

## REGINALD MORLEY-PEGGE



Reginald Frederick Morley Pegge ('Morley', the name most used by his friends, was originally a Christian name which eventually mutated into his surname) was born in London on 17 January 1890, the only child of William Morley Pegge and his wife Florence. His father had been a brewer but seems to have retired by the time his son was born and thereafter lived as a gentleman of some wealth and leisure. By 1891 the family had removed to Brighton, where their home remained for many years. Young Reginald was sent to school to Summerfields, Oxford, and then to Harrow, which he left at Easter 1908. His interest in brass instruments had begun in his prep school days, and at Harrow he was a member of the school orchestra – presumably as a horn player. He there came into contact with Tom Busby, who first mentioned to him as a horn expert W.F.H. Blandford, later to become his friend and mentor on horn matters, though they did not meet for another twelve years. In the meantime Morley was sent to France to study the language and then spent a short time in Essex as land agent to Lord Howard de Walden. As soon as he was 21, however, he left this uncongenial occupation and returned to France to study the horn under Brémont at the Paris Conservatoire; he also took the class of chef d'orchestre and studied hand-horn technique with Vuillermoz. His professional career was interrupted by the First World War, when he served in the British army in Military Transport, not being released until 1919 after a spell with the army of occupation; he was then employed at the Reparation Commission, whose headquarters were in the Champs Elysée. In 1917 he married Anne Taylor, of Yorkshire and Scottish ancestry but whose family had long been settled in France; their son William was born in 1918.

Morley-Pegge's work at the Reparation Commission, which left him with sufficient leisure to play the horn and pursue its history, lasted until 1925. He then spent two years working in the advertising department of Citroen, still in Paris, until finally in 1927 he was able to secure posts as a professional musician, playing principally with the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, the Colonne, the Association des Concerts Poulet and the Paris Radio Orchestre. In the 1930s he was invited to recatalogue the wind instruments in the collection of the Paris Conservatoire, a mark of the esteem in which his scholarship was already held. By now, after various moves around Paris, he and his household (which included his sister-in-law Mico Taylor) had settled at 57 Avenue de Balzac in Ville D'Avray, a small suburb in the western outskirts of Paris; there was also a small holiday home on the Normandy coast. Few letters survive from this period of Morley-Pegge's life, but he was a talented photographer and a number of photographs capture the flavour of these French years; he was a frequent exhibitor at the Paris salon. Also enhanced by his life in France was his appreciation of food and wine – as gourmet, not gourmand.

The outbreak of World War II did not immediately disrupt Morley-Pegge's life, but he was still on the reserve of officers and his son was now of military age. In the spring of 1940, when the swift German advance brought about the fall of France, the family had to leave at almost a moment's notice, abandoning most of their possessions including Morley-Pegge's cherished instrument collection. For the remainder of the war Morley-Pegge was stationed in Edinburgh, working again in military transport; his wife joined him and his sister-in-law was working with Rolls-Royce in Belper, Derbyshire, while Bill Morley-Pegge was serving in the army. Military transport seems an odd use of someone with such long experience of France and fluent French, but Edinburgh had its compensations. Morley-Pegge was able to play with the Reid Orchestra, and began a close friendship with Lyndesay Langwill; their letters, which all survive, demonstrate their passionate enthusiasm for the history of brass and woodwind instruments, and, as with the Blandford-Morley-Pegge correspondence, gradually develop into intimacy.

It was during his time in Edinburgh that Morley-Pegge emerged as the historian of the horn and the serpent and, to a lesser degree, of other brass and woodwind instruments. He began to lecture on the horn, and to write articles, and was eventually commissioned to write the book which eventually, after a slow gestation, was published by Ernest Benn in 1960 as *The French Horn*. It was dedicated to W.F.H. Blandford, Morley-Pegge's correspondent and friend since 1920 whom he acknowledged as his master. In the same period he contributed many articles to Grove, and to various periodicals.

In September 1946 Morley-Pegge moved to London and found work with the International Ballet and the Ballets des Champs Elysées. Home became a flat in Highgate (6 Hall Road), though he was often on tour. Bill Morley-Pegge had returned to France in 1945, to the house in Ville d'Avray – where Morley-Pegge's collection was found intact, except for one trombone. In 1959 the Morley-Pegges moved to Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey, where they remained for ten years, then moving into nearby Cobham. Morley-Pegge died on 1 June 1972. Most of his collection, and all his papers, were secured for the Bate Collection; Philip Bate had been a friend since 1939, first by correspondence and then in person.

From its inception in 1946 Morley-Pegge was active in the Galpin Society, of which

he was a founder-member. This brought him into a wider musicological circle than had been available to Blandford, and he was always generous with advice and knowledge. The French Horn also brought him correspondents, many from America, to whom he always replied meticulously and courteously.

Morley-Pegge formed his technique on the classical French instrument to which he long remained faithful. the increasing difficulty of modern horn parts, however, led him to adopt a B-flat instrument by Schmidt of Berlin, with a transposing valve adjustable between a semitone and a perfect fourth. This instrument was, after Morley-Pegge's death, bought by one of his friends by correspondence (they never met), Harold Meek, hornist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and first editor of *The Horn Call*, journal of the International Horn Society.

Philip Bate, obituary of RMP in *The Galpin Society Journal* XXV 1972.