

A LIFE DEVOTED TO MUSIC: SUSAN LUSHINGTON IN KINGSLEY

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ABSTRACT

Susan Lushington (1870–1953) was born into a Victorian family noted for its service to law and government. At the turn of the century she and her father settled in the village of Kingsley, Hants., which had already benefited from the educational mission of her aunts. For half a century she organized and directed choral and orchestral performances that raised the cultural level of her Surrey-Hampshire border area, and brought enjoyment to countless numbers.

Susan Lushington, born in London in 1870, is still remembered in and around the village of Kingsley, Hampshire, as the director of countless amateur music programmes for nearly half a century. ‘Dear, I am producing a shortened version of *Carmen* in six weeks’ time in Ockham Hall. You will be at the first rehearsal on Tuesday’ was a command not to be ignored, even by so eminent a ‘happy slave’ as Sir Gilmour Jenkins, KCB, KBE, MC (Jenkins, G, 1953). Frequently tardy, she would turn up only after the orchestra and singers had arrived, sweeping into the hall in something ‘gauzy’ (Stevens interview). Tall, slender, and angular, with a long face and fine features, she dressed, when not performing, in the fashion of upper-class women of her day, though she had a penchant for colourful effects on special occasions. Her forthright manner and enthusiasm for music put at ease people who might have otherwise have been awed by her distinguished family, or resented her as a London intruder into their quiet village, which had a population around 400 and was still largely agricultural. Her accent, a local resident recalled, was not too ‘high class’ (Wickes interview). Before the First World War she became a familiar sight as she travelled to

neighbouring villages on horseback or in a carriage. Her coachman claimed the privilege of wearing a cockade in his hat because he had driven for her father when he was a judge in the county courts of Surrey and Berkshire (Andrews interview).

Susan Lushington’s musical mission in Kingsley began in 1903, when she settled there with her father following his career in public office. Before serving as a county judge he had been Secretary to the Admiralty from 1869 to 1877, and before that Deputy Judge Advocate-General (*WWW*). Meanwhile, his twin brother (Sir) Godfrey was working his way up in the Home Office, becoming its Permanent Under Secretary in 1885 (*WWW*). The brothers’ love of music was shared by Susan’s mother Jane. An accomplished pianist, she played for relatives and guests at the family’s London house, 36 Kensington Square, and at Pypports, their country retreat in Pyrford, near Woking, Surrey. By the 1880s she was monitoring the music lessons of her three daughters: Catherine (‘Kitty’), born in 1867, studied the violin; Margaret, born two years later, the cello; and Susan, born in 1870, the violin. Also taking an interest in their musical progress were family friends from the new Royal College of Music: the composer Sir Hubert Parry, who dedicated two intermezzi for string trio to the sisters in 1884, and the violinist Henry Holmes, whom their mother accompanied on the piano in public concerts (Curtis 1998, 40; HRO 38M49/F8/40).

At an early age the Lushington girls were taken by their father to play in musical programmes that he arranged for the London Positivist Society at Newton Hall, in Fetter Lane, off Fleet Street, where he and his brother Godfrey were founding members and generous benefactors. It was

through a leading Positivist, the reforming barrister and writer Frederic Harrison, that Vernon Lushington engaged as tutor to his daughters the then unknown novelist George Gissing, who had been discovered by Harrison (Vogeler 1984, 181–83). Gissing thought the sisters clever and mature for their age; and, given his own fondness for music, one hopes that occasionally the sound of their playing came his way as he entered or left their beautifully appointed London house, such a contrast to his own mean lodgings (Coustillas 1987, 18–19). Susan said later that she had been too young to feel the ‘impact’ of Gissing, though she read the novels that gave him his literary reputation (‘Gadfly’ 1953).

What did make a lasting impression on Susan in her youth was the Pre-Raphaelite art that filled the

family home. She knew about her father’s friendship with the central figure of the group, the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. They had met in London shortly after Lushington took a first class degree in Civil Law at Cambridge in 1855. The following year he introduced Rossetti to the painter Edward Burne-Jones, thus laying the groundwork for the second phase of the Pre-Raphaelite movement (Burne-Jones 1904, I, 128–29). Though not an artist himself, Lushington was said by Rossetti’s brother William to be living according to aesthetic principles: ‘High art. Blue greens. Japanese Cabinets. Expense unworthy of consideration’ (Gaunt 1966, 96–98). With family wealth sufficient to make him a patron of the arts as well as of Positivism, in 1862 Lushington commissioned a portrait of his distin-



Fig. 1 Arthur Hughes, *The Home Quartette: Mrs Vernon Lushington and Her Daughters* 1883 (Location unknown)

guished father, eighty-year-old Dr Stephen Lushington, a former Liberal MP who had been Judge of the High Court of Admiralty since 1838, and Dean of Arches since 1858 (Waddams 1992). The painter chosen by Lushington was one of his impecunious Pre-Raphaelite friends, Holman Hunt, and Hunt greatly enjoyed his stay with Dr Lushington at the family seat, Ockham Park, Ripley, Surrey, where his genial host played the role of the local squire and where he would die eleven years later at age 91 (Hunt 1967, 219–22; Waddams 1992, 56, 346–47). Wanting to present his future wife with a piece of jewelry, Vernon asked Rossetti to make the selection, and what Rossetti chose was no staid Victorian piece but a hair ornament described by someone who saw it decades later, probably when it was in Susan's possession, as 'such a thing as the princess of an Oriental fairy-tale might wear': a humming bird's breast of copper and blue-green enamel, with a nodding metal head and quivering wings (Gaunt 1966, 109). After his marriage Lushington arranged for Rossetti to make a pencil sketch (FAM) and several portraits of his wife (NPGCC, 49, 347, 347a).

The painter and illustrator Arthur Hughes, a follower of Rossetti's, also found a generous patron in Lushington, and in his daughters as well when they had homes of their own. After moving to Kingsley, Susan bought two paintings by Hughes; one, titled *Caedmon's Awakening*, appropriately depicts the Anglo-Saxon monk ordered by the angel to 'Sing of the beginning of things' (Roberts 1997, 213, 244). In 1913 Hughes braved the rain with her to sketch on Kingsley Common, and the sight of goslings 'all packed tightly together like a yellow pyramid', convinced him that even at age 81 it was 'impossible not to begin fresh pictures' (Roberts 1997, 288). The sisters' devotion to Hughes probably stemmed in part from his friendship with their father, and in part from his having made a lovely painting of them with their mother a year or so before her early death in 1884. *The Home Quartette* (Fig. 1) depicts them in the well-appointed music room at Pypports: mother at the piano, Margaret seated with her cello, and Kitty and Susan standing with their violins and bows held ready to play. All four wear dresses of rich fabric with ruffled sleeves. The girls' are of



Fig. 2 Photograph of Susan Lushington standing with violin (HMC)

olive green velvet, set off by vermilion sashes and dark red stockings; the mother's, a floor-length gown, is a shimmering gold satin. Through the window, which has upper panes of bottle glass, one sees a garden; the window seat pillows and drapes are of blue velvet (Roberts 1997, 195). The painting, along with other works of art inherited or bought by Susan, gave her two successive homes in Kingsley a Pre-Raphaelite ambiance remembered later by her guests and friends (Gasch interview; Phillips interview).

The Lushington sisters performed not only in an intimate family setting and before small groups like the Positivists, but in public with, for example, the South Hampstead Orchestra (Curtis 1998, 40). Their parents were among those more advanced Victorians who abandoned the once widely-held belief that the violin was an unsuitable instrument for a woman because playing it required arm motions and a tucked-in chin that were seen as unattractive (Gillett forthcoming). Susan (Fig. 2) was especially gifted; when singing she could sight read music without ever making a mistake (*The Times* 23 Feb 1953). Henry Holiday, a painter and designer who worked with William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, noticed that she had 'a clever way of her own of transposing from violin music' in order to play the viola, which she had never studied (Holiday 1913, 296). Mrs Charles Darwin, a family friend, exclaimed of all three sisters, 'If they go on as they began they will be she-Joachims', an allusion to the Hungarian violin virtuoso (Litchfield 1904, II, 343).

But none of the Lushington sisters became a nationally known performer. The family's wealth and social status made that unlikely, and in any case their mother's death the year after Hughes completed his family portrait left their father dependent on his daughters for solace and the management of his house. In 1890 Kitty married Leo Maxse, and though they lived not far from Kensington Square, Maxse's acquisition of the *National Review*, a conservative monthly, drew Kitty into a new circle, more political than artistic. She continued violin lessons with Parry for a time, but turned to the piano. After her death in 1922 a friend would remember her generosity in expending her musical talent 'unreservedly in the service of others', especially those with 'cares of State'. She recalled Kitty at the piano playing 'softly on by the hour in the drawing room of their house in Montpelier Square . . . to those favoured ones who had the entrée there' (*The Times* 10 Oct 1922). This suggests the social milieu of *Mrs Dalloway*, the novel by Virginia Woolf whose eponymous character was modeled on Kitty (Latham 1969; Curtis 1997). After her marriage, Kitty's place in family musicals was taken by a cousin, Diana Langton, who also joined Margaret and Susan in playing Parry's music for Aristophanes' *Frogs* under the

composer's direction in the Oxford University Drama Society's 1892 production, and in a Bach choir conducted by Sir Charles Stanford (*The Times* 23 Feb 1953). In 1895 Margaret Lushington married Diana's brother Stephen, and upon his mother's death two years later, he added her maiden name, Massingberd, to his and inherited Gunby Hall in Burgh-le-Marsh, Lincolnshire, which had been in the Massingberd family for generations (HRO 38M49/D5/25; Curtis 1998, 42). Thereafter the principal musical activities of Margaret and Stephen shifted largely to that local area, though he and his sister Diana (who married Sir Archibald, later Field Marshal Montgomery-Massingberd) occasionally performed in Susan's programmes in Hampshire (HMC, programmes 29 Jan 1910, 15 Apr 1914; *Alton Mail* 7 Jun 1924; HRO 38M49/D5/25).

With her sisters married, Susan had to carry on socially alone or as her father's companion. He took her with him when visiting friends, such as the novelist Margaret Hunt, whose unmarried daughter Violet, also a novelist, was playing an analogous role with her aged mother (which did not stop Violet from having a number of affairs, the most notorious with Ford Madox Ford (Hunt). After the death of their mother's great friend Julia Stephen in 1895, Kitty Lushington undertook to mentor the Stephens' daughters, Virginia and Vanessa (the future Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell) but with limited success. Virginia considered Kitty worldly (Woolf 1975–80, IV, 185) and Susan effusive. As children Virginia and Vanessa had called her 'the gushington' (Woolf 1975–80, V, 292). But since Virginia found conventional society trying, she recognized certain virtues in Susan: 'she does all the talking' (Woolf 1975–80, I, 10), and was, after all, 'a charming animal and can play the spinet to perfection' (Woolf 1975–80, I, 26–7). Still, the thought of spending a day with Susan caused some apprehension in the future novelist: 'all that good behaviour, & white gloves. . . (However shabby her dress is she always wears tight, brilliant white gloves). . .' (Woolf 1975–80, I, 121). Long after they ceased to meet, Susan's appearance continued to fascinate Virginia. In 1920, quizzing Vanessa, who had run into Susan at a social gathering, Virginia asked about their old friend's

complexion – ‘Does it turn a brackish purple, that particular red in age?’ – her hair, and her dress – ‘And does she still wear green sequins at night?’ (Woolf 1975–80, II, 431). Neither Virginia nor Vanessa apparently showed any interest in what Susan was doing with her life, which by then was as firmly dedicated to music as Virginia’s was to literature and Vanessa’s to art.

When Susan and her father settled in Kingsley, they took over a substantial house that had been occupied by his unmarried sisters, who had recently died: Frances, in 1900, and Alice, in 1903. Upon leasing the house, the sisters had named it Kingsley Cottage; before that it bore its present name, Cold Harbour. They came to the village after their family home, Ockham Park, reverted to its owner, the Earl of Lovelace, upon the death of their father, Dr Stephen Lushington, in 1873. At Ockham Park they had run a school in which their father took a great interest, and wishing to continue their work on

a larger scale in Kingsley, they commissioned a London architect, E C Robins, to draw up plans for a residential school to supplement the existing village school and accommodate 90 pupils (Fig. 3). As their construction firm they chose J H and E Dyer, in Alton, which was to build All Saint’s Church in Kingsley about the same time. The site selected for the school was on a lane running off the main road by the Cricketers, a public house, and next to Kingsley Pond and Kingsley Common (Fig. 4). Constructed of brick and tile, the main building consisted of an assembly hall, dining room, music room, and classrooms on the ground floor, and dormitories and bathrooms on the upper floor. There was a headmaster’s three-bedroom house on the grounds. The non-teaching staff would number as many as ten, not counting a cook and baker. A private laundry was located near Lindford Bridge. The entire cost of construction, £15,000, was borne by the sisters, who named their building Ockham Hall after their

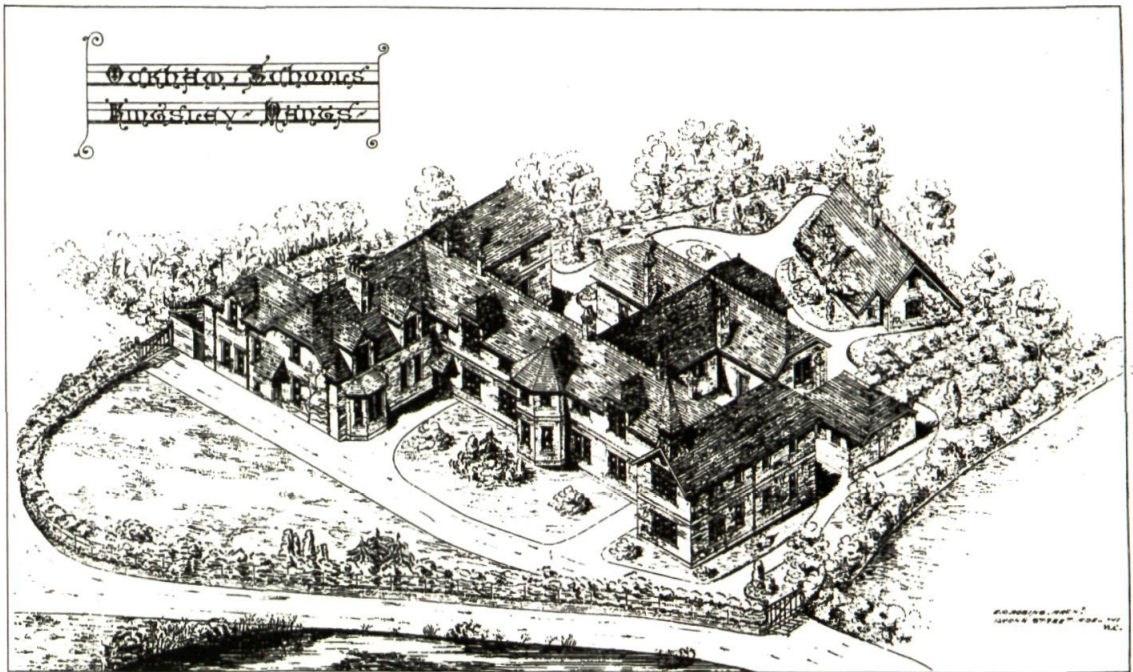


Fig. 3 Ockham Schools (sic), from *The Architect* 24 Mar 1877

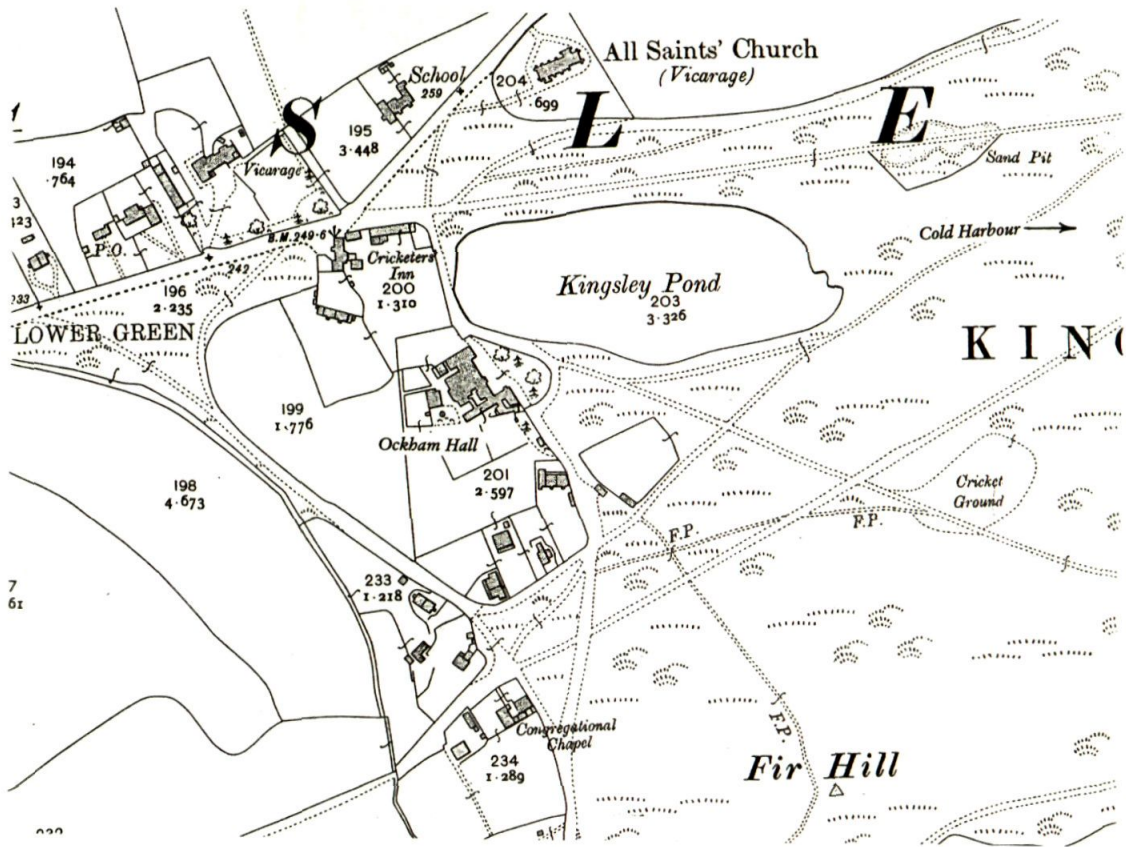


Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 1910 Map of Kingsley

earlier venture at Ockham Park. Opened in 1876 in the presence of local dignitaries, including the Earl of Selborne, formerly Lord Chancellor, Ockham Hall immediately became a landmark. Its handsome tower contained a seven-day striking clock and two bells loud enough to be heard by nearby residents. The sisters communicated with the staff by means of wires strung on poles across Kingsley Common. By 1881 enrollment at Ockham School peaked at some 54 pupils, which meant that there was never any crowding, the bane of so many small schools (Dyer 1998; OHA, press cutting [1976]; *The Architect* 24 Mar 1877, 196; Penn 1997; Barnes n.d.; *VCH*, 518).

Frances and Alice Lushington were as progressive in their views of education as their father, who had helped found the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1826, and their brothers Vernon and Godfrey, who had taught in F D Maurice's Working Men's College in the 1850s (Waddams 1992, 34; Davies 1971, 33, 70). Ockham School recruited not only fee-paying children from the surrounding area, other parts of England, and the outposts of the Empire, but also, in accord with their philanthropic aims, children of servants from nearby large houses who may not have paid all the cost of their education. Besides this innovative mixing of different social classes, the school was among the first in the country to accept pupils

of both sexes, though boys and girls were taught separately. Their ages ranged from eight to nineteen. The discipline was Victorian: a child who misbehaved might be put in the cellar. The grounds included tennis courts and small gardens for the pupils. For sports they trekked to Sandyfield. For ice skating there was Kingsley Pond, and for swimming a small pool near Kingsley Mill. A couple near the school kept a tuck shop for the children. They could play on Kingsley Common but the village was off limits. Locked gates on the north and south sides of the premises aroused some bitter feeling among local residents and eventually free access to the school grounds was provided (OHA, press cutting [1976]; Wickes interview; 'Gadfly' 1953).

As state-funded schools increased in number and size, small secular ventures like Ockham School inevitably declined; by 1891 it had only 44 pupils, who with their seven teachers including the headmaster enjoyed a generous student-teacher ratio. But profit was not one of the founders' purposes, and Ockham School continued to exist until the death of the elder sister. In 1905 the property was offered for sale, 'practically freehold' according to the sale particulars, since the leasehold was believed to extend for a term of 900 years from 1758, and the quit rent of two shillings sixpence per annum had apparently never been paid. Yet this 'valuable and well-built property' attracted no buyer and remained unused until it gained a new mistress and a new role in the village (Penn 1997; HMC, Sale Particulars).

Within months after moving to Kingsley Cottage, Susan Lushington had organized a local choir and staged her first concert for Kingsleyites, as she liked to call her new neighbours. For rehearsals and performances she used Kingsley Cottage's long reception room with its adjacent veranda, or the 40 by 20-foot assembly room at Ockham Hall, with its raised platform and pipe organ. Her choral group participated in the Winchester Festival and in competitions in nearby towns and villages, and she began leading other choirs as well (*The Times* 17 Feb 1953; Whitelegge 1998; Gasch interview). What is remarkable in all this is her transition from a violinist who performed mostly before small audiences, to a conductor of amateur choral societies and a direc-

tor of ambitious musical programmes that might include professional performers. She had observed her father planning the music for Newton Hall, and she had probably noted his irritation at the inadequacy of its choir, but like him she worked with what she had (Vogeler 1984, 168-69; *Positivist Review* Aug 1906, 179).

Sadly, two of her early efforts at large-scale conducting were occasioned by the sudden death of her sister Margaret in 1906. For a memorial service in Margaret's parish church near Gunby Hall Susan conducted the *Brahms Requiem*, and for a later service in her sister's memory, Handel's *Messiah* (*The Times* 17 Feb 1953). The earliest surviving programme of a concert given by her Kingsley choral class is dated 29 January 1910 and names Ockham Schools (sic) as the venue. Works performed included voice solos, a duet, a trio, a quartet, a double quartet, and a chorus. There were sacred songs such as 'For He, the Lord our God'; part songs by Brahms, Elgar, Morley, and Parry; and Stanford's choral work 'The Last Post', with a company quartermaster from a nearby army barracks on the cornet (HMC, Programme 29 Jan 1910). Less than three months later, her choral class won a prize competing against thirteen other groups in the Corn Exchange in Farnham, with the Bishop of Winchester presiding (HMC, Certificate 13 Apr 1910). The number of entries in this competition suggests that she had arrived in Kingsley just in time to be part of the wave of amateur choral singing rolling through the English countryside. Much of it was sponsored by the Women's Institute, which held its first choral competition in Sussex in 1926, but the Institute had no branch in Kingsley until about the time of Susan's death (Jenkins, I, 1953, 121-22).

One of the prizes at the two-day competition in Farnham was sponsored jointly by Susan and her father, who took a keen interest in her musical activities. Like her, he had slipped gracefully into the life of the village. It was said that upon retirement he vowed he would no longer be ruled by time: if he felt like going for a drive in the middle of the night he would send for his coachman and go. Another new pleasure was to listen to the local farmers talking in the Cricketers, and he attempted to evoke their idiom and interests in a long poem in blank verse. Surviving only in manu-

script, it has more human interest for a reader today than all the sonnets and poems on Positivist and literary themes he had published privately in earlier years. His death on 24 January 1912 from a stroke (that by chance occurred during one of his infrequent visits to his Kensington Square house) left Susan at age 42 bereft of her most faithful supporter. But soon after his burial beside his wife in the parish churchyard in Pyrford, she felt obliged to get on with rehearsing for the annual spring competition lest she disappoint her choir (LSE, Susan Lushington [hereafter SL] to Frederic Harrison; HMC, SL to Gwen Bywater, 12 Apr [1912]; *The Times* 25, 29 Jan 1912).

Her scope was expanding. By the early 1920s she had more than one hundred singers under her direction, some from local schools (HRO 38M49/D5/25, SL to Sophie Wickham, 25 Jan [1922]). And her choice of music was becoming more ambitious. In 1914 she included excerpts from Gluck's *Orpheus* in a concert at Ockham Hall by her Kingsley choral class (HMC, Programme, 15 Apr 1914); and in 1921 she produced the entire opera in concert performance (*Alton Mail* 12 Apr 1924, mentioning it). Three years later she staged Beethoven's *Fidelio* after wisely including parts of the opera in two prior concerts because she knew the work would be unfamiliar to both singers and audience (*Alton Mail* 12 Apr, 7 Jun 1924). Other programmes included a musical setting for Milton's *Comus*, shortened versions of *Faust* and *Carmen*, a staged version of Handel's oratorio *Theodora*, choral standbys such as Elizabethan songs (sometimes in arrangements by her friend Ralph Vaughan Williams), and musical renditions of poems by Sir Henry Newbolt. She liked to introduce dancers in fanciful costumes, and kept a chest full of colourful garments for that purpose (*The Times* 17 Feb 1953). In her most innovative production she conducted a 20-member orchestra performing Handel's *Water Music* on a raft built on Kingsley Pond by local army engineers. Thirty school children dressed as frogs and nymphs cavorted by the edge of the water, and six halberdiers welcomed King George I, in whose honour the music was first played on a barge in the Thames in 1717. Motor car headlights lit the scene, which dissolved in confusion when a thunderstorm drove everyone into adjacent Ockham

Hall for shelter (Jenkins, G, 1953; *Hampshire Chronicle* 15 Jul 1933; Wickes interview; Stevens interview).

For major productions, Susan enlisted the help of such professional musicians as Hubert Langley, singer, actor, and authority on 18th-century music; Sir Landon Ronald, conductor, pianist, composer, and Principal of the Guildhall School of Music from 1910 to 1938; and influential friends like Sir Gilmour Jenkins, a prominent civil servant who was active in the Royal Academy of Music and on the Council of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (which provided wind instrumentalists for her production of *Fidelio*). Members of the Royal Artillery at Aldershot and of the staff of Bedales School might be pressed into service, as well as humbler local folk such as the coal man. If someone failed to get the music right, she would minimize the difficulty: 'It sings itself, dears, it sings itself' (Gasch interview; Phillips interview).

At Kingsley Cottage and later at Ockham Hall, Susan was the lady of the manor, inviting groups of actors like the Greenwood Players to entertain her guests, and organizing classes to teach the old country dances then enjoying a renaissance. She had parties for children from the village, giving them all gifts at Christmas, and in summer letting them wander in her garden to marvel at her peacocks and examine the graves of her dogs (HMC, press cutting 27 Feb 1953, Barnes n.d.; Edwards interview). Her Pre-Raphaelite pictures and display of swords (from the Admiralty uniforms of her grandfather and father?) made it evident to callers that she was no ordinary Kingsleyite. At the beginning, affluence also set her apart. Her account book for the 1920s shows that she kept her maids in caps and aprons, indulged her love of spring bulbs, and subscribed to numerous musical and charitable groups. She owned a motor car, a wireless, and a telephone, and besides local newspapers took the London Sunday *Observer*. In 1936 she bought a brocaded evening gown and red evening cloak in the January sales, and in the same month mourning clothes following the death of King George V (HMC, SL account book, 1923-36). She paid her gardener, who had worked for her father and lived in what is now Glenn Cottage, £1-19-7 a week (supple-

mented by occasional tickets to cricket matches at Lords, the races at Goodwood, and the Chelsea flower show). For this he was expected to milk the cow and raise the vegetables for her household. He added to his income by helping out at the Cricketers, and his wife was sometimes installed in the kitchen at Kingsley Cottage because Susan could never keep a cook (Andrews interview). A decline in her investments in the 1930s led her to take paying guests. This aggravated the servant problem but provided her with amusing stories – ‘and, my dear, he spreads honey on his bacon’. When one of these paying guests told a *Daily Mirror* journalist about the Pre-Raphaelite art on display in the house, and he featured the information in a column, Susan was outraged at the vulgarity of it (private information; Gasch interview; Edwards interview; Wickes interview).

As her income dwindled, some of her father's books and pictures found their way to the sale rooms, but that only bought time (HRO 38M49/F6/68; Gasch interview). As an economy measure, shortly before the Second World War she left Kingsley Cottage and moved into Ockham Hall, installing her four-poster bed in an upstairs room under the bell tower overlooking Kingsley Pond. She sometimes remained in her room most of the morning after staying up late into the night. During the war she turned other rooms over to foreign evacuees and military officers, and her entertainment of soldiers from the neighbouring barracks was so lavish that her friends protested. Typically generous and impractical, she responded: ‘Darlings, we *are* taking care but we shall never be short of food here in the country districts’. After Dunkirk a sign appeared on the front door: ‘Returned Heroes – please walk in and briefly phone your families – it's FREE’, and when a staggering phone bill resulted, her army friends had to come to her aid (Edwards interview; Barnes n.d.). Meanwhile, she augmented her income by renting two cottages behind Ockham Hall, one to the journalist William Gaunt, who acknowledged her help in writing *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy* in 1942, which launched his career as an art historian; and the other to Thomas Wade Earp, a sculptor (Edwards interview; Barnes n.d.; *WWW&EA* on Gaunt and Earp). She continued to give concerts, some to raise money for wartime

charities. With the coming of peace, the soldiers were replaced by civilian paying guests. They found Ockham Hall dusty and the food sparse. Susan hardly noticed such lapses. She left household matters to servants, who in her later years included Mrs Coates (‘Coatsie’); and she was a vegetarian who cared little about food, having as a child been made to finish everything on her plate or face it at the next meal (Murray interview; private information).

For her 70th birthday celebration, held at Ockham Hall, the Dean of Winchester composed an ode that summoned up the shades of Purcell, Haydn, Parry and other composers whose works had so often sounded within its walls (HRO 38M49/E7/178). The ode ends with Orpheus proclaiming Susan ‘forever young’. But signs of her aging were evident. Her violin playing was not what it once was, but after all, it was her work with other musicians in amateur performances that was so remarkable, and which earned her an MBE in June 1943 (HRO 38M49/E6/71). If she was becoming increasingly oblivious of others' feelings, her old enthusiasm for music and her generosity were undiminished. At Glyndebourne she once annoyed those around her by turning over the large pages of the score until sleep overcame her, and then her snoring posed a different problem. After the concert she insisted on presenting a lyre designed by Burne-Jones to a bemused Kathleen Ferrier (Loch 1998).

For Susan's 80th birthday Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter collected contributions from some 120 of her friends and well-wishers. These included members of the Maxse and Massingberd families; Ralph Dutton, the owner of Kingsley Cottage; musicians who had worked with her, and individuals such as Clementine Churchill who wanted to show their support. Ralph Vaughan Williams asked that her ‘many very impecunious friends’ be assured that even 6d would be welcome. The contributions totaled more than £233, enabling Sir Edgar to present her with two radio receivers and over £150 (HRO 38M49/F8/54).

About this time Susan told a reporter that though she was not lonely, she was looking for two persons ‘with striking personalities’ to share her ‘70-room mansion’ and her interests in gardening and music. By then she had a 30-piece orchestra in which she played the drums and

cymbals, carrying the drums on the roof of her car. In exchange for help with the cooking and housekeeping, the new friends would receive a stipend of £1 a week each. Out of 60 applicants, she selected about a dozen for interviews, but their fate is unknown (HMC, press cuttings [1950]). One of the last Ockham Hall concerts was Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, staged on a cold December night in 1951 with Susan conducting and playing the dulcitone for the recitatives. Before beginning, she provoked a good deal of laughter by explaining that Dido had to be replaced at the last minute due to illness, Aeneas had a bad cold but would sing anyway, and his glittering armour had frightened away one of her cupids. During the evening, the monster stove at the rear of the hall disgorged so much heat that a dripping wet cloth had to be thrust into its maw. A friend later asked, 'Who could have got away with all this except our Susan?' ('Gadfly' 1953).

Faithful to her calling to the end, Susan was rehearsing Brahms' *Requiem* when she fell ill the following winter. She died in a nursing home in Petersfield on 16 February 1953 and was buried in St Nicholas churchyard in Kingsley. Her aunts had been buried there some half a century earlier, and in their memory grateful pupils had erected a lych gate that is still there. But Susan's long service to the village has no such tangible memorial. It was, of course, celebrated in her obituaries, including one in *The Times* headed 'A Life Devoted to Music', followed by several loving tributes (*The Times* 17 Feb, 23 Feb, 21 Mar 1953; 'Gadfly' 1953; HMC, press cutting Mar 1976). At her crowded funeral in All Saints Church, Kingsley, and at the Memorial Service in Farnham parish church, her life and devotion to music were movingly recalled, and some of the music she had loved was sung by soloists and choral groups she had directed (*The Times* 20 Feb, 23 Mar 1953; HMC, press cutting

[26 Feb 1953] and *Memorial Service . . . March 21st*). A published digest of her will revived interest in her background and colourful ways. She left three Hughes' paintings, including *The Home Quartette*, to her nephew, Godfrey L Norris; a bas-relief from the school of Donatello to her sister Margaret's parish church in memory of their father; and two rare old violins to a cousin with instructions that they be passed on to members of the family, but only to someone who would play them and hand them on in turn. The headline in a local paper warned: 'MISS LUSHINGTON'S VIOLINS MUST NOT BE SOLD' (*The Times* 18 Jan 1955; Roberts; HMC, press cuttings 27 [Jan] 1955 and undated).

The Ockham Hall property she left to Norris, causing complaints among some villagers that a certain building had not gone to the 'old people' (Wickes interview). Almost derelict at her death, the school building fell into even worse condition over the next two decades, vandalised and littered with old schoolbooks, sheet music, and her papers. Finally, in 1976, just one hundred years old, it was bought by Kinstan Builders of Mithurst, and the Kingsley Parish Council welcomed the firm's proposal to convert the building into ten upmarket residences (OHA, press cuttings *The Herald* 13 Feb 1976 and *Farnham Herald* 14 Aug 1987). Thus reincarnated, Ockham Hall stands today, a quiet haven with a remarkable history.

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Archive and Art Sources

FAM Fogg Art Museum
HMC Helen Mirwald Collection
HRO Hampshire Record Office

LSE Library of Political and Economic Science,
London School of Economics
NPGA National Portrait Gallery Archives
NPGCC National Portrait Gallery Catalogue Cards
OHA Ockham Hall Archives

Interviews with Helen Mirwald
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