



Conversations with Ray Saunders

Distinguished Visitors To Redditch

Did you know that one of the most significant composers of the early 20th century stayed in Beoley - Gustav Mahler

Internet research says....

Austrian composer and conductor Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) was one of the most significant composers of the early 20th century. Though he only found popular success in the last few years of his life, today many of his works, particularly his symphonies, are cornerstones of the orchestral repertory. Mahler was born in Kalischt (now Kalište). He studied at the Vienna Conservatory and the Vienna University, where he began conducting. He obtained his first major conducting position in 1883 in Kassel. In 1885 he moved to Prague and then to Leipzig Opera in 1886, where his completion of Weber's Die drei Pintos (1888) won him widespread renown. He was director of Royal Hungarian Opera in Budapest 1888–91 and chief conductor of Hamburg Stadttheater 1891–7. During that time he conducted the premieres of his Symphonies no.1 (1889) and no.2 (1895). In 1897 he converted from Judaism to Roman Catholicism and became director of the Vienna Hofoper. From 1903 Mahler's growing popularity as a composer led to his increased absence from the Hofoper as he conducted premieres of his own works, including of Symphonies no.4 (1901), no.3 (1902), no.5 (1904) and no.6 (1906). Other works from this period include the Kindertotenlieder (1901–04). In 1907 he took up a position with the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and in 1909 with the New York Philharmonic Opera, returning to Europe in the summers, where he conducting the premieres of Symphonies no.7 in 1908 and no.8 in 1910. His final works Symphony no.9, Das Lied von der Erde and the incomplete Symphony no.10 were performed posthumously. Mahler's works straddle the Austro-German musical tradition and 20th-century modernism, and share a profound emotional power and range that have ensured his continuing popularity and influence.

In 1948 the touring Austrian cricket team came to Redditch. They were taken on a tour of the factories. One afternoon in April 1948 at J W Young and Sons, we all had our heads down and were working hard on the machines, when the door opened and in walked Mr Young (the boss) with the whole of the Australian cricket team. There was Bradman, Lindwall, Miller, Hassett and the rest of the team. He was showing them round.

Anne Bradford Remembers.....

How I Got Thrown Out Of The WI



The Star & Garter, Crabbs Cross

Image from the RLHS archives.

I wasn't on the committee of the Crabbs Cross and Hunt End WI but I did go to all the meetings. One evening over the customary cup of tea and piece of cake, the Chairman said to me that she was worried because the membership was falling. Was there anything I could do to increase the interest? In those days, I was working for a local paper, (I think it was the *Redditch Indicator*) and she asked me if I could write something that would encourage ladies to join.

It so happened that Joan Hadley was coming the next month to give a First Aid

talk. Joan was a Redditch Councillor and, of course, very good with words. I remember her saying, for example, 'You think that half a pint of blood is nothing but tip it out and it will spread across the floor. You will see how much it is'. At this, one of the members nearly fainted and had to be escorted out by her two friends. Then two more members went out to make the tea. Joan said, 'My goodness, I didn't think my talk was as bad as all that'. I wrote an account which was passed round the committee for approval and sent to, I think, the *Redditch Indicator*. One of the reporters phoned me up and asked me if Joan thought that the members had gone out because of her talk.

A couple of days later, the phone rang. I think the first was the Birmingham Post and Mail. After that it didn't stop for a week. We were in nearly every newspaper in England. The WI committee was not pleased. The Chairwoman said, 'It made us look like weaklings'. I pointed out that the committee approved it before it went. She said, 'But we didn't know it was going in the *News of the World*'.

I was quite upset about it. I had taken a lot of time and trouble composing the article. I was only in my early twenties and a bit tender. Now, if this happened I would say something like 'Up yours' and forget about it. Anyway, we agreed to part company.

I don't think it had increased the membership at all.



Crabbs Cross Infants School.

Image from the RLHS archives.

Anne Bradford

