The Life and Remembrance of

George Butterworth

(1885-1916)

at Trinity College
Introduction

This exhibition from the Trinity Archive explores the undergraduate life of the composer George Butterworth, and reflects on the commemoration of a generation lost in the First World War.

George Butterworth entered Trinity College in October 1904 and graduated with Honours in the summer of 1908. An outstanding musician, he remained aloof from the light-hearted musical activities of his Trinity contemporaries.

It was in the wider University where most of George’s friendships were made, and his remarkable gifts developed. It was at Trinity however that he first met the English don Reginald Tiddy (fellow 1905–16). The two men shared a passion for English folk music and rural culture, and, as founder members of the English Folk Dance Society, they were to dance regularly together in demonstration Morris teams. George is circled above in a group photograph of 1906; Reginald Tiddy is circled below.
Edwardian Trinity

At the turn of the 20th Century, Trinity was one of Oxford’s smaller colleges, and then as now it had a reputation for friendliness. This sketch of 1913 shows members of the cricket team with their bags and bicycles at the porters’ lodge on Broad Street. George Butterworth was a keen cricketer at school, although he never played in a Trinity College first eleven.
Getting in

George came up to Oxford from Eton. There he had won a place as a King’s Scholar against considerable competition, and it was hoped that he might also gain a classical scholarship at Trinity. The examination was held jointly with Wadham College in the first week of the Christmas Vacation of 1903.

Candidates spent several days in Oxford sitting papers in Greek and Roman history, philosophy and literature. There was also an English essay, entitled,

_The origin and value of the sense of honour_

A sense of honour was firmly inculcated in every Edwardian schoolboy. When in 1914 they heard the call to arms, they knew exactly where their duty lay.

Although conscientious in his studies, George had no particular interest in academic work. He narrowly failed to gain a scholarship and entered Trinity as the senior commoner of his year.
In his own hand

Since the 1660s, it has been the tradition in Trinity for each new member to write their own entry in the Admissions Register. On 14 October 1904, George inscribed the required biographical details of his name and address, father, birth and education.

George was an only child. His father Alexander Kaye Butterworth was a solicitor and railway manager who could trace his lineage back to Anglo-Saxon times. Women were never mentioned in the records of an all-male college, but George’s mother Julia was a gifted soprano, while Alexander had wide ranging interests in music and the arts. Sadly, Julia was to predecease her son, dying in 1911 at the age of 52.
Rooms

George was assigned to rooms at the top of staircase 13 in the Garden Quadrangle, from where he had one of the finest views in Oxford, looking down the garden towards Wadham College. He lived here for two years, although, as he pointed out to his mother in an abortive attempt to be allowed to move into lodgings after only three terms, it was not possible to get a piano up the stairs.

This photograph copied from the album of Clive Dean (1905) shows the Garden Quadrangle from the lawn.
Every summer, members of Trinity assembled in Garden Quad for a group photograph. George’s direct gaze to the camera is very characteristic. Moustaches were not commonly worn by Edwardian undergraduates, but George had first sported his while still at Eton.
An Outstanding Performance

Although a small college, Trinity had many sporting and cultural clubs and societies. George was immediately recruited by a group of musicians who styled themselves the Impromptu Society, and he obligingly played the opening number in their concert at the end of his first term in December 1904.

*Shown with thanks to the family of Basil Cozens-Hardy (1903)*
George’s Chopin Nocturne stands out in an otherwise entirely light-hearted programme which included a solo on the banjo and a series of comic or sentimental music hall numbers.

Relationships between fellows and undergraduates were very close at this date. Note the two contributions by George’s philosophy tutor Harold Prichard.
They’d none of them be missed!

Another college society, The Savoyards, were equally keen to enlist the support of a talented singer for their weekly evenings of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and popular plays. The Society’s minute book records George’s election, also during his first term. Turning the pages, however, reveals that he never turned up, even once, to a meeting.
Much more to his taste

The undergraduate-edited Oxford Magazine illustrates the more serious musical fare that was available in Oxford. In George’s second term, Edward Elgar was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of the University, and during his stay in the city he joined the Professor of Music Sir Hubert Parry in a concert at the Town Hall. Elgar conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in his Variations, and Parry his choral work Blessed Pair of Sirens.

After the concert, Elgar attended a meeting of the Oxford University Musical Club, whose activities were much more to George’s taste. He was elected President of the Club in his second year at Oxford.
Dinner in Hall

Despite his diverging interests, George participated willingly enough in the rituals of collegiate life. In February 1906 he joined the whole college community in a Bump Supper Dinner to celebrate the College Eight’s success in the Torpids boat races.

Indoor and late-night photography was difficult and expensive, and treasured prints of this photograph survive in a number of albums in the Archive. Although partly obscured by one of the waiting staff, George can be seen sitting just below High Table.
Results

Despite his lack of enthusiasm for classical literature, philosophy or history, George was sufficiently assiduous to take Second Class Honours in his part one examinations.

His finest academic achievement was in October 1905, when he was awarded a prize of £10 for his performance in the internal ‘Collections’ exam, traditionally held in the College Hall. George best paper was on Cicero, for which he was given αβ [alpha/beta or AB].

In the days before grade inflation, George’s Third in finals in 1908 was a perfectly respectable degree.
Reginald Tiddy

George Butterworth first met Reginald Tiddy when he was elected as a classical tutor of Trinity College in 1905. It is likely that he was one of George’s tutors. It was not until 1910 that Tiddy took up a formal position as a lecturer in the University’s new-fangled Honours School of English. The main focus of his academic research was the Mummers’ Play, which was to be the title of a posthumous publication of his work. An enthusiast collector of local traditions and a passionate Morris dancer, Tiddy divided his time between his college rooms and a cottage in the Cotswolds village of Ascott-under-Wychwood, where this photograph shows him relaxing in the garden.
‘It took some courage…’

In the preface to *The Mummers’ Play* (1923), Reginald Tiddy’s close friend David Pye recalled the early days of the English Folk Dance Society, of which he, like George Butterworth, was a founding member. Regrettably, no photographs were taken of ‘one of our first public appearances’ as the Morris demonstration team performed at a Trinity College garden party where ‘it took some courage to appear.’ Tiddy’s attitude – ‘never conscious of the sneer of the unbeliever’ – was one very much shared by George Butterworth.

Despite being very short-sighted and prone to asthma, Reginald Tiddy was determined to play his part in the First World War. As he wrote to a friend in September 1914, ‘It seems to me that officers will stand a very poor chance of surviving this war, but I cannot really see how I can keep out of it, having had quite a fair amount of happy life, when these poor kids are being shot like this.’

The following February he secured a commission in the 4th Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, and in May 1916 he departed for France.
War Service

George Butterworth may have been an atypical undergraduate, but like virtually every man of his generation, he saw army service as his patriotic duty.

The Oxford University Roll of Service (1920) published a succinct summary of his military career. George enlisted in August 1914, and was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Durham Light Infantry. The symbol ‡ indicates previous service in the ranks: unwilling to wait or accept his father’s offer to pull strings to secure a commission, George had first volunteered as a private in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry. The Roll notes that he served in France and was awarded the Military Cross, which was then the second highest decoration, granted in recognition of ‘acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land.’

Leading a platoon on the front line in the Battle of the Somme, George was in fact recommended three times for the MC, and was awarded it twice, the second occasion for his part in the action in which he fell. The Roll used bold type for the names of men who fell. George was shot in the early hours of the morning of 5 August 1916, and he was buried by his men on the same day, somewhere near the front line.

No grave marker survived in the pulverized mud of the Somme battlefield, and George Butterworth is one of 72,000 soldiers whose names are inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial.
In deepest sympathy

Each morning in his Lodgings at Trinity College, Herbert Blakiston (President of Trinity 1907–38) braced himself to look at the casualty lists in The Times. Blakiston had been a tutorial fellow since 1885, and Senior Tutor for many years before his election to the presidency, and every fallen member of Trinity was known to him personally.

He saw George’s name and wrote immediately to his father. The next slide shows Sir Alexander’s heartfelt reply, expressing his pride in a son who had volunteered so willingly and had been decorated for his gallantry, even though ‘his tastes & interests were so very far removed from war & battle’.
My dear Sir,

I am very grateful to you for your most kind letter—I feel all you say about my dear son, but it is very comforting to know that his contemporaries think so. Like yourself, he felt that in his character strain his mind confirm the parent’s views. I feel too what you say of the shocking loss to England of the premature death of so many, let us hope that they would not have been content to stand aside from the fray. I was particularly pleased to know how George entered on the very first move, would not let me try to get him a commission when he found that he could not get one at the fort on his merits.

You will, I am sure, be pleased to hear of his Military Cross. I have no apology for sending you the enclosed copy of the Adjutant’s letters. (Please don’t trouble the machine.) They have cheered me greatly, particularly so because my son’s tactics ventured to were so very far removed from war battle.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

A. Kaye Pattleworth
Where he fell

Sir Alexander wrote to the President again, to send a reproduction of a map that he had received from George’s commanding officer. The ‘Butterworth Trench’ had been dug under George’s expert direction under cover of a heavy fog. A blue cross marks the place where George was shot, as he led an attack at the head of a bombing party.
‘So fine a soldier’
Sir Alexander had also had copies made of Brigadier-General Croft’s poignant letter, describing George’s ‘power of leadership’ in the first ‘strenuous 35 days’ of the Somme offensive; and his demeanor ‘cheery and inspiring his tired men’ on the night of his death.


August 18th, 1916.

Dear Sir Alexander,

I feel I must write you a note to tell you how deeply I grieve with you and yours for the loss of your gallant son. He was one of those quiet, unassuming men whose path did not appear naturally to be a military one, and I had watched him doing his duty quietly and conscientiously. When the offensive came he seemed to throw off his reserve, and in those strenuous 35 days in which we were fighting off and on, he developed a power of leadership which we had not realised that he possessed. As you know, I recommended him for an earlier action near Contalmaison for the Military Cross, which, alas! he could not wear. When in front of Pozières he was reported to me to have done excellent work under very heavy fire in getting his men to dig a new trench right in front of the Germans, from which later the Australians were able to successfully attack that village. Later we went into a line on the right of the Australians, S.E. of Pozières.

Here we were about 450 yards from the Germans, and I gave orders to dig a trench within 200 yards of them so that we could attack with some chance of success.

This trench was dug in a fog, and was a very fine deep trench which saved many lives in the days to follow, and your son again superintended the work, and it was called Butterworth trench on all the official maps.

Three days afterwards the 16th D.L.I. attacked Munster Alley just N.W. of Butterworth trench. They won 100 yards after a very hot fight, and I went up there at 4 a.m. in the morning to find the bomb fight still progressing, but the 18th holding their own. Your son was in charge, and the trench was very much blown in and shallow, and I begged him to keep his head down. He was cheery and inspiring his tired men to secure the position which had been won earlier in the night, and I felt that all was well with him there. The Germans had been bombing our wounded, and the men all round him were shouting Germans who showed themselves. Within about a minute of my leaving him he was shot, as I heard by telephone on my return. I could ill afford to lose so fine a soldier, and my deepest sympathy goes out to his relations, for I know that the loss of one so modest and yet so brave must create a gap which can never be filled.

Yours sincerely,
HENRY PAGE CROFT,
Brigadier-General,
Commanding 66th Inf. Brigade.

Plan attached.
Roll of Honour

Early in 1915, a printed scroll was produced by the University Press for the use of colleges. President Blakiston placed it on the altar table in Chapel, and began to inscribe the names of Trinity’s fallen.

The first on the list, Edward Cohan (1907), had been killed in an accident during mobilization on 5 August 1914.

James Gilkison (1903) was a serving army officer who fell in one of the first battles of the war, at Le Cateau, on 26 August 1914.

Frederick Buller (1910) was killed in a largely forgotten theatre of the War, German East Africa, on 25 September 1914.

The youngest on the roll is Stanley Knapp-Fisher (1913). On 6 October 1914 he succumbed to blood poisoning aged 19 and 6 months, just 3 days after receiving a commission.

J. Laurence Pumphrey (1910) was the only Trinity man who fell fighting as a private soldier, killed in France on 25 October 1914. He had not sought a commission on account of his severe stammer.
Gerard Anderson (1908) held the world record for the 400 yards hurdles. He was killed near Hooge on 9 November 1914, leading a charge with his sword in his hand.

Archer Downes (1911) and his elder brother Villiers (1909) were one of 5 pairs of Trinity brothers killed in the War. Archer died of wounds received in battle on 20 November 1914. Villiers had died of wounds a month before, on 18 October.

On 24 April 1015, Geoffrey Taylor (1913) was the first member of Trinity to be killed by gas. He was serving with the Canadian Highlanders in the front line at Langemarke, where chlorine was used for the first time on the Western Front. In 48 hours, the Canadian Infantry suffered 6,000 casualties, one third of them dead.

Hubert Whitaker (1910) the first to fall in the Gallipoli Campaign, on 3 May 1915. Thirteen members of Trinity are among the soldiers with no known grave listed on the Helles War Memorial. They include John Harley (1899), James Hamilton-Grierson (1905), Francis Danson (1910) and Charles Henderson-Hamilton (1901).

In August 1915, President Blakiston glued an extension sheet to the bottom of the scroll.
The physicist Henry Mosley (1906) had laid aside his ground-breaking work on the atom to volunteer for the army. His death as a communications officer at Gallipoli on 10 August 1915 was described by Isaac Asimov as perhaps ‘the most costly single death of the War to mankind generally’.

On 25 September 1915, John Purvis (1912) was Trinity’s first loss at Loos, the first of many set piece battles intended to break the stalemate on the Western Front.

Names were added to the scroll as the casualties were listed in The Times, often many months after they had died.

The deaths of Aubrey Baker (1908) in Mesopamia (Iraq) and Frederick Stoer (1914) in France were reported immediately. But Charles Mowat (1903) had disappeared in the chaos of Gully Ravine in Gallipoli on 28 June 1915, and for 8 months his family held out hope he had been taken prisoner.

Alfred King (British Columbia 1912) was the first of 4 Trinity Rhodes Scholars killed in the war.
Thirteen members of Trinity fell in the Battle of the Somme between 1 July and 18 November 1916.

Bernard Harvey (1907) and Bertram French (1912) were among the 20,000 British and colonial soldiers killed on the first day.

The artist Brian Hatton (1905) however had died in another forgotten theatre of the war, defending the Suez Canal at Katia on Easter Sunday, 23 April 1916.

George Butterworth is numbered 66th on the scroll. President Blakiston noted his MA, as a member of the University; and the MC, awarded just days before his death.
The majority of the names on the second extension of the scroll were killed in the Battle of the Somme, and during a winter of ongoing attrition in the trenches of the Western Front.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archibald Douglas</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>had deferred taking up his scholarship at Trinity to volunteer for the Royal Artillery. Transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, he was the first Trinity member to be killed in the air service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Plummer</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>served as an army Chaplain attached to the 61st Infantry Brigade. He was killed near the front line on 12 March 1917. His younger brother Arthur (1910) had also been killed in action in France, on 17 May 1915.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Gordon</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>was an only child who volunteered at the start of the war. He married in September 1916 just before sailing for France. He was killed in action on 28 April 1917, three months before his only son was born.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On 13 July 1917 David Davies (scholar 1915) was the first Trinity man to be killed while in command of a tank.

Armoured vehicles were of little use in the mud of the Battle of Passchendaele which began on 31 July 1917.

William Roper (1911, Neville Baker (1913) and Harold Vaughan (1896) all fell on the first day of the battle.

Noel Chavasse (1904) was the only man to be awarded the Victoria Cross twice during the First World War. He died on 4 August 1917 of wounds received while treating injured men on the front line.

Hubert Podmore (1906) was killed in an accidental explosion of munitions on New Year’s Eve 1917.
In January 1918 President Blakiston drew up a new scroll. The losses continued, men in the German ‘Spring Offensive’, and in the Allies’ ‘Hundred Days Offensive’, launched 8 August 1918. Finally, the end of the War was in sight.

Harold Hodges (1905) who had volunteered in August 1914 was killed in the Somme region on 24 March 1918.

As the advance moved swiftly across the pulverized landscape, many men died from infected wounds, including John Gunner (1902) on 9 August 1918.

The army Chaplain Cyril Buck (1902) was killed in action on 29 September 1918. He was posthumously awarded the MC.

George Whitehead (1914) was shot down over France, serving in the newly formed RAF.
The final part of the Roll of Honour includes many men originally listed as missing, and also those who died service while in the army of occupation, many of them in the influenza pandemic of 1918-20.

Bevil Quiller-Couch (1910) had served with great distinction since being called up as a reserve officer on the first day of the war. When the Armistice was declared his family rejoiced, and he proposed to the girl whom he had loved in secret for the past 4 years. Before they could marry, he succumbed to influenza, on 6 February 1919.

Wyatt Rushton (1916) was the first ever Rhodes Scholar from the state of Alabama. Passed unfit for military service in the US Army, he volunteered with the Red Cross in France. Wyatt died of illness on the boat home on 1 February 1919.

Another lost to illness was James Whitehead (1909), elder brother of George (1914). Their father endowed Trinity’s Whitehead Travel Scholarship in their memory.

George Joy (1910) was last seen wounded in No Man’s Land on 21 May 1915; but only when the war ended did his father give up hope.

The playwright George Calderon (1887) had been missing since the Battle of Achi Baba on 4 June 1915. He was the oldest member of Trinity to fall in action.
The War Memorial Library

In July 1919 President Blakiston convened a committee of Trinity alumni to decide how best to commemorate the fallen. They quickly decided on an ambitious project to create a permanent memorial of lasting benefit to the undergraduate members of college.

It was Blakiston himself who suggested a library. Opened on 11 November 1928, Trinity’s War Memorial Library is arguably the finest war memorial in Oxford. Two photographs were published in The Times.
After almost a decade of fund-raising and numerous delays while the site was acquired, the Library the new facility was greatly appreciated by Trinity’s junior members. The view from the main doors – today, the entrance from the mezzanine reading area – is instantly recognisable, and the original tables are still in use. The bookcases on the window side were raised and the gallery added in 1954.
A garden of English roses was created in what is today known as Library Quad; this photograph of 1938 is the earliest known colour image of any part of Trinity.
We Will Remember Them

The names of Trinity’s fallen members were painted in gold on a large oak board placed within the library entrance. A second board was made to remember over 130 graduates who gave their lives in 1939-45.

The names of the fallen are read in Chapel each year on Remembrance Sunday.
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Throughout the centenary period of the First World War, Trinity remembered its fallen members in an exhibition outside the Hall.

This large printed panel was based on the original commemorative board, but the roll was increased to 160, with the addition of five German and Austro-Hungarian members of Trinity who also fought, and died, in the conflict.
For the Fallen

The centenary exhibition also featured the earliest known manuscript copy of ‘For the Fallen’ by Laurence Binyon (Scholar 1888 and Honorary Fellow of Trinity 1933-43). His lyrical and prescient poem was first published in The Times on 14 September 1914. Two years later, Binyon wrote it out for the wife of a friend.
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
August 1916

3rd
Noel M. Vickers (1899), Lieutenant,
Yorkshire Regiment
Killed in action near Maroc, France.

5th
George S. K. Butterworth (1904), Lieutenant,
Durham Light Infantry
Killed in action in the Battle of the Somme.

5th
Thomas G. Brocklebank (1901), Captain,
Royal Field Artillery
Killed in action in the Battle of the Somme.

11th
Reginald J. E. Tiddy (Fellow and Tutor in English
Literature), Second Lieutenant,
Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry
Killed in action near Laventie, France.

25th
Guy W. Bartholomew (1899), Captain,
King’s Royal Rifle Corps
Killed in action in the Battle of the Somme.

30th
Thomas R. Crawley-Boevey (1899), Captain,
Gloucestershire Regiment
Died of wounds received in the Battle of the Somme.

Lost Friends

Alongside Binyon’s poem was placed a monthly list of the fallen. Between August 1914 and March 1919, there were only five months in which no member of Trinity was lost.

In August 1916 there were six. Less than a week after George Butterworth was shot by a sniper near Pozières, his tutor, friend, and fellow Morris dancer Reginald Tiddy was killed by another, as he inspected a trench some 50 miles away at Laventie.