

WALTER FIELDING HOLLOWAY BLANDFORD

Walter Fielding Holloway Blandford (b.28 Dec.1874, d. 23 Jan.1952) was the eldest of the four children of George Fielding Blandford (1829-1911) (see Oxford D.N.B.), a distinguished Wimpole Street psychiatric specialist. W.F.H.B. was educated at Marlborough and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took a first in Natural Science in 1886. After some years as lecturer in entomology at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill he changed careers and switched to law, being admitted as solicitor in August 1901, apparently following a period as an articled clerk. On 4 July 1903 he married Mabel Eunice Smith (1875-1962); their four children were Molly (born 1904), Alison (born 1907), George (b.1908) and Harry (b.1912). Their first home was in Kensington, but the family moved to The Paragon, Blackheath, before Harry's birth and remained there, though they were to move to 12 Lee Road in 1922 and to 4 Lee Road in 1938. During World War One Blandford worked in the censor's department of the War Office, and seems not to have returned to his legal practice. In 1922 he suffered a breakdown and spent some months as a patient at Chiswick House, then a mental hospital. In the summer of 1923 he had recovered sufficiently to move as business and financial manager at Wyke House, Isleworth, another mental institution, which was being run by a friend, perhaps originally a connection through his father's work. Blandford remained at Wyke House until 1932, when he apparently retired and returned to live with his family. The Second World War inevitably brought domestic disruptions, but Lee Road, Blackheath remained his headquarters for the rest of his life.

Blandford's interest in music seems to have begun at school. At about 13 he took up the cornet 'as a means of sublimating my musical libido' but was forced to give it up by internal trouble. On recovery he became bugler to the school rifle corps, then euphoniumist in the brass band. But it was while he was a Cambridge undergraduate that he discovered his life-long love, the French horn. During his first vacation he attended a concert at which Wendtland played the horn in the Beethoven septet, and instantly resolved 'to learn the instrument or perish in the attempt' He also experimented with the trumpet and trombone, but it was as a horn player that he took part in good amateur orchestral concerts. Later in life he claimed (though he later amended the statement) that he had played the first notes in the new Queen's Hall, as horn player in Weber's Oberon overture with the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society at a 'smoking concert' some days before its official professional opening in 1894. In 1891 he had won praise for his rendering of the obbligato in Handel's L'Allegro. Although details do not survive it is clear that throughout his twenties and thirties he was playing a great deal, at a semi-professional level, and that he continued to do so on a less frequent basis well into the 1920s, when trouble with his teeth put paid to his playing. His last performance in public was when he played the horn obbligato to the Quoniam tu solus in Bach's B-minor Mass – as he proudly recorded, quite flawlessly.

Besides being a player Blandford was also a collector and musicologist, and his writings on the horn and other instruments, though few, were very highly regarded by the next generation of organologists. In 1920, at a Puttick & Simpson's sale (when he acquired a horn by L.J.Raoux, eventually sold to his young friend Farquharson Cousins), Blandford met the man who was to become his closest musical friend and correspondent, Reginald Morley-Pegge.

Because during the 1920s and 30s Morley-Pegge was living in France, and was subsequently during World War II stationed in Edinburgh, the friendship was very largely letter-based. Blandford's half of the correspondence was prized by Morley-Pegge and survives in its entirety, though Morley-Pegge's letters do not and are only represented by the few carbon copies which he himself made. The correspondence, which began on strictly musical subjects, gradually extended across the whole range of Blandford's life, and is particularly rich in domestic detail during wartime, giving a vivid and always entertaining picture of the struggle to maintain a normal life despite bombing, rationing, privations and general disruption. Blandford's quirky sense of humour is apparent, as is his breadth of learning and accomplishments: he was an excellent linguist in French and German, and for a considerable period beguiled his leisure in attempting to translate Damon Runyon into French, though ultimately the project foundered without resulting in any publication.

At the beginning of the correspondence Blandford is very much the senior partner, the older man pleased to find the younger one equally passionate and interested and happy to share his knowledge. By the 1940s, however, Morley-Pegge moved into the dominant position as his own work on the horn developed, and it was he and not Blandford who produced the definitive book on the instrument. When *The French Horn* was finally published in 1960 it was dedicated to Blandford, whom Morley-Pegge had always acknowledged as his master.

Blandford had the leisure to correspond very widely, and although the Morley-Pegge letters are the most numerous there are also substantial surviving collections of his letters to Lyndesay Langwill and Philip Bate; among his papers (inherited by or given to Morley-Pegge) are also letters to Kathleen Schlesinger, author of the article on the horn in the 1910 (11th) edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Arthur Falkner, and T.S.Wotton, a friend from the 1880s onwards; he also corresponded with Adam Carse and the collector Archibald Nettlefold, though these letters do not survive. When Morley-Pegge came to write his obituary for the *Galpin Society Journal* he regretted that Blandford had published so little, but acknowledged his great influence over the scholars of succeeding generations. It is possible now to salute him not only as a horn-player and musicologist but also as an incomparable letter-writer.

Letter to P.A.T.Bate, 15 February 1946 *ibid.*

Blandford later discovered that there had been at least one earlier concert.