

# Anglo - Austrian

Society

Since 1944



## Autumn Edition 2024

Herbstausgabe

[www.angloaustrian.org.uk](http://www.angloaustrian.org.uk)

# Autumn Edition 2024

## **Chairman's message**

*As I pen these lines, I do so with some regret that the long, lovely days of summer are already behind us once more. The summer does seem to disappear so quickly! However I trust that this year you have also had the chance to enjoy some of the pleasures which the summer traditionally offers, whether you did so at home with family or visiting friends near or far.*

*If you happened to be in Austria and visited the Salzkammergut, you may have noticed that this summer was rather special for the region. In all corners of the Salzkammergut there have been special events marking the fact that it was chosen as one of this year's European Capitals of Culture. Not only larger towns like Bad Ischl but also many of the smaller towns and villages in the region arranged exhibitions, concerts, performances and various community events (indoor and outdoor) to mark the occasion in style.*

*For The Anglo-Austrian Society 2024 has also been a year of celebration, as we marked the establishment of the Society eighty years ago – back in 1944. As part of our celebrations, in the Spring we enjoyed an evening at the Austrian Embassy in London. In September, as the Autumn season began, we had the opportunity to come together at the Austrian Cultural Forum for a book presentation and musical evening, focussing on Mozart. On this occasion the distinguished Mozartian conductor, Ian Page, interviewed the author, Judith Grohmann, and those present also had the pleasure of listening to stellar performances of music to match the occasion by the prize-winning pianist, Thomas Kelly.*

*Although these two events took place in London, when we came together online in June for the Society's Annual General Meeting, we were once again able to welcome members of the Society from all corners of the UK and from parts of mainland Europe. Now that the Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) there is not a great deal of formal business to be done at an AGM. Instead it gives us a chance to share ideas and experiences. This year we were joined by the Cuarteto Iberia – the string quartet from the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, who took part in the Society's Chamber Music Exchange Project in April. The members of the quartet talked about the experience, told us what they felt that they had gained from the exchange, and then shared a video recording of a performance they had given in a recent international competition (which they won). Even for those who met the members of the quartet in person when they performed in London, it was a rather special experience to hear these lively young musicians talking about what they gained from the project and their hopes for the future.*

*This edition of the Newsletter includes news of things which other grantholders and members of the Society have been doing recently. If you have something to share, please do get in touch. You will find the email addresses you need on the back page of this Newsletter. Rob Hopkins, the Newsletter Editor, is always keen to hear from you. Following the announcement in the last issue that the Newsletter is now available in digital form, some members have already contacted Rob to say that they would prefer to receive their copy in this way. Please let him know if you would like this, too. And if you want to be sure of hearing about events or other activities available to you through your membership, do make sure that the Society has your current email address. Just email Judy Raumann, the Membership Trustee, saying that you would like the Society to use this email address to contact you. This way you won't miss out when things are happening. And we DO want to keep in touch with you.*

*All good wishes  
Dame Janet Ritterman  
Chairman*

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## The Allegro Vivace Choir from Vienna Perform in Stirling.

The “Allegro Vivace” choir from Vienna gave a concert in the Holy Trinity Church in Stirling, in conjunction with “Crieff Choral Group”, on Monday 27th May 2024. I was in attendance. The link with the church was that the current Rector Christoph Wutscher, who is also a musician, was born and brought up in Vienna and founded “Allegro Vivace”, hence their visit. “Allegro Vivace” has 23 members. Crieff Choral Group will make a visit to Vienna in October in return.

The concert started with Crieff Choral Group singing “Ye Banks and Braes” and “Isle of Mull” in a style reminiscent of Hugh Robertson and the Glasgow Orpheus Choir. It was brave of them singing in this style and in such a setting as it is difficult to maintain the pitch. Their rendition of “Peace I Leave With You” by H Amy Beach was beautiful as was “May the Road Rise with You”. “Allegro Vivace” joined them for this Irish Blessing, making it more vibrant.

For the rest of the concert “Allegro Vivace” gave us a feast of different styles of songs, starting with the well-known “Der Lindenbaum” with the text by Wilhelm Müller and music by Schubert in his “Winterreise.” Next, they sang three of Brahms’ songs from the settings of his 49 Volkslieder and three other songs in this style. Here the arrangements brought out the wonderful and high voices of the sopranos and the alpine sounding harmonies with the rest of the choir. Later when they sang “Trag mi Wind” the reverberation of the voices lasted for some time. These were sung a cappella.

The sacred pieces were also top notch such as “Signore delle cime”. When they sang 3 Noccturni and “Che del Ciel” by Mozart, the conductor conducted from the piano. They finished with some songs in English including African-American spirituals which brought out the alto voices more than before. These songs were dynamic. I loved “Didn’t it Rain” appropriate for Scotland and Austria, and “Let me Fly”. A wonderful way to finish. The conducting by the conductor Mattias Binder was exuberant. The soprano who sang a solo verse had a magnificent voice. The whole choir was very powerful and always together and the contrast between soft and loud and fast and slow was perfect. There was one encore. The numbers attending were very good and after the concert food and drinks were served.

Margery MacKay

May 2024

Photo’s taken at the Concert



## What AAS Grantholders are doing

Below you will find details of some of the things that holders of Anglo-Austrian Society Otto Harpner grants are doing. There may be things here that you are able to share.

### Crieff Choral Group - Exchange project

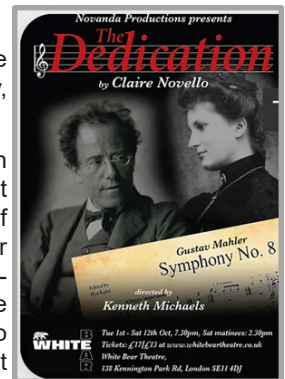
In the Spring edition of the Newsletter, there was a short item about the Crieff Choral Group, a Scottish choir who have organised an exchange with a Vienna-based choir, Allegro Vivace. The first stage of the exchange took place in Scotland when the two choirs gave a joint concert in Stirling on 27th May. (There is a review of the concert on the previous page, by one of the members of the Society, who attended). The return visit, for which The Anglo-Austrian Society has provided a grant to assist with the costs involved, takes place in Vienna in October. So if you happen to be in Vienna in mid-October, do see if you can go to one of the two concerts. The first is on Wednesday afternoon, 16th October, in the Peterskirche (Petersplatz 1, 1010 Wien) right in the centre of Vienna, at 3pm. The second, two days later, when the two choirs join forces once more, is on Friday evening, 18th October, in the Pfarre Gersthof (Bishop Faber Platz 7, 1180 Wien) – In Währing, right on the edge of the Vienna Woods, at 7pm.



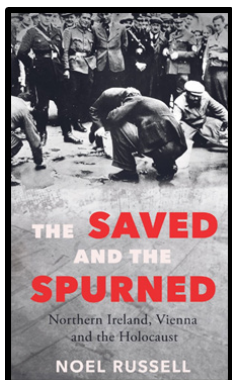
### 'The Dedication' – play by Claire Novello

The author of this play, who writes under the name of Claire Novello, has received a grant from The Anglo-Austrian Society, towards the costs of presenting The Dedication.

The play, which is being presented at the White Bear Theatre in Kennington, London SE11 between 1st and 12th October, is set in Vienna in the early years of the twentieth century – the time of Freud, Klimt and the emergence of Modernism. Twenty-one year old Alma - beautiful, clever, talented and an aspiring composer - is torn between marriage to the famous Gustav Mahler and the younger, less celebrated Alexander Zemlinsky, her teacher, who supports her musical ambitions. She marries Mahler knowing that as his future wife he has forbidden her to compose.



If the play is likely to be of interest to you, do try to go to one of the ten performances. There is a matinee on Saturdays.



## **Noel Russell - The Saved and the Spurned: Northern Ireland, Vienna and the Holocaust**

**(Dublin: New Island Books, 2024)**

Noel Russell received a grant from The Anglo-Austrian Society towards the cost of a German language course at the University of Vienna in 2018, during which he also carried out research in archives held there. This book, which has just been published (September 2024) provides the first comprehensive account of how the Northern Ireland government responded to Jewish appeals for help on the eve of the Holocaust.

For several months before World War II, several hundred persecuted Jews, mainly from Nazi-occupied Vienna, tried to escape to Northern Ireland. They had learned of a Stormont scheme to tackle the region's chronic unemployment by offering financial support to skilled professionals to create local jobs. Almost all applicants were rejected, and more than 125 of these men, women and children were murdered in the Holocaust.

Noel's book, which is based not only on his archival research, but also on unpublished family memoirs and letters, and interviews with Holocaust survivors and their descendants, describes the applicants' desperate efforts to save their families and themselves, and highlights the tireless work done by committed Northern Irish people to rescue them. It also explores how the small numbers of refugees admitted to Northern Ireland made a major contribution to its economic, social and cultural life that continues to this day.

## **200th Anniversary of the birth of Anton Bruckner, famous Austrian composer and organist**

The front cover of this Newsletter shows a portrait of the famous Austrian composer - Anton Bruckner (painted by Ferry Beraton).

Anton Bruckner, born on 4th September 1839 in Ansfelden, Upper Austria, is widely regarded as one of the most influential composers of his time. Yet, during his lifetime, his musical works were rather ambivalently received. His talent as an organist was recognised early on. His symphonies, however, initially received an unenthusiastic reception, especially from Vienna's cultural elites. Anton Bruckner's reputation was a stubborn, eccentric loner from the countryside who didn't fit in with high society. Only in old age did he finally receive the respect and admiration of his contemporaries, Anton Bruckner died on 11th October 1896 and this year marks his 200th Birthday.

The Symphony No. 7 in E major was the most beloved of Bruckner's symphonies with audiences of the time and is still popular. It was written 1881-1883 and revised in 1885.

Throughout 2024 there will be a celebration of his life and a full programme of the celebration can be found using the following link which can be viewed in both German and English language: [www.antonbruckner-2024.at](http://www.antonbruckner-2024.at)

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## Virtual Stammtisch



The Virtual Stammtisch is open to all members of the Anglo-Austrian Society. We meet online (via Zoom) on the fourth Friday of the month, starting at 6.15pm (UK time). The session, which lasts for an hour, begins with a talk (in English) by a guest speaker. After the introductory talk, we usually have two breakout groups (one English-speaking, one German-speaking) when members share experiences and there is opportunity to follow up points with the speaker. If you have not yet thought about joining the Virtual Stammtisch, and would like to give it a try, send an email to [chairman@angloaustrian.org.uk](mailto:chairman@angloaustrian.org.uk). Contributions to the talks programme are always welcome, so if you have a topic to suggest, and would be willing to give a talk (online) for the Virtual Stammtisch, please contact the Chairman.

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**June** – In June those attending the Virtual Stammtisch enjoyed a talk given by Gertrud Fischbacher, a visual artist and textile designer who works mainly in the medium of artistic photography and video, and who is a member of staff at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg. Known for many of the exhibitions that she has mounted throughout Europe and beyond, Gertrud shared a fascinating series of photographs of Kuchl, a small market town in the Tennengau region, not far from Hallein, and on one building in particular, the village Inn. This building, a typical Austrian village inn, though one with some remarkable features, was owned by several generations of her family. By illustrating the continual development of the Inn and the resources that were made available to visitors, particularly those initiated by her grandfather, as well as the changing expectations of holiday makers from the early years of the twentieth century onwards, Gertrud provided a highly distinctive perspective on the development of life in one Austrian market town and the way in which this was intertwined with the development of tourism in the wider region.

**July** – The July talk was provided by Sabine Granger, known to Virtual Stammtisch regulars because of the excellent talks she had previously given. This time Sabine focussed on the Austrian city where she was born, Wiener Neustadt, including in the title of her talk, the phrase "Die Allzeit Getreue" ("the forever loyal city"). To the delight of her audience, Sabine not only offered a richly informative account of the history of the city, explaining how, when and why it had attracted the description of being "forever loyal" but taking this forward with a wealth of informative detail to the present day. She drew attention to the continuing significance of Wiener Neustadt as a centre for industry, for transport, for research and much more besides. Its importance nowadays as a major railway hub was illustrated by the hundreds of trains passing through the city every day, while its historical role, as the location of the oldest military academy in the world, the Theresianische Militärakademie, founded in 1751 and still providing training for army officers, made many of her listeners realise that this was a city they would really like to explore when the opportunity arose.

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**August** - The speaker for the August was The Rt Hon. Sir Mathew Thorpe, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, known for his distinguished legal career. However for the Virtual Stammtisch, Sir Mathew gave a talk which he simply called 'Walking the Jakobsweg in Austria'. During a visit to Austria in 2013, shortly before his retirement, Sir Mathew was captivated by the network of pilgrim paths that lead to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. During the next seven years he embarked on four lengthy walks along the various routes of the Jakobsweg as it crosses Austria. This experience he has recounted in his book, A Divided Heart, published in 2021. In his talk for the Virtual Stammtisch, which will remain long in the memories of those who heard it, Sir Mathew shared something of the personal impact of this experience, and showed some of the photos of memorable sights that he encountered on these walks.

## New Stammtisch Groups start up in Edinburgh and in London

### Edinburgh

Edinburgh is the first to launch a new AAS Stammtisch group! Congratulations, Margery!

In July, Margery MacKay, one of the Society's Edinburgh members, whom some of you will know from the Virtual Stammtisch online meetings, launched a Stammtisch group in Edinburgh.

Here is her note about it:

"The first meeting of the Edinburgh Stammtisch took place on Wednesday 24th July 2024 in The Red Cockerel Café. There were three of us and we hope to meet to discuss all things Austrian and branch out from there. It is early days.

Do you know someone who might like to join them? Please put them in touch with Margery -[margerymackay@btinternet.com](mailto:margerymackay@btinternet.com) - 0775 1260713

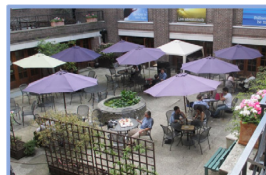
### London

Following on from Margery's Edinburgh initiative, Judy Raumann, Membership Trustee ([membership@angloaustrian.org.uk](mailto:membership@angloaustrian.org.uk)) and Michael Worton, Board Secretary ([boardsecretary@angloaustrian.org.uk](mailto:boardsecretary@angloaustrian.org.uk)) are planning to establish in October a North London Stammtisch (or possibly even a pan-London Stammtisch).

They will be starting with an exploratory meeting with interested people at the Café in the Friends House on the Euston Road, directly opposite Euston Station. Details of the date, time and address will be circulated soon. If you think you might like to come, please email Judy or Michael.

### Still NO Stammtisch group in your area?

Could you start one? If you're willing to give it a try, just get in touch ([enquiries@angloaustrian.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@angloaustrian.org.uk)). There's lots of support and advice available, and plenty of pleasure in store!



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## Vienna in the 1930's

One of our members, Erik Pordes, happened to find on YouTube a remastered film showing images of Vienna in the 1930's. He has kindly shared this link, since he thought that there would be other members who might also find the video interesting. Erik's message explained why he was glad to see these pictures:

"My parents were born in 1916 and 1917 respectively and brought up in well-to-do middle class Viennese families and, whilst of Jewish ancestry, were fully integrated and proud of their Viennese lives and heritage. The 1930's were of course shocking and life-changing times in Vienna and elsewhere but, unlike many members of their families and so many others, they were fortunate to be able to leave Austria in 1938. They had to abandon their university studies in doing so and ended up in Shanghai, as refugees, which was also where they first met each other.



The stories of their lives, both before and subsequently, will always stay with me and it was therefore something of a shock when I stumbled on the You Tube clip below :

<https://youtu.be/ZA9dHEKD-vM?si=SzwDppaXRPH48LkB>

Here, suddenly was the lost Vienna of my parents' teenage years that I had heard much about, starkly presented in colour and with the sounds of the city — history coming to life — and evoking unfamiliar, unexplored and almost 'nostalgic' feelings in me. Though the colour has been added to the footage later, and perhaps not totally realistically, together with appropriately superimposed sound, it felt real enough to me."

Erik's interest, and indeed his fascination having been aroused, he started looking around for more. To his great surprise, he quickly came up with quite a few other film clips, some in the original black and white, some colourised as well as a series of still photographs. Here is just one example of many that are available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w96umMf9r3E>

If you are interested, do search for yourself. You may be surprised to find what you can discover.

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## How to contact The Anglo-Austrian Society

Please contact the Society by email and direct your message to the email address that seems most relevant to your query.

[boardsecretary@angloaustrian.org.uk](mailto:boardsecretary@angloaustrian.org.uk)

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Charity number: 219015

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Correspondence sent to this address will be forwarded as appropriate.

**Cover Photo Credit: Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)**

**Austrian Composer - [austria.info](http://austria.info)**

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