

# OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

## INTO THE WOODS

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of the world's most  
magical landscapes



**ROSL**

ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

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#### OVERSEAS EDITORIAL TEAM

##### Editor

Rosie Allen: [editor@rosl.org.uk](mailto:editor@rosl.org.uk); +44 (0)20 7408 0214

##### Design

zed creative: [www.zedcreative.co.uk](http://www.zedcreative.co.uk)

##### Advertising

[charlotte@parkwalkmedia.com](mailto:charlotte@parkwalkmedia.com)  
[renata@parkwalkmedia.com](mailto:renata@parkwalkmedia.com)

#### ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

Incorporated by Royal Charter

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##### President

The Rt Hon The Lord Geidt GCB GCVO OBE QSO PC

Chairman The Hon. Alexander Downer AC

Deputy Chairman Anne Wilkinson

Hon Treasurer Richard Harbord FCA

Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street,  
London SW1A 1LR; +44 (0)20 7408 0214;  
Fax +44 (0)20 7499 6738; [info@rosl.org.uk](mailto:info@rosl.org.uk);  
[www.rosl.org.uk](http://www.rosl.org.uk)

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Ruth Bala, The Hon. Alexander Downer AC,  
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Alistair Harrison CMG CVO, Anthony Teasdale,  
Susan Walton, Helen Prince,  
Atholl Swainston-Harrison, Anne Wilkinson

##### Director-General

Dr Annette Prandzioch: +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x201;  
[patodirectorgeneral@rosl.org.uk](mailto:patodirectorgeneral@rosl.org.uk)

##### Director of Education Projects

Margaret Adrian-Vallance MBE:  
+44 (0)20 7408 0214 x307; [mvallance@rosl.org.uk](mailto:mvallance@rosl.org.uk)

##### Artistic Director

Geoff Parkin: +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x325;  
[gparkin@rosl.org.uk](mailto:gparkin@rosl.org.uk)

##### General Manager

Warren Miller: +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x203;  
[wmiller@rosl.org.uk](mailto:wmiller@rosl.org.uk)

##### Director of HR

Sarah Banner: [sbanner@rosl.org.uk](mailto:sbanner@rosl.org.uk)

##### Membership

+44 (0)20 7408 0214 x214; [membership@rosl.org.uk](mailto:membership@rosl.org.uk)

For more contacts visit [www.rosl.org.uk/the-team](http://www.rosl.org.uk/the-team)

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WELCOME



“Our events programme will continue to be vibrant during autumn and in the run up to the festive season”

Summer is always an especially glorious time at the Royal Over-Seas League, with our very special garden in full action with al fresco dining, concerts and parties. So when autumn approaches there can be some regret that it's over for another year; but this edition of *Overseas* reminds us what a wonderful season it is. Our new Editor, Rosie Allen, has commissioned some exciting articles with a global cornucopia of autumnal offerings.

We also look back on the wonderful occasions this summer that we have enjoyed together: from the historic Platinum Jubilee weekend, to an incredible evening with opera star Joseph Calleja, who thrilled members with both his remarkable voice and his great humour, to the 70th Annual Music Competition in the presence of our Vice-Patron, Princess Alexandra at Wigmore Hall. You'll find out more about these special events inside. We still have a key occasion coming up, on 15 September, with our Centenary Lecture by eminent Historian Andrew Roberts, who will talk about his new biography of Lord Northcliffe, a key player in our foundational history. This will be followed by a champagne reception with tasty canapés prepared by our Executive Chef Elliott Plimmer. Do check our website to see if there are tickets left by the time this edition lands on your doorstep.

Our Chairman, the Hon. Alexander Downer AC, is standing down after a successful term in which he provided tremendous leadership and support, being instrumental in bringing the success ROSL enjoys today. Together with my Senior Leadership Team and all of Central Council, we thank him very much for putting ROSL on a solid foundation for the years ahead.

Our events programme will continue to be vibrant during autumn and in the run up to the festive season. We have some very special treats lined up, with a preview of some of them in this edition. Do pop in during this time to enjoy some of these events, and of course consider spending Christmas itself at ROSL, as well as New Year which I can guarantee will go with a pop!

**Dr Annette Prandzioch**  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL



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"The woods really do belong to communities, and not just Latvians; anyone in the EU is encouraged to camp overnight and forage for berries and mushrooms. You can really feel free in our forests"

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## From the EDITOR

Woodlands have long been associated with the virtues of freedom, mystery, wisdom and even rebellion, and in an age of digital extroversion, the sanctity of these enigmatic habitats offer a rare chance for introspection. Whether 'forest bathing' (a Japanese term to describe the act of absorbing the forest's atmosphere) or simply taking a walk in the woods, these spaces invite us to reconnect to the mysteries of the natural world and discover the gifts hidden among the trees.

So as the season changes, this edition is dedicated to the magic of wooded landscapes. In 'Treasures of the forest' on page 6, I'll be learning from four experts across the world about what makes the forests of their native homeland uniquely beautiful, from the gorgeous blazes of colour that characterise a Massachusetts fall, to the tree-covered hills that claim home to the sought-after truffle of Piedmont.

On page 12 nature writer and artist Tiffany Francis-Baker uncovers the fascinating secrets of the 'Wood Wide Web' a system of communication between trees, fungi and other organisms that is completely transforming the ways in which scientists understand woods and their fascinating inhabitants. Elsewhere, on page 15 we hear about a life-affirming project (due to debut at ROSL in January) in which the whisperings of Hiroshima's survivor trees are giving a voice back to survivors of laryngeal cancer; and Olly Fathers explains how he's reshaping wood offcuts to create some unique artwork for the Brabourne Room on page 22.

On what would have been the 150th anniversary of his birth, Abi Millar celebrates the talents of Vaughan Williams, discovering how the composer's fascination with English folk tunes inspired his music on page 16. And on page 26 we talk to Director of the iconic London Library Philip Marshall to talk all things literary. There's much more to discover too, and we hope you enjoy this issue in which we invite you to sit back, relax and immerse yourself in the magic of the wild.

**Rosie Allen**  
editor@rosl.org.uk



# TREASURES OF THE FOREST

Woods are at their most enchanting in the seasons of transformation; from springtime's bright speckling of bluebells, to plump mushrooms hiding in the dark recesses of autumn trees. Rosie Allen speaks to four experts across the globe about the treasures that draw them to the forest as the seasons change

## FORAGING FOR FUNGI, LINGONBERRIES AND CRANBERRIES IN LATVIA

If Latvia conjures images of a demi-Eden, all wild borderless treescapes and lingonberry bushes laden with fruit, then that's because the stereotype is largely true. Over half of the country is wooded and a quarter is public owned, with 99% of private forests also open for public access. In contrast, the UK Forestry Commission reported in 2019 that only 27% of Britain's woodland is publicly accessible, highlighting just how remarkable Latvia's egalitarian emphasis on woodland access really is.

'From a young age the forest is part of our culture,' explains Tomass Kotovičs, CCO of Latvia's State Forests, an organisation that manages the preservation of the country's wooded habitats. 'The woods really do belong to communities, and not just Latvians; anyone in the EU is encouraged to camp overnight and forage for berries and mushrooms. You can really feel free in our forests.'

One theory on how forests became such an important part of the shared Latvian imagination is that Latvians are ancestrally Indo-European. They migrated to a place where 95% of the landscape was wooded and survival became dependant on using the woods as a source of shelter, fuel and food. 'Despite half of this woodland being eventually cleared for farming, it still hasn't lost its importance and

remains a large part of our heritage and folklore to this day' adds Tomass. Even now, firewood is still the most used fuel to heat Latvian homes, and wood is a major component of the housebuilding industry.

Latvia's food culture in particular is rich in recipes that feature wood-foraged foods: summer provides a bounty of chanterelle mushrooms and raspberries; autumn is a time to seek out the foodstuffs that can be preserved for the colder months ahead – for the pickles, chutneys and vinegars that add colour and cheer to the depths of winter. 'Foraging is a real rite of passage for Latvians,' explains Tomass, and there is a deeply homely, ritualistic element to the recipes he

describes. For example, a traditional method for preserving berries includes boiling them in vinegar, carefully layering them in a barrel with sugar, salt and leaves from blackcurrants and flowers from the dill plant, and putting the barrel in a warm place to ferment for three or four days. 'Once it's sour enough you put the barrel in a cold cellar for eating during winter,' he explains.

But before these preparations can be made, it's time to venture into the depths of the forest to unearth its bounty. 'The autumn wood has the most beautiful smell,' Tomass says. 'Moisture, fallen leaves, mushrooms – a distinctive aroma. And after the first frost comes the wonderful colour on the maple trees, lots of yellows and reds.' Adding to the fairytale feel of the autumnal Latvian landscape are moose and deer, which roam the woods looking for food, and cranes that gather in clearings and meadows as they prepare to head to warmer climes for the winter.

This is also the time for mushroom picking: 'There are more than 300 types of edible mushrooms that can be commonly found in the autumn forest' Tomass explains. 'Fungi picking is a family thing. Grandparents and parents teach the kids how to pick them safely. It can't be properly learnt from a book – that way can lead at best to the hospital, at worst to the cemetery.'

Autumn is also a magical time to explore beyond the forests to Latvia's wetlands and peat bogs, where cranberries and lingonberries grow in abundance. 'If you want to experience the most special feeling in the world, one you'll never forget,' says Tomass, 'hire a guide to take you to the wetlands in October. It's a beautiful, silent place, where the motion of the moss and water makes for a strange 'moving' landscape.' 🍄



Clockwise: Tomass Kotovičs, CCO of Latvia's State Forests; lingonberries and chanterelle mushrooms are a seasonal treat for foragers in the Latvian woods



### Latvia

In Latvia it's legal for families to cut down a fir tree to be taken home and decorated for Christmas. But it's forbidden for tree hunters to take firs that are under 12 cm in diameter, or 2-3 metres tall, in order to preserve the beauty of the forests, along with the well-loved Christmas tradition, for future generations



EXPLORING AUTUMN COLOUR IN MASSACHUSETTS

A blaze of jewel-like colour graces the Massachusetts landscape in the fall, making the foliage itself the ultimate treasure for walkers to enjoy from October onwards.

‘Autumn is a season for all the senses,’ enthuses Paul Catanzaro, Associate Professor & State Extension Forester at the University of Massachusetts Amerherst. ‘It’s the time to stand by a fire to take the chill off and enjoy the smell of wood smoke.’ Paul’s job involves many aspects of conservation across Massachusetts’ vast woodlands (over 60%, or 3.1 million acres of the state is forested), giving him an enviable intimacy with the spectacle of an East Coast fall.

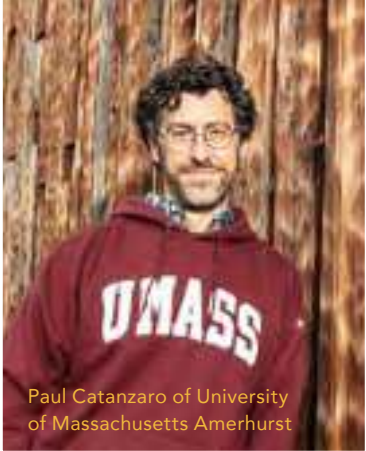
But what’s the science behind the changing of the leaves as autumn arrives? Paul explains that ‘an ideal fall foliage season is one that starts slow and lasts a long time. The factors that influence this start in the summer with sufficient rain to ensure trees remain actively photosynthesising into the autumn. A gradual dropping of temperatures combined with a slow change in daylight each day signals to the trees that it’s time to start winter dormancy and they slowly stop producing chlorophyll, the chemical which gives leaves their green appearance. Without that, the true colours of the leaves are unmasked, including the reds of red maple, the orange of sugar maple, the yellow of beech, and the browns of oak.’

Paul believes that it’s the unique environmental factors and diversity of trees that makes the state’s woodlands uniquely beautiful at this time of year. ‘Massachusetts landscapes want to grow forests,’ he says. ‘We sit at the intersection of several major forest types, including central hardwoods with their oak and hickory, and northern hardwoods with their beech, birch, maple, and spruce-fir forests. Since different trees have different fall

colours, this diversity of species composition leads to a vibrant mosaic of fall colours painted across the heavily forested landscape.’

While Massachusetts is one of the few places on earth where such a large population of people live among so many trees, much of this beautiful landscape is owned privately, presenting unique challenges to conservationists such as Paul. ‘Like many forests around the world, ours face increasing challenges. Three quarters of our forests are owned by families and individuals, and the average age of these ‘family forest owners’ is almost 65 years old, resulting in the largest inter-generational turnover of ownership our country has ever seen. The decisions that these families make about the future ownership and use of their land will determine which benefits their forests continue to provide to people and nature. Conversion of forests to other land uses, such as residential development and solar fields, eliminate many of these benefits. Much of my work focuses on helping families understand their options to meet their personal and financial goals while keeping the land forested. Our forests have also seen a dramatic increase in invasive insects, mostly from Asia where the climate is similar. These invasive insects such as Asian long-horned beetle, hemlock woolly adelgid, and the emerald ash borer have no natural predators and therefore have caused tremendous amount of tree mortality. These challenges don’t work in isolation and have an amplified synergistic impact.’

More information about Paul’s vital work in the forests of Massachusetts can be found at [masswoods.org](http://masswoods.org).



Paul Catanzaro of University of Massachusetts Amerhurst



**Massachusetts**

‘Fall foliage overlaps with apple season, another New England tradition’ Paul tells us. ‘Pairing a trip to go apple picking at an orchard, learning how to press apple cider, or tasting cider at a local cider mill is a great way to get out into the landscape, explore beautiful villages, and immerse yourself in New England culture’



**Piedmont**

Traditionally, pigs – irresistibly attracted to the musky scent of truffles – would have been used to hunt. However dogs, easier to control and less likely to wolf down their precious finds, are now more commonly used. Lagotto Romagnolos are the only pure-bred dog breed that’s recognised officially as a truffle hunter, with the intelligence and sense of smell to successfully seek out these prized tubers



Hunting for truffles: Lagotto Romagnolo dogs are specially bred to sniff out these delicacies

THE HUNT FOR THE WHITE ALBA TRUFFLE IN PIEDMONT

Piedmont, the jewel of Italy’s mountainous north-western region, is home to beautiful hilltop villages, prestigious vineyards, and perhaps most famously a delicacy that has transcended the realms of gourmet treat to become an obsession for lovers of luxury food: the Alba white truffle.

One of the world’s most expensive edibles, this craggy-looking tuber – which completes its life cycle completely underground and in symbiosis with surrounding oak, beech and hazelnut trees – has assumed an integral role in the gastronomic, cultural and economic ecosystem of Piedmont. The ‘slow food’ movement, a philosophy that promotes the preservation of traditional local food cultures, originated here in the 1980s and underpins the foodie reputation of a region where the truffle is king.

The climactic event of the season is October’s Alba White Truffle Fair, attracting traders and gourmets from all over the world and showcasing prized examples of this Piedmontese delicacy. Eye-wateringly high prices are paid by the world’s wealthiest gastronomes, all eager to experience one of nature’s most ephemerally delicious obscurities. Last year US media outlet Bloomberg reported that truffles imported for use in the country’s restaurant trade were fetching prices in the region of \$4,000/oz These prices look to rise even further, as the changing climate leads to hot, arid summers that prove inhospitable to the truffle.

Away from the glamour and glitz of Michelin-starred restaurants and A-list customers, the white truffle is as rustic

**The relationship between the truffle hunter and the wood is one of respect and the search for truffles is a meditative act**

a product as it’s possible to be. The woods that crown the hilly basin south of the Po river – rich in a variety of tree species – provide the perfect growing environment, entombed in free-draining soils, where it forms a symbiotic connection to the root systems that surround it, until the snuffling nose of hog or dog brings them to the surface. For those who live in these fabled lands, the kinship between wood and truffle hunter is imperative.

‘The relationship between the truffle hunter and the wood is one of respect and the search for truffles is a meditative act,’ explains Isabella Gianico from the National Centre of the Study of Truffles, an organisation that facilitates education about and environmental protection of the iconic Italian truffle. ‘Walking through the trees presupposes calm and patience, which is essential to finding truffles,’ says Isabella, who, like many who grow up in this region, has hunted for truffles since she was a child and her father taught her the art.

For Isabella being immersed in the woodland is an intrinsic part of the truffle hunting experience. ‘It means developing a deep knowledge of the environment in which it grows, knowing every signal that nature gives, from understanding the weather, to the undergrowth and the plants themselves. During the autumn when white truffle season is at its peak, we go out every day, usually in the evening after work. The dog is happy to go out and enthusiastically points out where to start digging and carefully extract the truffle. It’s a magical moment.’



INTO THE WOODS



Clockwise: A kākā, New Zealand's stunning native parrot; Philip Simpson of the Project Janszoon Trust; Clematis Paniculata



FINDING ORCHIDS IN ABEL TASMAN, NEW ZEALAND

As the shadows lengthen in the woodlands of the northern hemisphere, the forests of its southern counterpart are beginning to stir into life. 'In New Zealand's evergreen forests or 'bush', the subtle signs of spring are longer days, new stars in the sky, flowering plants and the flashes of colour and raucous dawn chorus of our distinctive native birds,' says Philip Simpson, writer and ecologist, and Trustee for the Project Janszoon Trust, an organisation that is helping to restore the rich and unique wildlife of the beautiful Abel Tasman national park. New Zealand's smallest national park, Abel Tasman is nevertheless an ecological jewel, with its heavily forested hills and golden sea shores home to a huge diversity of flora and fauna.

For Philip though it's spring's exotic flowers that herald the turn of the year. 'The floral symbol of spring in the bush is puawānanga, with large white flowers spreading like snow in patches across the canopy, heralding the season's change. In Māori bush lore, its father is Rehua and its mother Puanga, stars of Matariki/Pleiades that signify a new beginning and abundance.

'Another spring treasure is the flowering of the world's largest fuchsia, kotukutuku, *Fuchsia Excorticata* – one of the few New Zealand native trees that loses its leaves in winter. In spring its delicate flowers droop with striking blue pollen which dusts the head of the handsome green bellbird, or korimako.'

'For me, springtime in the park is orchid time,' Philip continues. 'Tiny ground orchids have a single jewel-like flower. They love the cool spring moisture, the acidic granite soils and the rich fungus-infused humus which

provides their nutrients.

The enigmatic ghost orchid gets its food from soil fungi instead of green chlorophyll. These ghostly plants are white or splashed by purple flecks and, as they don't need light, they flower underground. I once found thirty of these hairy spider orchids flowering when I scratched away leaf litter in a nice moist hollow – my all time favourite botanical thrill!'

It's not just the stunning flowers that make the woods of Abel Tasman such a wonder to explore in spring. 'A dazzling green bird arrives in the spring from the Solomon Islands 4,000km to the north - the shining cuckoo, or pipihauraroa – 'the little bird that travels far'. They arrive calling for a mate and search for a nest to lay their egg – another fleeting treasure in the springtime bush.

'We also hear the kākā calling – a stunning native parrot that is now successfully breeding in the park. You'll hear their 'ka-aa' call or catch a flash of bright orange – their underwings are glorious – as they fly through the bush searching for a tree hole to nest in.'

Find out more about the Abel Tasman national park and the work of Project Janszoon at [www.janszoon.org](http://www.janszoon.org)



New Zealand

Abel Tasman's forests are home to Kahikatea or white pine, New Zealand's tallest tree, which can grow up to an astonishing 60m tall. Project Janszoon's ambition is to extend the once-vanishing swamp forests, where the species thrives, by over 25 hectares by 2024, giving these titans of Tasman a chance to thrive once again



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# Whispers in the Woods

Nature writer Tiffany Francis-Baker digs into the roots of the Wood Wide Web, a 450-million-year-old communication system that is beginning to reveal the deepest mysteries of the forest

The woodlands of Britain are places of dual identity; bursting with new life, yet murmuring with the gentle tide of death and decay. In autumn, the leaves, once green and glistening, fall to the earth and rot to pieces, while the gaps they leave behind allow the sunlight to pour into the heart of the wood and cast it into golden shadow. Autumn is often seen as a time of deterioration, but it is also the season of rejuvenation – a time to observe the cycle of nature in its entirety. Plants crumble into particles and bring life back to the soil, sinking into the damp earth before being devoured by the roots of new plants, ready to begin their lives again. To walk in the woods is to see creation in a continual loop. But what about the things we cannot see? What about the world that lies deep beneath our feet, hidden in a tangle of tree roots and spores?

Over the last few decades, an ecological research revolution has changed the way we think about forests forever. At its core is a concept known as the Wood Wide Web, more formally known as a mycorrhizal network of fungi and plants (from the Greek words *mykós*, meaning fungus, and *riza*, meaning root). Estimated to be around 450 million years old, this ancient network joins and connects individual plants together using gossamer-fine fungal tubes that weave through the soil and into the tips of plant roots. This connection then allows the plants to not only communicate with each other, but also to trade micronutrients, nurse sick plants and saplings, and warn against insect infestations. Some dying trees have been found to share their remaining resources with the rest of the community, while young seedlings clouded by shade have been sent extra resources by their neighbours.

One of the Wood Wide Web's pioneering scientists, Suzanne Simard, discovered how some trees will even collaborate seasonally to help each other push through their toughest months. In her 2021 book *Finding the Mother Tree*,

she recalls how her research team were able to track the flow of carbon as it was shared between birch and Douglas fir trees. When the birch trees lost their leaves, they received extra carbon from the firs; the birch trees then supplied carbon back to the fir trees that were growing in the shade. The result of this exchange was better overall health for both species, more opportunity to photosynthesise, and greater resilience in the face of any disturbance.

The revelation of the Wood Wide Web's existence has reframed our knowledge of the natural world, but it has also opened up more questions than researchers might currently be able to answer. There are likely more ways in which the network functions, and more to understand about how the members of this fascinating community coexist. If each is intricately tied to another, where does one species begin and another end? Is it accurate to still see trees and plants as individuals, or would they be better described as a superorganism made up of independent citizens? How exactly do they share knowledge and trade nutrients? And does the word 'friendship' have any place in all of this?

## Secrets of the soil

Soil is a mystery. We hold it in our hands and call it dirt, but there is so much more to this simple brown substance than meets the eye.

A mixture of tiny rocks, dead plants and animals, air and water, soil is also home to the not-quite-visible fungal spores and bacteria that only reveal themselves through the eye of a microscope. And it is only through the slow, steady creation of soil, season by season, that the planet can grow things anew. Soil gives rise to new flowers, shrubs and trees that feed the rest of the ecosystem and enable the cycle of life to continue flowing. It also anchors roots, cleans our water, stores carbon, buffers against pollutants and helps prevent flooding. It is vital to the survival of almost every species on earth, which is why soil erosion, in which soil is severely degraded or



Tiffany has published several nature books, including an exploration of landscapes after dark, and guides to both foraging and beekeeping. She's also an illustrator and a custodian of the South Downs national park in Hampshire, where she lives



500 million

estimated age of the Wood Wide Web

3 trillion

trees on the planet

60%

of trees are connected to ectomycorrhizal fungi (EM)

10%

loss of EM if we don't reduce carbon emissions

28,000

tree species mapped onto the wood wide web database

deemed infertile, has become one of the most pressing environmental issues of the day.

And although only a recent discovery, scientists have already recognised the value of the Wood Wide Web within the planet's overall health and resilience to climate change. The type of mycorrhizal fungi found in the network plays an important role in our ecosystems, from nutrient cycling and disease regulation to removing contaminants, mitigating greenhouse gases and regulating water supply. They also contribute to modern agriculture by promoting resistance to stress factors like droughts, temperature rises and low nutrition, all of which are expected to become more frequent and intense as climate change continues to pick up speed. To many researchers, it is clear the Wood Wide Web supports not only trees and plants, but also the very essence of life itself – including our own species.

It is through this spirit of collaboration that the true magic of the Wood Wide Web reveals itself. For many of us, the natural world, although beautiful, strong and complex, can

also appear ruthless and aggressive. A 'dog eat dog' strategy of survival, in which every plant, animal and insect is willing to do, eat, kill or maim anything to make it through another day. But in this case, at least, that model is not accurate. Whether they are conscious of it or not (another as yet unanswerable question),

Trees have the ability to understand the needs of their fellows, to share with those who need it and trust that their own need will be met in return

these plants are fully aware that their survival relies not on the individual, but the collective. A single, isolated tree will inevitably fail, but a forest community based on collaboration, generosity and fairness, in which the weak are cared for by the strong, will thrive for hundreds and thousands of years.

It is a simple lesson, and one that our own species could greatly benefit from learning. Trees have the ability to understand the needs of their fellows, to share with those who need it and trust that their own needs will be met in return. We are only just beginning to understand the complex structure of the Wood Wide Web, but it has already been made clear that, despite our anthropocentric world view, we have so much to learn from our animal and non-animal counterparts. No man is an island, after all.

## Further reading

Recent years have seen a slew of excellent books on the Wood Wide Web. Here's a few we'd recommend



**Suzanne Simard, Finding the Mother Tree**  
World-renowned scientist Susan Simard reveals the startling truths about trees that she's learned over a lifetime of study



**Peter Wohlleben, The Hidden Life of Trees**  
Peter uncovers the wondrous scientific processes happening right beneath our feet that help trees grow, share nutrients and communicate



**Merlin Sheldrake, Entangled Life**  
Causing a sensation when it was published in 2020, Merlin's deep dive into the world of fungi offers a mind-bending view of the mycorrhizal network



## From silence into song

A story of the destructive and healing power of radiation in song

Thomas Moors, co-founder and Director of the Shout at Cancer charity, tells us the remarkable story behind a new performance project, in which the recorded 'voices' of Hiroshima's Survivor Trees give laryngeal cancer survivors the chance to communicate through song.

'From Silence Into Song' brings together the voices of a choir of cancer survivors, treated with radiotherapy, with a choir of trees that survived the catastrophic nuclear bombs in Japan in 1945. These life-affirming choirs unite their voices, breaking their silence in songs of hope. Radiation has a

**Above, from left to right:** A choir of survivors; a survivor tree that withstood the Hiroshima bomb; recording the 'voices' of Hiroshima's survivor trees

**Below:** Test shot of a tree using thermal imaging, a technique which Philip Clemo will be replicating with survivor trees

dichotomous history, as both an instrument of healing and war. In the late 19th Century X-rays were first used to treat cancer, and in 1918 Ernest Rutherford split the atom, leading to the development of the first atomic bomb. In August 1945 the US detonated two atomic bombs over Japan, destroying the biological and man-made landscape and killing over 200,000 people. Scientists believed that nothing would grow in Hiroshima and Nagasaki for over 75 years.

Amazingly though, over 200 trees survived the destruction, including a Weeping Willow less than 400m from the Hiroshima blast epicentre. These trees became known as the Hibakujumoku, 'Survivor Trees'. Many are still alive today and continue to be a symbol of hope and overcoming adversity.

British Director and Composer Philip

Clemo has worked with Japanese colleagues and audio pioneers Hottinger Bruel & Kjaer, using specialist microphones and highly sensitive sensors to record surface and internal sounds from the survivor trees, including the clicks and pops of the sap rising. Now we can hear the voices of these once silent witnesses.

**Like the Hibakujumoku (survivor trees), this choir is a life-affirming symbol of survival against the odds**

The voices of these inspirational survivor trees have come together in new compositions with another truly inspiring choir: the choir of the voiceless.

I created the Shout at Cancer choir for cancer survivors who have had radiotherapy in combination with a laryngectomy: the surgical removal of the voicebox. Like the Hibakujumoku, this choir is a life-affirming symbol of survival against the odds, in which I teach members how to rediscover their own voices. As with the trees, the choir members were once silent but they will now be singing together in harmony with the survivor trees to spread their joint message of resilience, survival and hope.

This project celebrates the survival instinct dwelling within each living thing and the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity. The team has used cutting-edge and novel technologies to capture imagery and soundscapes in unusual ways, delving beyond ordinary perception. For this extraordinary project filming techniques, including thermal imaging, infra-red, aerial, close-up and slow motion, are used to capture each tree's character in all its defiance and magnificence.

'From Silence Into Song' will be presented in a concert at the Royal Overseas League on 27 January 2023. This will be an excellent opportunity to take a moment for yourself: join us, relax, listen, reflect and connect.'





# FOLK ASCENDING

The composer Ralph Vaughan Williams was inspired by English folk music when crafting his best-known works. However, there is more to his music than just nostalgia, writes Abi Millar

On 12 October, the music world will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). One of Britain's most prolific composers,

Vaughan Williams penned nine symphonies and five operas, along with an array of hymn tunes, film scores, carols, ballets, chamber music, and concerti. He is most famous for the likes of *The Lark Ascending* and *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, which consistently top polls of radio listeners' favourites.

Compared with the more avant-garde composers of his period, Vaughan Williams' output is nothing if not accessible. He is known for his soaring melodies, which evoke bucolic scenes from a pre-industrial age. However, that simplicity should not be taken as simplistic. As a growing wave of critics now assert, Vaughan Williams is a far more diverse and interesting figure than he is sometimes given credit for.

'When I began my work on Vaughan Williams in the late 80s, there was virtually nobody working on the subject,' says Vaughan Williams scholar Julian Onderdonk, Professor of Music Theory, History and Composition at West

Chester University. 'His music was too old hat, it wasn't edgy enough. But as scholarship has moved away from that, I think his pioneering achievement is increasingly recognised.'

This achievement is perhaps best contextualised through thinking about his interest in folk music. As Onderdonk's own work has explored, Vaughan Williams' supposedly parochial style actually came from a place of political radicalism. He was invested in promoting working-class culture, and – contrary to the modernist ideal of the artist at odds with society – saw the artist as the servant of the people.

'Vaughan Williams believed very firmly that music needed to speak to a broad public,' says Onderdonk. 'I think folk songs helped prevent his music from becoming over-elaborate. They showed how to be simple and direct, even when he wasn't being folk.'

## Local traditions and finding folk

Beginning in his early thirties, Vaughan Williams spent significant portions of time biking through the English countryside (mostly East Anglia, Sussex and Hertfordshire) familiarising himself with regional folk tunes. Although he spent most of his life in London, he wanted to cast a light on local traditions.

'He had been aware of folk song from an early age through the work of the collectors John and Lucy Broadwood, and was interested enough to begin lecturing on the subject from 1903,' says Tiffany Hore, Library and Archives Director at The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, part of the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). 'He collected his first song, *Bushes and Briars*, from Charles Potiphar in Essex, later that year, and in the years that

followed he collected over 800 songs and carols.'

In doing so, he established himself as one of the most important figures of the first English folk music revival – a period during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when collectors sought

to preserve what was seen as a vanishing art. In the face of growing industrialisation, it seemed that the rural ways were dying out, and old ways of life were being forgotten.

The emphasis was on conducting fieldwork, and transcribing songs by the remaining performers before it was too late. In this, Vaughan Williams stands alongside other key collectors such as Cecil Sharp, and George Butterworth and Ella Mary Leather. Together, they participated in the Folk-Song Society, which eventually merged with the English Folk Dance Society to become the EFDSS. Vaughan Williams served as president of the EFDSS from its formation in 1932 till his death in 1958.

'What sets Vaughan Williams apart from his contemporaries is the way in which he used the songs he notated,' says Hore. 'Others such as Butterworth and Percy Grainger incorporated folk material into their classical compositions, but Vaughan Williams took this to a new level.'

For starters, he worked tirelessly as an arranger of folk songs, producing nearly 50 publications with around 260 arrangements, and adapting about 70 examples for *The English Hymnal*. He also wove these tunes into his instrumental work – for example in *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* for harp and string orchestra, and his *English Folk Song Suite*. ❶



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Born in 1872 in Gloucestershire, Ralph Vaughan Williams would become one of Britain's best-loved composers. With works including *The Lark Ascending* (1914), Williams wrote over six decades and composed ballets, operas and chamber music alongside both religious and secular pieces



‘He very much favoured modal tunes, which simply means using an unusual scale so that they sound a bit different from the mainstream, popular music,’ says Onderdonk.

Even when he wasn’t quoting songs directly, much of his work bears their influence. *The Lark Ascending*, for instance, features what Onderdonk calls a ‘folky’ middle section, characterised by its energetic pulse and sing-song melody.

‘Sometimes he created medleys or potpourris of folk tunes, for society dances and things like that,’ says Onderdonk. ‘But for serious concert music, he would of course develop them in the way that Debussy or Brahms or Wagner would. He was inspired by folk music to write his own original melodies that partake of the folk spirit.’

For Vaughan Williams, as for his contemporaries, there was a nationalist element to this undertaking. At the time, English music was somewhat stigmatised –

a ‘weak sister’ to the French, German and Italian music that was so revered throughout the continent.

As Vaughan Williams wrote in 1941: ‘The attitude of foreign to English musicians is unsympathetic, self-opinionated and pedantic. They believe that their tradition is the only one... and that anything that is not in accordance with that tradition is ‘wrong’ and arises from insular ignorance.’

The figureheads of this movement wanted to create a distinctly English, ‘pastoral’ style of classical music, which would match the mood of deepening nationalism in the build-up to World War I. Vaughan Williams, then, sought to rid his style of Teutonic influences and supplant them with a folky element he saw as more essentially

English.

‘Vaughan Williams believed that English folk culture – meaning folk tales and folk music – reflected an English spirit, because that’s what everyone believed back then,’ says Onderdonk. ‘He wanted to blend folk traditions with a few mainstream European traditions and genres, to make English music count on the international stage.’

Clearly there are problems with this idea, which extend beyond any concerns we may have with nationalism generally. For one thing, it relies on a romanticised ideal of folk music, which doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. Far from being a point of national distinction, different strains of European folk culture actually share deep similarities and common roots.

Some critics have also taken umbrage against the idea of middle-class collectors purloining working class tunes, and using them to get income from the copyright. Onderdonk thinks that, while Vaughan Williams can’t be completely exonerated of that, he did take an interest in the people, as well as just the music. Similarly, while he bought into the idea of an ancient English



150<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY CONCERT

ROSL will be hosting a special performance to celebrate the works of Vaughan Williams on 11 October, the day before what would have been the composer’s 150th birthday. The programme will include ‘Songs of Travel’ sung by this year’s AMC singers winner, James Atkinson, and also a performance of his most popular work ‘The Lark Ascending’, featuring 2016 Gold Medal winner Emily Sun.

tradition, he was aware there might be outside influences on folk song.

‘He was actually more open minded than a lot of his peers,’ says Onderdonk. ‘He collected songs that came from Ireland, he recognised that some songs could have Scandinavian influence. That’s the kind of thing an English chauvinist would not have done.’

Despite these nuances, it was for his romanticised view of Englishness that Vaughan Williams lost clout among the modernists. Only in the 1990s did his work come back around, with critics conceding that Vaughan Williams was more than just a nostalgic nationalist.

‘The modernists valued an alienated, edgy artistic expression, but musicology has got past these narrow strictures,’ says Onderdonk. ‘It recognises that all kinds of things are worthwhile, even very straightforward music, and today Vaughan Williams is providing an inspiration to new composers.’

This critical about-face may have been lost on the public, who never stopped loving Vaughan Williams. There have always been performances, and always been devoted listeners with an ear for the sheer beauty of his work. As we approach his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, now’s a good time to immerse ourselves in his music once again.

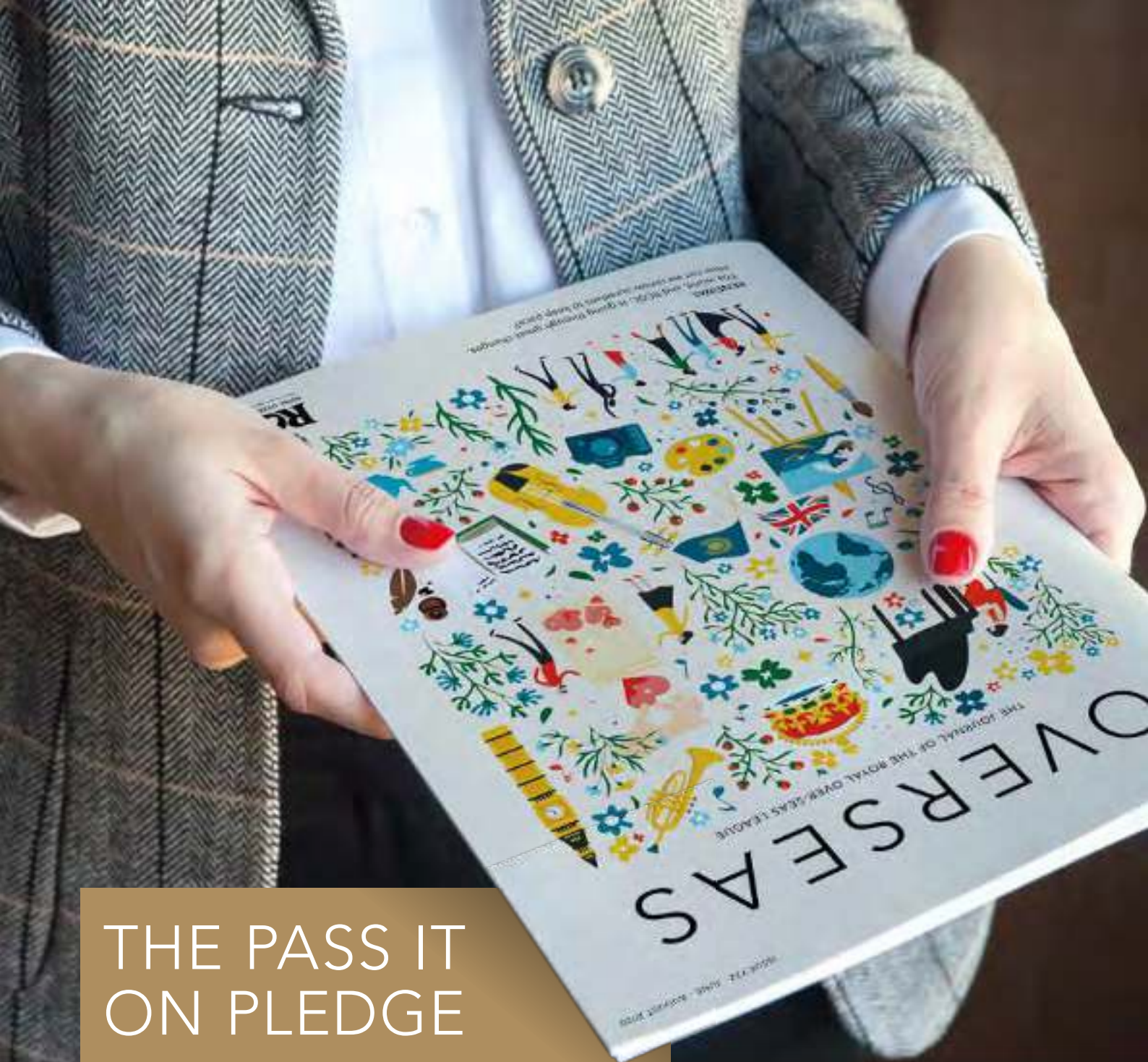
WE WANTED TO BLEND  
FOLK TRADITIONS WITH  
A FEW MAINSTREAM  
EUROPEAN TRADITIONS AND  
GENRES TO MAKE ENGLISH  
MUSIC COUNT ON THE  
INTERNATIONAL STAGE

INTO THE WOODS

Pertinently for the theme of this issue, Vaughan Williams wrote a hymn tune to words that begin ‘Into the woods’. This is a musical setting of a poem by Sidney Lanier, and features in the hymnal *Songs of Praise Enlarged*. The first four lines are as follows:

*‘Into the woods my Master went,  
Clean forspent, forspent.  
Into the woods my Master came,  
Forspent with love and shame.’*

Onderdonk says that while the tune doesn’t much resemble a folk song, it does use the Phrygian mode, an unusual type of minor scale. ‘We know he was attracted to the unusual modes of folk songs, or at least privileged those that were ‘modal’, ‘ he adds.



THE PASS IT  
ON PLEDGE

When you’re finished with your copy of *Overseas*, please don’t throw it straight into the recycling, pass it on!

We’re encouraging our members to spread the word, so if you know any non-members that might enjoy reading the articles and the great window they provide into the world of ROSL, please pass it on to them.

If they end up becoming a member, you could even be entered into our prize draw to win a hamper from Davy’s if they mention you on their application, as part of our ‘Propose a Friend’ scheme.

[www.rosl.org.uk/proposeafriend](http://www.rosl.org.uk/proposeafriend)



**ROSL**  
ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE  
ESTD 1910





A branch-inspired lamp design seeks to reflect the beauty of the silverwood panels

# THE HALL OF INDIA & PAKISTAN

Our magnificent event hall has had a much-needed refurbishment to restore it to its 1930s glory. Rosie Allen speaks to designer Afra Affara and ROSL's General Manager Warren Miller about the inspiration behind the redesign and the new features that make this historic space really sing

## AFRA AFFARA

### Designer

It's a privilege to work in such historic rooms as those at Over-Seas House. For me the key to creating an interior which feels immersive and authentic is to let the room talk; to allow the stories, heritage and original features of the space to come alive and inform the design.

Art Deco was a huge inspiration for the Hall of India and Pakistan. The room was built in the 1930s, and the luxury and opulence of that era just seemed to fit the grandeur of the room so well. You'll see elements of Art Deco design reflected in many of the room's features, not least the carpet, which is a real focal point. I chose gold and black as the colour palette, as they give a sumptuous feel and allow the intricate design to stand out beautifully. The detailing on the carpet includes a stylised scallop shell pattern, which feels classically 1930s, and scrolling inspired by the works of art deco artist Edgar Brandt, who created spectacular designs in wrought iron. Ostrich leather textures and peacock motifs added an element of the Art Deco to the design.

To embellish the beautiful silverwood panelled walls I created four mirrored artworks that would represent the Hall of India. Each was inspired by a national flower: lotus for India, jasmine for Pakistan and waterlily for Bangladesh, along with a fourth panel which shows a floral design influenced more generally by the traditional designs of these countries. The technique I used to create these works is reverse painting (*or verre églomisé*), a French term that describes the process of painting an image onto the reverse of a piece of glass.

Lighting is an important element in any room design, and for an elegant addition I chose sumptuous gold branch-inspired lamp fittings, which felt thematically in keeping

with the beautiful silverwood on which they are mounted. The ceiling remains pared back, with a fresh coat of a warm, yellow-tinged white contrasting the opulence of the room elsewhere.

## WARREN MILLER

### General Manager

The Hall of India and Pakistan hadn't been updated since the 1980s – and it showed. The décor felt tired and didn't reflect the grandeur that the original design had intended. With five weeks to complete the refurbishment, our aim was to make the room as visually close to its original 1930s design as possible, while being mindful of preserving the unique original features that make this a Grade I-Listed building. We were led by archive material and images, along with deeper research of interiors at the time, in order to make the refurbishment as authentic as possible. In practice, this meant removing the modern dividing screens and replacing them with beautiful satin curtains, along with undertaking extensive French

polishing of the Indian silver-grey wood panelling. The panelling was gifted to us in 1937 by the Indian Government following a fundraising tour to India by the then Assistant Secretary Mr Eric Rice and you'll see the names of individual donors inscribed in the wood as a lasting tribute to the Indian Government and to those of the Indian Princes and other Indian members who contributed at the time. We had to restore the beautiful panelling with extreme care and respect, allowing the natural and rich colour and texture of the material to shine through.

We had a further challenge in finding the best way to improve the poor acoustics in the Hall of India and Pakistan, whilst respecting the Grade I-Listed space. After advice from an acoustic specialist, we opted for floating acoustic floor to be installed. This ensured not only an effective solution allowing us to use both the Hall of India and Pakistan and Princess Alexandra Hall at the same time, it also meant we protected both the historically significant floor and skirting in the hall.



## INSPIRATION

The patterns and design of the beautiful new carpet in the Hall of India and Pakistan were inspired by the iconic works of French designer and ironworker Edgar William Brandt. His pieces were characterised by swirling floral motifs, foliate forms and highly stylised patterns, largely wrought in iron to create showstopper pieces such as radiator covers, gates and fireplace grills. He also served in the First World War, leading him to become involved in the design, development and invention of weaponry

Image: Douglas Fry, Piranha Photography





# WOOD ARTISTRY

## Reimagining offcuts into art with Olly Fathers

Visual Arts Curator Robin Footitt talks to artist Olly Fathers to discover the inspiration and craftsmanship behind his beautiful wood veneer art pieces currently taking pride of place in the Brabourne Room

If you have dined in the Brabourne Room recently you may have noticed the new display of works by British artist Olly Fathers as a part of ROSL ARTS' Artist Focus series. Titled *Series of Offcuts 2* they are a set of simple compositions rendered in different shapes and colours of wood veneer. *Offcuts* is formed from the remnants of Fathers' other veneer artworks and has a beautiful message of sustainability, something he has long sought to achieve. 'Looking back through all my work I've always had a tendency to not want to throw things away or disregard things that are created due to the process of making' he says. 'I find them to have almost

an innocence and integrity that cannot be replicated.

Whilst making some veneer pieces I started to amass a large collection of offcuts and I have been exploring a variety of ways to use these beautiful shapes and pieces of wood. This has led to a mixture of different works, but the series of offcuts is one I'm particularly pleased with.'

Most of my starting points for a new series or projects are often driven by a realisation or mistake even, within the making process

Larger *Offcuts* works are also on display at the Morgan Furniture Showroom in Central London, which opened in late May 2022 as a part of Clerkenwell Design Week. Both exhibitions come at a time when the rising interest in Olly Fathers' art has led to him working in his Brixton studio full time, a space he has occupied for 12 years. 'Besides my family, art is my life at the moment. This has been nearly my first whole year as a full-time artist and I never get bored or tired of coming into work. I've known I wanted to be an artist from a young age and despite having to work several other jobs alongside it to maintain a practice, I've never really considered anything else an option.'

Olly Fathers, *Series of offcuts 2* (2022), various wood veneers in Solid Sapele frame, 41 x 31cm

Main image: Olly Fathers, *Series of Woodcuts 2*, 2022.

Inset: One of Olly's woodcuts which are currently living up the Brabourne Room

Growing up in Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, Fathers moved to London to study at Wimbledon College of Arts, firmly establishing an experimental studio practice over the past decade across multiple mediums from painting and sculpture to large-scale murals and collage. 'I have an innate desire to constantly learn new things



and challenge myself. This is why I ended up working with a variety of materials and mediums. Initially I started working with wood veneer and marquetry purely out of a fascination of how people did it. My grandparents used to have some old furniture that had some decorative elements and I think my intrigue stemmed from there. I started by buying bags of offcuts from eBay and spent hours watching YouTube, reading books and a lot of trial and error. I have

found the whole learning process incredibly satisfying though and without going through this way of learning things like the *Offcuts* series would never have come about. Most of my starting points for a new series or projects are often driven by a realisation or mistake even, within the making process.'

*Olly Fathers, Series of Offcuts 2 is on view in the Brabourne Room, ROSL Clubhouse, London until late 2022. Contact [roslarts@rosl.org.uk](mailto:roslarts@rosl.org.uk) for all sales enquiries.*

*Olly Fathers, Offcuts can be seen at Morgan Furniture Showroom, Clerkenwell throughout 2022*





# ROSL INTERNATIONAL ARTIST RESIDENCY 2022

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
THE ART HOUSE, WAKEFIELD

Visual Arts Curator Robin Footitt took time to sit down with Samuel Nnorom (b. 1990, Nigeria) and Madhu Das (b. 1987, India), two artists who will be participating in our two-month residency across Wakefield and London this autumn

Samuel Nnorom, *Daily Bread* (2022), Ankara fabric, 226 x 142 x 23cm  
Madhu Das, *Landscape that is not ours* (2018), archival print on Hahnemuhle archival paper, 101.6 x 67.8cm

## SAMUEL NNOROM

I understand that this will be your first time travelling outside of Africa – how have you arrived at this point in your career as an international artist?

My career kicked off in 2021 as a full-time studio artist, I also began to have some international presence from gallerists, curators and collectors who showed a huge interest in the style of my works. I must say that a lot has changed in the way I perceive art as a career because before now, apart from being a side-hustle, I couldn't believe that just being an artist could pay my bills. But with commitment, persistence, and God's grace, I realise that there is more than just having talent.

I live and practice in Nsukka, Nigeria, which is mostly populated by rural settlements and income is mostly generated from university students who live in the community. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka is a prestigious university where the artist El Anatsui taught as Professor of Sculpture (El Anatsui is a Ghanaian sculptor particularly well known for his large-scale pieces composed of thousands of folded and crumpled pieces of metal sourced from local recycling stations and bound together with copper wire).



How do you see your connection to your own traditions influencing the time you will spend in the studio at The Art House, Wakefield?

My current art practice explores Ankara fabric wax (African wax print), shaping bubbles of various colours and size, creatively stitched together. Actions like sewing, rolling, tying, stringing, suspending, and cutting are used as metaphors that explicate the temporariness, permanence and liminality of the human condition. My use of material draws its metaphor from the concept of the vacillating origin of Ankara fabric wax to Africa, while the bubbles technique suggests to me elements or a structure that holds something for a short while. My artworks are not limited to the history of Ankara fabric, rather they laid the terrain upon which creative discourse is narrated through personal experiences, recent happenings, futuristic predictions, global content and the general human condition.

I will also be interested in creating works with the local community in Wakefield as part of a communal art practice which will probably have a monumental scale.

What three items will you travel with that you can't live without?

Interestingly, I can't think of anything that I can't do without, maybe because this is my first time travelling outside my continent. However, I think my mental health, peace of mind and positive energy can carry me through any process or journey.

## MADHU DAS

In contrast with Samuel you've had quite a bit of experience on artist residencies to date – could you tell us more?

In 2018, I was the recipient of a Delfina artist residency, so this is going to be my second visit to the UK. Currently, I'm a full-time practising artist living and working in Mumbai, India. I was the recipient of the TAF (The Arts Family) Emerging Artist Award South Asia London (2021); Generator Grant, Experimenter Gallery, India (2021); Emerging Artists Award, FICA/ Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation, India (2020); Inlaks Fine Arts Award (2015) and was selected by Harvard South Asia Institute for the Emerging South Asian Visual Artists Program (2016).

My practice incorporates a project-based, multi-disciplinary intersection that has been cultivated by material, landscape, language and communication. It is defined by the time in the form of visual essays; it is an ongoing excavation and investigation of the ideas around memory, trauma, anxiety and belief connected to geography, community,



or an individual persona intrigued by the way cultural and political factors influence one's life. In a way the two are woven together in the space.

There is an interesting parallel between your connections to textiles research and the history of Wakefield...

During the residency at The Art House my research will examine the raw material and textile industrial heritage in Wakefield and its surrounding area in pre-industrial Britain. I drew connections between Wakefield and Mumbai and the two cities' rich textile industrial histories, to explore their geographical identity during the residency. Upon completion, this

research will culminate as a presentation on rediscovering roots and suppressed histories, where I plan to show the stark contrast between the history of raw materials and textile industries in Wakefield and the wider region in the form of visual essays, notes and installation, perhaps video.

And which items will you travel with that you can't live without? My sketchbook, ZOOM H6 Audio Field Recorder and a Sony 6500 camera







## Inside the London Library

Step inside the iconic literature-lover's paradise as Rosie Allen speaks to Director Philip Marshall about *Dracula*, creating a haven for budding writers and the 'serendipity of the stacks'

### *What attracted you to working at the London Library?*

Before I became Director, I knew nothing about the Library's incredible history and the huge role that it continues to play in supporting readers, writers, and thinkers of all different kinds. I was amazed to find, for example, that a seemingly endless list of great names had relied on and been inspired by the Library, including Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, TS Eliot, Edna O'Brien, Tom Stoppard, and Kazuo Ishiguro, to name but a few. When I joined, the Library had a

tremendous collection, many stunning atmospheric workspaces, and a host of brilliant, knowledgeable staff, but there was a serious danger that it was no longer sustainable. I was really drawn to the challenge of making sure that the benefits of this 'hidden treasure' became much more widely shared and that it would be secured for the benefit of many generations to come. I'm delighted to say that we have managed to grow our membership in each of the last four years and am especially pleased that we are growing fastest amongst the under 30s.

### *What's your favourite room in the Library, for both atmosphere and aesthetics?*

There are so many wonderful rooms in the Library that it is a hard choice to pick just one. But I think my favourite space is probably the 'Back Stacks'. It feels a bit like an Aladdin's cave for books. The gaps in the iron grill flooring (which help to circulate the air) mean that no matter where you look, above or below, there is nothing but shelves upon shelves of books for miles (we have around 17 miles of shelves across the whole Library). Plus, there's a wonderful bookish smell. Of course, one of

the most special things about the Library is the fact that you can browse almost all of the collection on open shelves. This means that you tend to come across books you really weren't expecting to find – members call this the 'serendipity of the stacks'.

The Back Stacks have acted as a great backdrop/setting for films and live theatre, including an episode of the BBC's *Killing Eve*, and in 2019, Creation Theatre performed an adaptation of *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells, which took audience members on a tour through the Back Stacks.

### *The Library has a storied history and many famous members, past and present. Are there any surprising or interesting stories that you learnt when you began as Director?*

In 2018, during my first few years as Director here, we decided to research the Library's connection with Bram Stoker, who had been a member while he was writing *Dracula* between 1890 and 97. A colleague was able to identify 27 books in the Back Stacks that Stoker had listed in his detailed research notes. Those books contained various marginalia that exactly matched the passages that Stoker had identified

as important. These books had been part of our borrowing collection for years, open for anyone to take home, but it seemed likely that these were the very books he used for his research.

We were able to confirm our suspicions with a book from the Library's safes. Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was donated to the Library in 1937 by Noel Stoker, Bram Stoker's son. Inside are extensive marginalia, pencil crosses and underlinings, made by the book's original owner, Bram Stoker. They were the same style as the marginalia found in the 27 newly discovered books, confirming that these books were indeed the very copies he had used to research his gothic masterpiece.

*Dracula* is just one example of our hidden histories. Since she joined the Library in 2019, our archivist Nathalie Belkin has scoured the Library to inventory thousands of items from meeting minutes to member lists. We've discovered, for example, that the Library had a great number of Suffragettes in membership – at a time when not many places were accepting women. We've also discovered, in our visitor books, that Ralph Waldo Emerson visited the Library in 1873 to meet founding members on his last trip overseas. It shows that the Library had a far-reaching effect around the world.

### *The London Library was the first lending library in the city – how does it feel to be part of an organisation that was such an integral part of literary history?*

Wonderful! The London Library's collection, writing spaces, and community of members have, for 180 years, fuelled and inspired many of the UK's most talented writers and thinkers. Our 2021 impact report found that The London Library's 7,200+ members produce on an annual basis over 700 published fiction or non-fiction books, over 15,000 articles, and over 460 film scripts for stage/screen. The members who create these works attribute a third of the creative process to their Library membership.

These figures show how we are supporting the creativity of our members. We feel proud to be helping and want to share the benefits of the Library as widely as possible. The Library is also committed to building literary partnerships and we are delighted to be working with English PEN, the Jhalak Prize, the Women's Prize for Playwriting, and the Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award to name just a few. 📖



Above: Director Philip Marshall.

Left: Images of the Art Room, which houses the larger of the Library's 25,000 art books





*Was the London Library a bit of a game changer in respect of how people's reading habits expanded and changed in the city?*

At its start, the Library offered something that did not currently exist in London – a lending library. The Library at the British Museum did not lend and while there were lending libraries already operating in other cities around the country, London's readers were not so well catered for. Public libraries were not created until the 1850s. The list of illustrious writers and thinkers right from the very beginning (often early in their careers) shows just how important it was to have open access to a serious collection of books and there must be a great many books that would never have been written if it had not been for this tremendous, pooled resource.

But the Library is always ready to respond to members' changing reading habits. During the pandemic, at a time when very few libraries were able to make their collections accessible at all, the Library's Postal Loans Team ran an enhanced service that saw more than 5,000 books sent out to members. It was an

incredible achievement when working and travelling during lockdown was such a huge challenge for the team.

We also provide access to a huge online collection that includes hundreds of thousands of titles. This is especially useful for in-depth academic research.

*What is your favourite genre of book to read while at the library?*

I don't have a favourite genre – my interests are very wide-ranging and I like trying out new things. At the moment I am reading a biography, last week it was a thriller and the next on my list is a history book! I enjoy reading books recommended to me by members and am always drawn to the new books written by members.

Our window overlooking Masons Yard showcases some of the most recent volumes written by members to have joined the Library collection. The display is curated by London Library librarians and is always wonderfully eclectic, I'd recommend it to anyone looking for some inspiration for their next read.

**Whether in the reading rooms or tucked away, members tell me that an hour spent writing in the library is worth four hours anywhere else!**



**ROSL VISIT TO THE LONDON LIBRARY**

Join us on Wednesday 5 October for a tour which will reveal the history of both the organisation and building, including a display of some treasures from its special collection. Books and artefacts especially relevant to ROSL will be selected for you to view, making this a tour to remember.

**For tickets and more information please visit [www.rosl.or.uk/events](http://www.rosl.or.uk/events)**

*The Writers Room is a hub for budding authors – why do you think it's such a popular location for writers?*

Actually, our writers tend to spread out across the Library's spaces, depending on the environment that might suit them on that particular day. The Reading Room is our largest and most popular room. It is a stunning and spacious place to write. Whereas the Stacks provide quiet atmospheric corners for writers looking for a little more solitude. Whether in the reading rooms or tucked away, members tell me that an hour spent writing in the library is worth four hours anywhere else!

The Library has always been a home for writers and we are very proud of that long tradition. I think many writers today find inspiration in the fact that the books they hold or the desks they write at have been used by so many great writers before them.

*London is a city steeped in literary history – what is it about London that you think is so inspiring to writers and readers alike?*

London is an incredibly creative, dynamic and diverse city. There is a sense of ideas and opportunities all around, and millions of stories are being imagined and lived all the time. Whether you're a reader or a writer, that must be a great source of inspiration.

# Christmas and New Year



AT ROSL



Celebrate Christmas in beautiful St James's, with our exciting festive packages. By planning ahead you can take advantage of special rates for accommodation at the London Clubhouse in December, including scrumptious meals and a choice of seasonal events and activities

## A Christmas Stay

### CHRISTMAS EVE

Choose our two-night stay package (24 and 25 December) to receive a warm welcome, enjoying mince pies and mulled wine on arrival. Members can dine in the stylish 1910 Dining Room where a delicious festive menu will be served, and a selection of family board games can be enjoyed in the Drawing Room. For information on local church services, please ask at Reception.

### CHRISTMAS DAY

Wake up on Christmas Day in the grand surrounds of our historic Grade I-Listed clubhouse. Celebrations begin at midday with a sparkling drinks reception followed by Executive Chef Elliot Plimmer's spectacular Christmas lunch menu, including half a bottle of wine, along with coffee and mince pies. Each guest will receive a personal gift from ROSL, before a special screening of HM The Queen's speech.

### BOXING DAY

Extend your celebrations a further night (26 December) and join our knowledgeable London tour guide for a Boxing Day walking tour of the local area, setting off from our central location.

### Two-night stay package (24 & 25 December)

- Two nights' accommodation including breakfast
- Mulled wine and mince pies on arrival
- Family board games in the Drawing Room
- HM The Queen's speech
- Delicious Christmas lunch and gift

### Three-night stay package (24, 25 & 26 December)

- Includes all of the above, plus:
- Accommodation on night of 26 December
  - Walking tour of London with a knowledgeable local guide

PRICE PER NIGHT	Single Room	Double Room (Single occupancy)	Double or Twin Room (Double occupancy)
Two nights (24 & 25)	£200	£215	£320
Three nights (24, 25 & 26)	£190	£210	£300

## New Year's Eve

Celebrate a New Year in luxury and style at ROSL, with your exclusive invitation to our black-tie cabaret dinner in the glamorous 1910 Dining Room.

New Year's Eve Package includes:

- 8.30pm, Champagne and canape reception
- 9pm, Cabaret dinner
- 11:50pm, Countdown, Champagne and a screening of London's New Year's firework celebrations
- £200 per head inc VAT (accommodation is in addition to this)

Book our Cabaret Dinner package and benefit from a special discount on your room rate. The deposit payments are non-refundable and non-transferable after 20 December 2022, which is the deadline to book. At the time of booking, you will be requested to pay a **£200 per person deposit**.

PRICE PER NIGHT	Single Room	Double Room (Single occupancy)	Double or Twin Room (Double occupancy)
31 December 2022	£325	£340	£560

### Christmas T&Cs:

At the time of booking, members are requested to **pay a £135pp deposit** and the remaining balance at check out. Deposit payments are non-refundable and non-transferable after the 16 December 2022, which is the booking deadline.

### Book separately

Christmas lunch is £135 per person for adults and £35 for under 12s. At the time of booking, you will be requested to **pay a £135 per person deposit**. The deposit payments are non-refundable and non-transferable after the 16 December 2022, which is the booking deadline.

The Boxing Day walking tour of London may be booked separately at £18 per person.

All rates are inclusive of VAT





## THE ARTS REPORT

## What to see this autumn

Our ARTS team recommend the best cultural goings on around the UK to add to your calendar this season



**Robin Footitt**  
ROSL Arts Curator

Autumn happens to be my favourite time of the year. With the weather cooling and more opportunity to walk about, it really lends itself to exploring new spaces and going further afield. There are many intriguing propositions for the visual arts across the UK throughout the second half of 2022; here are my highlights.

**CORNELIA PARKER**  
Until 16 October 2022,  
Tate Britain, London

Cornelia Parker is one of Britain's best loved and most acclaimed contemporary artists. Her playful use of everyday objects and materials to make grand-scale installations make this retrospective an opportunity to see them all together for the first time. The exhibition includes iconic suspended works as *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (1988–9) and *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*

(1991); the immersive *War Room* (2015) and *Magna Carta* (2015), her monumental collective embroidery, as well as her films and a wealth of her innovative drawings, prints and photographs.

**CERITH WYN EVANS**  
8 October – 5 February 2023,  
MOSTYN, Llandudno

MOSTYN presents a major solo exhibition by Cerith Wyn Evans (b. 1958), the most widely established and internationally recognised Welsh artist working today. His work, especially his intricate neon sculptures, interrogate the idea of perception and question not only how we interpret works, but also how we interpret our surroundings and our broader systems of spoken, visual and written language. Curated by Alfredo Cramerotti, MOSTYN's Director, this site-specific exhibition will be a fully immersive, sensory exploration of the mind and body, our cognitive system and consciousness.

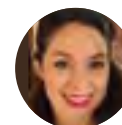
**HOLLOW EARTH: ART, CAVES & THE SUBTERRANEAN IMAGINARY**  
24 September – 22 January 2023,  
Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham

A fascinating subject common to every culture and world religion, caves have been an enduring source of inspiration for artists across the ages. Spanning the last century, *Hollow Earth* at Nottingham Contemporary brings together a wide range of responses to the image and idea of the cave, covering themes of prehistory and myth, ritual and the future. Nottingham itself sits above a network of almost 1,000 hand-carved sandstone caves, dating back to the Middle Ages. Organised in collaboration with Hayward Gallery Touring, the exhibition brings together works by around 50 artists and collectives. It includes painting, sculpture, photography, film and music from across the last century, with a number of new commissions. In 2023, the exhibition will tour to The Glucksman in Cork and to RAMM in Exeter.

**JALA WAHID**

22 October – 30 April 2023,  
BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art,  
Gateshead

Jala Wahid's first major institutional show brings together sculpture, video, sound and text. Wahid's work highlights the ways in which global and inter-regional politics have shaped Kurdish identity. Her innovative practice explores this at the intersection of fiction and reality and touches on urgent issues in relation to nationhood, diasporic living and migration, intergenerational connections and cultural manifestations.



**Rosie Allen**  
Overseas Editor

After the outdoor festivals and garden concerts of summer, the cool embrace of autumn is a great time to return to the cosy confines of galleries, theatres and music venues. Here's my pick of the UK's best indoor art events to explore.

**BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL**  
12 November, 7.30pm,  
Theatre on the Lake, Keswick

Perched on the edge of the Lake District's stunning Derwentwater, in the shadow of brooding hills and formidable fells, Keswick's Theatre on the Lake is a pretty spectacular place in which to meditate on the beauty of the mountains. Banff Mountain Film Festival invites us to do just that.

Originating in Banff, Canada as a means to celebrate mountain culture, the Banff Mountain Film Festival brings together filmmakers and adventurers to document the beauty of some of the world's most awe-inspiring landscapes. Witness 'epic human-powered feats, life-affirming challenges and mind-blowing cinematography' and you may even be inspired enough to tackle Keswick's own Catbells fell yourself.



Abel Selaocoe



Cerith Wyn Evans

**LONDON LITERATURE FESTIVAL**  
20-30 October, Southbank Centre, London

The lure of a good book grows ever stronger as the leaves begin to fall and the nights draw in, and what better way to ease into autumn than discovering a slew of new writers to keep you company throughout the colder months? The London Literature Festival is the city's longest running event of its kind and is dedicated to celebrating the written word. This year's event promises to be a treat for book lovers, featuring a mix of international authors, prize-winning novelists and award giving. Visit londonlitfest.com for more details



**Geoff Parkin**  
Artistic Director

It's always Shakespeare season for me, and my highlight for the autumn combines a stunning venue with crowd-pleasing comedy.

**MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**  
1-5 November 2022, Theatre Royal  
Stratford East

London is of course blessed with a huge array of West End theatres to choose from, in the main presenting work that often goes on to tour around the UK. There are however some gems of theatres a bit further out of the city that I love, including the Hackney Empire and Theatre Royal Stratford East, both of which regularly programme work that originated outside of London and comes to London as part of their tour.

Theatre Royal Stratford East is a beautiful intimate theatre designed by James George Buckle, with later improvements by the renowned Frank Matcham which presents an eclectic year-round programme. In November they present Sheffield Theatre and Ramps on the Moon's production of *Much ADO About Nothing*, Shakespeare's ever popular comedy of romantic interplay between two couples when a group of soldiers arrive in Messina.



The Crucible

Sure to be a treat!



**Cerys Beesley**  
Arts Manager

I always look forward to the release of autumn's new season of events and these are the ones I've circled in my calendar for 2022.

**THE CRUCIBLE**  
14 September– 5 November, National  
Theatre, London

Arthur Miller's most famous play gets another airing a good eight years after the Old Vic's legendary production. Centred around the Salem witch trials, the gripping parable of power and its abuse returns in an urgent new staging by Lyndsey Turner.

**YEOMAN OF THE GUARD**  
3 November – 2 December, English  
National Opera, Coliseum, London

A brand new production of the most beloved operettas *Yeoman of the Guard* takes to the Coliseum stage in November, where the Tower of London is the scene for a tangled web of melancholy and mirth. Visionary Director Jo Davies returns to the London Coliseum alongside the brilliant designer Anthony Ward and Chris Hopkins conducts the slightly darker score, that still manages to remain characteristically playful of Arthur Sullivan.

**ABEL SELAOOE: WHERE IS HOME (HAE KE KAE)**  
Sun 25 September, Southbank Centre,  
London

ROSL Annual Music Competition Alumni, brilliant cellist and musical innovator, Abel Selaocoe returns to the Queen Elizabeth Hall to explore the meaning of home, drawing on diverse influences from across Southern Africa and the Baroque era.



# HITTING THE *High Notes*

Guitarist and winner of the 2022 Annual Music Competition Gold Medal,  
Jack Hancher tells Rosie Allen what it takes to strike gold

*Why did you choose to specialise in guitar and how has it kept you interested all these years later?*

I've been playing for as long as I can remember. I first picked up a guitar at the age of four, and I think one of the things that always interested me was the different sounds you can create. I'm constantly experimenting and trying new things in an attempt to make my playing as colourful as possible.

Something that has developed as I've got older is relishing the intimacy of the instrument. Often, the fact that the guitar is a quiet instrument is seen as a disadvantage, however over the years I've come round to the opinion that it's actually a benefit. There's something special about the atmosphere you can create in a concert with this intimacy. The guitar is rarely, if ever, going to create real intensity with sheer volume, however I do think you can create intensity by playing very softly - softly to the point where the audience are sat absolutely still and almost afraid to make a sound breathing. They're often the moments in concert I enjoy the most.

*Can you tell us a bit about your background in music?*

I was born and grew up in a town called Shrewsbury, which is in the West Midlands. I started playing the guitar as my Grandad (who was a trumpeter) had one in his house. One day I picked it up and was showing an interest in it, so he taught me a couple of simple melodies. I then started having lessons and reading music and at the age of 12 I started entering local youth music competitions. I think it was around then I started taking it more seriously. My other love growing up was (and still is) football, but it was clear I wasn't going to get anywhere with that, so I focused more on my guitar and music. My teacher at the time was Gareth Rees-Roberts, to whom I owe a lot. He introduced me to a wider repertoire, and really helped me develop my technique. At 16 I went to Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. I've been very fortunate with my teachers as I think some can have a 'my way or no way' approach, but all of mine gave me room to express my own musical ideas, and if they weren't convinced by them, rather than saying 'you can't do that', we'd work at the ideas to make them more convincing with little tweaks here and there. I really am very grateful for this, and all of them have had a lasting impact on how I play today.

*What have been your career highlights so far?*

I don't think I'll top winning the ROSL Gold Medal for a while! That was a certainly a huge moment for me, and the following day performing on Radio 3's *In Tune* for the first time. Both certainly helped me reach a far bigger audience than I've reached before, and importantly an audience beyond just guitarists. Prior to that, I was fortunate enough to have been a EuroStrings Artists, which gave me the opportunity to travel around Europe and perform at various guitar festivals. That was a fantastic experience, and one I'm very grateful for.

*What are your ambitions as a musician?*

I think ambitions constantly change as a musician. At the moment, the thing I'm most eager to do is commission new



Alexander Downer with ROSL Vice Patron  
Princess Alexandra at the AMC Awards





Jack performs live on BBC Radio 3's In Tune programme following his AMC win

Guitarist Jack Hancher completed his Master's in Performance at the Royal College of Music in 2018 where he studied with Gary Ryan and Chris Stell and won the RCM Guitar Award 2014 while still in his second year as an undergraduate. Jack has won prizes at the Zagreb Guitar Festival Competition, the Plovdiv GuitArt Festival Competition, earning him the place as a EuroStrings Artists for 2021, and has performed at guitar festivals across Europe.



music for the guitar. In terms of venues, I've been fortunate enough to perform at Wigmore Hall, and I'm not sure it gets any better than that as a classical guitarist. I'd love to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York some day (I can dream!). I would certainly like to record an album, but I'd like to include a new commission on it so that is something that's maybe a little further down the line. I'm certainly open to collaborations. Luckily the guitar can collaborate with a lot of instruments so I'm certain that's something I'll do more of in the future.

*How do you think winning the AMC will help you realise those ambitions?*

I think it will open the door for more collaborations and hopefully commissioning music too. Already I've been booked or approached for concerts and opportunities that wouldn't be happening without or prior to ROSL.

*What music do you listen to and to what extent does this inspire your work?*

I actually don't listen to classical guitar as much as I used to. I regularly find listening to other instruments sparks my

creativity more. For example, when learning Bach, I often listen to violinists. In particular Rachel Podger as I think her interpretation of Bach's music is sublime and certainly inspires me. When learning John Dowland's music for the first time, I found listening to madrigals very inspirational. Although the music I play was written for the lute, I always think in terms of vocals, whether that be how a new voice or line enters, or using different speeds of vibrato.

I often listen to a lot of non-classical music too such as rock and pop. Sometimes it's good for me to switch off a little bit from classical music. It always makes me feel refreshed when I come back to it, whether that's practising or listening.

*What would you say to anyone thinking of taking part in the Annual Music Competition?*

The best advice I can give to anyone thinking of taking part in the AMC is to try and treat every round like a performance opportunity rather than a competition. Don't try to second guess what a panel may be looking for – just go out there and express yourself.

**Already I've been booked or approached for concerts and opportunities that wouldn't be happening without or prior to ROSL**

## NEWS & EVENTS

*The latest from our clubhouse; branches; and art, music, and education projects*



### The Hon. Alexander Downer AC steps down as ROSL Chairman

**Following three years of service, the Hon. Alexander Downer AC will be stepping down as Chairman of ROSL this summer on completion of his term**

Alexander has overseen a transformational period at ROSL, steering the institution through the challenges of the Covid era and overseeing the most significant revitalisation in decades, including large-scale renovation projects in the club house, and hugely successful changes to ROSL's hospitality offerings, including taking our catering back in-house and reopening the 1910 Dining Room. He has worked with the Director-General to introduce a new and exciting Public Affairs series, introducing to ROSL prominent speakers from across

the globe, and thereby helping to make ROSL a place of ideas and thought leadership. All of these significant changes have brought ROSL up-to-date while celebrating our unique heritage. On finishing his term, Alexander said that 'it has been a great honour to serve as the chairman of this historic institution. I know it will thrive in the years ahead.'

Alexander's career has seen him serve as one of Australia's leading public servants, covering politics, diplomacy and the Commonwealth. He was Australia's longest-serving Foreign

Minister and High Commissioner to the UK. In addition to a range of other political and diplomatic roles, he is currently Executive Chairman of the International School for Government at King's College London, Chairman of the UK think tank Policy Exchange and a trustee of the International Crisis Group.

All the team at ROSL wish to thank Alexander for his dedication and leadership over the past three years. He has been instrumental in facilitating positive changes including raising significantly ROSL's profile in the UK and beyond.





## Celebrating ROSL's Royal Charter Centenary in style

In celebration of ROSL's Royal Charter Centenary, Chairman the Hon. Alexander Downer AC and Director-General Dr. Annette Prandzioch were delighted to host the extraordinary talents of Maltese operatic tenor Joseph Calleja – truly a titan of the operatic stage – at our Gala dinner back in June.

Over 100 guests enjoyed a Champagne reception in the newly refurbished Hall of India and Pakistan, followed by a concert featuring Joseph Calleja, accompanied by South African pianist, and ROSL alumni, James Baillieu in the Princess Alexandra

concert hall. This was followed by a special dinner created by Executive Chef Elliot Plimmer, including lobster bisque, cured Loch Fyne Salmon, butter roasted lamb rump and a summer berry pudding.

The evening also was a fundraising event for ROSL's music, arts and heritage programmes. Please do consider a donation to our associated charity, the ROSL Foundation, which supports our worthy charitable projects. Visit [rosl.org.uk/foundation](http://rosl.org.uk/foundation) to find out more about how you can support our arts programme and heritage projects.

## Director of Education Projects Margaret Adrian-Vallance to leave ROSL

We're sad to announce the departure of Director of Education Projects Margaret Adrian-Vallance from ROSL this year. From receptions overseas to carrying eagles through the Brabourne Room, Margaret who was appointed MBE in 2011 for services to the education of disadvantaged children in Namibia, looks back at the highlights and changes over the last 30 years

'Time flies when you are having fun and change is often about presenting the same thing in different ways'.

'The lovely ROSL building for example benefited from the Westminster Wing roof being raised to accommodate a new floor of bedrooms in 2003. Later, decking for a stage enhanced the ROSL garden and this year the Restaurant, has been transformed. The renovated Hall of India and Pakistan, kitchens and front gate look gorgeous.

'Once, offices were also storage areas. On my first day at ROSL in 1993 my staff had desks in a corridor and I had a cupboard full of Christmas puddings. After exciting redesign and renovation. I quickly came to love the role of Director of PR and Development, 1993-2012, and then as Director of Education Projects.

There was just so much to like and interesting people to meet, such as at DG Robert Newell's legendary Tuesday evening receptions and travels



to Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana to promote membership (ROSL had over 20,000 then). Above all was the generous support from so many for our welfare/education projects in Commonwealth countries such as Namibia.'

Events were eclectic, with Arts and PR having separate programmes until 2014. Highlights included the ROSL boat in the Queen's Jubilee River Pageant on the Thames in 2011 – a blustery day but all were warmed by Champagne and fine food; Ascot, Henley and quirky events such as a falconry and raptor display

in the garden. Relevant permissions required the birds to go in via the clubhouse and carrying eagles and a vulture past diners in the Brabourne Room had its challenges.

Restructuring has led to a smaller Central Council and there is now a tighter focus on arts and heritage. Despite economic recessions and COVID, the key things of good companionship, fun, thoughtful members, innovation and a lovely building remain.'

We'd like to thank Margaret for all her hard work and dedication to ROSL over the years and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

## Follow your heart with a wedding celebration at ROSL



Did you know that Over-Seas House is available to hire for weddings? Our stunning Grade-I Listed house and garden make a picture-perfect backdrop for any wedding, whether you're hosting an intimate winter ceremony and dinner or a vibrant summer-garden celebration.

Perfect for ten to 70 guests, or up to 150 guests in our largest event settings, every one of our nine spaces at Over-Seas House is licensed including our garden. Members receive a **15% discount** on all food and beverages along with a free bridal suite for the happy couple.

Discover our wedding packages on our website, including a bespoke planning service from our experienced and attentive team.





## Celebrating the life of Joanna Brown

We're saddened to announce the passing of Joanna Brown MBE on 1 May 2022. Jo was a close friend of ROSL and was awarded an MBE for her services to the League in 2001. Here her niece Elisabeth Tilley reflects on Jo's life

Born on 8 March 1925, Jo grew up in Penkridge, Staffordshire and at 17 went to Edinburgh for a domestic science course, subsequently training as a dietician and working in London and Edinburgh. It was in Edinburgh that Jo met her husband, David. David was posted on his assignments for various international organisations, and introduced Jo to ROSL, which gave her many international

friends and a community who enriched her life. In 1997 she was awarded a lifetime honorary membership and in 2001 she was enormously proud to be given an MBE for her services to ROSL. In her later years whenever she was in London Jo liked nothing better than to spend her day at the clubhouse reading the paper and entertaining her family and friends. ROSL truly was her home from home.



## Melvyn Tan becomes honorary ROSL ARTS Patron

We are pleased to announce renowned pianist and fortepianist Melvyn Tan as our new Honorary Patron of our new ROSL ARTS Patrons Scheme. Melvyn won the ROSL Annual Music Competition in 1976, performing on the harpsichord at Queen Elizabeth Hall to take the grand prize

After winning at ROSL, Melvyn established a truly international career which has led to performances in all the continents and the majority of major concert venues worldwide.

Donating to our ROSL ARTS Patrons scheme directly supports our work in discovering, mentoring and promoting exceptional young artistic talent at this crucial stage as they establish their careers.

We are pleased that Melvyn will perform at our special ROSL ARTS Patrons concert on 22 September at ROSL which will include a short Q&A session followed by Champagne.

To find out more about the Patrons scheme please visit [www.rosl.org.uk/artspatrons](http://www.rosl.org.uk/artspatrons) or email [roslarts@rosl.org.uk](mailto:roslarts@rosl.org.uk)

Judging is underway for the second ROSL Composition Award as we wait to see which six composers the judges will choose to compete in the final workshop with London Sinfonietta. Once chosen, the selected composers will be invited to compose a short work or sketch for a small chamber ensemble. This year we have also partnered with Birdsong Music Publishing, and the shortlisted composers will take part in a mentoring session with one of two established composers, Freya Waley-Cohen

or Charlotte Bray, before they workshop their piece with London Sinfonietta in November. This workshop will be open to the public (more details on how to attend this will be released soon). Following the workshop, the jury will select one composer as the winner of the ROSL Composition Award 2022, who'll then receive a £3,000 commission prize to compose a 12-15 minute chamber work, which will be then premiered by London Sinfonietta. A truly wonderful prize for any young composer to aspire to.



Arts Coordinator Cerys Beesley explains why our Composition Award provides an incredible opportunity for one talented young composer



## In the studio with Di Bresciani

Australian Artist, ROSL ARTs patron and member Di Bresciani gives us a glimpse into her creative process as she talks to Rosie Allen about the inspiration behind her upcoming exhibition at Over-Seas House, 'A New Look at Australian Light'

### What most inspires your work?

In painting, perceptions of colour and light are inextricably intertwined, as there is no colour without light. We have a clear light in Victoria and from my earliest memories I was enamoured with colour and the play of light as I ran about the verandas of our home in the Mallee. My Father had cleared much of the land for our farm but thankfully left hundreds of acres untouched. My memories today are still vivid of vastness, colour and light.

### Can you give us a brief insight into your creative process?

When I am painting I often become preoccupied with colour, and there are a few motifs which I keep repeating or returning to. The interactions and movements of colour across the canvas have become something of an intriguing obsession.

When I confront a canvas of

any size the first task is to cover the linen with a ground colour. I have tried many, but usually it is raw sienna which works for most of the palettes I use. I mix the finest oil colour with gum turpentine and sweep across the surface using a cloth, often following the differing textures as I

travel around the surface. A few suggestive lines create depth, and layers of colours are added. Next I take up brushes, quite thick and large, and the physical involvement begins to embrace and unfold, depending upon the responses of the canvas to my touches and marks.

With every new canvas one starts again. It is a new



“  
Participation in art and music activities helps us learn to think creatively and adapt to change

adventure, the years pass, the works pass, the search continues. But it is not like a scientific search. It is not a theory which may be validated, disowned or changed. It is art.

As a ROSL ARTS Patron, how important is it to you that we can continue supporting young

musicians and artists across the commonwealth?

The importance of art and music in society cannot be overestimated. These aspects of our culture transcend all borders and all cultures and have been part of the existence and expression of humankind throughout history.

They are vital for education, physical and social expression

and they enhance our development, understanding and communication. Participation in art and music activities helps us learn to think creatively and adapt to change. Young musicians and artists spend years defining and refining their skills and appreciation. They need to find a following and meet with like-minded artists, and they require help to discover pathways to encourage their fulfilments and contributions as artists.

By supporting young musicians and artists across the commonwealth, ROSL is enriching communities across the globe.

'A New Look at Australian Light' will open for a private view on Thursday 29 September, with the exhibition running from 30 September to 27 November at Over-Seas House. RSVP for free entry at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)



# ROSL around the world

Our branches provide an opportunity for members in all parts of the world and across the UK to enjoy a range of social events close to home. To find out more about getting involved, simply contact your local representative

## AUSTRALIA

### Tasmania

**Spring luncheon with guest speaker**  
Wednesday 19 October, 12pm, Succulent Restaurant in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens  
Join us for a spring luncheon featuring a to-be-confirmed guest speaker, at the Succulent Restaurant, which is under new management, with a new menu. There will be lucky door prizes for members attending. Please RSVP by 12 October to confirm your place.

### Christmas luncheon

**Thursday 8 December, 12pm, Reflections Restaurant, Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania, Lindisfarne**  
Join us for our Christmas luncheon at the Motor Yacht Club, with an à la carte menu, along with lucky door prizes for members attending. You are welcome to bring a guest to this event. Please see the Spring ROSL Branch newsletter for more details.

**Book group afternoon teas**  
Book group afternoon teas continue to be held on the last Thursday of each month, and based on a theme each month, with those participating choosing which book they would like to share based on the agreed theme, over afternoon tea. You are welcome to bring a friend to this event.

### Victoria

Victorian Branch members have enjoyed getting together at various events over the last few months. The branch's annual Angliss luncheon was held on 8 April and attended by more than 50 members and guests. Our guest speaker was British Consul General to Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, Mr Steph Lysaght who spoke of Australia's close ties with Britain, particularly in relation to the UK/Australia Free Trade Agreement. This was followed by Mr Kenneth Parks' touching visual tribute



to the late Duke of Edinburgh. On 4 May a group of nearly 30 members enjoyed a cinema event to see *Downton Abbey – The New Era* at the Palace Como Cinema, which was followed by a luncheon and refreshments.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Christchurch

On a lovely sunny winter's day in Christchurch, the ROSL Branch celebrated The Queen's Jubilee in grand style with a high tea. Hats and fascinators were worn by most of our members and the main table adorned with British serviettes and Union Jack flags to mark the occasion, which was held at Mona Vale, with the Avon river meandering through the gardens. The Queen's

Accession Day message was read out by President Judith Leckie, and Dr Alistair Stokes sang a beautiful rendition of *God Save the Queen*, followed by a toast to Her Majesty. All in all this was a most splendid occasion, especially after so many of our monthly functions having to be cancelled due to a surge of COVID cases in the community.

### Morning teas with a guest speaker

**Wednesday 13 July, Wednesday 10 August, Wednesday 14 September, Wednesday 12 October, Wednesday 9 November, Holly Lea Retirement Village**  
In December we intend to hold a festive lunch, more details of which will be released soon.



## LONDON GROUP

The London Group has an exciting calendar of events planned for the autumn months: firstly a talk on Monday 5 September on the history of Westminster and Whitehall, with a walk of the area to be arranged shortly afterwards (please keep an eye on the website for more details). On Wednesday 5 October we'll spend an atmospheric evening visiting the beautiful London Library, and on Tuesday 15 November at 11am we'll be visiting the City of London's historic Apothecaries Hall.

## MEMBER-LED ACTIVITIES

### ROSL Book Group

The ROSL Book Group meets in person at the Club, as well as on Zoom for overseas members, on Wednesdays, once a month, to discuss primarily novels. The discussion starts at 6pm, but we meet beforehand for a drink and a chat and afterwards for dinner (optional) at 7.30pm. Dates of meetings: 28 September, 26 October, 23 November, 14 December 2022.

### ROSL Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at ROSL every Monday 2pm-4pm (except on Bank Holidays) and we play duplicate ACOL. Once a month there is a refresher course with a truly excellent tutor. New members are welcome.

Lunch at 12.30 is optional.

Cost: £10pp for supervised play and £20pp for monthly refresher course sessions.

### ROSL Backgammon Club

Meets on Wednesdays 2pm-4pm in the Drawing Room and for lunch (optional) at 12.30 in the Brabourne Room. New members are welcome.

### ROSL Theatre and Opera Group

We go regularly to the theatre, opera, ballet and modern dance. We also go to Glyndebourne twice a year in Summer (Alcina, 24 Aug 2022) and Autumn (Figaro, 28 Oct 2022).

Please contact  
**Eve at E.Mitleton-Kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk**

## CONTACTS

### British Columbia:

Liz Murray  
evmurray@telus.net  
+1 604 922 1564

### Calgary:

Madeleine King  
madeleine.king@telus.net

### Christchurch:

Judith Leckie  
jrleckie@xtra.co.nz

### Ireland:

Palmer Carter  
palmercarter@eircom.net

### New South Wales:

Contact tba  
membership@rosl.org.uk

### Ontario:

Ishrani Jaikaran  
www.rosl-ontario-canada.ca  
rosl.ont@sympatico.ca  
+1 416 760 0309

### Queensland:

Contact tba  
membership@rosl.org.uk.

### South Australia:

Graham Beckett  
secretary@roslsa.org.au  
www.roslsa.org.au

### Switzerland:

Jo Brown  
+334 5040 6631

### Tasmania:

Stephen Jones  
stephenj1@iprimus.com.au  
+61 (0)613 558 95

### Taunton:

Contact tba  
membership@rosl.org.uk

### Victoria:

Keir Watt  
www.rosl.org.au  
rosl@alphalink.com.au  
+61 (0)3 9654 8338

### Sussex:

David Kay  
sussex.branch@rosl.org.uk

### Western Australia:

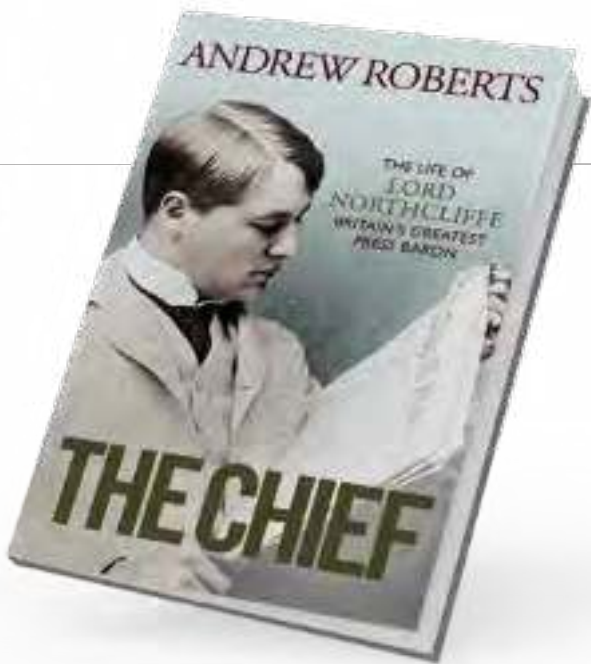
Anthony Howes  
+61 (0)8 9450 6050



Settle into a new season of entertainment with our new roster of events

ROSL Centenary Lecture and Reception:  
Professor Andrew Roberts  
Thursday 15 September, 6.30pm

Join us for a fascinating insight into one of ROSL's founders at our special Centenary lecture featuring renowned historian and journalist Professor Andrew Roberts, who'll be talking about his new book *The Chief: the Life of Lord Northcliffe*. Tickets include a Champagne and canapé reception.



The HandleBards present  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
Tuesday 27 September, 6.30pm

Shakespeare's tragic tale of the iconic young lovers gets a comic makeover with The HandleBards' madcap take on the Verona-set classic. Expect a flurry of costume changes and slapstick antics and from the trio in this 'uproariously funny' adaptation.



Vaughan Williams  
150th birthday  
celebration concert  
Tuesday 11 October, 6.30pm

ROSL will be hosting a special performance to celebrate the works of Vaughan Williams on 11 October, the day before what would have been the composer's 150th birthday. The programme will include 'Songs of Travel' sung by this year's AMC singers winner, James Atkinson, and also a performance of his most popular work 'The Lark Ascending', featuring 2016 gold medal winner Emily Sun.

**YA Concert: Ryan Corbett**  
Tuesday 1 November, 6.30pm

Following his success winning the ROSL Gold Medal in 2021, we are pleased to present accordionist Ryan Corbett in his first solo programme here at ROSL. A star in the making, Ryan has already joined the prestigious BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme and will present a varied programme which is sure to delight.

DATES FOR  
YOUR DIARY

Go online to get full details  
and book your next event at  
[www.rosl.org.uk/events](http://www.rosl.org.uk/events)

<b>2 SEPT</b> CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS WITH ZEB SOANES Friday 2 September	<b>15 SEPT</b> ROSL CENTENARY LECTURE & RECEPTION: PROFESSOR ANDREW ROBERTS Thursday 15 September	<b>27 SEPT</b> THE HANDLEBARDS PRESENT ROMEO AND JULIET Tuesday 27 September
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**29 SEPT**  
DI BRESCIANI A NEW LOOK  
AT AUSTRALIAN LIGHT'  
Thursday 29 September

**4 OCT**  
CEZANNE: ART TALK  
WITH CINDY POLEMIS  
Tuesday 4 October

**5 OCT**  
LONDON GROUP VISIT:  
THE LONDON LIBRARY  
Wednesday 5 October

**11 OCT**  
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
150TH BIRTHDAY  
CELEBRATION  
CONCERT  
Tuesday 11 October

**1 NOV**  
YA CONCERT:  
RYAN CORBETT  
Tuesday 1 November

**22 NOV**  
ALEX MENDHAM & HIS ORCHESTRA  
Tuesday 22 November



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Winslow Homer, 'The Gulf Stream', 1899 (reworked by 1906). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1906 (06.1234) © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York