newbury should be proud to have such a thriving amateur symphony orchestra in its midst. Long may the Orchestra continue, not only for the players' enjoyment but for the enormous pleasure given to hundreds of people living in Newbury and the surrounding district.

May the next hundred years be just as rewarding.

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Hon. Assistant Secretary Mrs. Judith Denny

Hon. Treasurer . . . Mrs. Christine Ostler

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Conductor: Mr. Adrian Brown

Leader: Mr. Peter Denny

Hon. Presidents or. Johnny Morris