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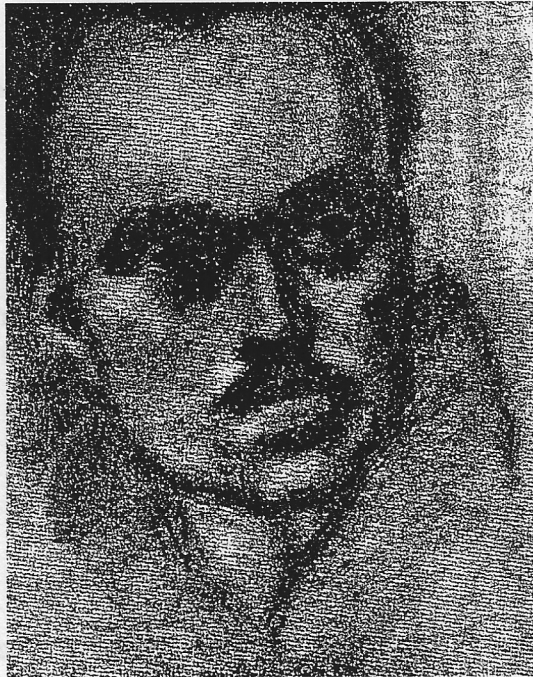
No.13

April 2010

LEIGH VAUGHAN HENRY

The Man who Infatuated Margaret Glyn
and Upset the People of Ewell

Charles Abdy



Leigh Henry c.1919



Margaret Glyn c.1895

Introduction

The Glyn family were important to Ewell for more than 200 hundred years, one of the most prominent members being Sir George, the 4th baronet, who for more than fifty years was vicar, as well as a big landowner and patron of the church. Sir George Glyn had several children but they all died without issue, and when his daughter Margaret died in 1946 she was the last of the Glyns of Ewell.

Margaret Glyn was a talented musician: as well as performing she wrote about various aspects of music and composed a wide range of works. Her particular interest was 16th and 17th century English keyboard music. A fellow enthusiast for Tudor music was Leigh Vaughan Henry, a versatile musician who was active as an administrator and pianist as well as a composer. He cultivated Margaret Glyn in spite of being some 25 years younger, and during the final two years of her life he was able to persuade her to change her will so that when she died in 1946 the bulk of the considerable portion of the Glyn estate she had inherited was left to him. In my book *The Glyns of Ewell* I made references to Leigh Vaughan Henry and his relationship with Margaret Glyn and this drew him to the attention of Dr Sue Cole, a Postdoctoral Fellow of the School of Music of Melbourne University, who is researching the revival of early English music in the early twentieth century. She began to take an interest in what she has described as 'the sheer outrageous implausibility of Leigh Henry's story' and pursued him with an academic rigour that has enabled her to uncover more about his life than I was able to. She kindly made some of her findings available to me, and has given permission for them to be used in the following account of Leigh Vaughan Henry which embellishes what I wrote in *The Glyns of Ewell*.

Leigh Vaughan Henry

Leigh Vaughan Henry was born in Liverpool in 1889. He showed early promise as a musician and in his teens attracted the attention of conductor and composer Granville Bantock, 1868-1946 (later Sir Granville Bantock) who encouraged him. Throughout his life Henry was an ardent disciple of Bantock.

In 1913 Henry was made Director of Music at the Gordon Craig School for the Art of the Theatre in Florence, where he became involved with the promotion of modernistic music. He wrote extensively to explain the works of the younger more advanced composers and his lectures and recitals aroused much interest. His own compositions received favourable comment. A move to Germany in 1914 as musical director of the Theatrekunstschule in Berlin was unfortunate: when WW1 broke out he was interned at a camp near Berlin and spent the next three and half years there. It would seem that conditions at the camp were far from arduous: he was able to write articles on music and get them published outside. The inmates were able to organise concerts and theatrical performances.

Henry's writing activities continued after the war and in the 1920s he was well regarded as a critic – he was an advocate of avant-garde composers such as Schönberg, Stravinsky, Poulenc and of course Bantock. In 1921 he started a bi-monthly journal called *Fanfare* which had articles on music by many distinguished contributors as well as poetry, much of it by Henry himself, in spite of which the enterprise lasted for only seven issues. In 1926 he is reported to have taken on the role of press advisor on musical matters and director of the musical information bureau for the Russian Ballet. Henry had also become deeply involved in the movement for the revival of Tudor music whose members included Margaret Glyn.

In October 1930 Henry had a change of scene when he went to the US for several years: it seems to have been a remarkable boat trip in the course of which he became a Cambridge graduate and henceforth called himself a Doctor of Music. In an article announcing one of his numerous weddings he was reported to have served with distinction on the Italian front as a major of cavalry, having been decorated with the British Military Cross and the Italian War Star, quite an achievement for one who spent most of the war imprisoned in an internment camp!

Henry's third wife was German and when in 1934 he returned to England it was via Aachen in Germany, where he wrote a series of articles which were published in England on his return, articles extolling Hitler's National Socialism. He became a member of Mosley's Blackshirts. The articles he wrote for them led to his arrest and internment in WWII in June, 1940. The accusations against him included making plans for a provisional government and passing coded messages to the Germans in BBC radio music broadcasts. So he had the rare distinction of internment by the Germans in WWI and by the British in WWII. He was released in late 1944.

Not much is known about Henry's life after the war except that he was elected a full Druid and conducted a performance of Margaret Glyn's sixth symphony, which he referred to as a 'sad, somewhat stark piece, though very modern and advanced - certainly astonishing to have come from an 80-years-old woman.' This was at the 1945 Welsh Eisteddfod at which Margaret Glyn was instituted a Bard. He is also known to have worked on film scripts.

Although his first wife wanted nothing to do with him after their divorce, his daughter Olwen by that marriage did occasionally keep in touch and left a moving account of his death in 1958 after a long and painful illness in a letter to Lady Bantock. Henry had been commissioned by her to write the composer's biography but his illness and death intervened.

The flowery wording of a letter from Henry to Lady Bantock in August 1957 concerning the proposed biography gives a clue to how he may have ensnared Margaret Glyn. He refers to Granville Bantock as 'the dear master, a great-souled being of vast erudition, always a great, genial explorer of wonder and beauty and the human heart, with the magic of a rare, revelatory vision.'

Leigh Vaughan Henry and the island of Redonda

Redonda is a very small island, essentially a large rock, in the West Indies. The only time it was inhabited was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when its deposits of guano were being gathered. This operation came to an end during WWI.

The 'Kingdom of Redonda' is a largely literary conceit that seems to have arisen in the 19th century whereby various people have called themselves king of the island. In 2007 the Wellington Arms pub in Southampton, England, declared itself an embassy of the 'nation' of Redonda to gain diplomatic immunity from the smoking ban. It did not work.

Henry came into the picture because in 1949 he composed a national anthem for Redonda, for which service he was made Grand Duke of Basalto (it is not known by whom). (Dr Cole has commented that she thinks that it was King Juan I of Redonda, aka John Gawsworth, who spent a lot of time in a pub in Bayswater and would bestow peerages on anybody who bought him a drink). Given the nature of Redonda, a bare rock, the first words of the anthem, 'O God who gave our island soil in trust for evermore' are somewhat inappropriate. But then, it is most unlikely that Henry ever went anywhere near the island.

Leigh Vaughan Henry and the Margaret Glyn estate

It would seem that Margaret Glyn got to know Henry in the 1920s when they were both part of the group of composers working for a revival of music of the Tudor period. He reviewed a concert of the music of Orlando Gibbons and John Bull that she gave in 1922. When in 1937 he published his biography of John Bull it was dedicated to Margaret Glyn.

Margaret Glyn was able to maintain contact with Henry during his internment and he helped her to set up two companies – the Glyn Foundation and the Glyn Press. That was in June 1944 before he was released from internment.

In her will dated 14 April 1944 Margaret Glyn made provision for The Pit Garden between Cheam Road, Ewell Bypass and Reigate Road to be maintained as a bird and wild flower sanctuary to which villagers would have access and there was a bequest of £500 to Epsom and Ewell Cottage Hospital. Henry was entitled to receive a fee from the two companies they had set up not exceeding £300 a year, with a further £50 a year as Curator of the museum of musical instruments that had been set up in The Malt House, Church Street, Ewell.

During the following two years Margaret Glyn made six codicils modifying the terms of her will, the last one being dated 14 April 1946. The effect was to make things much more favourable for Henry; apart from some minor bequests to others, he was to receive the whole estate including the Malt House with its collection of antique musical instruments. All the shares of the two companies were to go to him. The provisions for the bird and wild flower garden were revoked; The Pit Garden was left to Leigh Henry. It became part of Seymour's Garden Centre and is now the site of Homebase. The bequest of £500 to the hospital was revoked.

After Margaret Glyn died on 3 June, 1946 at the age of 81 there was a court action in which the validity of the codicils was challenged by Glyn Press Ltd and Charles Fell, one of the executors. It was stated that the codicils had been written down by Dr Henry while being dictated by Miss Glyn and that she was completely infatuated with him. However, Mr Justice Hodson gave judgement in favour of Henry in May 1948, saying he was satisfied that Miss Glyn was at the time of sound mind and knew and approved the contents of the codicils.

Ewell villagers were not happy with the demise of the museum of musical instruments and the loss of The Pit Garden, particularly as there was a story circulating that when Margaret Glyn had been lying ill in bed an eye witness had seen Leigh Henry bounding down the stairs waving a piece of paper and crying out, 'I've got it.'

Local historians were not happy with the way in which Henry disposed of the substantial collection of Glyn papers that he had acquired – many were sold off to an antiques dealer who wished to make lamp shades from the parchments. It was just good fortune that the documents were recognised in time, purchased by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and preserved.

The value of the Margaret Glyn estate that Henry had got possession of was some £70,000 - a considerable sum of money in 1946. When he died in the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital he was living in a small house near Heathfield, Sussex, where he had been shackled up with a woman who bred poodles and was reputed to have led Leigh Vaughan Henry a dog's life. His will divided his possessions among several lady friends, but the total value appears to have been only a fraction of the Margaret Glyn inheritance. The will also dealt with the copyright of various writings and musical scores by both himself and Margaret Glyn and made a plea that efforts should be made to secure public recognition of the works. I am not aware that this was done, or if it was, whether it was successful.