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The Importance of Being Ernest John

**Challenging the Misconceptions about
the Life and Works of E. J. Moeran**

Ian Maxwell

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Music Department

University of Durham

2014

Supervisor: Professor Jeremy Dibble

Abstract

The thesis begins by presenting a set of beliefs about the composer Ernest John Moeran that has come to be recognised as Moeran conventional wisdom. Hitherto, all writing about the composer, scholarly or otherwise, has been predicated on the acceptance of these beliefs as undeniable fact. All aspects of the composer's life and work have been perceived and rationalised within their context, and together they have provided what has until now been acknowledged as the basis of biography. This research project has determined conclusively that most, if not all, of these beliefs are the result of misunderstanding, exaggeration, speculation or fabrication, and may therefore be regarded as misconceptions.

These misconceptions are herein challenged through the narrating of episodes from Moeran's life-journey, as constructed from the results of forensic and hermeneutic examination of such source material and documentary evidence as it has been possible to locate and examine. Moeran, as both man and composer, is consequently revealed to have been a substantially different character from that portrayed by the conventional wisdom, and while the body of music he composed remains unchanged the perception and reception of it is radically transformed.

Moeran's development as a composer is traced by the examination of a few representative works, each of which relates specifically to the aspect of his life under consideration. These works have also been selected to illustrate both Moeran's stylistic originality and his formal ingenuity.

The thesis concludes with a re-assessment of the composer and his achievement. The impact on Moeran scholarship of the findings presented in the body of the thesis is described and areas where further research may extend these findings are suggested.

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Acknowledgements

A research project of this nature that has spanned eight years and several countries and even continents can only be completed with the generous assistance of many people. If I have missed anybody in this list of acknowledgements, I apologise for the oversight.

I would like to thank the librarians of Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, Melbourne and Sydney University Libraries, and of the British Library and Trinity College Dublin Library. My thanks also go to the staff and archivists of The National Archives in Kew, the London Metropolitan Archives, the Royal College of Music, Uppingham School, The Britten-Pears Foundation, Lambeth Palace, Lincoln Cathedral, Clare College Cambridge, The Inner Temple Library, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Melbourne Performing Arts Centre.

I would also like to give particular thanks to the following individuals who have made their time generously available to answering my questions and enquiries:

Andrew Rose, Andrew Westlake (Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club), Ann Francis (Clare College, Cambridge), Anna Hollis, Dr Axel Klein, Professor Bill Sweeney (University of Glasgow), Professor Brian Moeran (Copenhagen Business School), Calista Lucy (Dulwich College), the late Colin Scott-Sutherland, Darrin Winter (The Fisherman's Return, Winterton), Diana Spelman, Dr Fabian Huss (University of Bristol), Georgina Binns (Librarian, Lenton-Parr Library, University of Melbourne), the late Gordon Cumming, Helen Allinson (Sittingbourne Museum), Helen Hawes (Parish Assistant, St. Mary's, Spring Grove), Helen Jones (Lambeth Palace Library), Hugh Forrester (Curator, Police Service of Northern Ireland), Dr Ita Beausang, Jack Moshakis (Wesley College, Melbourne), John Talbot, Lyn Parkyns (Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club), Dr Michael Crowe (Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club), the Rev. Michael Kneen, Michael Seeney (Oscar Wilde Society), Monica McCabe, Patricia Convery (Performing Arts Centre, Melbourne), Professor Rhoderick McNeill (University of Southern Queensland), Robert Atholl (Clare College, Cambridge), Dr Roger Jacob, Dr Rosemary Golding (Open University), Dr Ruth Fleischmann, Stephen Lloyd, Suzanne Mendel and Tracey Dennis (Inner Temple Library).

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends Professor Bill David, Dr James Reid Baxter, Simon Fenwick and Graeme Herrington for invaluable advice.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor Jeremy Dibble, on whose suggestion I began this study of E. J. Moeran, and whose interest in and enthusiasm for my research and discoveries have only been matched by my own.

Finally, my personal thanks go to my three daughters, Catherine, Clare and Nicola, for putting up with my Moeran obsession for so long; to my parents for their unflinching support, particularly to my mother for her awakening in me as a child a life-long love for English music, and to my wife, Jane, who has supported and helped me over the years of this project in more ways than I can count.

Thank you all.

Ian Maxwell, January 2014

Preface

“The Importance of Being Ernest John”

In Oscar Wilde’s play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the hero, Mr John “Jack” Worthing, frequently travels to London to indulge in the pleasures of the city with his friend Mr Algernon Moncrieff. While there, he adopts the persona of his imaginary younger brother Mr Ernest Worthing. Later in the play, Algernon Moncrieff also masquerades as the fictional Ernest. At the *dénouement*, ‘Jack’ is revealed actually to be Algernon’s elder brother, Ernest John, and thus it turns out that his *soi-disant* name was real. The title of the play is a complex pun on the name ‘Ernest’ and the importance of the qualities of truthfulness and seriousness that are either evident or lacking in the characters portrayed. The play explores these qualities in an entertaining and original manner, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of ‘being earnest’.

The composer E. J. Moeran was baptised Ernest John and throughout his life, he was called 'Jack' – first by his mother and subsequently by those that considered themselves to have been his close friends. This research project has determined that the concurrence of the names is more than mere coincidence – from the perspectives of both the choice made by Moeran's parents and his personality. Thus, the subtitle of this thesis *The Importance of Being Ernest John* suggests a duality in Moeran's life that reflects to some extent the duality depicted in the play. While the possibility of a link between Moeran's given names and those of the character in the play is interesting, it is not especially germane to the subject of the thesis.¹ However, the significance of the difference between reality and fiction is crucial to the understanding of the composer's life and music.

When I began this research project, the objective was to undertake a comprehensive examination of the life and music of E. J. Moeran with a specific focus on his chamber music works. The chamber music genre was selected, first because Moeran composed chamber music throughout his career and there are surviving examples from all phases of his life, and second, because the number of works is quite small, enabling a detailed analysis of each to be made within the length constraints of a doctoral thesis. The intent was to establish the form of Moeran's stylistic evolution and to show how his extant compositions lie on a consistent stylistic path. However, as more information about Moeran was uncovered, it became apparent that his life encompassed a number of distinct phases and that the transitions between these phases were marked by significant events that radically changed the course both of his life and his creative flow. As the research progressed, the recognition of these events and their causes and consequences became increasingly necessary as it was clear that any discernible evolutionary stylistic path would be entirely dependent upon the course of Moeran's life and, thus, dependent upon the consequences of these events. I therefore determined to map Moeran's life in some detail in order to establish the sequences of events that encompassed and resulted from the critical points I had identified.

¹ The evidence that Moeran's parents' choice of names for their younger son might have been influenced by the play is presented in the Appendix.

It was during this stage of the project that I discovered that most of what has been written biographically about Moeran and, indeed, the entire conventional understanding of his life lacked much basis in verifiable evidence – the more I discovered, the more I found this to be the case. It very soon became abundantly clear that a full re-examination and re-assessment of Moeran's life, essentially starting from scratch, would be necessary as a preliminary to any study of the music. It was also evident that since all the existing studies were based on a mistaken understanding of the man, any conclusions they reached regarding the music would be unreliable. It became necessary, therefore, to assemble every piece of evidence that could be located pertaining to the life of Moeran and to scrutinise it in objective, forensic detail. In this way, a picture of the man would be created without being influenced by the conventional understanding.

It soon became apparent that a comprehensive treatment of both the stylistic evolution through the chamber music and the re-examination of Moeran himself would not be possible within the constraints of a single research project. Thus, the plan to examine the chamber music was necessarily discarded, and the composer himself became the primary focus of the project.

In deconstructing the myth, and reconstructing the reality, I have endeavoured to present the authentic E. J. Moeran. While he is still the composer of the *Symphony in G minor*, the *Violin Concerto*, the Norfolk and Suffolk folksong arrangements and all the other music, his character – as portrayed hitherto – has been radically re-evaluated. The thesis now stands as a presentation of the real E. J. Moeran – so far as evidence and supportable supposition are able to determine – in the form of a) narrative sequences that focus on the crucial events referred to above, and b) an examination of representative compositions – those that best characterise the highlighted aspects of his creative life.

Introduction

The constraints of a doctoral thesis are such that an examination of the life and works of a composer – even such as Moeran, whose life was relatively short and whose corpus of works is quite small – must be selective. Additionally, a balance must be struck between examining the life and examining the music. In the only doctoral-level research project that has thus far been devoted to Moeran’s life and works, the researcher, Rhoderick McNeill, attempted to preserve this balance by dedicating half of each chapter to Moeran’s life, and half to the music composed during the period covered by the chapter. However, space constraints prevented McNeill from providing a comprehensive biography, and he was limited to the detailed examination of a few major works.

As explained in the Preface, the boundaries of this research project changed a number of times during its development, as more and more information about the composer and his music was unearthed. It had been discovered that what has been believed to be known about Moeran

is suspect, and that a re-examination of the man's life would be essential in order to set the correct context to re-examine the music. In order to make even this task manageable, it was decided to focus on certain episodes of Moeran's life that had been identified as crucial to his development path as a composer; to present these in a narrative form, together with linking passages where appropriate, and to illustrate these episodes with examinations of representative works.

The purposes of the thesis were consequently redefined primarily to identify and challenge the misconceptions about Moeran that have led to the present state of misunderstanding about the composer and his music, and secondarily to resolve certain mysteries about the composer's life – in particular, how he supported himself and how he managed to produce a range of mature works, apparently without precedent, at an early stage of his career. Three key events in Moeran's life were identified as reference points around which the narrative sequences would be constructed. These three events are:

- Moeran's establishment as a composer in London in 1920
- the decision to join Philip Heseltine in the Eynsford cottage in 1925
- the meeting with Peers Coetmore in the summer of 1943

Objectives

The objectives of the thesis are fivefold:

- to present the current understanding of E. J. Moeran and his music, as accumulated in the scholarly writings produced to date, and to show that this is founded on a factual and evidential framework may now be regarded as unreliable
- to distinguish the facts of Moeran's life from the fiction and to present a new interpretation of his composing career that accounts fully for all the available evidence and supportable supposition, and, in particular, to explain his rapid rise to prominence during the early 1920s
- to provide a convincing explanation for Moeran's ability to spend most of his adult life as a composer without recourse to paid employment or reliance on income from composing

- to contextualise the key events that guided the course of Moeran's adult life and imposed the direction of his creative path
- where possible, to establish and classify features of Moeran's music that demonstrate his original style

Thesis Overview

The thesis is presented in this introduction, seven chapters and an appendix.

Chapter 1 – “*The Moeran Myth*”

Chapter 1 sets out the current perception of E. J. Moeran by examining briefly both the material written about Moeran during his lifetime, and the researches undertaken during the sixty or so years since his death. A number of commonly held beliefs about Moeran are presented and these are collected together under the convenient heading *The Moeran Myth*. The chapter ends with a critical survey of the archival and documentary sources that are available for a study of Moeran's life.

Chapter 2 – “... *the origins of a composer*”

The main purposes of Chapter 2 are a) to establish the origins and form of the family and artistic environment within which Moeran was nurtured and which provided the basis for his life as a composer, and b) to examine the circumstances of his childhood and school and college days.

Chapter 3 – “... *a composer goes to war*”

Chapter 3 describes Moeran's life and experiences as an army officer during the First World War. It is shown how Moeran was able to continue his musical and composing activities and that the events of the war that directly impacted him actually provided him with opportunities, rather than his creative life being constrained. The circumstances and consequences of his injury are investigated in detail and presented objectively.

Chapter 4 – “... construction of a composer”

Chapter 4 begins by tracing the sequence of events that led to Moeran’s establishment as a composer in 1920s London. His life from 1920 to the creation of the Eynsford cottage *ménage* in January 1925, during which he experienced five years of steady rise to recognition as a leading English composer, is presented.

Chapter 5 – “... the composer ruined”

Chapter 5 begins by examining the beginnings of the Eynsford cottage commune. The chapter traces the impact this had on Moeran during the subsequent four years and concludes by describing Moeran’s attempts to recover from the effects of his cottage sojourn during the two years leading up to Heseltine’s death in December 1930.

Chapter 6 – “... finale”

Chapter 6 presents the remainder of Moeran’s life in a series of linked episodes, including the completion of the *Symphony in G minor* and his meeting with and subsequent relationship with Peers Coetmore.

Chapter 7 – “...a composer reconstructed”

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising how it has achieved the objectives set out in this introduction. An overview of Moeran’s life in the context of the information revealed in the thesis is presented and his significance is re-assessed.

Appendix

The appendix examines the possibility that the similarity between Moeran’s given names and those eventually revealed as being the names of Mr Worthing in Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* is not mere coincidence.

Chapter 1

“The Moeran Myth”

Ernest John Moeran is one of the least researched and understood composers that were active in England during the first few decades of the twentieth century and working in the musical genre frequently labelled the *English Musical Renaissance*. During the three decades following his death in 1950, his music was overlooked or even ignored as dated and obsolete. It then became a victim of the curious cult of the ‘scandalously neglected composer’ that has flourished amongst British Music enthusiasts from the early 1970s. However, more recently and as more of Moeran’s music has been recorded and performed again, his particular form of folksong-inspired pastoralism has attracted a new audience – one that still appreciates melodic music utilising a harmonic language firmly rooted in the post-Romantic tonal tradition.

However, this new appreciation has not been accompanied by much scholarly examination and Moeran's status as a minor adjunct to the *English Musical Renaissance* has remained intact. As was set out in the Preface, as this research project progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the conventional wisdom about Moeran – such as it is – is deeply flawed and that previous writers and researchers have failed to penetrate the cloak of misapprehension that has surrounded the composer – indeed, most have failed to appreciate its very existence. Since the conclusions about and assessment of the music have been made on the basis of what was understood about the man and his life, the validity of these conclusions and assessments must now be questioned and a thorough re-examination undertaken. Although Moeran's music has been categorised as derivative, careful listening reveals features and characteristics that suggest a much greater degree of originality than that for which he has been credited. It is the opinion of this author that such generalisation has been the result of the evolution of a set of misconceptions about the man himself that have, over a period of many years, supplanted the facts.

There is often a propensity, when appreciating the work of a creative artist, to conflate the creation and the creator. While this has been prevalent in the case of supposedly neglected composers (particularly those working during the so-called *English Musical Renaissance*), it has been especially so for E. J. Moeran² and this has had a major effect on the overall perception of the man and his music. In writings about the composer – scholarly or otherwise, biographical details have been subjectively selected or reinterpreted to support the assertion that, because the creation has been perceived to be a thing of beauty, so must have been its creator. Moreover, the suggestion that any aspect of Moeran's character or personality was in any way defective, cannot be apprehended. This phenomenon has given rise over the years to an aspect of Moeran

² By the mid-1920s Moeran had been referring to himself as 'E.J. Moeran' or 'E J Moeran' for some time and this convention was questioned originally by Philip Heseltine in his essay on Moeran, written for the June 1924 issue of the *Music Bulletin*: 'I must confess that when I first encountered the name of E J Moeran in the Daily Telegraph some years ago, no clear impression was made upon my mind. In the first place there is something cold and inhuman in the indication of the Christian name by a mere initial. A good tradition has ordained that composers shall be more than N or M until such time as fame bestows on them the dignity of a surname *tout court*. J S Bach is admissible - though the sonorous Johann Sebastian is vastly preferable; but R V Williams gives but a distorted image of a personality singularly clear in its full denomination; and the monstrosity of F A T Delius has never even been perpetrated by those who are pedantic enough to announce a work by W A Mozart.' Philip Heseltine, 'E. J. Moeran', *The Music Bulletin*, Vol.6, No.6, (June 1924), 170

accepted wisdom which this researcher has designated the *Dear Jack Conjecture*. Referring to Moeran as 'Jack' has come to convey a contrived intimacy with the man, implying that the writer is part of some 'Moeran fraternity'. Thus, when attempting to assess objectively the man and his music, the researcher must disregard the illusion so created. Although the author of this thesis does like (most of) Moeran's music, he has been meticulous in remaining dispassionate during the course of this research project with regard to the composer and his character. The interpretation of the evidence concerning Moeran as a person has been restricted to that which is either verifiable or can be shown to be plausible.

As in every case where new research builds upon and extends the scope of previous studies, it is incumbent upon the researcher to examine the work of past scholars – both to acknowledge any dependencies and to show where new information may cast doubt on earlier conclusions. During the sixty or so years since the composer's death, there have been several studies made of the music of Moeran and while each has shed some light on its subject, all have suffered from a hindering dearth of direct evidence about the man and his life. Most of these studies have compensated for this lack by relying either on anecdotal evidence, often provided by witnesses whose reliability was assumed to be greater than it really was, or on circumstantial evidence the interpretation of which frequently reflected the pre-suppositions of the researcher. It is possible to address the problem of lack of evidence by ignoring the details of Moeran's life entirely and using only the music as data. While such an approach resolves the problem of the deficiency of biographical material, it necessarily fails as a complete study. The music exists, but the manner of its creation was dependent upon the circumstances of its creator and to remove these renders the analysis incomplete and any conclusions drawn questionable.

In presenting an assessment of an artistic creation by also considering the creator's circumstances as an integral part of the creative process, it is essential that the analysis of the creator as a person is as precise as possible and for this the researcher must determine how much of the evidence is reliable. Any biographical study is, by necessity, a compromise between fact and supposition but it is reasonable to expect that what are claimed to be facts are

supported by evidence and that supposition is more than unfettered speculation. In the case of Moeran, it is unfortunate that almost the entire character of the man and his life story as understood previous to this research project has been a combination of unsubstantiated rumour, hearsay and invention. Verifying what little real evidence there is has been difficult for previous researchers and this has, perhaps inevitably and possibly in some desperation, led to subjective testimony being restated as fact. Such material as exists and particularly that relating to Moeran's early life – such as anecdotes and circumstantial evidence – has been held to be incontrovertibly correct. This, together with the fact that his music has attracted many 'scandalously-neglected composer' enthusiasts who have, over the years, fervently filled in the information gaps with guesswork and sometimes sensational exaggeration, has led to an accepted wisdom about the man that lacks much evidential basis. The result of this has been the gradual establishment of a set of assertions about the composer, his life and work that are at best conjecture and at worst complete fiction. Together, these comprise what this researcher has termed the *Moeran Myth*.³ This chapter details each of the aspects of the *Moeran Myth* and explains how some of them came into being.

The reason that it is important to examine the *Moeran Myth* and, where appropriate, to counter its assertions is that hitherto, Moeran's contribution to art music has been set in the context of the various characteristics of the *Moeran Myth* and thus any evaluation of him as a composer has consequently been compromised. In each of the studies that will be reviewed later in this chapter, the final analysis of Moeran as a composer is derived from or informed by one or more aspects of the *Moeran Myth*. This research project is the first to present E.J. Moeran as man and as composer on the basis of verifiable or convincingly plausible evidence that has been rigorously tested.

The principal features of the *Moeran Myth* are:

³ The concept of the composer myth is by no means confined to E. J. Moeran. Musical biography abounds with accounts of the activities and accomplishments – sensational or otherwise – of composers and musicians. The fascinating thesis *Rewriting Composers' Lives: Critical Historiography and Musical Biography* by Christopher Mark Wiley (Royal Holloway, 2008), presents a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon, showing how apocryphal stories – such as the fourteen-year-old Mozart's apparent memorisation of Allegri's *Miserere* – have become part of canonical biography.

- Moeran spent his childhood in Norfolk and the county had an immense influence on him as he grew up
- the Moeran family and household was not musical in any way and the source of Moeran's emerging musical talent was a mystery
- neither Moeran nor his family had ever considered music as a career path during his schooldays; it was expected that he would become an engineer
- Moeran was severely wounded during the First World War the treatment for which was the insertion of a metal plate into his skull; he was left with fragments of shrapnel too close to his brain to be removed; this injury eventually led to his premature death at the age of fifty-six
- as a result of his injury, Moeran was invalided out of the army and awarded a disability pension; it has been assumed that this was his principal income
- after his service as a motor-cycle despatch rider during the First World War, Moeran returned for a time to Uppingham School as a music teacher
- Moeran's rapid rise to prominence during the early 1920s and his seemingly spontaneous production of fully mature orchestral and chamber music works has not been observed as remarkable; one writer has asserted that Moeran's music was little known until the 1930s
- Moeran retreated to the Cotswolds in 1930 to re-appraise his compositional style and a distinct change is apparent in the music he composed thereafter
- as an adult and particularly during his middle age and later life, Moeran was a 'jolly decent chap' – the above-mentioned *Dear Jack Conjecture*; he was a sociable, affable man of the people who felt most comfortable in the company of 'simple' country folk
- Moeran's behavioural foibles were the natural consequences of his compositional genius and creative and artistic temperament; those that could not be so explained were attributed to his war wound exacerbating the effect of small amounts of alcohol on his system
- Moeran's musical style was highly derivative – it is asserted that similarities with many other composers can be heard in his music and it is assumed that he was heavily influenced by these composers; Frederick Delius, John Ireland and Peter Warlock are frequently mentioned in this context; his style has been described as 'sponge-like' – in that he absorbed the music he heard and subsequently released it in his own music and that he employed a referencing technique, in that he deliberately quoted – directly or indirectly – the music of other composers in order to evoke a similar reception response for his own music
- Moeran's compositional technique was based on a 'germ-cell' or 'parent-cell' structure, in that melodic components derive from much smaller, single-bar units

The research for this project has determined that much of the *Moeran Myth* originated in some clearly identifiable and unsupported assertions that were made as statements of fact over a period of several years – both during the composer’s life and after his death. These were subsequently embellished and became subject to the usual fate of rumour – to grow and self-perpetuate. There has also been a tendency for those that have written in detail about Moeran to write about the man they believe or wish him to have been, rather than objectively about who and what he actually was. This is most apparent in the only two books published to date about the composer – *Lonely Waters* by Lionel Hill and *The Music of E.J. Moeran* by Geoffrey Self. Whilst these books, published within a year of each other in the mid-1980s, have contributed to the maintaining of interest in Moeran over the past three decades, they each suffer from a significant flaw – that of pre-supposition – and it is now apparent that Hill and Self were mistaken in their portrayals. The content and form of the two books will be considered later in this chapter and references to each are made throughout the remainder of this thesis.

The assertion that Moeran was brought up in Norfolk and that the county had a formative effect on his development both as a person and as a composer seems to have had its main origin in a brief article about Moeran, written by Philip Heseltine in 1924 for the *Chesterian*.⁴ Moeran also stated himself that during his period of study at the Royal College of Music, his father had been vicar of a country parish in Norfolk and that he returned there at weekends.⁵ Quite without further corroborative evidence, this has been taken as indicating that Moeran grew up in Norfolk. Geoffrey Self, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* wrote: ‘Shortly after Moeran’s birth the family moved to Bacton in Norfolk, and what was then a remote region of fen and reed cast its spell on the impressionable boy’.⁶ Even if it were true that the Moeran family moved to Bacton shortly after Moeran’s birth, the village does not lie in the fen country. The closest named geographical region, the Norfolk Broads, lies a few miles to the south – and while it could certainly have been described as ‘remote’ one hundred years ago, the romantic

⁴ Philip Heseltine, ‘Newcomers: E. J. Moeran’, *The Chesterian*, No. 36, (January 1924), 124

⁵ E. J. Moeran, ‘Folk Songs and some Traditional Singers in East Anglia’, *The Countrygoer*, Issue 7, (Autumn 1946)

⁶ Geoffrey Self, ‘Moeran, Ernest John Smeed (1894–1950)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004)

landscape that Self conjures up has little relevance to Moeran's childhood and adolescence. This aspect of the *Moeran Myth* will be considered further in Chapter 2.

The idea that the musical genius of Moeran was exceptional in his family derives primarily from another piece written by Philip Heseltine – a miniature essay published by Chester in 1926.⁷ It is stated that Moeran heard 'practically no music except in church'⁸ during his childhood, and, from this, it seems to have been assumed that the Moeran family and household were not musical in any way. Later, Moeran's brother William Graham Moeran provided some apparently supporting evidence. He said that it had been their parents' intention that Moeran should become an engineer – since he was very interested in railway engines, motorcycles and other mechanical things. The Heseltine essay also states that in the Moeran household, the only music books available were *The Cathedral Psalter* and *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and that it was from these that the young Moeran taught himself to read music.⁹ This aspect of the *Moeran Myth* is also considered further in Chapter 2.

The most compelling and dramatic feature of the *Moeran Myth* is the severe injury he is said to have suffered during the First World War, the primitive treatment he underwent, including the apparent insertion of a metal plate into his skull, and its lasting legacy of shrapnel fragments embedded too close to his brain for safe removal. It has also been asserted that the injury resulted in Moeran being both invalided out of the army and awarded a disability pension. The effects of the injury and its treatment have variously informed all existing studies of Moeran and are faithfully reproduced in all biographical articles – including *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Indeed, the war wound and the metal plate are the most commonly quoted aspects of Moeran's life and almost every facet of the man's character is cited with reference to them. The story has become so entrenched in the Moeran conventional wisdom that challenging its veracity has required painstaking scrutiny

⁷ Philip Heseltine, *E. J. Moeran*, (J. & W. Chester, London, 1926)

⁸ *ibid.*, 4

⁹ *ibid.*

of the apparent facts and the discovery of more than usually convincing evidence. The facts of the war injury and its associated aspects will be presented in Chapter 3.

Moeran's rapid rise to prominence on the London musical scene of the early 1920s has been mentioned but its remarkability has been generally overlooked. In particular, Philip Heseltine drew the reader's attention to what he saw as Moeran's exceptional achievement:

there is no British composer from whom we may more confidently expect work of sound and enduring quality in the next ten years than from Jack Moeran; there is certainly no one of his years who has as yet achieved so much.¹⁰

An objective examination of Moeran's creative output and activities between 1920 and 1922 raises many questions that have been ignored by other Moeran researchers and commentators. For example, where and when did he gain the experience to produce mature orchestral works – such as *In the Mountain Country* and the *First Rhapsody* – the only apparent precedents for which were a few songs and short piano pieces, or how did he gain acceptance in musical circles so quickly, such that multiple performances of most of his compositions were assured. Moeran was by no means the only young composer in post-war London – competition was fierce and the standard was very high – but Moeran's progress, from his arrival in London in 1920 to the peak of his achievement in 1925, appears to have been comparatively effortless. The research for this thesis has uncovered a previously unknown part of Moeran's life that is shown to have had a pivotal role in his establishment over a short period of time and thus provides convincing answers to these questions, and this is the principal concern of Chapter 4.

The supposed derivative nature of Moeran's style has been the subject of debate over the years. To the extent that all composers are derivative, Moeran certainly was no different – he did not invent a new style or form of music, neither did he extend the conventions of the musical tradition within which he worked. However, the question as to whether or not he had a distinctive voice has been argued over in each of the studies of the composer completed hitherto. Critics and other writers have also given mixed opinions. In one case, Moeran is the

¹⁰ Heseltine (June 1924), 174

subject of a distinctly oblique perspective; on the question of whether Moeran succeeded in creating his own style, Christopher Palmer wrote:

My own view is that he did not. In fact I wish to suggest without impertinence, and I speak as an admirer of Moeran – that his distinction lies not so much in any recognisable or striking individuality of idiom as in a recognisable and striking ability so to order this assembly of often disparate currents and cross-currents of musical thought to produce thereof a musical substance fine-textured, subtle-mannered and eloquent. Proportions are balanced with an infallible sureness; there is no grinding of gears, no sudden breaking out of one style and equally abrupt acceleration into another; the music flows with a smoothness and inevitability, it sings ever so radiantly, and before long we find ourselves accepting this skilled and painless concatenation of acquired stylistic elements as something original and personal.¹¹

Of course, this is the personal view of the author and the book from which this quotation is taken is about Delius, but its conclusion does appear to be rather circumspect. The lack of a creative individuality is one of the most difficult of the *Moeran Myth* claims to refute effectively, as it is, in the end, a subjective opinion. However, if it may be reasonably asserted that Moeran's music could not have been composed by anybody else, then it is equally reasonable to assert that he did have a distinctive voice. Whether this is true or not will be discussed in the context of the individual works examined during the course of this thesis.

The other aspects of the *Moeran Myth*, as listed above will be discussed at relevant points in this thesis.

Earlier Moeran Studies

The earliest articles about Moeran were written by Philip Heseltine in 1924 in the *Chesterian*¹² and in the *Music Bulletin*¹³ and 1926 in the miniature essay published by J & W Chester Ltd.¹⁴ Moeran had come to Heseltine's attention with the publication in 1923 of his Housman cycle *Ludlow Town* – which Heseltine had admired – and the two soon became good friends. As a follower of both John Ireland and Frederick Delius, Heseltine's music utilised language that

¹¹ Christopher Palmer, *Delius*, (Duckworth, London, 1976), 20

¹² Heseltine (January 1924), 124

¹³ Heseltine (June 1924), 170-174

¹⁴ Heseltine (1926)

extended harmonic boundaries and he may have recognised a fellow harmonic innovator in Moeran. The first of Heseltine's pieces on Moeran published in January 1924 was a brief appreciation of the composer, and is the first item to mention Moeran's war injury: 'In 1914 he joined the army, serving throughout the War, with the exception of a period in 1917, when he was wounded at Bullecourt',¹⁵ his living in Norfolk: 'E. J. Moeran has lived the great part of his life at Bacton, in Norfolk ...',¹⁶ and his not experiencing much music during his childhood:

It is a curious fact that a composer who now displays such remarkable maturity at an age when many others are still groping after means of expression, should have heard no serious music in his childhood. Until the age of fourteen he did not know the sound of a full orchestra, and it was about the same time that he first made acquaintance with chamber music and choral works, drawn almost entirely from the classics.¹⁷

It is also the first intimation both that Moeran had already composed a large body of work, and of his self-criticism: '... he has written a considerable number of chamber works, practically all of which he now considers worthless and prefers to withhold from the public'.¹⁸ Heseltine wrote that the string quartet just published (the *String Quartet in A minor*) was the fourth such work and that the violin sonata (the *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Pianoforte*) was the third for that instrument.

A few months later, Heseltine wrote another, longer piece that was published in the June 1924 issue of the *Music Bulletin*, which is very probably the origin of the notion that the composer was possessed of particular *bonhomie*. Heseltine wrote:

Whereas when we hear of Jack Moran [*sic*] (with the accent on the Mor) all is clear at once and a personality is apparent. It sounds so delightfully unlike a professional musician – and one might spend many pleasant hours in Moeran's company without discovering that, officially at any rate, he was an accounted one.¹⁹

¹⁵ Heseltine, (January 1924), 124

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Heseltine, (June 1924), 170

In the knowledge of what has been subsequently said about Moeran, it is apparent that Heseltine's article is the ultimate source of several of the *Moeran Myth* aspects. It is clearly one of the sources of the war wound story:

[Moeran joined] the army at the outbreak of war, was severely wounded in France in May 1917, and after his recovery was attached to the transport section of the R.I.C, remaining in Ireland until demobilised in 1919.²⁰

The essay ended by remarking on Moeran's achievement to date:

... there is no British composer from whom we may more confidently expect work of sound and enduring quality in the next ten years than from Jack Moeran; there is certainly no one of his years who has as yet achieved so much.²¹

Two years later Heseltine wrote a further appreciation of Moeran in a miniature essay, published by Chester, shortly after the publication of a similar miniature essay on Heseltine (Peter Warlock), written by Moeran. Heseltine's essay made further reference to the war wound:

[Moeran] joined the army in August 1914, as a motor-cyclist despatch rider, was granted a commission early in the following year, and served as an officer in the Norfolk regiment. He was wounded in 1917 in an attack at Bullecourt, and rendered unfit for further active service.²²

It is also the probable origin of the story of the lack of any music in the Moeran household as Ernest John grew up:

Young Moeran was brought up in the secluded atmosphere of an Evangelical household, and at the age of nine he was sent to a boarding school at Cromer, where he had some violin lessons, but heard practically no music except in church. However his harmonic sense began to assert itself at an early age, and he taught himself to read music at the piano with the aid of the only music books available in his home, namely *Hymns A & M* and *The Cathedral Psalter*.²³

Additionally, Heseltine's article is the earliest mention of Moeran's return to Uppingham School as assistant music master: '... on his discharge from the army in January 1919 [Moeran]

²⁰ *ibid.*, 171

²¹ *ibid.*, 174

²² Heseltine (1926), 5

²³ *ibid.*, 3-4

took up a post as music master at Uppingham'.²⁴ By the date of publication of the essay, Moeran and Heseltine had been sharing a cottage in Eynsford for more than a year and had been close friends for at least two years. Heseltine probably knew as much about Moeran as anybody outside his family and, since the source of the biographical material in the piece must have been Moeran himself, much can be deduced about the composer from what he said and the interpretation that Heseltine gave it.

In January 1930, Hubert J. Foss published *E. J. Moeran: A Critical Appreciation*, in the *Musical Times*.²⁵ It was apparently written as a reminder to the *Musical Times* readership of the composer's existence – since Moeran had not published anything for some time, although Foss refers in the article to a performance of the *Rhapsody No. 2* in London the previous summer. The article might also be read as a thinly-veiled appeal to Moeran himself to start composing again. Its importance to Moeran scholarship is that it is the earliest published analysis of the folksong influence that Foss asserted permeated Moeran's music. Foss claimed that, at the time of writing, there was: '... a wave of unpopularity for the English folksong school ...' but that Moeran's reliance on it as a source had been: '... carelessly and without study ...' attributed. Foss noted that, as far as he was aware: 'Moeran never ... uses an actual folk-tune in any of his works'. Foss's perception is clearly shown in his next statement:

what [Moeran] learnt from English folk-music was absorbed and digested before ever he wrote his first outstanding work; it affects the whole corpus of his style, and even his thought, rather than its outward characteristics, and gives him an individual and intense mode of thought which would only with difficulty have been acquired in any other school.²⁶

Foss quoted the first few bars of the *String Quartet in A minor* first movement and went on:

As a short epitome of Moeran's manner this example is excellent. It shows at once (particularly since there immediately follows a re-statement of the melody in an F minor tonality) that the music has learnt much from the modes without being strictly modal. From them it derives that pleasant mingling of major and minor (so we really hear it) which gives it a special feeling. An occasional odd use of unexpected accidentals obviously comes from

²⁴ *ibid.*, 5

²⁵ Hubert Foss, 'E. J. Moeran: A Critical Appreciation', *The Musical Times*, (January 1930), 26-29

²⁶ *ibid.*, 26

the same source. Here, too, we see the unit of Moeran's harmonic system, its concordance, its colouration by use of secondary sevenths, its reliance on the triad, and its trick of moving the bass downwards by tones.²⁷

As a brief and non-academic description of the fundamental features of Moeran's style during his first fruitful period (1920-1925), this is very precise. Foss was, of course, a friend and admirer of the composer, as he was a friend of many such composers during the 1920s, and consequently was writing not entirely objectively. Foss's unique insight at the time was to realise that folksong not only influenced Moeran but also that it had become an immanent part of his musical psyche – it comprised an essential part of the framework on which Moeran's canvasses, both large and small, were constructed. While there is nothing of the *Moeran Myth* in Foss's article, aspects of it will be considered further later in the thesis.

Hubert J. Foss wrote another, semi-scholarly article about Moeran some years later. This article was written for *The Listener*, published on 3 July 1942 in anticipation of the first performance on the composer's *Violin Concerto*, which was to be broadcast the following week on what was then called the BBC Home Service. Like his earlier 1930 article, Foss's piece on Moeran followed a middle path between popular writing and an academic treatment but his elaborate language and extravagant use of metaphor and the symbolism of nature make for difficult reading:

... there came a new Wordsworthism; a spirit of nature that is not in the least naturalistic. It is a form of musical contemplation from the soil upwards: the peaceful growth of the plant is philosophically as important as its flower, and indeed it might be said that English music has not been content, not even sometimes willing, to pluck the flowers and make them into a lover's garland.²⁸

Foss presented arguments in support of Moeran similar to those he gave in the 1930 *Musical Times* article and he bemoaned the rarity of performances of the *Symphony in G minor*.²⁹

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Hubert Foss, 'Moeran and the English Tradition', *The Listener*, (3 July 1942)

²⁹ Foss's *Listener* article appears to have been prophetic, as the *Violin Concerto* was hugely popular and successful, garnering multiple performances. The *Symphony in G minor* was also performed regularly over the next few years.

In 1962, the British Music enthusiast Colin Scott-Sutherland was researching material for a possible book on Moeran and he wrote a letter asking for information about the composer from Moeran's brother William Graham. William Graham replied to Scott-Sutherland in a letter dated 24 August 1962 with many recollections about the composer's life. The contents of this letter were gradually made known over the years and it was finally published in its entirety in the 2009 edition *British Music*, the journal of the British Music Society.³⁰ William Graham Moeran's recollections were undoubtedly clouded but much of what he said can be regarded as reliable in the light of supporting evidence.

The first academic study of Moeran's music was the thesis *E.J. Moeran – An Assessment*, written by Stephen Wild and submitted to the University of Western Australia in 1966 in fulfilment of the requirements of the M.A degree. Wild later published the biographical part of his thesis, together with an introduction written by Moeran's widow Peers Coetmore and a discography compiled by Lewis Foreman, as a book in 1973.³¹ While undertaking the research for his thesis, Wild interviewed Coetmore, who was living in Melbourne at the time with her fourth husband, Maurice Walter Knott. It is not clear to what extent Coetmore helped Wild's research but it is evident from the content both of the thesis and the subsequent book that Wild had not been able to read any of the letters that survive of those that Moeran wrote to Coetmore between 1943 and 1950. However, it is apparent that his study reinforced existing aspects of the *Moeran Myth* and laid the basis for some of the others. For biographical details on Moeran, in addition to the reminiscences supplied by Coetmore and which it is now apparent that she selectively recalled and presented,³² Wild relied heavily for primary evidence on the two items written by Philip Heseltine examined above. Wild clearly took the authenticity of this material at face value and, as a result, several of the *Moeran Myth* key aspects: the war wound, the shrapnel embedded near his brain and the job as music master at Uppingham find their first mention in scholarly writings here. Wild also referred to Moeran spending time in the Cotswold

³⁰ John Talbot, 'Memories of Jack', *British Music*, Vol. 31, 2009 (British Music Society, London, 2009), 7-10

³¹ Stephen Wild, *E.J. Moeran* (Triad Press, London 1973)

³² The present day vernacular would employ the word 'spin' to describe the character of Coetmore's presentation.

Hills during the early 1930s for the purpose of re-appraising his musical style. The origin of this can only have been Peers Coetmore, since it does not appear in any of the biographical items about the composer published before the mid-1960s. The origin of the Cotswolds story is a mystery, since there is no unaccounted-for time of sufficient duration in Moeran's life in the early 1930s during which he could have retreated there. However, plausible explanations may be devised and it is likely that the story grew from a conflation of one or more unconnected events and a geographical confusion. This will be considered further in Chapter 6.

In his thesis, Wild placed great importance on what he called Moeran's 'germ-cell' technique of melodic construction. He deconstructed much of the melodic content of works such as the *Cello Concerto* and *Symphony in G minor* and asserted common origins for these in much smaller units – the 'germ-cells'. This idea was later adopted by Geoffrey Self and still later by Christopher Pidcock. Wild also advanced a theory that Moeran deliberately included imitations or quotations from the music of other composers in order to evoke a fixed emotional response in his listeners. This theory was also put forward and extended by Self and Pidcock and will be considered further below.

Both Wild's thesis and book contain a number of factual errors – probably due to the difficulty in 1966 of verifying anything from a distance of ten thousand miles. However, Wild may be forgiven his oversights as he would have had little reason to doubt what he was told by an apparently reliable informant, and the most interesting part of Wild's book from a biographical perspective is the introduction contributed by Peers Coetmore herself. However, assertions such as '... until the 1930s, Moeran's music did not attract wide notice ...',³³ that Moeran spent considerable time in Somerset and that the cello concerto was composed '... half in Wales and half in Ireland ...'³⁴ have lent a scholarly weight to such misconceptions about Moeran.

³³ Wild (1973), 11

³⁴ *ibid.*, 14

Vernon Lee Yenne submitted his thesis entitled *Three Twentieth Century English Song Composers: Peter Warlock, E. J. Moeran and John Ireland* in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of D.M.A. at the University of Illinois in 1969. Although this research did not focus primarily on Moeran, it nevertheless represents an early attempt to define and categorise his compositional style, as perceived in his songs. Yenne set out the following reasons for his concentration on the three composers mentioned in his title:

First, all were primarily song composers (Ireland was also a fine writer for the piano), and whose best and most representative works date from this fifteen year span. Secondly, their works demonstrate a number of the major trends in English vocal music, albeit conservative ones, that occupied the thoughts and energies of composers during this time. Thirdly, there was a close friendship between two, Warlock and Moeran, and they even collaborated on one song *Maltworms*. Warlock's music has also been seen as an important influence on Moeran. Ireland is included, not only for the worth of his music, but because he was Moeran's teacher at the Royal College of Music and exerted considerable power over him for a while. Fourthly, all these men were influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the powerful figure of Frederick Delius. Lastly, it is proper now, considering the current revival of interest in music of this period that an investigation be undertaken into the works of three of the most talented song composers of that early era. As with many new movements there is a reaction against it, which in turn is followed, as in this case, by a fresh appreciation. There are Warlock and Ireland societies in England which give concerts of the composers' works and it is now time for a more comprehensive critique of their music.³⁵

Yenne's assessment that these composers were 'primarily song composers' may be reasonably challenged in the cases of Ireland and Moeran. While about half of Moeran's published works were songs, this is insufficient reason to categorise him as primarily a song composer. In the case of Ireland, the proportion of songs in his entire oeuvre is less than that of Moeran and it is also not reasonable to consider him to be primarily a song composer. As was the case with Stephen Wild's thesis, there exist a number of factual errors that may be attributed to the inevitable difficulty Yenne had in the late 1960s in obtaining and verifying facts about the three composers he was researching. It is evident that Yenne was unaware of Wild's research of a few years earlier but it is likely that at the time, he had no means of knowing about it. However, in his assessment of Moeran, he evidently used many of the same sources – principally the Heseltine items published during the mid-1920s – and he reached many of the

³⁵ Vernon Lee Yenne, *Three Twentieth Century English Songs Composers: Peter Warlock, E. J. Moeran and John Ireland*, (University of Illinois D.M.A. Thesis, 1969), 3

same conclusions. However, Yenne's evaluation of Moeran's style as being heavily dependent upon the influence of folk song is precise. Yenne subjected each of the solo songs to critical analysis but he based his underlying appreciation of the composer on the above-mentioned articles by Hubert J. Foss. Yenne's consideration of Moeran's style and compositional techniques was limited by the fact that he examined only the songs in detail. However, in asserting that vocally-inspired melodies and an adventurous and innovative harmonic inventory, derived ultimately from the use of modal scales, were an important, probably even predominant, characteristic of Moeran's style, Yenne was the first academic commentator to appreciate the extent to which Moeran's immersion in folk song had informed his own approach to composition. While the analysis of some of the individual songs suffers from the same lack of verification as does some of the biographical material and the presented compositional chronology is haphazard, Yenne managed to identify a form of stylistic evolution and correctly stated its origins.

In 1982, Rhoderick McNeill submitted his thesis *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E. J. Moeran* in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for the University of Melbourne. According to Stephen Wild, McNeill had earlier begun a master's thesis examining Moeran's unfinished second symphony but it is not known whether this was completed or if he expanded his research into the doctoral study just mentioned.³⁶ By 1982, Peers Coetmore had died and her widower – the previously mentioned Maurice Walter Knott – made available to McNeill many of the letters written by Moeran that had been in Coetmore's possession. Thus, McNeill had much better source data than had Wild with respect to Moeran's later life. However, for earlier biographical details, McNeill drew on Wild's original material and also relied heavily of the reminiscences of Walter Knott. He also communicated by letter with musicians, such as Sir William Walton, who had known Moeran in their youth. As with Wild and Coetmore, McNeill accepted much of the anecdotal evidence provided by Knott, his

³⁶ In his D.M.A. thesis *Selected Orchestral Compositions by Ernest John Moeran*, Bruce Polay wrote: '[Stephen] Wild, in a letter to the author, identified four studies [on Moeran] currently in progress ... 3) a master's thesis by Rhoderick McNeill (Victoria, Australia) concerning the composer's unfinished Second Symphony'. The letter quoted by Polay was apparently written in 1982.

correspondents and others as authoritative accounts and set them down as such. These have been subsequently referenced as direct evidence and, consequently, much of the *Moeran Myth* was given further scholarly support. McNeill's technical treatment of many of Moeran's works was necessarily superficial, as he attempted to examine within a single study, every extant composition. However, while he did not adopt Wild's 'germ-cell' hypothesis, he showed clearly that Moeran was dependent on external stimuli – such as folk song, his environment and the classical techniques he studied in his youth – for his compositional ideas. McNeill did not mention Yenne's research in his thesis, so it is probable that he was unaware of it. However, since much of the biographical material had the same ultimate origin, many of errors contained in Yenne's dissertation also appear in McNeill's thesis.

Written as an 'affectionate account' of the author's friendship with E.J. Moeran, Lionel Hill published *Lonely Waters – the diary of a friendship with EJ Moeran*, in 1985.³⁷ The book recounts aspects of the last seven years of Moeran's life from the perspective of Hill as a friend of the man and a devotee of his music. Hill's acquaintance with Moeran began in mid-1943 and quickly developed, on the basis of the evidence provided by Hill, into a friendship that endured until a few months before the composer's death in December 1950. There is no scholarly material as such in Hill's book but it contains much of immense interest and importance to the Moeran researcher. Its principal contribution to the *Moeran Myth* is the author's conviction that the man was 'gifted and lovable' – a character trait that has been subsequently adopted by Moeran enthusiasts. Hill's denial of anything negative about Moeran and his behaviour – even managing to attribute his alcoholism to circumstances beyond the composer's control – is a testament to Hill's devotion. However, read and analysed objectively, many of Hill's reminiscences reveal Moeran (at least during the period in which Hill knew him) to have been rude, arrogant and exploitative of others' generosity.

Hill was writing some thirty-five years after Moeran's death and portrayed the man he remembered, to quote the cover of the book, 'in loving detail'. However, this portrayal must be

³⁷ Lionel Hill, *Lonely Waters : the diary of a friendship with EJ Moeran*, (Thames Publishing, London, 1985)

considered in the context of Hill having formed a distinct impression of the man from the music that he had already heard. Describing his first experience of hearing a work by Moeran – the orchestral work *Lonely Waters* which he heard on the radio in early 1943 – Hill said: ‘... the time had come to make every effort ... to make contact with a mind so in tune with my own’.³⁸ Thus, even before Hill and Moeran met, a strong pre-conception was in place that subsequently suppressed objective appreciation. The content of the book was constructed primarily from a combination of personal recollections, diary entries and letters. Hill also acknowledged information provided by a number of sources – including Maurice Walter Knott.

In 1986, Geoffrey Self wrote *The Music of E.J. Moeran*³⁹ and this remains the only published biographical study of the composer. In fact, it was not written as a biography, rather it followed a pattern similar to that of Rhoderick McNeill’s doctoral thesis in that it attempted to assess Moeran’s entire musical output in the context of what the author regarded as the relevant episodes of his life. Like Stephen Wild’s book, Self’s book was an adaptation of a thesis – in this case, submitted for the degree of M.Phil to the University of Exeter in 1979. Similarly to Lionel Hill, Self was also writing long after the composer’s death, but he did not know the man personally. Relying on testimony from sympathetic sources, such as Stephen Wild, Rhoderick McNeill, Maurice Walter Knott and Moeran’s Irish friend the conductor Michael Bowles, he came to the conclusion that Moeran was a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. However, this assessment derived from a mistaken interpretation of what Self regarded as the facts. Like Hill, Self had formed a preconception of Moeran’s personality but in this case formulated from what he believed he knew about Moeran’s early years. An example of this is his description of Moeran’s youth – an extract of which formed the basis of the extract from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Moeran quoted earlier:

The place of birth – Heston – is of little significance, for the family were to move shortly to Bacton in Norfolk where the Reverend J.W.W. Moeran had been appointed to the living. A very remote region of the Fen Country, isolated, empty and desolate, it is a region of

³⁸ *ibid.*, 9

³⁹ Geoffrey Self, *The Music of E.J. Moeran*, (Toccata Press, London, 1986)

‘Lonely Waters’, reeds and scrubland. The place cast its spell on the impressionable boy, who retained all his life a love of the fens, their people and their music.⁴⁰

Within these few words, Self presented an idealised and romantic perspective on the child Moeran as father of the man and established a compelling and desirable characteristic for his later analysis of the music. As will be shown in Chapter 2, Moeran’s father was not appointed to the living of Bacton, Moeran did not grow up in the Norfolk fen country and there is no evidence that he was any more impressionable than any other boy. Neither is there any convincing evidence that he had a particular love for the region.

Self’s preconception dominated his presentation of Moeran as a person and thus circumscribed his analysis of the music. Nowhere is this more apparent than Self’s theory that the *Symphony in G minor* was intended as a requiem for Moeran’s friends and colleagues who had died during the First World War and that its thematic material was based both actually and symbolically on the Norfolk folksong *The Shooting of his Dear*. However, the information presented by Self that has contributed most significantly to the *Moeran Myth* was his description of Moeran’s First World War injury:

On 3 May [1917], at Bullecourt in France, [Moeran] was severely wounded in the head, with shell particles too near the brain to be removed. Two months later, he was promoted to Lieutenant. With the ending of the War, he attended the School of Aeronautics (Royal Air Force) for two months but was finally released from military service in January 1919. After many Medical Boards he was awarded a disability pension assessed (according to Michael Bowles) at 80-90 per cent. These are the bald facts. The physical injury was appalling enough; one cannot begin to imagine the mental scars.⁴¹

Self continued:

The treatment for his injury involved the fitting of a metal plate into the skull and it is probable that this injury permanently affected [Moeran’s] physical health and may ultimately have contributed to his death.⁴²

As with Wild and McNeill, the source of much of Self’s biographical information was also Walter Knott – either directly or via the earlier researchers’ work, but Knott had made no

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 17

⁴¹ *ibid.*, 19

⁴² *ibid.*

mention of a ‘metal plate’ or an ‘80-90 per cent disability pension’. As stated in the quotation above, Self acknowledged the testimony of Michael Bowles contained in a number of letters written to Self as he was preparing the book, and it can only be from these letters that the ‘metal plate’ and ‘disability pension’ stories derive. Self consulted a medical authority as to the possible after-effects of the kind of injury he asserted that Moeran suffered:

All patients who have had head wounds – especially those who have plate in the skull – are warned of the dangers of drinking alcohol. Even a small amount of alcohol may affect a patient out of all proportion to the amount consumed.

People who have plates in the skull may be subject to severe headaches and irrational behaviour, irritability, violence and lack of co-ordination (giddiness or falling about) which might be mistaken for a drunken state.⁴³

Self did not attribute this quotation so the identity of the medical expert is not known. However, it is apparent that he or she had been asked a loaded question – that is to say, the existence of the metal plate had been assumed. It is significant that most of the symptoms referred to by the medical authority would also be apparent in an alcoholic.⁴⁴

During the course of his musical analysis, Self extended the earlier theories of Stephen Wild – and proposed that Moeran worked by the use of symbolic references, what Self called *loci classici*, in order to evoke a particular emotional response to his music. Self presented examples of where he believed that Moeran had – deliberately or otherwise – quoted from works such as Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius* and Bax’s *Symphony No. 3* (communicating ‘peaceful serenity’), Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 6* (communicating ‘shattering of peace’) and Mozart’s *Symphony No. 40* (communicating ‘controlled emotion’). However, since this referencing would have had to have been deliberate, the theory could only be convincing if there was any evidence that Moeran said or wrote that he was doing this. The comprehensive examination of Moeran’s

⁴³ *ibid.*, 20

⁴⁴ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the causes, symptoms and effects of alcoholism in detail. The evidence that Moeran eventually suffered from alcohol-related problems – whether clinically diagnosable as alcoholism or not – is beyond dispute, and this will be presented later in the thesis. Amongst the numerous reference works on alcohol dependency and alcoholism are Elvin Morton Jellinek, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism*, (Hillhouse, New Haven CT, 1960) and Irving Maltzman, *Alcoholism – Its Treatments and Mistreatments*, (World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, 2008)

writings and his numerous surviving letters undertaken in the course of this research project has shown that there is no such evidence, and this researcher finds the model implausible.

Self summarised his conclusions in his final chapter called *The Moeran Meaning*. He set out a case that Moeran was a victim, primarily of the First World War but also of misunderstanding and alcohol. Self's attribution of almost everything negative about the composer to the war injury, while understandable in context, is entirely dependent upon the war injury having been as serious as Self narrated. Towards the end of the book he wrote:

Many of Moeran's accidents [of which there were a large number] have been attributed to drunkenness – but this seems too facile; it is probable that the war injury may have had much responsibility for them.⁴⁵

He continued:

The significance of Moeran's war experience has not been accorded nearly enough weight in such comment on his work which has so far appeared in print. He lived through three years of its horrors, and carried the permanent effect of his head injury to the grave.⁴⁶

If this statement is true, then the analysis is precise. However, as will be shown later, principally in Chapter 3, the foundations of Self's thesis fail to stand up to scrutiny, and an alternative explanation for the events of Moeran's later life must be found.

Bruce Polay submitted a thesis in partial fulfilment for the degree of D.M.A. at Arizona State University in 1989, entitled *Selected Orchestral Compositions by Ernest John Moeran*. Polay presented comparative analyses of Moeran's six major orchestral works: the *Cello Concerto*, the *Violin Concerto*, the *Rhapsody in F sharp for Piano and Orchestra*, the *Serenade in G*, the *Sinfonietta* and the *Symphony in G Minor*. Polay examined each of the six works using a common set of criteria: use of formal structures, analysis of melody and analysis of harmonic organisation. His purpose in so doing was to eliminate any subjective considerations. Polay's research appears to have been a response to earlier Moeran studies that he considered lacked

⁴⁵ Self (1986), 237

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 245-6

depth and were: ‘... simply overviews in which detail is generalized’.⁴⁷ He further summarised his concerns and intentions:

The literature emphasizing Moeran’s craftsmanship is less than might be expected for a composer whose place in musical history can only be acknowledged by an appropriate amount of available writing. It is intended that this writing might spur further interest and examination of Moeran’s music.⁴⁸

Polay seems to have been unaware of McNeill’s doctoral research programme although he had been informed of the Australian’s earlier master’s level project by Stephen Wild. However, he did reference the Yenne D.M.A. thesis on Moeran as a song composer. He was very careful to cite all his sources and although he quoted some of the aspects of the *Moeran Myth* in his biographical notes, there is no evidence of verification. Polay’s contribution to Moeran scholarship was his catalogue of the extent to which he believed that Moeran was influenced by other composers. The bulk of Polay’s thesis comprises three chapters each examining the six selected works according to one of the three criteria mentioned above. The six works were considered both individually and aspects of them were compared. The data is factual, was extracted from the scores and no attempt to incorporate aesthetic considerations was made. For example, Polay compared Moeran’s use of sonata form structures in each of the movements where such a form is apparent. He contrasted the modifications employed in each case. The data thus presented is informative and useful in many cases, and his dissections reveal indisputably that Moeran’s attention to structural detail was meticulous. Polay also identified Moeran’s precision in his conclusion and he expressed the hope that further, more specific research would be done on Moeran’s music and that the apparent revival of interest in it would be maintained.

In 2002, Trevor Hold devoted a chapter of his book *Parry to Finzi* to the songs of E. J. Moeran.⁴⁹ In presenting a scholarly assessment of most of Moeran’s songs, Hold identified many of the stylistic characteristics that set Moeran apart from his contemporaries. However

⁴⁷ Bruce Polay, *Selected Orchestral Compositions by Ernest John Moeran*, (Arizona State University D.M.A. Thesis, 1989), 2

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 6

⁴⁹ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi*, (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2002), 373-394

and somewhat contradictorily, Hold attributed many of these to the influence of others – most especially Peter Warlock. The notion that Moeran was heavily indebted to Warlock – especially in the area of harmonic innovation – is a commonly-quoted aspect of the *Moeran Myth*. However, a careful examination of the timeline of each composer shows conclusively that much of Moeran’s harmonic and melodic personality was established before he came across the music of Warlock and long before they became friends. There is sufficient evidence to establish a counter-case that Moeran’s influence on Warlock was at least as strong as the other way around and this will be presented later.

Fabian Gregor Huss submitted his thesis *Inspiration, Influence and Stylistic Development in the Symphonies and Concertos of E.J. Moeran* at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, in August 2007.⁵⁰ Huss examined in some detail the orchestral works that Moeran composed from the mid-1930s from the perspective of the dual influences of Irish folksong and landscape that Moeran experienced during the final fifteen years of his life. Many of the aspects of this thesis were later summarised in an article by Huss published in *Tempo* in April 2009.⁵¹ The main section of the thesis traces Moeran’s stylistic development across the five completed orchestral works: the *Symphony in G minor*, the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (1942), the *Rhapsody in F sharp for Orchestra and Pianoforte* (1943), the *Sinfonietta* (1944) and the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* (1945). Huss also briefly considered the surviving fragments of the uncompleted second symphony in the context of a stylistic progression. Although Huss presented some compelling arguments, particularly those relating to the effects landscape and nature had on Moeran and how the results of these may be identified in the music, he relied for biographical detail on the same sources as the other studies mentioned so far. Consequently his portrait of Moeran as person during his last fifteen years is heavily informed by a perspective that this thesis will show to have been incomplete.

⁵⁰ Fabian Gregor Huss, *Inspiration, Influence and Stylistic Development in the Symphonies and Concertos of E.J. Moeran*, (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, MA Thesis, 2007)

⁵¹ Fabian Gregor Huss, ‘The Construction of Nature in the Music of E. J. Moeran’, *Tempo* Vol. 63, No. 248, (1 April 2009), 35-44

Cyril Andrew Blosser wrote his thesis entitled *Ernest John Moeran: Seven Poems of James Joyce. A Singer's Guide to Preparation and Performance*, in partial fulfilment for the degree of D.M.A. at Ohio State University in 2009. He provided his reasons for the study of the song-cycle thus:

The purpose of this study is three-fold: to present a detailed biography of Ernest John Moeran including his musical influences; to offer a biographical sketch of James Joyce; and to provide performers and teachers with a guide which builds on insights from the composer's past, musical ideas presented in the score, and interpretation of the text.⁵²

Blosser's biography of Moeran formed Chapter 2 of his thesis and it drew heavily on all the sources mentioned so far in this chapter, but most especially it referenced Geoffrey Self's book *The Music of E.J. Moeran* and the so-called *Worldwide Moeran Database*,⁵³ from both of which Blosser quoted as if they were authoritative. As with all the studies described here – from Stephen Wild onwards, there is little evidence of verification of assertions, other than to quote another source. The genuine primary evidence was mostly overlooked and the inconsistencies in quoted material were not remarked upon. For example, Blosser stated that:

On the evening of April 17, 1912, Moeran attended a concert featuring Balfour Gardiner in Queen's Hall, London, where he heard the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams's second and third Norfolk Rhapsodies.⁵⁴

This was followed by a quotation from the composer himself, evidently intended as verification of the previous statement:

One winter's evening, when I had been to St. Paul's Cathedral intending to hear Bach's Passion music and failed to obtain a seat there, feeling in the mood for any music rather than none at all, I went to the Queen's Hall where there was a Balfour Gardiner concert, prepared to be bored stiff.⁵⁵

The unlikelihood of the date of 17 April being a 'winter's evening' was not questioned. The main section of Blosser's thesis is a critical analysis of the song-cycle *Seven Poems of James*

⁵² Cyril Andrew Blosser, *Ernest John Moeran: Seven Poems of James Joyce. A Singer's Guide to Preparation and Performance*, (Ohio State University, D.M.A. Thesis, 2009), 2

⁵³ Formerly www.moeran.com and more recently www.moeran.net, originally established in the mid-1990s by Moeran enthusiast Andrew Rose and maintained by him until about 2007.

⁵⁴ Blosser (2009), 5

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

Joyce, composed by Moeran in 1929 as a group of settings of poems from Joyce's *Chamber Music*. The thesis reasonably fulfils its stated primary purpose of providing a guide for the performance of the song-cycle.

The most recent study of Moeran's music was made by Christopher Pidcock as part of his Master of Music (Performance) degree. His thesis, *An Exploration of the Compositional Idiom of E. J. Moeran with Specific Focus on his Cello Concerto*, was submitted in 2010 at the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Sydney. The focus of the study is well encapsulated by the thesis abstract:

Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950) was an English composer whose music enjoyed considerable popularity during his lifetime, however only ten years after his death his name was verging on oblivion. Moeran was composing at a time in England where artists and musicians had a great deal of pressure on them to be original and different, and his music was soon considered old fashioned and out of touch with the post-1950 musical environment in Britain. His music is at times derivative of other styles, however, a close study of his music actually shows he is more original than he has been given credit for. His music is of a high quality and deserves to be better known. Through exploring his compositional technique and how it developed by the time of the *Concerto in B minor for Violoncello and Orchestra* (1945), it has become clear that he is in fact a highly original composer who had a complicated and intricate composition process. The heart of this paper lies in the fifth chapter where several possible influences are investigated within the cello concerto.⁵⁶

As with the Blosser study, Pidcock credited the earlier sources as authoritative. In particular, he acknowledged advice from Stephen Wild and Rhoderick McNeill and referred both to the writings of Lionel Hill, Geoffrey Self and to the *Worldwide Moeran Database* as factual sources. The bulk of Pidcock's thesis is an examination of Moeran's *Concerto in B minor for Violoncello and Orchestra*, principally by considering its apparent similarity to other cello concertos – those by Dvorak, Elgar and Schumann are mentioned. The analysis is clearly an extension of Geoffrey Self's treatment in *The Music of E.J. Moeran* and Pidcock referred to Self's work as authoritative. In particular, he adopted Self's *loci classici* approach and quoted a large number of extracts from Moeran's concerto alongside the works from which he believed the Moeran work derives. However, part of Pidcock's purpose in his thesis was to present the

⁵⁶ Christopher Pidcock, *An Exploration of the Compositional Idiom of E. J. Moeran with Specific Focus on his Cello Concerto*, (University of Sydney, M.Mus. Thesis, 2010), Abstract

cello concerto as a work worthy of more widespread adoption by performers and, in this, he seems to have been successful.⁵⁷

Other Moeran Studies

During the course of this research project, the author came across references to other Moeran research but was unable to trace any further details. These include the following:

- P.M. Kennedy, *Ernest John Moeran and Folk-Song*, M.Mus thesis, University College, Cork, 1981
- John Rippin, A biographical study of E. J. Moeran, begun in 1979, final status unknown
- Linden Knight, An examination of the part-songs of E. J. Moeran, final status unknown
- Tom Clark, a study of the relationship between the music of Moeran and Peter Warlock, final status unknown

Archival and Documentary Sources

A number of primary sources of biographical and other information about Moeran that seem hitherto not to have been examined in detail by researchers were also subjected to scrutiny during this project. Principal amongst these are the archive of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, the papers in E. J. Moeran's *Military Record*, the *E. J. Moeran Collection*, the *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection* and the *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960*.

Archive of the Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club

The archive of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* is held in the Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford, shelfmarks Dep. c. 958-68, e. 487, and OCMC dep. 1-5 (temporary shelfmarks for recently acquired material). It contains the membership records, financial records, programmes and

⁵⁷ The 2013 recording of the cello concerto by Naxos, performed by Guy Johnson and the Ulster Orchestra conducted by JoAnn Falletta came about partly as the result of the soloist's acquaintance with Christopher Pidcock.

other papers relating to the operation of the club between 1899 and 1954. Its relevance to Moeran research is that the composer was a member of the club between 1912 and 1930, and he features in many of the programmes and other documents. Much useful information about Moeran may be obtained both directly and indirectly from these records, and much of the biographical data in this thesis relating to the period 1918 to 1930 is drawn from the archive.

In addition to material about Moeran, the archive also contains an immense quantity of unique data about musical activity in London during the first few decades of the twentieth century. The membership of the club included a large number of composers and musicians, few of whose biographies make any mention of their being members and of the musical activities in which they engaged.⁵⁸ The archive is largely un-researched.

E. J. Moeran Military Record

The *E. J. Moeran Military Record* is held in the United Kingdom National Archives at Kew, reference WO 374/48245. It contains fifty pages of material, from Moeran's enlisting record in September 1914, to his discharge in January 1919. The most significant contribution to Moeran scholarship derives from the Medical Board Reports that took place during the months following Moeran's injury in May 1917. The record enables Moeran's military career during the First World War to be followed in some detail.

E. J. Moeran Collection

The *E. J. Moeran Collection* is held in the Lenton-Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library of the University of Melbourne. It formed part of a bequest in 1977 from Peers Coetmore to the (then) Victorian College of the Arts, which became part of the University of Melbourne in 2007. This collection contains many of Moeran's extant autograph manuscripts,

⁵⁸ Examination of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* archives raises many conundrums. For example, Ralph Vaughan Williams was a member of the club during the 1900s. The details of the 31st programme given on 6 August 1901 feature performances of his songs *Silent Noon* and *Boy Johnny* – both indicated as first performances. These performances pre-date the dates of composition of the songs as current RVW scholarship holds.

which had been sent to Peers Coetmore in Australia by Julian Herbage in 1965. According to the catalogue produced by Stephanie Browne as part of a Significance Assessment Assignment undertaken in 2009, there are one hundred and seven manuscripts covering about fifty works. Most are in full score but there are also piano reductions and instrumental parts. According to the original catalogue of the collection, compiled by Rhoderick McNeill, also included were published scores of sixty-four works by Moeran and over one hundred scores by other composers and a small library of books. However, the Significance Assessment carried out by Stephanie Browne failed to locate any of these latter items and it is presumed that they have been lost.

It was not possible for the author to visit Melbourne during the course of this research project, so the assistance of Stephanie Browne and the Lenton-Parr music librarian Georgina Binns was relied upon for the provision of information about the collection. Additionally, the *Catalogue Raisonné* included in the above-mentioned thesis by Rhoderick McNeill, provided essential dating and performance information about a number of works. Otherwise, the *E. J. Moeran Collection* remains largely un-researched and it is clear from the catalogue produced by Stephanie Browne that a number of dating inconsistencies in Moeran's works remain to be resolved.

Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection

The *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection* is part of the Performing Arts Collection, held in the Library of the Melbourne Arts Centre. It was a bequest from Maurice Walter Knott, fourth husband and widower of Peers Coetmore. After Coetmore's death in 1977, Knott spent some time collecting and collating material related to his wife and her former husband, Moeran. Knott was closely associated both with the Arts Centre and with the school Wesley College, both in the St. Kilda area of Melbourne. Knott bequeathed the collection to the Arts Centre and the Moeran copyright to Wesley College. The existence of the collection was not known to scholarship until the research for this project led to its discovery in 2007. Unfortunately, it was

not possible for the author to examine the collection personally during the course of this research project, but, again, the generous assistance of the Lenton-Parr music librarian Georgina Binns made possible the creation of a preliminary catalogue.

The collection has the references 1M49 and 1M27 and contains items of importance to Moeran scholarship, including the collection of letters written by Moeran to Peers Coetmore between 1943 and 1950. There is also an annotated score of Moeran's *Sonata for Violoncello and Pianoforte*. The bulk of the material relates to Peers Coetmore's career in Australia after the death of Moeran, but there is also a set of manuscript scores including two previously unknown works by Arthur Willner, an *Adagio for Violoncello and Piano* and a *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*, inscribed 'Dedicated to Jack and Peers Moeran, 26 July 1945, Kington'.⁵⁹

The Peers Coetmore material was examined by Stephanie Browne and formed the basis of her Master's thesis *The Life and Career of Peers Coetmore, English cellist (1905-1976)*. However, as far as the author is aware, the remaining material is largely un-researched.

Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960

The *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960* is held at the Leo Baeck Institute Archives in New York. However, unlike the other archives described in this section, it has been fully digitised and is available for examination online via the finding aid at the Center for Jewish History website.⁶⁰ The collection comprises the archive of the Sudeten-Czech composer and teacher Arthur Willner (1881-1959), who was a friend of Moeran from the mid-1930s. The collection includes manuscripts, travel diaries, family documents and letters, including some correspondence relating to Moeran during the mid-1940s.

⁵⁹ Since this was the date Moeran and Coetmore were married, it may be reasonably supposed that the sonata was a wedding present from Willner to the couple.

⁶⁰ <http://findingaids.cjh.org/?pID=431011>

Generally, the most significant aspect of the collection is the set of one hundred or so manuscript scores composed by Willner during his exile in England, none of which have been published and few, if any, have been performed. With the exception of the Moeran letters, this immense archive of fascinating material is entirely un-researched.

Biography, Autobiography and Correspondence

As will be presented later in this thesis, principally as a result of his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, Moeran's life intersected with those of many others, particularly in London during the 1920s and 1930s, and many of these people either became the subject of biography or, in some cases, wrote their own autobiographies. Thus, aspects of Moeran's life can be traced through the documented interaction with many of these people. Amongst other names, notable personalities known to Moeran were: Robert Gibbings, Arnold Bax, Robert Nichols, Philip Heseltine, Constant Lambert, Herbert Howells, Augustus John, Hamilton Harty, William Walton, Harriet Cohen, Eric Fenby, Benjamin Britten, Nina Hamnett, Cecil Grey, Hubert Foss, Roger Quilter, Herbert Hughes and Jack Lindsay. Reference will be made to many of these people and their biographies and autobiographies during the course of this thesis.

The 1920s and 1930s were also decades during which people wrote many letters, and substantial collections of letters written by many of these people and others exist both in libraries and private collections. Moeran himself was a prolific letter writer. During the research for this thesis, reference was found to several collections of letters that include Moeran correspondence. The primary collections are: *the Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection*, Collection ID 1M27, 1M49, Library of the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, the *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960*, AR 10707 / MF 911, Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York, United States of America, the *BBC Written Archives* at Caversham Park, Reading, the *Fleischmann Papers Archive*, University College, Cork and the *Julian Herbage Papers*, catalogue JH at the Britten-Pears Library, Aldeburgh.

The Barry Marsh Collection

While the research for this project has been as thorough as time and resources have permitted, it is likely that there is a substantial amount of material relating to Moeran that remains to be researched – especially material that is held in private collections. One such source known to exist is the *Barry Marsh Collection*. The British music enthusiast Barry Marsh has been amassing a collection of archival material relating to Moeran for some thirty years or more. Mr Marsh has been working on a biography of Moeran since 1994, but, as of the time of writing (July 2014), the work has not been completed. Mr Marsh has kept the content of his collection to himself – pending publication of his book – and the author has been unable to examine any of the material. Thus, the extent of the collection is unknown.

However, it is thought that amongst the content is the archive of Lionel Hill, which may have been bequeathed to Mr Marsh, as may have been a number of collections of letters. Mr Marsh contributed a chronology to the *Worldwide Moeran Database* website⁶¹ and some of the information presented there suggests that Mr Marsh has access to documentary material that reveals information about Moeran's life that is not available elsewhere. Although the author has been unable to persuade Mr Marsh to make his collection available for consultation during the research for this thesis, it may be that at some future point, the collection becomes accessible to scholarly examination.

⁶¹ <http://www.moeran.net/Chronology/Chronology.html> (accessed 14 July 2014)

Chapter 2

“... the origins of a composer”

Ernest John Moeran was able to devote almost his entire adult life to composing whatever, whenever and however he wished, unburdened by the consequential constraints of the necessity to earn a living. The provision of financial support that enabled his lifestyle imposed no restrictions on his musical output beyond the basic requirement that he was to compose. The few specific commissions that he accepted – most of which came towards the end of his career – were regarded by him more as an imposition than a bonus.⁶²

⁶² In late 1943, Moeran accepted a commission from Walter Legge – the head of music for the Armed Forces – to compose a work for ENSA. According to the reminiscences of Lionel Hill, Legge was asking several British composers for short orchestral works suitable for entertaining the forces at ENSA concerts in various wartime locations. Although Moeran seemed to be happy at first about the commission, he later found working to the time and instrumentation constraints imposed by Legge to be incompatible with both his highly self-critical working method and his desire to be doing something else – in particular, the composition of music for Peers Coetmore. However, Moeran regarded the commission as a necessary duty, referring to it as his ‘war work’. Nevertheless, it frustrated him and he wrote to Coetmore: ‘Blast Legge, his overture must wait till I have had a session with you & your cello this week’, from a letter to Coetmore dated Kington, 16 November 1943, transcribed in Rhoderick McNeill, *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E. J. Moeran*, (University of Melbourne, PhD Thesis, 1983), 428

This chapter presents the evidence that shows how Moeran was able to benefit both from a financial fortune created long before he was born and from an intellectual and musical stimulus that resulted from his being a member of a very unusual extended family. This entails a number of excursions into aspects of Moeran's ancestry, childhood and family life which are necessary to establish a full environmental framework within which the detail of his later life as a composer may be located. Like any creative artist, Moeran was the product of his ancestry, upbringing and accumulated childhood experiences and a comprehensive understanding of these elements is essential for an accurate assessment and study of the man as composer.

The chapter continues by following the course of Moeran's life from his early childhood to the end of his second academic year at The Royal College of Music in July 1914. Moeran's earliest extant compositions are subjected to examination and are shown to have been representative of a consistent stylistic path that ran through and evolved over the course of his career as a mature composer. The external musical and social influences that informed the early part of his musical development and thus guided this evolution are also examined. During the course of the chapter, the origins of a number of the aspects of the *Moeran Myth*, as presented in Chapter 1, are discussed in more detail and each is critically examined.

In writing the remaining chapters of this thesis, the author has attempted to follow the course of Moeran's life chronologically. However, since some facets of that life have become confused over the years, it has occasionally been necessary to introduce future events out of sequence in an effort to clarify or dispel the confusion. Moreover, the discrediting of those aspects of the *Moeran Myth* that may have resulted from chronological misunderstanding has also required the adoption of a more flexible approach to timeline.

Ernest John Smeed Moeran

Who was Moeran, the composer? What were the events, both during his early life and before it began, that resulted in the possibility of his being able to devote almost the whole of his adult life to the composition of music? This question implies something quite unusual and it is useful to pause for a moment to emphasise and to expand it – for much of his adult life, Moeran was provided with an independent income adequate for his relatively simple needs that released him from the necessity to spend any time earning a living. This status enabled him to compose in complete freedom without the constraints generally consequent upon adopting a career as professional composer – Moeran was privately paid to be a composer, but not necessarily to compose anything specific. These circumstances began in about 1920 – when Moeran was aged twenty-five – and endured for at least the next twenty years. This period encompassed Moeran’s mature stylistic development and the production of many of his major works. Thus, the provision of this income may be seen as one of the key influencing factors in determining the genres, styles and number of works he completed. It is, therefore, appropriate in the contexts both of examining Moeran’s adult life and in tracing his evolving musical style, to examine in some detail the family history that culminated in this possibility. It is also essential to establish, as far as is possible, the facts about Moeran’s childhood, up-bringing and education – facts that laid the foundations for a life spent as a composer.

However, in order to avoid being overwhelmed by detail, it is necessary to identify those events that assume pivotal importance in the retrospective consideration of consequent events. These can thereby be assigned a significance that transcends mere coincidence and may be seen, *a posteriori*, to have influenced more greatly the path that led to the construction of the composer Moeran. At the beginning of his book *The Music of EJ Moeran*, Geoffrey Self stated ‘Perhaps more than we would wish, our parentage determines what we are’.⁶³ In this context, Self was using the word ‘parentage’ to encompass the effects of upbringing – not only are we

⁶³ Self (1986), 14

determined by who and what our parents are but also how, where and under what circumstances we are nurtured. In his book, Self continued by endeavouring to make a case for the dual influences on Moeran and his music firstly of Ireland, through his father's family, and secondly the county of Norfolk, as the result of his mother having been born there. The importance of both Ireland and Norfolk for Moeran do become apparent later in his life but in an entirely different way from that suggested by Self. As will be shown below, Moeran's father was indeed born in Dublin and it is known that his mother was born in Norfolk – in King's Lynn. However, Moeran's father did not grow up in Dublin and there is little, if any, evidence to show that he spent much time in Ireland other than his first few months; similarly, census records show Moeran's mother spent only a short time in the place of her birth as a baby. In the life of the composer Ernest John Smeed Moeran, it is the consequences rather than the location of his mother's birth that provide the first steps on a path of connected events and it is in the county of Kent that the search begins.

George Smeed

In the middle of a housing estate, on the southern edge of the town of Sittingbourne, there is an open space that has been known for the past seventy or so years as the King George's Playing Fields.⁶⁴ The houses that now surround it are new and the town has expanded further south to create more homes for the increasing population. The small village of Tunstall is located just beyond the new housing development. Here and there in the north-east corner of the Playing Fields may be found some old outbuildings, the base of a row of pillars and the remnants of foundations that provide a clue to the former use of the land – the Playing Fields is the site of the former Gore Court House and Estate. During the 1850s, Tunstall was more than a mile south of Sittingbourne and there was a wide swathe of open country to the north of the village.

⁶⁴ 'The King George's Fields Foundation was set up as a national scheme in March 1936 to commemorate the recent death of His Royal Highness King George V. To administer the project the King George's Fields Foundation (KGFF) was constituted by Trust Deed in 1936. The Trust Deed defined a playing field as *any open space used for the purpose of outdoor games, sports and pastimes.*' From <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/KGV.aspx> (accessed 16 May 2014). Since 1936, four hundred and seventy-one 'King George's Fields' have been inaugurated around the United Kingdom on land that is protected in perpetuity.

In the middle of this, lay Gore Court Estate with a large country house that had been built between 1792 and 1795 by Colonel Gabriel Harper, formerly of the East India Company. The house was surrounded by parkland, wooded areas, a small lake and carriage tracks led to the several entrances to the park.⁶⁵

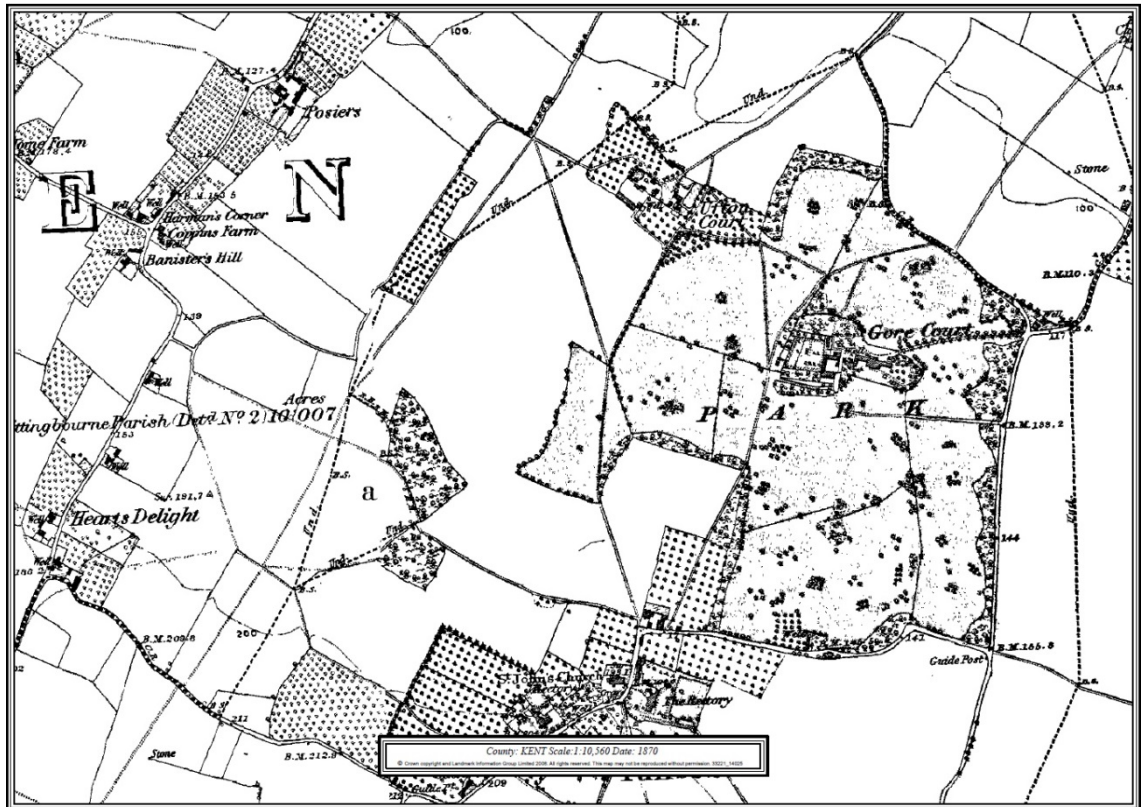


Figure 1 Map of Gore Court Estate in 1870⁶⁶

Colonel Harper did not live in the house for long. He died in 1800 and the house and estate were sold. The property passed through a number of owners until it was put up for sale by auction in October 1853. The estate was bought by brick-maker, shipping magnate and farmer George Smeed, both to befit his social position and to provide an appropriate home for his

⁶⁵ These geographical details have been deduced from the evidence provided by historical Ordnance Survey Maps (consulted online on various dates at <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/digimap/home> and in the maps collection of the British Library), and from a visual inspection of the site performed by the author of this thesis in August 2008.

⁶⁶ <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/digimap/home> (accessed 22 November 2007)

growing family.⁶⁷ Smeed was a proficient entrepreneur who had created a huge personal fortune through the businesses of brick-making and barge-building that flourished around the town of Sittingbourne in Kent during the mid-nineteenth century. The Smeed & Dean brickworks supplied the material for the construction of many of Victorian London's largest buildings – including Tower Bridge, the Law Courts and parts of Buckingham Palace. The bricks were also used for the linings of many underground railway tunnels. George Smeed's barges also carried bricks and other cargo between the Medway towns and Northern Europe and Scandinavia and travelled frequently up and down the east coast of Britain. George Smeed himself was also an unusual mixture of down-to-earth fellow of the people, ruthless businessman and philanthropist. Whilst perhaps not in the same league of benevolence as Richard and George Cadbury in the Midlands, Sir Titus Salt in West Yorkshire and William Hesketh Lever on Merseyside – all of whom built model towns or villages for their workers,⁶⁸ Smeed held the welfare and education of his employees to be of the highest importance.

When George Smeed and his wife Eliza moved into Gore Court at the end of 1853, they had seven daughters, ranging in age from Mary Ann, who was twenty, down to the newly born Emily Ruth.⁶⁹ Servants were engaged to look after the house, the family and the estate, and governesses were employed to take care of the education of the girls. Gore Court Park also included several cottages and these were occupied by some of the estate workers.⁷⁰ The railway had recently arrived at Sittingbourne and Gore Court was just a short carriage and train journey from the metropolis. Smeed's older daughters were able to enjoy the social life available to

⁶⁷ The sources for the information about Gore Court and George Smeed in this and the following paragraphs are Richard-Hugh Perks biographical monograph *George Bargebrick Esquire: The Story of the George Smeed – the Brick and Cement King* (Meresborough Books, Rainham 1981), the monograph *The Story of Gore Court House and Estate, Tunstall*, by Helen Allinson (Sittingbourne Heritage Museum, 2006), and the novel *Old Faces in Odd Places* by 'Urban Rus' (Wyman & Sons, London, 1882), in which the central character George Bargebrick is based on George Smeed. 'Urban Rus' was the pen name of George Smeed's stepson Harry Greensted. Family information has been gleaned from Census, Birth, Marriage and Death and other online genealogy resources, accessed primarily through the Ancestry website (<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>).

⁶⁸ Ratcliffe, J., et al, *Urban Planning and Real Estate Development* (Routledge, Abingdon 2009), 7-8

⁶⁹ 1861 England Census, Class: RG 10; Piece: 529; Folio: 201; Page: 2; GSU roll: 542656

⁷⁰ 'The outbuildings consisted of a dairy, wood and coal store, brew house and gardeners' and shepherds' cottages. There were two excellent walled gardens, a barn, cow houses and lodges, a cart horse stable for four horses, two coach houses with coachman's rooms and lofts over, and stabling for ten carriages and riding horses. The mansion was ... surrounded by delightful scenery, upwards of 100 acres of rich and fertile land with three cottages for workmen.' Helen Allinson, *The Story of Gore Court House and Estate, Tunstall*, (Sittingbourne Heritage Museum, 2006), 9

affluent young ladies in Victorian London. Through his business connections, George Smeed could number amongst his London friends and associates some of the most influential and powerful people of the time. Many of these people would have been visitors at Gore Court and Smeed's daughters would have become familiar with important house-guests. Over the next few years, the Smeed girls grew up into eligible young ladies and began to make appropriate marriages.



Figure 2 Gore Court House

This existence persisted for about a dozen years, during which time three of Smeed's daughters were married. On 2 February 1866, Smeed's third daughter Esther, who had married Benjamin John Whall, an affluent King's Lynn banker's clerk, died while giving birth to her daughter Ada Esther.⁷¹ Benjamin Whall had already been widowed when his first wife, Julia Anne, died just two years earlier, and he had a six-year-old daughter, Emily Whall, from that marriage. Thus, he was thrust into the position of having to care for two young children. For a time, Benjamin had the support of his large family, many of whom were living near him in King's Lynn. However, when he took his third wife, Caroline Dennis, the following year, baby

⁷¹ Although no direct evidence for the cause of Esther Smeed's death has been found, the coincidence of the date of her death and that of the birth of Ada Esther Smeed Whall – as indicated from online Birth Marriage and Death records – is sufficient to make the assertion safe. The date of death for Esther Whall is further confirmed by the Find A Grave database record <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=WH&GSpartial=1&GSbyrel=all&GScentry=5&GSSr=81&GRid=35384457&> (accessed 16 May 2014), which locates her grave in St John the Baptist Churchyard, Tunstall, Kent

Ada Esther was made a Ward of Chancery⁷² and placed in the care of her maternal grandfather, George Smeed. The exact reasons for this decision and who was responsible for it are not known but it is possible that Whall's new wife found the presence of two children from previous marriages to be unacceptable – particularly when she became pregnant herself – and required their removal. Whatever the reasons might have been, Ada Esther Smeed Whall was taken to live at Gore Court to be brought up in the care of her grandfather.

Ada Esther Smeed Whall

Extensive searches have failed to locate any contemporary archives relating to daily life at Gore Court during the time of George Smeed's ownership. Thus, details of the life of Ada Esther as she grew up surrounded by wealth and luxury can only be speculated. The 1871 Census⁷³ entry for Gore Court reveals the presence in the house of two governesses – so it may be reasonably supposed that the education of the five-year-old Ada Esther, together with that of her younger aunts and step-brother and sister, was being done privately. Ten years later, in the 1881 Census,⁷⁴ Ada Esther appears as a resident of Vanbrugh Castle Ladies' College – a very exclusive and advanced school for the 'daughters of gentlemen' located at Maze Hill in Greenwich. By this time, she would have been fifteen years old and it is likely that she had been in attendance at the school for three or four years. George Smeed was passionate about education and he clearly provided Ada Esther with the best that his substantial fortune could buy. Again, it has not been possible to locate any archives of Vanbrugh Castle Ladies' College but some information about life at the school can be deduced from advertisements placed in *The Times* and other newspapers, and other occasional references to the school in contemporary periodicals. The curriculum would have followed the general pattern of other Victorian schools for young ladies, so it is possible to gain some understanding of what the young Ada Esther would have been taught. Among the subjects would have been languages, singing, needlework,

⁷² Ward of Chancery (or Ward in Chancery) was a supervisory order in which a minor – often an illegitimate child – was placed in the care of the Chancery Court. It is known today simply as ward of court.

⁷³ 1871 England Census, Class: RG 10; Piece: 984; Folio: 110; Page: 9; GSU roll: 838720

⁷⁴ 1881 England Census, Class: RG 11; Piece: 726; Folio: 112; Page: 50; GSU roll: 1341169

deportment, manners and all the social skills appropriate for an affluent young lady of the time.⁷⁵ This advertisement for the school comes from the *Stamford Mercury*:

VANBRUGH CASTLE, BLACKHEATH, LONDON, S.E. – High-class SCHOOL, exclusively for the Daughters of Gentlemen, conducted by the Misses NICHOLSON, assisted by resident English, Parisian, and German Governesses, and eminent Professors in regular attendance. Great attention is paid to comfort and refinement. Pupils prepared for Local Examinations. Nineteen certificates obtained in 1878 from Oxford, College of Preceptors, and S. Kensington School of Art. The Castle is a large mansion, standing in enclosed grounds, and is furnished with every requisite for health and recreation. Terms from 50 Guineas.⁷⁶

From another advertisement placed in *The Times* it can be deduced that one of the music teachers was also a composer:

MUSIC and SINGING – A lady (composer), in the neighbourhood of Blackheath, wishing to increase her connexion, will be happy to give LESSONS at her own or pupils' residence. Understands harmony. For terms address E. K., Vanbrugh Castle, Blackheath.⁷⁷

It is not known to what extent Ada Esther's father, Benjamin John Whall, had any part in her upbringing after she was adopted by George Smeed. It is rather strange that a father should give up his recently-born daughter for adoption – even to such a close and very wealthy relative. However, as has been suggested, it is possible that he had no choice. While the distance between King's Lynn and Sittingbourne was quite substantial for the mid-nineteenth century, railway travel was becoming common. By the 1870s, it would have been possible to travel such a distance in just a few hours. Thus the likelihood that Benjamin Whall visited his daughter at Gore Court must be considered – even though it cannot be asserted with total confidence. All that can be said is that it seems implausible that all connections between Ada Esther and her father were severed – if only because the name BJ Whall, as the bride's father, appears in the announcement in *The Times* of Ada Esther's wedding to Joseph Moeran. It is, therefore, probable that Ada Esther knew many of the other members of her father's family. Even if contact was rare during the period when she lived at Gore Court, it is entirely reasonable to

⁷⁵ Among the many reference works covering the education of girls in Victorian England are: Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, (Routledge, Abingdon, 1982), Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (Routledge, Abingdon, 1981) and Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, (Croom Helm, London, 1980)

⁷⁶ 'Classified Advertising', *The Stamford Mercury*, (3 January 1878), 1

⁷⁷ 'Classified Advertising', *The Times*, issue 28984, (3 July 1877), 3. The identity of E.K. has not been determined

suppose that this increased after she had become a young lady of independent means. An examination of the members of the extended Whall family shows them to have been quite out of the ordinary and several were particularly musical.

During his years living in King's Lynn, Benjamin John Whall proved himself to have been an amateur musician of exceptional talent. There are numerous items in *The Musical Times* between 1856 and 1874 – generally in connection with the *Lynn Musical Union* and the *King's Lynn Philharmonic Society* – that testify to this. In 1856, the following announcement appears in the *Brief Chronicle of the last Month* section:

Lynn Musical Union. The first soirée for the season was given by this society, at the Music Hall of the Athenaeum, on the 31st October. The music comprised various pieces from the oratorio of St. Paul, and a selection of songs and glees; all of which were very creditably performed. The band and chorus consisted of 70 performers, under the direction of Mr J Thomson, R.A.M. The leader was Mr J. Bray; and Mr B.J. Whall presided at the organ.⁷⁸

Over the next few years, Whall's organ playing was highly commended, including in 1857:

Lynn. The Musical Union have already had their third soirée of the sixth season, and have made considerable progress in the performances, under their able conductor, Mr J. Thomson. The band and chorus consist of nearly 70 performers, and are led by Mr J. Bray, a very competent violinist. Mr Whall, an amateur, performs upon the organ in a masterly style. The selection of the music is unexceptionable.⁷⁹

By 1861, Benjamin Whall had taken over from Mr J. Thomson as conductor of the *Lynn Musical Union* choir. However, after 1861, the *Musical Times Regional Reports* for King's Lynn and Norfolk do not mention him again until six years later. During this period, as has been shown, he had experienced a number of momentous events – the death of his wife Julia Anne, his second marriage to Esther Smeed, the birth of Ada Esther, the death of his second wife and his third marriage to Caroline Dennis. However, in 1867, Whall seems to have been re-appointed as conductor of the *Lynn Musical Union*. The *Musical Times* reports says:

⁷⁸ 'Brief Chronicle of the last Month', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 7, No. 166 (1 December 1856), 355

⁷⁹ 'Brief Chronicle of the last Month', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 8, No. 170 (1 April 1857), 24

King's Lynn. – The fifth season of the Philharmonic Society's Concerts was inaugurated on the 15th ult. by a very creditable performance of Haydn's *Tempest*, Mendelssohn's *Hear My Prayer*, and a pleasing selection of part songs, &c. Miss Florence de Courcy afforded her professional assistance in the principal soprano parts; and her efforts were ably seconded by amateurs of much ability. The chorus, numbering nearly 100, was under the direction of Mr B.J. Whall; leader Mr Bray; organist, Mr Rolfe.⁸⁰

Despite the multiple tragedies in his life, Benjamin Whall probably maintained his association with the *Lynn Musical Union* and *Philharmonic Society* at least until 1881. His last mention in *The Musical Times* as conductor appears in 1874 but the 1881 Census records him as still living in King's Lynn, together with his third wife Caroline, two sons from the third marriage and two domestic servants.⁸¹ However, on some date between April 1881 and April 1887, Whall went to live near to Glasgow.⁸² His wife Caroline died and for the next thirty or so years, he occupied himself with amateur musical activities and the teaching of music in the Glasgow area. He was elected organist of the Kelburne Masonic Lodge in December 1900 and in the Scottish Census entry of 1901, describes himself as a 'Professor of Music' – a euphemism for private teacher. Benjamin Whall also married twice more, his fifth wife Bethia (née Hardie) surviving him to sign his death certificate in 1921. Apart from living an event-filled life, Whall was clearly a musician of considerable ability and he lived long enough to see the beginnings of his grandson Moeran's career as a composer. There is no evidence that shows conclusively whether Moeran spent much time with his maternal grandfather so it is impossible to say whether Whall had any direct influence in Moeran's development as a musician and composer. However, Benjamin John Whall figures as important in the Moeran story in as much as he represents the composer's closest genuinely musical ancestor – but he was not the only one.

⁸⁰ 'Summary of Country News', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 13, No. 298 (1 December 1867), 230

⁸¹ 1881 England Census, Class: RG 11; Piece: 1997; Folio: 101; Page: 36; GSU roll: 1341481

⁸² The items of information about Benjamin Whall's life in Scotland presented in this paragraph were obtained from a number of newspapers, including the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Paisley Herald and Renfrewshire Advertiser*, and retrieved through various searches of the *British Newspaper Archive* – <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>
The coincidence of the date of Whall's relocation to Glasgow with that of the death of George Smeed, the guardian of his daughter Ada Esther, cannot be ignored but the suggestion of any significance would be pure speculation. However, the fact that Whall and Smeed were both freemasons may also have been a factor.

Benjamin John Whall's great-uncle – also Benjamin Whall (1781-1855) – was active for many years as a lay clerk at Lincoln Cathedral and was master of the choirboys and organist of St. Martin's Church, Lincoln. His brief obituary in the *Musical Times* notes:

At his residence in the Minster Yard, Lincoln, aged 74, died on 24th January, of paralysis, Mr B. Whall; who was, for more than a quarter of a century, master of the boys, tenor singer in Lincoln Cathedral, and organist of St. Martin's Church.⁸³

Benjamin Whall's son William, after marrying Mary Boulton in 1845, fathered eight children, many of whom became noteworthy or achieved eminence in the creative arts. These included William Boulton Whall, Roughton Henry Whall and Christopher Whitworth Whall (1849-1924). William Boulton was a polymath who had studied music under Stainer at Oxford. Under the pen name 'Alan Oscar', he wrote *Captain Kid's Millions* – supposedly the true story of the pirate known popularly as Captain Kidd. He eventually became a ship's captain and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. Roughton Henry had taken a Mus. Bac. (Dunelm) and was also an FRCO. Like Benjamin John Whall, he featured frequently in the pages of the *Musical Times*. William Boulton and Roughton Henry collaborated on a collection of sea-songs – *Ships, Sea-Songs and Shanties*.⁸⁴ William Boulton collected the songs and wrote the text while Roughton Henry provided harmonisations of some of the songs. Their brother, Christopher Whitworth Whall, is now renowned as having been an important founding member of the *Arts & Crafts Movement* and was a leading artist in stained glass.⁸⁵ Christopher's daughter Veronica Whall (1887-1967) was also eminent as a stained glass artist, having created windows for many cathedrals and churches throughout Great Britain. She also designed and illustrated the sea-songs collection for her uncles.

⁸³ 'Brief Chronicle of the last Fortnight', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 6, No. 139 (15 February 1855), 313

⁸⁴ William Boulton Whall, Roughton Henry Whall, Veronica Whall (*illus.*), *Ships, Sea Songs and Shanties*, (James Brown & Son, Glasgow, 1910)

⁸⁵ Christopher Whall glass may be found in the Lady Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral and in the South Transept of Canterbury Cathedral. Other works are exhibited at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow.

Orphaned again

George Smeed died suddenly in April 1881 and the Gore Court estate was sold. Ada Esther was still a minor and under the Ward of Chancery terms, her maintenance was taken over by her aunt Sarah Ann – who was George Smeed’s eldest daughter – and her husband the Rev. William H Graham, who was vicar of St. Paul’s, Upper Norwood, a parish in the south-east London suburbs. Ada Esther went to live with her aunt and uncle in the vicarage. George Smeed left a total estate worth some £160,000.⁸⁶ Present day valuation equivalents are difficult to calculate precisely but even in simple purchasing power terms, this would equate to more than £14 million in 2013.⁸⁷ The terms of Smeed’s will were many and varied but the bulk of the fortune was settled upon his surviving daughters and grand-daughter in the form of a trust fund paying annuities for twenty-one years, at the end of which period the fund would be wound up and the remaining proceeds distributed amongst the surviving beneficiaries and their named dependents. Ada Esther received an annuity of £150 for her education and maintenance – which would, of course, have been paid to her aunt and uncle to disburse at their discretion.⁸⁸ Although it is not possible to assert with certainty that Ada Esther continued in attendance at Vanbrugh Castle School after her uncle’s death, there is every reason to suppose that she remained there as a

⁸⁶ ‘...George Smeed of Sittingbourne ... farmer and brickmaker ... bequeathed personal estate stated to be of the value of £160,000 and devised real estate stated to produce £4,000 or £5,000 per annum to his trustees and executors ...’ ‘High Court of Justice’, *The Times*, issue 31275, (27 October 1884), 9

⁸⁷ There are numerous methods for calculating the present day equivalent value of estates in the past and there are many publications and websites that explain them. The approximate figure of £14 million mentioned here derives from an equivalent purchasing power calculation engine available at <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare> (accessed 30 November 2013)

⁸⁸ The values of the annuities bequeathed by George Smeed to his grand-daughter Ada Esther Whall quoted here and on subsequent pages derive from data found in the *Law Times Reports*, Case, Re. Smeed and Archer v. Whall 1886 Vol. 54, 929. There was a challenge to the will and this case was heard to settle the issue. The relevant section of the case runs: ‘George Smeed, by his will, dated the 27th May 1876, after bequeathing certain legacies and an annuity to his widow, devised and bequeathed his real and personal estate to his trustees therein named, upon trust to pay the sum of £150 per annum for the maintenance of each of his daughters who should be under the age of twenty-one years, and his grand-daughter, A. E. Whall ... The testator then directed his trustees to pay to each of his daughters, after she should attain the age of twenty-one years, and until she should attain the age of twenty-five years, an annuity of £500, to be increased to £1000, upon her attaining the latter age. There was a similar provision in effect for the grand-daughter. These annuities were continued after the respective deaths of the daughters in favour of their husbands and issue.’

The case concluded that the children of the original beneficiaries – Smeed’s seven daughters and his grand-daughter Ada Esther Whall – were also entitled to have the income from the testator’s estate applied to their maintenance and education. Thus, it may be reasonably concluded that during the period in which the George Smeed Trust was in operation – that is to say from 1882 to 1907 – the children of Ada Esther Whall (William Graham and Ernest John) were provided for from the trust income, including covering the costs of their education– that is to say, the employment of governesses and payment of school fees.

scholar until the age of about eighteen – possibly taking on some minor teaching and pastoral responsibilities towards the younger girls. This was normal for the senior girls in such institutions at the time.⁸⁹ It is also probable that her status as a weekly boarder was maintained and she would have returned to the Upper Norwood vicarage each weekend. Upper Norwood was a magnet for artists and intellectuals during the 1870s and 1880s – the impressionist painters Camille Pissarro and Claude Monet spent some time there.⁹⁰ As a wealthy, well-connected and increasingly eligible young lady in Victorian society at a time when women were beginning to assert their independence and individuality, Ada would have been in a position to socialise with many of the prominent artistic and creative people of the day.

Ada Esther probably left Vanbrugh Castle School in about 1885 and it is likely that on returning to live permanently in Upper Norwood she would have adopted the role of assistant to her aunt, who would have had many duties to perform as vicar's wife amongst the women of the parish.⁹¹ Her annuity – the equivalent of perhaps £14,000⁹² in 2014 – was not immense but would certainly have enabled her aunt and uncle to provide for her. Shortly after Ada Esther returned to live in the vicarage, her uncle appointed a new curate, the twenty-six-year-old Joseph William Wright Moeran.

Joseph William Wright Moeran

Joseph William Wright Moeran was the second son of the Rev. Thomas Warner Moeran of Cork and Frances Byrne of Dublin.⁹³ After taking a Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College, Dublin in 1845⁹⁴ and then being ordained, Thomas Moeran had served as curate of

⁸⁹ (see references in footnote 75)

⁹⁰ <http://www.norwoodsociety.co.uk/articles/74-pissarro-and-norwood.html> (accessed 13 November 2012)

⁹¹ Books such as J.F.C Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875-1901*, (Routledge, Abingdon 1991) and Ros Aitken, *Stephen Gladstone: Rector of Hawarden*, (University of Chester Press, Chester 2012) provide interesting insights into many aspects of life in a Victorian vicarage.

⁹² (see footnotes 87 and 88)

⁹³ The family information for Joseph William Wright Moeran presented in these paragraphs derives from Census, Birth, Marriage and Death and other online genealogy resources, accessed primarily through the *Ancestry* website (<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>). Information about the Moerans' various ecclesiastical appointments was obtained from volumes of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*.

⁹⁴ *Register of the Alumni of Trinity College Dublin*, 9th edition, (Trinity College, Dublin, 1970)

Westport, County Mayo (1845-1847), and curate of Youghal, County Cork (1847-1849).⁹⁵ In 1849, he was appointed curate at St. Mark's Church, Liverpool⁹⁶ and he married Frances Byrne in 1853.⁹⁷ Although the family lived in Liverpool, their children were all born in Dublin: Edward Joseph in 1857, Joseph William Wright in 1859 and daughter Frances Anna Swift in 1861.⁹⁸ In 1857, Thomas Warner was appointed vicar at St. Matthew's Church, Toxteth Park and the family lived there until 1873, when Thomas was appointed to the living of Bacton in Norfolk.⁹⁹ Joseph was fifteen when the family moved to Bacton vicarage. The Rev. Thomas Moeran was to remain incumbent at Bacton for the next forty years.¹⁰⁰

Like the Whalls, the Moeran men were well-educated, as required by the two family professions: the Law and the Church. As has been shown, Thomas Warner Moeran was an alumnus of Trinity College, Dublin and Joseph graduated with a BA in Theology from St. Catharine's College, Cambridge in 1882 (he added his MA in 1892).¹⁰¹ Moeran's uncle, his father's brother Edward Joseph, was also at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, and graduated in 1881 with a Law BA.¹⁰² Later, Joseph's elder son William Graham – brother of Ernest John – would go up to Emmanuel College, Cambridge to read Theology.¹⁰³ There is also evidence that suggests that Moeran himself was considering going to Cambridge before it was decided that he should pursue his musical studies at the Royal College of Music. (This will be examined in more detail later.)

After graduating from Cambridge, Joseph Moeran was ordained and, for his first clerical appointment, took up a curacy at Pocklington – a village some ten miles to the east of York. He

⁹⁵ W. M. Brady, *Clerical and Parish Records of Cork, Cloyne, and Ross*, Vol 3, (Alexander Thom, Dublin, 1864), 224 and *Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1915*, (Horace Cox, London, 1915), 1060

⁹⁶ *Cork Examiner*, (9 May 1849), 3

⁹⁷ Ireland, Civil Registration Marriages Index, 1845-1958, Vol. 5, Page 372, FHL Film Number 101244

⁹⁸ 1861 England Census, Class: RG 9; Piece: 2687; Folio: 49; Page: 35; GSU roll: 543013

⁹⁹ *Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1908*, (Horace Cox, London, 1908), 995

¹⁰⁰ 'The Rev. A. C. Cuffe-Adams, curate of Wymondham, has been appointed to the vicarage of Bacton, North Walsham, by Lord Kimberley, in succession to the Rev. T. W. Moeran, who has resigned after holding the benefice for 40 years.', 'Ecclesiastical Intelligence', *The Times*, issue 40151, (5 March 1913), 12

¹⁰¹ John A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974)

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1915*, (Horace Cox, London, 1915), 1060

remained in this position until 1885, when he became curate at the parish church of St. Paul's, Upper Norwood.¹⁰⁴ Although there are no records of life in the vicarage during the following few years, it may be reasonably supposed that Joseph conducted a courtship of Ada Esther, as on 10 April 1888, in a ceremony co-celebrated by the bride's uncle and the groom's father, the couple were married.¹⁰⁵ On attaining the age of twenty-one, Ada Esther's annuity had increased to £500¹⁰⁶ so when she married Joseph Moeran, Ada Esther was – by the standards of the time – a wealthy young woman in receipt of a comfortable private income and would almost certainly have accumulated a considerable invested capital.

It is therefore quite clear that the extended families of both Moeran's parents provided a financial, intellectual, cultural and creative framework that established an unusually privileged and artistically fertile environment within which the young Moeran would be brought up. The subsequent influences on Moeran as a person and ultimately as a creative artist would have been a powerful directing force in his life.

¹⁰⁴ Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1905, (Horace Cox, London, 1905), 962

¹⁰⁵ 'Marriages', *The Times*, issue 32358, (12 April 1888), 1

¹⁰⁶ The equivalent of about £45,000 in 2013 (see footnote 87)

Childhood and Youth

It is readily apparent from the foregoing that the family into which Ernest John¹⁰⁷ Smeed Moeran was born on 30 December 1894¹⁰⁸ was a privileged one. Although his father was an Anglican clergyman, in itself a learned profession, the fact of his mother having a private income and the intellectual stimulus provided both by the Cambridge-educated relatives on his father's side and the artistic members of his mother's family, meant that Moeran grew up in a very advantaged environment indeed. However, and perhaps foreshadowing some of the more unusual aspects of his later life, even an act apparently as straightforward as his baptism – especially given the fact that his father was the vicar – raises a minor mystery. As stated above, Moeran was born at the end of December 1894 and according to the records of the church of Osterley St. Mary, where Moeran's father was the vicar, he was baptised on 23 February 1895. Oddly though, the record appears out of sequence and Moeran's baptism was not recorded in the Register until October 1897. At the appropriate place in the register for 23 February 1895 is to be found the rather cryptic handwritten note: 'For Baptism of Ernest John Smeed Moeran see page 35, No. 275'. The failure to record Moeran's baptism at the correct time is strange, considering that it was his father that performed the ceremony and who was responsible for the recording of the event in the register. As stated above, while certainly odd this is a minor issue and does not merit detailed investigation. However, its significance is that it was the first in a life-long series of unusual or unconventional incidents that, as will become apparent during the course of this thesis, can be understood retrospectively to have defined Moeran's personality.

As an Anglican vicar, Moeran's father seems to have been unsettled. He regularly moved from one living to another throughout the south of England until his retirement due to ill health

¹⁰⁷ See the appendix for a speculative excursus into the origin of Moeran's first two Christian names.

¹⁰⁸ Although 30 December 1894 is the date on Moeran's birth certificate, he seems to have celebrated his birthday on 31 December. In a letter he wrote to Peers Coetmore dated 30 December 1943, he says: 'Well, tomorrow I shall attain the ripe age of 49; the next day is New Year's Day ...'

in 1907.¹⁰⁹ The records provided by *Crockford's Clerical Directory* enable his career to be followed in its entirety. At the time of Moeran's birth at the end of 1894, his father was vicar of St. Mary's, Spring Grove in Middlesex. In 1898, Moeran's father was appointed vicar of St. Mary Magdalene, Peckham and the family moved to nearby Camberwell. Joseph Moeran remained there until 1901, when he became vicar of St. Simon's Southsea, near Portsmouth. This incumbency lasted until 1905, when he was installed as vicar of the joint parish of Salhouse with Wroxham in the county of Norfolk.¹¹⁰ This was some twenty miles from Bacton on the Norfolk Coast, where Joseph's father, Thomas Warner Moeran, had been vicar since 1873. Joseph Moeran had spent his mid-teens living in Bacton and it was clearly a part of the country that he knew well and loved, as he was to spend most of the next thirty years there.

At the time of this final clerical relocation, Ernest John Moeran was ten years old. It is both interesting and important in the context of his musical development, therefore, to consider how his early education was conducted. The *Elementary Education Acts* of 1870 and 1880 (amongst others) had provided for more or less universal education for all children in England between the ages of five and twelve – which included compulsory attendance at a suitable school if one was available.¹¹¹ However, exceptions to school attendance were allowed provided that the child could be shown to be gaining an equivalent and sufficient education elsewhere. There is no evidence discovered thus far indicating that Moeran attended any school during the family's periods of residence in Peckham or Southsea and such attendance is unlikely. The 1901 Census return for 22, St. Mary's Road, Camberwell indicates the presence of one Kate Hyom, described as a governess.¹¹² Missing from the census is the name of Moeran's elder brother William

¹⁰⁹ 'When Jack was about 12, his father was forced to retire from the Active Ministry of the Church owing to a breakdown in health from which he never fully recovered, although he lived to the ripe age of 85'; from a letter from William Graham Moeran to Colin Scott-Sutherland, dated 24 August 1962; quoted in John Talbot, 'Memories of Jack', *British Music Vol. 31, 2009* (British Music Society, London, 2009), 8

¹¹⁰ *Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1905*, (Horace Cox, London, 1905), 962

These frequent relocations would find reflection in Moeran's adult life in that he found it almost impossible to settle anywhere for any extended time.

¹¹¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/> and <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1880-elementary-education-act.html> (both accessed 23 April 2013)

¹¹² 1901 England Census, Class: RG 13; Piece: 506; Folio: 57; Page: 49 (name transcribed as Kate Wyom)

Graham – however he is to be found on the return for 42 & 44 Alleyn Park (a boarding-house for Dulwich College Preparatory School).¹¹³ On the date of this Census (31 March 1901), Moeran was aged six and his brother was eleven. This evidence shows clearly that William Graham Moeran was attending preparatory school and accordingly the governess must have been in the household, primarily for the education of Ernest John.

As was shown earlier, Moeran's mother Ada Esther had herself been educated first by governesses and later, at a private school. She may have wished to pass on a similar experience to her own children. Ada Esther's level of education would have been more than sufficient to qualify her in the nineteenth century as a teacher or governess herself,¹¹⁴ and so it is quite reasonable to suppose that she would have taken on this role. Moreover, the memory of her grandfather's passion for education, together with the income from his legacy – one of the provisions of which was to cover the education of her own children – would have motivated her own devotion to the task. It may therefore be confidently asserted that, at least until the age of ten, Moeran was educated at home – possibly for convenience due to the family's frequent relocations but chiefly because the provisions of the Smeed trust enabled the engagement of a suitably qualified governess.

While it is clearly impossible to know precisely how daily life in the vicarage proceeded during Moeran's childhood, a plausible scenario can be constructed by combining the scanty evidence presented above with a general knowledge of late-Victorian households – such as may be gathered from literature and reference works.¹¹⁵ The employment of a governess by middle and upper class households was partly a display of status and partly filled a utilitarian function.

¹¹³ 1901 England Census, Class: RG 13; Piece: 492; Folio: 42; Page: 14 (name transcribed as William G Mocran)

¹¹⁴ https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/sites/history-in-education/files/attachments/teacher_training_-_up_to_the_1960s.doc (accessed 23 April 2013)

¹¹⁵ Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess*, (Hambledon and Hambledon, London 2001) describes in detail the life and duties of governesses during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Life in the Edwardian home during the first decade of the twentieth century is also well documented in, amongst many books, including Evangeline Holland, *Edwardian England: A Guide to Everyday Life, 1900-1914*, (Plum Bun Publishing, 2014). A more general reference to the educational practices during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century may be found in chapters 9 and 10 of John Lawson & Harold Silver, *History of Education in England*, (Routledge, London 1973). The online resource *Education in England – the history of our schools*, written by Derek Gillard (<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/index.html>) is a comprehensive guide to the history of education in England from the sixth century to the present day.

The sons of the family were often sent away to school – preparatory school from the age of about eight, public school from twelve to eighteen and subsequently Oxford or Cambridge – and daughters were educated at home, in preparation for their own eventual roles as middle and upper class wives and mothers. Thus, the education role of governesses frequently encompassed the *Kindergarten* stage for the boys and the entire curriculum for the girls. In Moeran’s case, it seems likely that he was home-educated until the family arrived in Salhouse in 1905 – when Moeran was aged ten. The subjects expected to be provided by a well-educated governess included reading, writing, arithmetic, foreign languages (usually German, French and Italian, but occasionally Russian and other more exotic languages would be offered), history and geography. Additionally, for the girls, instruction in music (singing and playing the piano), needlework, drawing, painting and dancing would be provided. While little additional information about the Moeran’s governess Kate Hyom can be found – other than her birth in Watford in 1857,¹¹⁶ her employment as a ‘lady’s companion’ at the age of twenty-four¹¹⁷ and her death in 1933 at the age of seventy-five¹¹⁸ – it may be reasonably supposed that she was able to instruct Moeran over a period of several years in many of these subjects. In common with other large Victorian houses, the St. Simon’s vicarage would have had a schoolroom and the young Moeran may be pictured with his governess and occasionally with his mother learning his lessons – which gradually became more formal as he grew older.¹¹⁹

Set against this, however, is the aspect of the *Moeran Myth* which concerns the assertion that Moeran had virtually no exposure to music during his early childhood. In previous literature about the composer, it has become the accepted wisdom that Moeran was nurtured in a household almost devoid of musical influences and that his emergence as a musician was both surprising and unforeseen. The origin of this can be attributed primarily to Moeran himself. During his adult life, Moeran seems to have gone to some lengths to obscure the reality of his

¹¹⁶ 1861 England Census, Class: RG 9; Piece: 833; Folio: 71; Page: 6; GSU roll: 542708

¹¹⁷ 1881 England Census, Class: RG 11; Piece: 163; Folio: 68; Page: 21; GSU roll: 1341035

¹¹⁸ England & Wales, Death Index, 1916-2007, Registration District Aylesbury, Volume 3a, Page 1640

¹¹⁹ A good general reference to Victorian schools and schoolrooms (and education generally in the nineteenth century) may also be found on the website <http://www.victorianschool.co.uk/>

childhood and upbringing – especially the part that music may have played. This is most evident in the essay quoted in Chapter 1. Although the author was Philip Heseltine, the subject matter must have derived ultimately from Moeran. As has been shown, he claimed that there were no particular musical activities in his home; he implied that any interest he had in music was not encouraged by his parents and that he had only the *Cathedral Psalter* and *Hymns Ancient and Modern* as printed music sources available to him. The Heseltine essay also asserts that, during his childhood, Moeran heard ‘practically no music except in church’.¹²⁰ From this, it has been assumed that the Moeran family and household were not musical in any way and the idea developed that Moeran had been destined to become an engineer: Moeran’s brother William Graham supported this notion: ‘When my parents sent [Moeran] to Uppingham, their plan was that he should become an Engineer. This was largely due to the absorbing interest he had from a child in Railways. This continued all through his boyhood and manhood ...’.¹²¹ This aspect of the *Moeran Myth* is at first sight well supported by Moeran’s own activities – his interest in motor-cycles in particular.¹²² However, an interest in mechanical things – for example, motorbikes and railways – does not preclude one from becoming a musician and the gratuitous ‘either/or’ aspect of this assumption about Moeran does not seem to have been previously challenged.

The most pressing question that arises from this is: why should Moeran deny that music was present in his home during his childhood? It is almost self-evidently incorrect and Moeran himself contradicted his earlier assertions later in his life. Indeed, the conspicuous compositional fluency apparent from the very few extant works from Moeran’s late teens and early twenties renders it implausible that he did not have years of development and practice in the craft.¹²³ Since the origin of the *Moeran Myth* aspect seems to lie during the period in which

¹²⁰ Heseltine (1926), 4

¹²¹ William Graham Moeran; quoted in Talbot (2009), 7

¹²² Motorcycles were a recurring feature of Moeran’s youth. He enlisted in the army as a motorcycle despatch rider in September 1914 and during the 1920s, he took part in long distance motorcycle road trials. Chapters 3 and 4 will present more details of these.

¹²³ Surviving works are: age 18 – *Dance* (for piano); age 20 – *The North Sea Ground* (solo song), *Fields at Harvest* (for piano); age 21 – *Four Songs from ‘A Shropshire Lad’* (solo songs), String Quartet in E flat (the reasons for including this here are explained later); age 23 – *At the Horse Fair* (for piano)

Moeran was sharing a cottage in Eynsford, Kent with Philip Heseltine, it is possible that Moeran was both complying with what he thought was Heseltine's image of him and, consciously or unconsciously, was imitating his somewhat domineering friend. Since Heseltine himself had been largely self-taught in music and there was little music in the Heseltine home during his childhood – assertions that, unlike those in Moeran's case, are well-supported by evidence – Moeran perhaps felt that appearing to be similar would enhance his standing with Heseltine. The subject of Moeran's relationship with Heseltine will be returned to in Chapters 4 and 5.

It is possible to show that Moeran's claims of musical barrenness are unlikely to be correct. Moeran himself said that his parents arranged for him and his brother to have music lessons, William Graham learnt to play the piano and Ernest John learnt to play the violin. This was recounted in an anecdote given by Moeran when he was interviewed for Irish Radio (Radio Éireann) in 1947 by Eamonn Andrews about the practice of musical composition and how Moeran, in particular, came to be a composer. Moeran said:

When I was a small boy – I was about the age of nine – my parents decided that my brother and myself should learn music. My elder brother was taught the piano and so it was decided that I should learn the fiddle, the idea being that we two boys should play together. But I found that scales and exercises – only playing one note and not playing chords was rather dull and I used to love to get to the piano and invent, as I thought, great chords with three or four notes in both hands and I used to extemporise these things by the hour. I really thought that I was making great discoveries – which I was not, of course – but then ... I had the inkling that I wanted to put these things down on paper.¹²⁴

Although the level of playing ability that Moeran and his brother achieved as a result of these lessons is not mentioned, this is sufficient anecdotal evidence to show that there was a piano in the Moeran home. Additionally, as has been shown above, there is the strong probability that Moeran's mother both played and sang and the affluence of the family would have ensured that a piano – possibly even a quality grand piano – was readily affordable. The anecdote is interesting for a number of reasons but when considering its importance, it must be borne in mind that Moeran was recalling events from more than forty years earlier and his memory is the

¹²⁴ A recording of the interview is at <http://www.moeran.net/Writing/Radio-Interview.html> (accessed 1 January 2013) and the transcription was made by the author.

only evidence of any kind supporting it. Most significantly, however, is his recollection of ‘...get[ing] to the piano’ to ‘invent great chords with three or four notes in both hands’. Although Moeran stated that it was his brother that was taught the piano, from the recollection that immediately follows, it is apparent that Moeran also played the instrument. Given the span of years between the events being recalled and the date of the recollection, it may be reasonably supposed that the radio interview anecdote is a conflation of several memories – all of which are imperfectly remembered but each of which had a basis in reality. Moeran suggests he was about nine years old when the music lessons began. This is unlikely since by that time, his brother William Graham had been away during term time for several years – initially at Dulwich College Preparatory School and subsequently at Marlborough Public School. Moeran himself went away, first to Suffield Park Preparatory School at the age of ten, and then to Uppingham School at the age of thirteen. Thus, it is more probable that Moeran’s first exposure to music and playing – the piano in particular – took place when he was no more than about five or six. William Graham perhaps began piano lessons at the age of six or seven while he was still living at home and under the tutelage of the governess. Since he seemingly never showed any further interest in music during his later life and there is no evidence of his having continued music lessons at school, it may be supposed that the apparent ambition for Moeran and his brother to ‘play together’ was never realised.

It is also absurd for Moeran to assert that a wealthy, late-Victorian household possessed a piano but that there was no music, other than a couple of hymnbooks, from which to play. If the claim that William Graham was being taught the piano is accepted at face value, then he, at least, must have been provided with music to learn and the strong probability that Moeran’s mother played and sang also suggests that printed music of many kinds was present in the house. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, countless collections of songs of all kinds were published for a ready market. In the pre-electronic era, the piano was the centre of entertainment in many households and plentiful companies around the country existed to build and supply affordable pianos and innumerable music publishers provided the media in the form

of songs and piano music.¹²⁵ When the facts about the musical Whalls are also taken into account, the notion of the Moeran household being devoid of music becomes even more preposterous. Along with many books and collections of songs and piano music, they would certainly have owned a copy of the above-mentioned volume of sea-shanties compiled by Moeran's mother's cousin William Boulton Whall. Evidence that may be derived from an examination of Moeran's own compositions – especially the extant early works – also suggests that the young teenage Moeran gained technical and extemporising fluency by playing through the songs on the piano from this and other music books. As he maintained in the 1947 interview, he experimented with harmonies and thus began to develop the characteristic harmonic-based idiom that would find expression in his later mature compositions.

It is instructive to note that the first melody in the book is a version of the song *Shenandoah*:

Miss - ou - ri she's a migh - ty riv - er, A - way you roll - ing riv - er. The red - skins'
camp - lies on its bor - ders. Ah - ha, I'm bound a - way, 'cross the wide Miss - ou - ri.

Ex. 1 *Shenandoah* from *Ships, Sea-Songs and Shanties*, p1


The ease with which any number of alternative harmonisations may be devised reveals a plausible source for Moeran's harmonic diversity – the 'great chords on the piano' may be readily imagined. The octave-rise structure seen here from the first beat of bar one to the final beat of bar two is also one of the most distinctive elements of Moeran's melodic style and recurs throughout his oeuvre – from the earliest songs to his last compositions. Since it is also a characteristic of English and Irish folksong – both of which were important influencing factors in Moeran's stylistic development (as will be shown later) – it is probably presumptive to suggest that the idea originated in his playing of *Shenandoah* in particular. Also significant, in

¹²⁵ See Rosamond E. M. Harding, *The Piano-Forte*, (Gresham Books, London, 1978), Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994) and David Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998) for further details about the development of the piano in Victorian England. References on music publishing include James Coover, *Music Publishing, Copyright and Piracy in Victorian England*, (Mansell Publishing, 1985) and *A Short History of Cheap Music*, (Novello, Ewer & Co. 1887).

the context of Moeran's later compositions, is the fact that the *Shenandoah* melody comprises five two-bar sub-phrases. This fundamental melodic form continually appears in a range of contexts in the music Moeran composed throughout his life. The importance of the number five to Moeran will be the subject of more detailed examination later in this thesis.

The distinct stylistic influence of the sea-shanty is more practically shown in this example from one of Moeran's earliest surviving compositions:

Allegro



Oh, Grims - by is a plea - sant town as a - ny man may find, An'

Grims-by wives are thrif-ty wives, an' Grims-by girls are kind, An' Grims-by lads were ne-ver yet the

lads to lag be - hind When there's men's work do - in' on the North Sea ground.

Ex. 2 *The North Sea Ground* – first verse melody

Moeran composed *The North Sea Ground* in April 1915 and it represents one of his earliest surviving works. The significance of the song and its place in Moeran's developing compositional style will be considered in more detail in Chapter 3.

A Musical Family?

Regardless of whether traits such as musical ability can really be inherited in a genetic sense, the biographer of a musical personality generally does not fail to mention that his or her subject comes from a musical family or background, whenever such information is available, and it is of great interest to discover that a prominent musician had prominent musical ancestors. It reinforces the inheritance suggestion and is frequently proposed as the reason that such and such a person became a musician. Another element of the *Moeran Myth* – which again derives from

the assertions made in the *Chesterian* essay first mentioned in Chapter 1 – is the apparent lack of any musical family or background that is of note. However, as has been shown above, the exact opposite is true – much of Moeran’s family on his mother’s side was exceptionally musical – and Moeran had a disproportionately large number of musical relatives and ancestors. Thus, when William Graham Moeran, in the letter to Colin Scott-Sutherland mentioned earlier, stated that it was always thought a mystery from where his brother's musical genius came, he was either suffering from a memory dysfunction or possibly had unconsciously adopted the *Moeran Myth* as fact.¹²⁶

How well did Moeran know his relatives and how extensive was their influence on his upbringing? Despite the distances involved, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that these relatives either visited or were visited by the young Moeran and his family. The most significant pieces of evidence are Moeran’s reported exceptional knowledge of the sounds of railway engines and his apparent intimate knowledge of railway timetables.¹²⁷ The notion that this knowledge and experience was acquired during numerous railway journeys he undertook as a child is quite reasonable considering the circumstances both of the Moeran family and the time period. Additional evidence is provided by Moeran himself in his letters where he mentions visits by relatives. During an interview conducted towards the end of Moeran’s life by the Australian music critic Evan Senior, Moeran related an anecdote from his youth that involved him purloining a set of apparently superfluous false teeth from his home and selling them in London to raise funds to attend a concert. Apparently, the teeth had been left at the Moeran home by a relative.¹²⁸ Whether or not this actually took place as Moeran related is less

¹²⁶ ‘It has always been a puzzle from whom he inherited his musical talent – possibly from his maternal grandfather, Mr B.J. Whall’, William Graham Moeran; quoted in Talbot (2009), 7

¹²⁷ In *Lonely Waters*, Lionel Hill alluded to Moeran’s enthusiasm for railways. On page 18 he wrote: ‘It was at this time that I learnt of Jack’s great and abiding love of steam engines and everything concerning railways. The fact that we lived within sight and sound of this passion made his visit to us all the more enjoyable. His knowledge of railway timetables was prodigious, and many times at breakfast or lunch he would suddenly say “Sshh, ... here comes the 10.30 Birkenhead express!” Glancing at his watch, he would continue “She’s got a Castle loco on today, probably the Aberdovey Castle”’. Hill continued: ‘When I asked him how he knew such things he replied “By the beat of the engine; every engine is an individual with its own sound”’. While the events reported by Hill probably did not occur exactly as he described them, it may be reasonably asserted that Hill’s testimony is reliable in that he is unlikely to have invented the incident.

¹²⁸ Evan Senior, ‘E.J. Moeran’, *Australian Musical News and Digest* (1 May 1950), 30-31

relevant than the fact that the story provides corroborative evidence that family members periodically visited the Moeran home.

The Origin of a Composer

The above exposition establishes a convincing alternative to the assertions of the *Moeran Myth*. Far from having little or no exposure to music as a child, it is probable that Moeran was encouraged to play and make his own music from an early age and this provided the foundation on which the future composer was constructed. The young Moeran may have been ‘inventing music’ from as early as the age of five or six. However, no manuscript dating from earlier than 1912 survives. As has been shown, Moeran appears to have actively tried to suppress any idea that his interest in music derived from any time before his later years at Uppingham School and he is known to have destroyed almost all his juvenile work. When the family moved to Salhouse in Norfolk in 1905, it seems that the governess did not go with them and Moeran was enrolled at Suffield Park Preparatory School in Cromer, on the north Norfolk coast. This lay some forty miles distant and it is most likely that Moeran attended as a weekly boarder. He would have travelled by train from the nearby Salhouse railway station early on a Monday morning, returning from Cromer the following Friday afternoon – taking the short walk from the station back to Salhouse vicarage.

There is very little surviving evidence that provides information about any aspect of Moeran’s time at Suffield Park Preparatory School. Much of what is known derives entirely from the Evan Senior interview mentioned above. The article Senior wrote is not a transcription of the actual interview; rather it is his own interpretation of Moeran’s words – with a few quotations included to provide verisimilitude. The school itself has long since closed and been demolished, and its records have been lost. However, according to an advertisement placed in Ward and Lock’s *Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and its Environs*, the school was: ‘In Sheltered Situation, one mile from Cromer town’ with ‘Accommodation for 50 Boys in airy

Class Rooms and Bedrooms'.¹²⁹ The recollections of Moeran that may be distilled from the Evan Senior article suggest that his interest in music was stimulated while he was at Suffield Park by the arrival of a new piano teacher and that his piano and violin lessons continued during his time there.

“I think,” Moeran told [Senior], “that my first real interest in music came from this man, an interest that grew when I went to Cromer Pier and heard a band for the first time. Perhaps I was fascinated by the wonderful blue and gold uniforms of that band that played things like *The Merry Widow* and Beethoven’s *Coriolan* overture ...”¹³⁰

Much of Senior’s interpretation of Moeran’s imperfect memories has been taken by others as literally true without critical examination and has contributed substantially to the *Moeran Myth*. However, it may be speculated that Moeran’s first real attempts at composition were made during his time at the Suffield Park Preparatory School – building on the extemporising skills that he had begun to develop earlier – and that his playing ability on both piano and violin improved considerably.

Until he went to Suffield Park School, Moeran had spent most of his time either on his own or in the company of adults. The combination of the five-year age gap between Moeran and his brother William Graham and the fact that William was sent away to boarding school from a quite early age suggests that there would have been little fraternal engagement. Thus, Moeran spent his earliest formative years with no opportunity to develop the social skills required for interacting with his peer group. Although this was later rectified to an extent by the opportunities available at his school and college, the legacy of his isolated and insulated upbringing remained part of his character. Evidence that Moeran was socially dysfunctional as an adult abounds throughout his later life – from the age of about thirty until his meeting with and marriage to Peers Coetmore some twenty years later and on to his death at the age of fifty-six – and this will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6. However, despite it being a novel

¹²⁹ A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and its Environs, (Ward, Lock & Co, London, 1919), 63

¹³⁰ Senior (1950), 30

environment, there is no indication that Moeran was particularly unhappy at preparatory school. Possibly the relative proximity of his parents mitigated any loneliness or home-sickness.

As shown above, in 1907 Moeran's father retired from full-time Anglican Ministry due to ill-health,¹³¹ and he and his wife moved to a house in Nutfield near Redhill in Surrey.¹³² Moeran remained in attendance at Suffield Park School until the end of the school year in July 1908 and, due to the increased distance, it is likely that he became a full boarder for that period. He was awarded a school music prize on leaving – a hard-bound copy of the *Beethoven Piano Sonatas* published by Breitkopf & Hartel, Leipzig, was inscribed to 'Ernest John Moeran'.¹³³ Whether or not Moeran chose this prize himself, it indicates the level of playing ability that he had achieved by the age of thirteen. Moeran was clearly destined for a career in music and the public school selected by his parents reflected this intention. Again, this is in contrast to the *Moeran Myth* which, as suggested above, holds that Moeran's parents had planned for him to follow a career in engineering. Had this been the case, Uppingham School would have made little sense – despite William Graham Moeran's contention that the engineering path was precisely the reasons he was sent to Uppingham. While there is no doubt that Moeran had an abiding love for railways and, at least during his twenties, a fascination for motorcycles, it stretches credibility for his brother to suggest that an early childhood interest should convince his parents so to plan his career. Although the school fees were of no concern (being paid by the George Smeed trust fund),¹³⁴ the appropriateness and quality of the education provided was and Moeran's mother in particular would have ensured he attended the right school. William Graham had attended Marlborough College and there would have been little reason for his brother not to follow him were it not for the lack of provision (at the time) for musical education at that school. In contrast, by 1908, Uppingham School had acquired a reputation for the encouragement of artistic and creative potential in its students – especially in music. In the

¹³¹ (see footnote 109)

¹³² Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1908, (Horace Cox, London, 1908), 995

¹³³ This volume is now part of the *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection*, Collection ID 1M27, 1M49, Library of the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

¹³⁴ (see footnote 88)

public and endowed schools of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Music was rarely regarded as a suitable subject for study. Mathematics and the Classics were paramount but this had changed at Uppingham with the appointment of Edward Thring as headmaster in 1853.¹³⁵ Thus, although the evidence is circumstantial, it is reasonable to suggest that Moeran was sent to Uppingham School because of its provision of music as a subject for study and therefore his parents – or at least his mother – had the intention that his obvious musical talent should be appropriately nurtured.

Moeran entered Uppingham School in September 1908 and was assigned to Lorne House.¹³⁶ Uppingham had a system (which is maintained to the present day) of boarding houses for the pastoral care of pupils. Each pupil became a member of one of the boarding houses – under the supervision of a housemaster – which took over the duties of parental responsibility. Moeran's school career at Uppingham is slightly better documented than is his time at Suffield Park but it still relies heavily on anecdotal evidence that derives principally from Moeran's own selective recollections. The director of music at Uppingham was Robert Sterndale Bennett, grandson of the composer William Sterndale Bennett, and since 1905 he had continued and extended the exceptional provision of musical education that had been started by Herr Paul David under the

¹³⁵ 'Edward Thring was an educational pioneer and was also founder of the Headmasters' Conference. He won national and transatlantic reputation as an original thinker and writer on education. At a time when Maths and Classics dominated the curriculum, Thring encouraged many 'extra' subjects - French, German, Science, History, Art and Carpentry, and, in particular; Thring was a pioneer in the introduction of Music into the regular system of education. He believed that, in addition to a generally refining influence, music could also be made a means of interesting and stimulating boys not especially open to intellectual ambitions. The demand for musical teaching grew rapidly, so that in the course of time the one music master with whom he began his experiment required the aid of six or seven assistants, while one-third of the whole school took lessons in instrumental music. The school choir, with its hundred or more trained voices, gave life and beauty to the chapel services; the concerts of classical music became a marked feature in each term's school pleasures; on more than one occasion the choir went to the mission districts of the school in London to give concerts for the benefit of the poor. Some of the finest musical artists of the day who were induced to visit Uppingham became interested in the experiment which was being carried out and by taking part in the concerts kept before the boys a high ideal of artistic excellence.'; http://archive.org/stream/edwardtringhead00parkuoft/edwardtringhead00parkuoft_djvu.txt: (accessed 6 June 2013) (abridged)

¹³⁶ According to the Uppingham School website, Lorne House is the '... oldest of Uppingham's houses still in its original location ...' <http://www.uppingham.co.uk/Lorne-House>; (accessed 4 December 2013)

inspiration of the headmaster Edward Thring some forty years earlier.¹³⁷ Glimpses of Moeran's time at Uppingham School are suggested by various references. It is believed that he eventually played as leader of the second violin section of the school orchestra and the school archives confirm that recitals were given that featured his own string quartet performing music that he himself had composed. A commonly quoted work is a *Sonata for Cello and Piano* in four movements that took 'nearly an hour to perform'.¹³⁸ Mention is made of several string quartets and at least one violin sonata. While it is impossible to verify the composition of any of these works, it is evident that Moeran did compose and play and generally make music at Uppingham School. Robert Sterndale Bennett, in the obituary for Moeran that he wrote for the Uppingham School Magazine in March 1951, noted: 'I doubt if any boy has grasped with more discernment and avidity or made better use of the opportunity which school music has to offer'.¹³⁹ More definite evidence of Moeran's musical activities is provided by local newspaper reports of the 1910 and 1912 Speech Day proceedings. Moeran's name was included in the list of second violin players in the orchestra that performed at the 1910 Speech Day concert.¹⁴⁰ Two years later, it was recorded that the concert on 6 July 1912 included two compositions by Moeran, one of which was a four-part song – however, no further details were provided.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ 'In 1864, the pioneering headmaster of Uppingham, Edward Thring, was looking for a new director of music. The English composer, Sir William Sterndale Bennett, was commissioned by Thring to find him. He went to the place in Germany where he had studied, the Leipzig Conservatorium. There, amongst others, he asked the advice of the violinist leader of the Gewandhaus orchestra, Ferdinand David. David had given the premiere of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, and was a close friend and associate of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. Ferdinand suggested that his own son, Paul David, would be appropriate for this new post. Paul was just 25 years old with little or no English. He travelled to England in company with one of his father's most gifted pupils, Joseph Joachim, who was by this time already one of the most famous violinists in the world. Paul David inspired high standards of music at the school - a tradition which persists to this day. By no means an outstanding composer, nevertheless he was a fine violinist, and he wrote much music for the school. He continued to teach at Uppingham for some 40 years. Joachim, who frequently made concert tours in Britain, would always go to the school ... to visit his friend and to do some coaching. He even played in the back row of the violins in the school's string orchestra. He had made his debut in England in 1844 playing the Beethoven concerto under Mendelssohn - and his final performance of this same work was given at Uppingham in 1905 at the opening of the new concert hall. Fittingly, Paul David was succeeded as head of music at Uppingham by William Sterndale Bennett's grandson, Robert, who continued to maintain and develop musical standards for a further four decades.' http://rogerneill.blogspot.ch/2011_06_01_archive.html; (accessed 6 June 2013)

¹³⁸ Heseltine (1926), 4

¹³⁹ Quoted from a transcript of the obituary reproduced at <http://www.moeran.net/Biography/uppinghamobit.html> (accessed 21 June 2014)

¹⁴⁰ 'Uppingham Speech Day', *Stamford Mercury*, (15 July 1910), 4

¹⁴¹ 'Uppingham School Speech-Day', *Stamford Mercury*, (12 July 1912), 4

Moeran's time at Uppingham came to an end at the age of seventeen in July 1912. He would probably have followed the curriculum defined by the *1904 Regulations for Secondary Schools* which provided for: 'a four-year subject-based course leading to a certificate in English language and literature, geography, history, a foreign language, mathematics, science, drawing, manual work [and] physical training ...'.¹⁴² Although the public or endowed schools were not necessarily bound by the regulations, it is likely that most would have followed the guidelines – with a possible variation in the subjects offered. In the case of Uppingham, music was certainly added to the list. Many of Moeran's contemporaries that left the school at the same time would have gone on to Oxford or Cambridge University. An examination of the destinations of pupils leaving Uppingham School during the few years before and after 1912 indicates that several went to Cambridge and that of these the majority joined Clare College. The Admissions Book in the archive of Clare College, Cambridge confirms that between 1909 and 1914, there were several entrants each year from Uppingham School.¹⁴³ This association between Uppingham School and Clare College, Cambridge has an interesting footnote in the Moeran story that will be explained later.

As has been shown, it has been asserted that Moeran, on leaving Uppingham, was destined for a career in engineering, but that the intervention of the Director of Music at the school, the above-mentioned Robert Sterndale Bennett, persuaded his parents to enrol him at the Royal College of Music. However, as suggested above, the engineering career aspect of the *Moeran Myth* has probably become part of the Moeran story as a result of the conflation of several things that Moeran mentioned in later life. However, having apparently excelled at music during his four years there – as attested by Bennett's obituary piece – it would be unlikely that Moeran would then proceed anywhere other than a music college. It follows from this that entry to the Royal College of Music in the autumn after he left Uppingham would have been arranged some weeks or even months beforehand. Moeran was clearly a musician of

¹⁴² <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/chapter04.html>; (accessed 4 December 2013)

¹⁴³ *Clare College Admission Registers 1871-1950*, Cambridge University Archives Repository Reference CLARE/CCAC/2/1/1

considerable talent and, with the support of his teacher and the financial backing of his family, acceptance into the college would most probably have been a formality. It is not known how Moeran spent the summer of 1912 after leaving Uppingham School but the records show that he entered the Royal College of Music on 26 September 1912 with piano as his principal study.¹⁴⁴ It is also recorded in the archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* that he was elected to membership of that body on 7 October 1912.¹⁴⁵ Between 1912 and 1914, it is difficult to trace the exact movements of the Moeran family as the evidence is contradictory. The volumes of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* provide several addresses for the Rev. J. W. W. Moeran for these years, ending with 'Cliff Home' at Bacton-on-Sea in the volume for 1914.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps due to the temporary nature of the addresses occupied by the Moerans during 1912 and 1913 or even the comparative ease in daily commuting to the college in South Kensington, it seems to have been decided that Moeran would live with his great-aunt Sarah Graham in Upper Norwood, who, with her husband, the Rev. William H Graham, had some thirty years earlier provided Moeran's mother with a home. In any case, as a minor living away from the parental home, Moeran would have required the guardianship of a responsible adult relative.

¹⁴⁴ Royal College of Music Students Register, No. 10 1911-1914, RCM Records & Archives MS P35.03, 3768

¹⁴⁵ (see footnote 151)

¹⁴⁶ This was the house that Moeran's parents built at Bacton and where they lived until 1922. The house appears to have had several names – 'Cliff House', 'Cliff Home', 'Cliff Holme', 'Cliff Holm' and 'Sunny Cliff' – but it is likely that some of these result from typographical error or handwriting confusion. As of 2011, the house was still there as the residence of the owners of a caravan and leisure home park.

The Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club

The *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*¹⁴⁷ was established in London in 1899 by graduates of the two universities who, during their student years, were members either of the *Cambridge University Musical Union* or of the *Oxford University Musical Club*.¹⁴⁸ They conceived the idea of a Gentlemen's Club in London, based on and with the same principles and objectives as their undergraduate clubs. The first president of the club was the distinguished violinist Joseph Joachim and honorary membership was bestowed upon several leading musicians and politicians of the time – including Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Frederick Bridge, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Walter Parratt, Sir Edward Elgar, Dr Hans Richter and Arthur Balfour. By

¹⁴⁷ The principal archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* are held in the Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University. The archive is titled *Papers of the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club 1899-1954* and has the shelfmarks Dep. c. 958-68, e. 487. Most of the information in this section of the thesis is derived from this archive source.

¹⁴⁸ A detailed history of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, its establishment may be traced by the examination of the archives at Oxford University Library and contemporary newspaper articles. Oxford University Library Mus.1 c.140 (4) Scrapbook 4 contains a letter dated "May 1899" and written to the Oxford Union Society with the following text:

'The Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club

Dear Sir,

The idea of establishing a Club of the above description in London, similar in its objects and character to the *Oxford University Musical Union* and the *Cambridge University Musical Club* has for a long time been discussed by Members of those Clubs living in London. As a result of this feeling a Meeting of gentlemen interested in the project was held on March 21st 1899. After careful discussion it was decided to attempt to form a Club on the lines that have been so successful at the two Universities, and a provisional scheme setting forth its constitution and objects was approved. It was also agreed to name it *The Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club* and to throw it open to all Members of those Universities. It is estimated that the annual expenditure of such a Club could not possibly be put at a lower figure than £600 a year. It is therefore thought advisable to suggest Three Guineas as the Annual Subscription for Town Members and One Guinea for Country Members. It is proposed that all Members joining the Club before July 15th, 1899, should be considered Original Members, and should be exempt from any Entrance Fee. A copy of the provisional scheme is enclosed for your consideration. Should you feel disposed to join this Club, or assist in its formation, kindly sign your name and write your address on the enclosed Form and return it either to Mr Horace M. Abel, 10, King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, E.C. (Oxford Secretary *pro tem.*) or to Mr W.B. Knobel, 32, Tavistock Square, W.C. (Cambridge Secretary *pro tem.*), from whom all further information can be obtained. A Meeting will be held in due course, when a Committee and Officers will be elected, the Subscription fixed, and other business transacted. Of this Meeting notice will be given by post when replies have been received to this Circular, and a sufficient number of names is forthcoming.

We are, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully

H.M. Abel, Merton College, Oxford, W.B. Knobel, Trinity College, Cambridge etc. etc.'

Messrs. Abel, Knobel etc. also placed an advertisement in *The Times*, issue 35858 (17 June 1899), 15:

'A NEW MUSICAL CLUB. – A club, to be called *The Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club* is being formed in London for the purpose of encouraging the practice and knowledge of chamber music, both vocal and instrumental, among its members. It is proposed to secure suitable premises in as central a position as possible. The club is under the presidency of Dr. Joachim, and has the support of many of the best-known musicians in London. Among those who have consented to become honorary members are Mr. Arthur Balfour, Sir J. Frederick Bridge, Mr. W.H. Hadow, the Bishop of London, Dr. C. Harford Lloyd, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Hubert Parry, Signor A. Piatti, Dr. H. Richter, and Sir Richard Webster. Further information may be obtained from the provisional secretaries; Mr. H. M. Abel (Oxon. sec.), 10, King's Bench-walk, Temple, E.C.; and Mr. W. B. Knobel, (Camb. sec.), 32, Tavistock-square, W.C.'

1912, the Club had a membership numbering several hundred – the majority being Oxford or Cambridge graduates but also including a proportion of gentlemen invited into the Club under the special *Rule IV* – which provided for the admission of ‘Amateurs not being members of either University’ who were deemed to be worthy of membership on other grounds – such as making a conspicuous contribution to music-making in London.¹⁴⁹ The regular performing members of the Club in 1912 included: Arthur Bliss, Adrian Boult, George Butterworth, Edward Dent, Percy Scholes, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Richard Terry, Percy Buck, Baron Fred d’Erlanger and E.H. Fellowes. Members that later achieved eminence in fields other than music included: E. M. Forster, Compton Mackenzie, Lytton Strachey, Frederick Grisewood, Selwyn Lloyd, Anthony Asquith and Guy Liddell.¹⁵⁰

The Club Candidates Book¹⁵¹ records that Moeran was elected to membership on 7 October 1912. This fact is immediately problematic because Moeran does not seem to have been qualified for membership under any of the Club rules. He should have been excluded both on the grounds of age and the fact that he was neither a graduate nor an undergraduate of either Oxford or Cambridge Universities. It is also unlikely that he was elected to membership under the provision of *Rule IV*. Although the rule provided few guidelines about the criteria to be applied when accepting candidates under its conditions, it is difficult to conceive how a seventeen year old schoolboy could have satisfied any of them. In any case, members thus elected were indicated as such in the Registers of Members and Moeran’s name is not so indicated. The questions therefore arise: how did Moeran come to know about the Club and how did he manage to become elected to membership? Both his father and brother would have been entitled to apply for membership as they were both Cambridge graduates and it is possible although unlikely that they knew of the existence of the Club. Much more probable is that Robert Sterndale Bennett was influential in Moeran’s becoming a member. Sterndale Bennett

¹⁴⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.e.487, fol. 1, 3

¹⁵⁰ The list of performing and other members has been gleaned from an examination of the *Oxford & Cambridge Music Club Archives Membership Records and Programmes*, Oxford University Library Dep. c.958-964 and Dep. c.966-967

¹⁵¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.958, fol. 1, 144

had himself been a member of the Club for some time and he would have realised how useful membership could be to the young Royal College of Music student as he began his musical life in London. Answering the question as to how Moeran was elected to membership of a prestigious London club is much more difficult – but it is an important one to examine. It will be shown over the course of this and the following two chapters that Moeran’s membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* during the next fifteen years or so was the pivotal factor that determined his eventual rise to musical prominence.

Examining the record of Moeran’s election to the Club membership in the Candidate’s Book provides some clues:

Name	E.J.S. Moeran
Address	<i>Sunny Cliff</i> , Bacton, North Walsham, Norfolk ¹⁵² <i>Homeward</i> , 130 Auckland Road, Upper Norwood ¹⁵³
University	Cambridge
College	Clare
Period of Residence	(blank)
Degree	(blank)
Profession or Occupation	(blank)
Musical Attainments	Piano, Viola & Trombone
Proposed by	Geoffrey Garrod 14 September 1912
Seconded by	F.B. Smith 23 September 1912
Elected	Oct 7, 1912

There are a number of interesting features that immediately stand out. The first is the claim that Moeran appears to make concerning his University and College. Although these categories are filled in, both the Period of Residence and the Degree categories have been left blank. As was shown above, while not exclusively so, Clare was the traditional Cambridge college destination for Uppingham School pupils and it is probable that it would have been Moeran’s choice, had he gone up. The Admissions Books¹⁵⁴ in the archives at Clare College, Cambridge do not have any mention of an Ernest John Moeran – neither do the Term Books¹⁵⁵ nor the

¹⁵² Probably the same as ‘Cliff Home’ (see footnote 146)

¹⁵³ Moeran’s great-aunt Sarah’s address

¹⁵⁴ *Clare College Admission Registers 1871-1950*, Cambridge University Archives Repository Reference CLARE/CCAC/2/1/1

¹⁵⁵ *Clare College Term Books 1907-1912 & 1912-1921*, Cambridge University Archives Repository Reference CLARE/CCAC/3/2/9 & 10

relevant issues of the college magazine *Lady Clare*¹⁵⁶ during the years following 1912 contain any reference to Moeran. In any case, by the date of his election as a member of the Club, Moeran had been in attendance at the Royal College of Music for nearly two weeks and therefore could not have been simultaneously up at Cambridge. Why did Moeran appear to say that he was attending Clare College, Cambridge? The most obvious reason might be that it was conceived as a convenient fiction in order to establish his *bona fides* for election to membership. Although his admission to Cambridge University could easily have been verified, the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* had been established as a Gentlemen's Club and it may have been that the word of a gentleman – even a seventeen-year-old gentleman – was not to be doubted. On the other hand, his subsequent frequent attendance at Club meetings in London may have raised the eyebrows of those that perhaps thought he should be spending more time in Cambridge at his studies. Possibly the extension of a claim of intent into a minor subterfuge was simply glossed over at his election to membership – as the result of other compelling reasons for his acceptance, whatever these may have been. However, this is still insufficient an explanation. Another possibility could be that students at the Royal College of Music were entitled to membership of the Club and that Moeran gained entry automatically. However, there is no evidence in the Club archives to suggest that this was the case, and of the other students known to have been contemporaries of Moeran at the RCM, only Arthur Bliss and Heathcote Statham are known to have been members of the Club. However, both studied at the RCM after having graduated from Cambridge – Bliss from Pembroke College and Statham from Caius College – so both were entitled to membership of the Club in any case. Moreover, a detailed examination of the Club Candidates Book and Registers of Members¹⁵⁷ for the period including 1912 reveals no other member of a similar age to Moeran. Some undergraduates of each university were elected to membership but these were generally in their final year and none are recorded as participating regularly in the activities of the Club in the manner that Moeran was able to. It

¹⁵⁶ *Clare College Lady Clare Magazine 1902-2010*, Cambridge University Archives Repository Reference CLARE/CCCS/1/6/1

¹⁵⁷ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.960 and 961, fols 1-5

may therefore be reasonably assumed that Moeran was the youngest active member by some considerable margin.

The truth of Moeran's election will probably never be known but the most likely explanation is the pulling of some strings on the basis of Moeran having already established a reputation that had been recognised by influential members of the Club. Moeran's proposer for membership, Geoffrey Garrod and seconder, F. B. Smith, may also have been instrumental. Garrod's name appears frequently in the Club archives, either in connection with candidates' elections to membership or as a performer at the Club musical evenings, and it is also significant that one of Garrod's recorded home addresses locates him as a neighbour of the Moeran family in Dulwich for a short time during early 1912. This clearly raises the possibility that he knew Moeran and recognised his musical ability. Moreover, both Garrod and Smith were old Uppinghamians. Whatever the truth, Moeran was elected to membership of the Club and over the next dozen years or so, made full use of its facilities and networking opportunities.¹⁵⁸

Also on the Membership Record, Moeran's musical attainments are listed as piano, viola and trombone. Moeran's piano playing and violin (and probably by extension, viola) playing were certainly very advanced. He had carried off many of the music prizes both at Suffield Park Preparatory School in Cromer and at Uppingham. On entry to the Royal College of Music, Moeran's principal study was the piano with viola as minor study but, as has been shown, Moeran had been playing the violin from an early age and it is likely that he had achieved a reasonable standard during his four years at Uppingham. Since the playing techniques for violin and viola are very similar, it is reasonable to suppose that he may have been as competent at playing the viola as he was the violin. However, the mention of the trombone as a musical attainment is curious and merits some examination. Moeran's playing of this instrument is not supported by any other evidence. The only use of the word 'trombone' in any of Moeran's preserved letters is where he is talking about instrumentation for various orchestral works. He

¹⁵⁸ The possibility that Moeran represented himself as a graduate of Clare College, Cambridge – essentially lying about his age – cannot be discounted. Photographs of Moeran suggest that he may have had a more adult appearance that belied his real age, and this may have enabled him to carry off such a deception. However, in the absence of supporting evidence, this remains a conjecture.

did not compose any music specifically for the instrument, except in as much as it figured as a standard part in his orchestral works. Moreover, the evidence relating to his time both at Suffield Park and at Uppingham does not include any reference to trombone playing or study. Given that the Membership Record already contained one element of fiction – his attendance at Clare College, Cambridge – it is not too much of an extension to hazard that the claim to being able to play the trombone was another. Conversely, it is difficult to see how inventing an instrumental playing ability – which would have been obvious the first time he was asked to play – could have enhanced his membership prospects. Thus, it must be supposed that, somehow and at some time, Moeran had become proficient on the trombone.

The principal activity of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* was the performance of chamber music and this was organised in the form of fortnightly musical soirées in the Club Concert Room. The names of members present at these recitals were not recorded – at least in any of the extant archives – unless they were performing in some capacity and were therefore mentioned in the programme. It is thus not possible to determine exactly which of the meetings Moeran first attended or indeed what use he made of Club facilities, if any. However, since he was elected to membership on 7 October 1912, the first fortnightly programme that he would have been able to attend would have been the 300th Programme that took place on Thursday, 7 November 1912.¹⁵⁹ The performers for this programme included the singer Gervase Elwes and the musicologist Donald Tovey. It is thus quite possible that Moeran first became acquainted with these two on that occasion. It may be reasonably assumed that Moeran did attend musical evenings where he was not involved in the performance and that he made use of the practice facilities and other music-making activities that took place at the Club but were not formally recorded. The programmes of the musical evenings provide an invaluable insight into some of the music that Moeran would have heard and the musicians that he would have associated with regularly.

¹⁵⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.966, 301

The first recital where it is known that Moeran participated was the 303rd Programme on Friday, 20 December 1912.¹⁶⁰ This was also one of the ‘Ladies’ Night’ programmes. The proposed full running order as recorded in the printed programme was as follows:

Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club.	Friday Evening, Dec. 20th 1912, at 8.30 pm
LADIES' NIGHT.	
The 303 rd Programme will include	
<hr/>	
1. Sextett for Strings in B flat major, Op. 18	
<i>Brahms</i>	
Allegro ma non troppo – Andante ma moderato – Allegro molto – Poco allegretto e grazioso	
Rev. E.H.FELLOWES, Messrs. R.C.DAVIS, E.D.CHETHAM STRODE, C.R.WRIGHT, H.T.TRIGGS and E.S.KEMP	
2. Songs	
	(a) Fussreise
	(b) Der Gärtner <i>Hugo Wolf</i>
	(c) “Wir wandelten”
	(d) “War es dir” <i>Brahms</i>
	(e) Lachen und Weinen
	(f) Ungeduld <i>Schubert</i>
Mr GEOFFREY GARROD	
3. Quintett for Clarinet and Strings in A Major, K. 581	
<i>Mozart</i>	
Allegro – Larghetto – Menuetto – Tema con variazione, Allegretto	
Messrs O.W.STREET, E.A.STREET, A.M.HIND, H.E.WILLIAMS and A.P.FACHIRI	
<hr/>	
Accompanist – Mr E.J.MOERAN	

Figure 3 Example Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Programme

The form and layout of the programme (as approximated above) derived from the programmes of both the *Cambridge University Musical Union* and the *Oxford University Musical Club*. This form of programme layout was eventually adopted by all the musical clubs that had these clubs as their ancestors. As accompanist, Moeran would have been at the piano for the songs that were sung by Geoffrey Garrod.

Many of Moeran’s own compositions during the years of his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* were songs and chamber music and some influences from composers that are known to have been regularly performed at the Club may be detected. For example,

¹⁶⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.966, 304

Moeran's *Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor* was composed in 1922 and the *Violin Sonata No.2 in E minor* by Emil Sjögren featured regularly on Club programmes. An examination of the Moeran sonata suggests some indebtedness to the Sjögren model.

A Music Student Discovers English Folksong

Little is known about Moeran's life and studies at the Royal College of Music between 1912 and 1914, beyond the fact that after his first year, he changed his principal study to composition and came under the influence of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.¹⁶¹ While he was a very able pianist, it is clear that from early 1913, composition became his foremost activity. Moeran also made use of the opportunities for listening to music that the cultural life of London provided and it is probable that he had actually begun to do this before he even arrived in London – perhaps making use of the greater freedom afforded to the senior pupils at Uppingham School. Although there is no direct evidence for this, there is circumstantial evidence that makes the assertion safe. Moeran's recollections over the years make reference to attending concerts in London from 1911 onwards and it is possible by linking these incomplete and selective memories with historical records to make a reasonable guess as to which performances these actually were. The story mentioned earlier about selling false teeth to fund a trip to London is unlikely to be true as told – as it is probable that Moeran's family provided him with ample funds during his time away at school – but it provides supporting evidence that Moeran was in the habit of travelling alone to London, either from school or from the home he stayed in during the school vacations. Since there are several possible addresses for his vacation residence during his final year at Uppingham, it is not possible to state exactly where he lived but they were all within reasonable rail-travel distance of the capital. However, while Moeran's recollections may appear to place him with some certainty at particular concerts, closer examination reveals confusion of detail that makes it difficult to establish which he really

¹⁶¹ Royal College of Music Students Register, No. 10 1911-1914, RCM Records & Archives MS P35.03, 3768

attended. In the article for *The Countrygoer* magazine briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, Moeran included the following anecdote:

In the years immediately preceding the First World War, there took place in London some remarkable choral and orchestral concerts at which the programmes consisted largely of British music. They were held due to the generosity and enterprise of H. Balfour Gardiner and at them there were given many first performances of the works of such composers as Holst, Vaughan Williams, Arnold Bax and Percy Grainger, names at that time quite unfamiliar to the general musical public. Having just left school, I had come to London as a student at the Royal College of Music; apart from a certain amount of Stanford and Elgar, I knew nothing of the renaissance that had been taking place in music in this country. So one winter's evening, when I had been to St. Paul's Cathedral intending to hear Bach's Passion music and failed to obtain a seat there, feeling in the mood for any music rather than none at all, I went to the Queen's Hall where there was a Balfour Gardiner concert, prepared to be bored stiff. On the contrary, I was so filled with enthusiasm, and so much moved by some of the music I heard that night, that from then on I made a point of missing no more of these concerts.

Among other works I heard was a rhapsody of Vaughan Williams, based on songs recently collected in Norfolk by this composer. It was my first experience of a serious orchestral composition actually based on English folksong, and it caused a profound effect on my outlook as a young student of musical composition. This, and many other works which I encountered at these concerts, though not all based on actual folk-music, seemed to me to express the very spirit of the English countryside as I then knew it. My home at this time was in Norfolk, where my father was a vicar of a country parish, so I determined to lose no time in rescuing from oblivion any further folksongs that remained undiscovered.¹⁶²

As has been shown to have been the case with Moeran's other recollections mentioned so far, this one is also befogged by the distance in years between the events and the date they were being recalled. However, Moeran seemed to have forgotten when writing this article that he had quoted a similar anecdote to Philip Heseltine some twenty-two years earlier when Heseltine was writing an item about him for the *Music Bulletin*. Whatever he told Heseltine was recounted in the subsequent article thus:

Beyond Brahms [Moeran] had not pursued his investigations. He felt no curiosity about the music of his contemporaries; even Wagner was unknown to him. But chance came to his assistance one night in the spring of 1913 when, finding himself crowded out of St. Paul's Cathedral where Brahms' *Requiem* was to be given, he went to Queen's Hall to hear a concert, rather than hear no music at all. This was one of the admirable series given by Balfour Gardiner – concerts that will long be remembered in the annals of British music, though they were insufficiently appreciated at the time they were given – and the programme contained the Delius Piano Concerto, which accomplished for Moeran the same

¹⁶² Moeran (1946)

sort of miracle that *Tristan* and certain works of Grieg had effected for Delius in the eighties and revealed a new world of sound to his imagination.¹⁶³

The anecdotes are striking both for their circumstantial similarities and for the difference between the music Moeran claimed had such an effect on him. In each, Moeran was trying to establish a case for a Damascene revelation that radically changed his appreciation of British music. Since such a conversion would be expected to have had a major impact on the kind of music he created himself, it is important in the context of this study to attempt to resolve the apparent contradictions. In the *Countrygoer* anecdote, Moeran related that he had ‘just left school’ and ‘... one winter's evening, when I had been to St. Paul's Cathedral intending to hear Bach's Passion music and failed to obtain a seat there’ he ‘... went to the Queen's Hall where there was a Balfour Gardiner concert’. The Heseltine anecdote asserts that Moeran went to hear Brahms *German Requiem* ‘... one night in the spring of 1913’ and he was ‘crowded out of St. Paul's Cathedral’ and instead went to the Balfour Gardiner concert at Queen's Hall where he heard the Delius *Piano Concerto*. A thorough examination of the music periodicals and newspapers of 1912-1913 reveals that all the works mentioned were performed in the stated venues but there is no single day on which either of the asserted combinations was scheduled. However, on Tuesday 18 March 1913, there was a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* at 7pm at St. Paul's Cathedral¹⁶⁴ and the fourth and last Balfour Gardiner Concert of the 1913 season took place at 8.30pm at Queen's Hall, featuring amongst other works, the *Piano Concerto* of Frederick Delius.¹⁶⁵ Thus it may be reasonably supposed that this was the misremembered combination of events that provided the basis for both the anecdotes.

Had the events proceeded as Moeran recalled, he would probably have arrived at St. Paul's Cathedral shortly before 7pm. According to the announcement in *The Times*, tickets were not necessary for the public – so it may be supposed that despite St. Paul's huge capacity, sufficient numbers had already been seated for this Holy Week event that Moeran found it impossible to

¹⁶³ Heseltine (June 1924), 172

¹⁶⁴ Report in ‘Ecclesiastical Intelligence’, *The Times*, issue 40162, (18 March 1913), 5; announcement that ‘Bach's Passion Music (St Matthew) will be sung in St Paul's Cathedral at 7pm this evening – tickets not necessary for the public’

¹⁶⁵ Reported in ‘Mr. Balfour Gardiner's Concerts’, *The Times*, issue 40163, (19 March 1913), 8

get in. It would have been a forty-five minute walk or a twenty minute tube journey from St. Paul's to the Queen's Hall in Langham Place. Since this was the last Balfour Gardiner concert of the second season, it is likely that Moeran was aware of it – so he probably went there knowing that there would be seats available. This is the only interpretation of the recalled events that is plausible.

In the *Countrygoer* anecdote, Moeran says that the Balfour Gardiner concert filled him with such enthusiasm for the British music being performed that he made a point of missing no more of these concerts. Since the 18 March 1913 concert was the last one organised by Balfour Gardiner, it may be supposed that this aspect of Moeran's memory refers to a different concert – possibly the third concert of the season the previous year that took place on 17 April 1912 and actually did feature the *Second Norfolk Rhapsody* and *Third Norfolk Rhapsody* by Vaughan Williams. The only difficulty with this interpretation is that at that time, Moeran was still attending Uppingham School and had not yet arrived in London for his studies at the Royal College of Music. Moreover, Moeran's father, mentioned in the anecdote as being '... vicar of a country parish ...' in Norfolk, had already retired from the Anglican Ministry and, as was shown above, had been living in Nutfield in Surrey for several years. However, it is possible that Moeran had travelled up from Redhill (the nearest railway station to his parents' home) – the date of the concert would have occurred during the school Easter Vacation¹⁶⁶ – and this may even have been the original event for the 'false teeth' anecdote reported by Evan Senior. Moeran's claim in *The Countrygoer* article to have been living in Norfolk during his years at the RCM has been taken as authoritative by previous writers and has reinforced that aspect of the *Moeran Myth* that states that Moeran grew up in the county. Since it is simple to discredit – both *Crockford's Clerical Directory* and the testimony of William Graham Moeran referred to earlier confirm the Rev. J. W. W. Moeran's retirement from the Anglican Ministry in 1907¹⁶⁷ and his subsequent addresses until 1914 are also listed and none of which are in Norfolk¹⁶⁸ – it

¹⁶⁶ Easter Sunday in 1912 was 7 April

¹⁶⁷ *Crockford's Clerical Directory* for 1908, (Horace Cox, London, 1908), 995

¹⁶⁸ *Crockford's Clerical Directory* for 1914, (Horace Cox, London, 1914), 1047

may be wondered why Moeran made such a claim. As will be seen to be the case with many of Moeran's later recollections of his earlier life, his memory became unreliable and perhaps befogged not only by the years but also by a desire to restructure some of his past life – possibly even to fit the assumptions of the *Moeran Myth* as it developed from the mid-1920s onwards. It can only be the case that the 'home' in Bacton in 1912 or 1913 would have been that of his grandfather, Thomas Warner Moeran.

While the Vaughan Williams *Norfolk Rhapsodies* may be easily imagined as having had the effect of opening Moeran's eyes to the possibilities of incorporating folksong idioms into his own compositions the better to achieve a characteristically English sound, it is more difficult to understand the impact the Delius *Piano Concerto* would have had on him. Composed in 1897 (with the first movement being revised in 1907) and first performed in Elberfeld in Germany in 1904, the concerto is representative of Delius' earlier, more romantic style and few of the identifying features of his later, individual fingerprints may be detected. Indeed, it sounds less Delian than some of Moeran's own later works – the 'new world of sound' to which Heseltine refers in his piece must necessarily be something other than Englishness. It is difficult to understand what Heseltine meant – given that the concerto is quite derivative and contains little that Moeran could not already have been familiar with from his hearing of Brahms, Grieg and other mid to late nineteenth century piano concertos. It has already been shown that the range of music (and musicians) that Moeran was able to hear whilst at Uppingham School was extensive and that orchestral music and concertos were studied and played to the extent that was possible, given the available instrumental resources. However, in one of his first letters to Lionel Hill in April 1943 at the beginning of their friendship, Moeran mentioned his attendance at the concert during which the Delius *Piano Concerto* was performed. He wrote:

My first introduction to Delius was in 1913, when I was a student at the R.C.M. and I heard his Piano Concerto at a Balfour Gardiner concert at the Queen's Hall. I shall never forget the profound impression it made on me at the time, also the lordly and superior comments on it by some of my fellow students.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Moeran to Lionel Hill dated 21 April 1943; quoted in Hill (1985), 11

Hill went on to say:

It has always been an enigma to me that [Moeran] so loved Delius' Piano Concerto, which is generally agreed to be one of the latter's least typical works. [Moeran] was to hold this opinion to the end.¹⁷⁰

Since influences are readily detectable in much of Moeran's music, it may be reasonably supposed that a work that (apparently) had such a major impact on him at such a formative point in his compositional development would be perceptible somewhere in his *œuvre*. Although Moeran was otherwise strongly influenced by Delius, the style evident in the *Piano Concerto* is not apparent in any of his own music.

It is impossible to reconcile all Moeran's conflicting reminiscences with the reality as reported in *The Times* and *The Musical Times*. However, it is entirely reasonable to suppose on the basis of reconstructed interpretations of the evidence that Moeran was able to attend London concerts during his final year at Uppingham School as well as during his two years of living in London as a student and that he heard performances of significant compositions by contemporary British composers that greatly informed his own approach to composition. Moeran probably attended several of the 1912 series of Balfour Gardiner concerts and all of the 1913 series and the works he heard would have widened his musical horizons rapidly and extensively. In particular, his musical imagination was stimulated both by the possibility of using folksong as a melodic inspiration – as revealed in the Vaughan Williams *Norfolk Rhapsody* and by the unconventional and adventurous harmonic language utilised by Delius.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

Folksong Collecting

It has generally been believed that Moeran discovered folksong after his arrival in London in 1912. The extract quoted above in *The Countrygoer* in 1946 continued:

Accordingly, when I was home the following week-end, I tackled the senior member of the church choir after Sunday evening service. He mentioned a song called *The Dark Eyed Sailor*, but nothing would induce him to sing it on a Sunday. I found afterwards that I never could persuade anybody else, even some hard-boiled reprobate, to perform for me on a Sunday, at least not in Norfolk and Suffolk. As for this *Dark Eyed Sailor*, I was able to write it down, together with other old songs, on Monday: this was actually the first song I 'collected' as a boy. True, it was not an entirely new discovery, but it was encouraging to me, and started my ball rolling.¹⁷¹

The most plausible interpretation of this recollection is that it is a conflation of misremembered events. Two things in particular are inconsistent: a) Moeran's claim to have been home in Norfolk at the weekend – home for Moeran in 1912 was Surrey and not Norfolk, and b) his suggestion that he wrote down the *The Dark Eyed Sailor* '... together with other old songs ...' on the Monday. Had he been home from college for the weekend, it is likely he would have had to return there on the Monday morning. It is difficult to extract some sense of what really happened from these recollections and the available evidence and the only possible scenario that works for 1912 is that Moeran did attend the 17 April Balfour Gardiner concert – travelling to London either from Uppingham or his parents' Surrey home – and the following weekend, he visited his grandfather in Bacton for a few days and noted down *The Dark Eyed Sailor* and possibly other folksongs, returning home later in the week. The inevitable conclusion, if this is the correct interpretation, is that Moeran's folksong collecting must have begun while he was still at Uppingham School. Although this has also been suggested by Professor Aloys Fleischmann in his article on Moeran, published in *Envoy*: 'While still at school, he developed a flair for composition, and took to noting down songs from traditional singers in farmhouses and taverns ...'¹⁷² it is unlikely to be correct. As shown above, it is known that Moeran's parents did not move to Norfolk until 1914, and it is necessary to

¹⁷¹ Moeran (1946)

¹⁷² Aloys Fleischmann, 'The Music of E. J. Moeran', *Envoy* (Vol. 4, No. 6), 61

introduce visits to Moeran's grandparents to make the conjecture work. Moreover, there is no other record of Moeran collecting folk songs 'in farmhouses', nor is there any suggestion that he collected songs in Surrey (his parents' home county), or Rutland (the location of Uppingham School). Although Fleischmann did not acknowledge the source of his assertions, it can only have been Moeran himself, and it is probable that Fleischmann was imperfectly recalling the conversations.

An alternative possibility, but one that accommodates fewer of Moeran's recollections, is that he heard the Vaughan Williams *Norfolk Rhapsody* on a different occasion and in his memory this became confused with his Bach *St. Matthew Passion*/Delius *Piano Concerto* experience. A search of *The Times* newspaper archives reveals that Vaughan Williams' *Norfolk Rhapsody No.3* was performed by the Royal Philharmonic Society orchestra, conducted by Balfour Gardiner at the Queen's Hall on Thursday 20 November 1913,¹⁷³ and that the composer's *Norfolk Rhapsody No.1* was performed by the Queen's Hall Orchestra, conducted by Mr Isidore de Lara at the same venue, as part of a festival of British Music on Thursday 29 April 1915.¹⁷⁴ It would have been possible that Moeran attended either or both of these concerts and that it is from the memories of these that the confusion arose. This puzzle will be considered further in Chapter 3.

The song mentioned by Moeran – *The Dark Eyed Sailor* – is not an original folksong but is a broadside ballad published early in the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁵ The song was clearly very popular because it rapidly spread around the British Isles and beyond and has subsequently been 'collected' many times. Moeran's acknowledgement that it was '... not an entirely new discovery ...' seems to be rather grudging. However, the identification of this song in particular as the first of his collection injects another element of confusion into the story. In the first set of

¹⁷³ 'Royal Philharmonic Society', *The Times*, issue 40375, (21 November 1913), 11

¹⁷⁴ 'Concert of British Music', *The Times*, issue 40842, (30 April 1915), 13

¹⁷⁵ http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/Dark_Eyed_Sailor.htm; (accessed 5 December 2013)

folksongs that he published in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* in December 1922,¹⁷⁶ Moeran included several that he had collected at Winterton, Norfolk in July 1915. These were: *The Bold Richard*, *The Captain's Apprentice*, *The Royal Charter*, *The Pressgang* and *The Farmer's Son* and are noted as having been sung by James Sutton. However, it is reasonable to suppose that these five were not the only songs recorded by Moeran at Winterton. At the time, there were two public houses in Winterton, *The Fisherman's Return* and *The Three Mariners* and anecdotal evidence suggests that both played host to convivial evenings when songs were sung by the fishermen.¹⁷⁷ During the 1950s, James Sutton's nephew, Sam Lerner, issued a number of recordings of fishing and maritime folksongs that were popular in the Winterton pubs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1915, Lerner would have been in his mid-thirties and may well have been present in the pub at the time of Moeran's collecting expedition. Lerner claimed that he had learned most of his songs from his 'Uncle Jimmy' (James Sutton) and it is likely that *The Dark Eyed Sailor* was one of these songs. Thus, it is possible that Moeran's *Countrygoer* recollection actually refers to his folksong collecting visit to Winterton in July 1915. The only corroborating evidence for this is the fact that neither of the two works that can be positively dated to earlier than July 1915 – the piano piece *Dance* and the song *The North Sea Ground* – displays the influence of folksong that might be expected had he immersed himself in the genre from an earlier date. While two works cannot be said to be conclusive, the additional evidence lends weight to the conjecture that Moeran began collecting the folk songs after, rather than before, his enrolment at the Royal College of Music.

Whichever is correct, it is certain that Moeran had discovered the existence of folksong and the realisation of what could be done with it in compositional terms by the time of his later student days at the Royal College of Music. It is also certain that after his parents moved to Bacton in 1914, he did regularly return to Norfolk and while there familiarised himself with the

¹⁷⁶ Ernest John Moeran, 'Moeran Norfolk Collection', *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, Vol. 7, No. 26, (December 1922), 1-24

¹⁷⁷ 'In Winterton fishing predominated as the main means of male employment ... [and] the fishermen did adjourn to the village's two pubs, *The Fisherman's Return* and *The Three Mariners*, for what ... were lengthy bouts of singing and step dancing.' http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/s_lerner.htm; (accessed 5 December 2013)

singing of folksongs – most especially in the public houses in the surrounding villages. The accounts of his folksong collecting expeditions and the subsequent publication of these in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* are more than sufficient evidence to verify that, for several years during his late teens and early twenties, Moeran was immersed in the idiom of English Folk Song.

Building a Reputation

On 15 October 1912, Moeran paid his one and a half guineas half-annual subscription to the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*,¹⁷⁸ thus cementing his association with the Club and beginning the process of establishing himself in London musical life. As has been speculated, he may already have made the first moves to doing this during his final year at Uppingham School but now he was a student at the Royal College of Music and a member of a prestigious music club. For his first term at the college, Moeran had been living with his great-aunt Sarah in Auckland Road, Upper Norwood and it is probable that he travelled up to the college each day from there.

¹⁷⁸ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.961, 16



Figure 4 The Reverend Thomas Warner Moeran with Moeran as a baby; photograph displayed in St. Andrew's Church, Bacton, Norfolk

In March 1912, at the age of ninety, Thomas Warner Moeran retired from his post as vicar of Bacton.¹⁷⁹ He and his wife moved into their retirement home and it is presumably there that Moeran would have gone to stay with his grandparents.¹⁸⁰ It was probably during these visits that he composed his earliest surviving works *Dance* and *Fields at Harvest*.¹⁸¹ For whatever

¹⁷⁹ 'Ecclesiastical Intelligence', *The Times*, issue 40151, (05 March 1913), 12

¹⁸⁰ Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1915, (Horace Cox, London, 1915), 1060

¹⁸¹ The manuscripts of *Dance* and *Fields at Harvest* form part of the Moeran Archive at the Lenton-Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library of the University of Melbourne (no catalogue number assigned).

reason, the manuscripts of both pieces survived Moeran's frequent episodes of intense self-criticism during which he destroyed much of his work¹⁸² but they have left the Moeran researcher with a problem. While the dating of *Dance* is straightforward – the manuscript is marked 'May 1913' – *Fields at Harvest* bears the date 'Dec. 23rd' but the year is frustratingly omitted. If Moeran is taken at his word and it may be assumed that the piece was composed, or at least completed, on 23 December, then determining the year would establish which of the two piano pieces is Moeran's earliest surviving composition. Of the writers that have previously addressed this problem, Rhoderick McNeill believed that *Field at Harvest* pre-dates *Dance*: '*Fields at Harvest* appears to have been composed before *Dance* judging by its more conservative idiom ...'¹⁸³ McNeill also examined the manuscript paper used by Moeran and observed that it was the same for the two pieces and not of a type used by Moeran for his post-First World War compositions. This led McNeill to assert that the two pieces were composed in close proximity of date to each other. Thus, he concluded that *Fields at Harvest* was composed or completed on 23 December 1912. John Talbot supported McNeill's dating argument in his Centenary Edition *E.J. Moeran: Collected Solo Piano Music* of 1994. In the editorial notes, Talbot wrote: '*Dance* is written in ink, clearly dated 'May 1913'; *Fields at Harvest* is written in pencil and dated only 'Dec. 23rd', but is probably earlier than *Dance*'.¹⁸⁴ Conversely, in *The Music of E.J. Moeran* Geoffrey Self stated that *Fields at Harvest* was composed in 1913, implying that it was later than *Dance* but did not support this assertion.¹⁸⁵

At first sight, McNeill's argument seems to be cogent. In his analysis of the piece, he explained his contention that the idiom is conservative, by comparing the harmonic variation and pianistic style with that of *Dance* and determining that, in his opinion, *Fields at Harvest*

¹⁸² The survival of these pieces is probably fortuitous, rather than due to Moeran's selective retention. The manuscripts of each were discovered in a bundle of Moeran's effects from his mother's home that were sent to his widow Peers Coetmore in Australia some years after the composer's death. It is possible that they were items that the composition student Moeran gave to his mother as examples of his work and that he later forgot about them.

The manuscripts now form part of the *E. J. Moeran Collection* at the Lenton-Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia, catalogue numbers VCA 9 (*Dance*) and VCA 11 (*Fields at Harvest*)

¹⁸³ McNeill (1983), 11

¹⁸⁴ John Talbot, *E. J. Moeran, Centenary Edition, Collected Solo Piano Music, Vol. 1* (Thames Publishing, London 1994), 67

¹⁸⁵ Self (1986), 21

was less advanced. He also noted the more frequent use of ‘... unorthodox harmonic progressions involving seemingly unrelated chords ...’¹⁸⁶ in *Dance*, which also led him to conclude that this piece was the later. Finally, he noted that *Dance* contained stylistic references to *Fields at Harvest* – which further supported the earlier dating of *Fields at Harvest*. However, the basis of McNeill’s argument, with the exceptions of the manuscript paper type and the use of pencil or ink, is subjective and is disputable on a number of grounds. The following section examines each piece in detail and presents objective evidence that suggests that McNeill’s conclusion may be successfully challenged.

At first sight, there are several stylistic aspects that link the two pieces. There is extensive use of arpeggiated accompaniment structures, which contrast with block chords. The melodic subjects are constructed primarily from trochaic units and are concealed within the arpeggiated structures. Additionally, there is extensive use of the piano upper register, compared with sparing deployment of lower notes; the range in both pieces is A2-A7 with just a few notes below A2. Although an examination of the few other extant pre-1920 works by Moeran reveals that they all feature these basic attributes to some extent, it is instructive to compare them in these two pieces. As will gradually become apparent during the course of this thesis, Moeran eventually regarded melody as the most prominent characteristic of his music, followed by harmony and then form. However, in 1912-1913, Moeran was still developing his compositional processes. His exposure to musical form during his schooldays – from the evidence of Robert Sterndale Bennett present earlier, achieved principally through the playing of an extensive classical repertoire – had instilled in him the foundations of good structural technique. Thus, it may be supposed that even in such early works as *Fields at Harvest* and *Dance*, Moeran was aware of the importance of utilising an appropriate form, and each is in a basic ternary form. However, in *Dance*, the implementation is naive in that the second ‘A’ section is a note-for-note repeat of the opening eighty-six bar first ‘A’ section, which suggests that Moeran was following the example he observed in the classical pieces that he played

¹⁸⁶ McNeill (1983), 15

himself. While Moeran used ternary form throughout his composing career, there is no other extant piece in which the second 'A' is an exact repeat of the first 'A'. Eventually, Moeran became very creative and innovative formally and this is one of the principal characteristics of his later style. However, *Dance* displays none of this ingenuity. Clearly reflecting the title of the piece, the rhythmic and thematic ideas in the 'A' section provide both a driving momentum and skipping effect that fairly successfully carries the listener forward. Two subject groups are presented, although subject group I has no melodic content:

Quick and lively ♩ = 148

Ex. 3 *Dance* – 'A' section, subject group I, bars 1-8

Subject group II is more interesting with a proto-melody presented in the upper notes of the right hand line:

a tempo

Ex. 4 *Dance* – ‘A’ section, subject group II bars 23-31

This proto-melody is then developed during the remainder of the ‘A’ section. Although the musical ideas reflect Moeran’s youth and inexperience, it is evident that he was enthusiastic about unusual sound combinations. After his invention of the ‘... great chords with three or four notes in both hands ...’ during his childhood days of experimentation at the piano,¹⁸⁷ he would absorb the ideas of others and process them alongside his own original thoughts to create chords and sequences that pushed the boundaries of acceptability.

Consistent with the principles of ternary form, the ‘B’ section of *Dance* is a contrasting section, but it is clear that Moeran had not yet developed sufficient discernment in the presentation of his ideas. After a three-bar link – which is simply a repeated note – the forty-three bar ‘B’ section begins in a style reminiscent of the middle sections of a number of works by Grieg. Moeran was almost certainly familiar with some of the piano and chamber music of Grieg, having probably played it himself either during his piano studies or at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*.¹⁸⁸ It will be noted that the length of the ‘B’ section is exactly half that of the ‘A’ section. While this may be coincidence, it is an odd one, given that Moeran evidenced an appreciation of numeric relationships throughout his composing career and clearly

¹⁸⁷ See quotation from Irish Radio interview on page 69

¹⁸⁸ The records of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* indicate that Grieg was one of the most frequently performed composers.

applied them to many of his formal structures.¹⁸⁹ By presenting a middle section half the length of the outer two sections and with a much slower tempo marking, Moeran created a satisfying structural balance.

The ternary form of the piece is completed by an exact repeat of the opening eighty-six bars, followed by a coda that is, itself an unmodified restatement of the first repeat of the four-bar 'B' main subject. The abruptness of the ending reflects the unsophisticated nature of the overall form of the composition. Overall, the piece suggests 'work-in-progress' in that some parts of it are aesthetically satisfying and other parts would benefit from some rethinking by the composer. As was stated above, it is reasonable to suppose that both *Dance* and *Field at Harvest* are rare examples from a substantial body of music that Moeran composed during the few years after he started his studies at the Royal College of Music in 1912 and that instead of revising, he moved on and composed something else. *Dance* bears little resemblance to any of Moeran's other surviving compositions and its inexperienced character is all that is available as evidence of the early development during his first two years at the RCM.

In contrast with *Dance*, the ternary form of *Fields at Harvest* is more imaginatively deployed. The opening 'A' section comprises nineteen bars with two subject groups. Again the melodic interest is combined with the arpeggiated open harmony but, in contrast to *Dance*, the melody is convincing. It has a distinct folksong quality and even suggests that Moeran might have been listening to *Sumer is Icumen in*:

Allegretto leggiero ♩ = 120



The image shows a musical score for the first four bars of the 'A' section of 'Fields at Harvest'. It is written for piano in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto leggiero' with a quarter note equal to 120. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The melody consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some dotted rhythms. The accompaniment is an arpeggiated pattern of eighth notes.

Ex. 5 *Fields at Harvest* – 'A' section, subject group I bars 1-4 (Melody highlighted)

¹⁸⁹ This subject will be further examined in later chapters

The 'A' section is completed by a short second subject utilising parallel fourths, fifths and sixths that further emphasises the folksong nature of the piece:

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a melody of parallel chords (dyads and triads) and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system also has two staves, with the treble clef staff continuing the melodic line and the bass clef staff providing accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo marking 'a tempo' is placed above the first staff.

Ex. 6 *Fields at Harvest* – 'A' section, subject group II bars 15-19

Also in contrast with *Dance*, the new material presented in the central 'B' section follows a similar pattern to that of 'A' and the section might almost be described as a proto-development. This is the first surviving piece by Moeran that hints at the sonata form that he utilised in a multitude of creative and imaginative modifications from his earliest mature works of the early 1920s, through to his final compositions during the late 1940s. The return of the 'A' section is distinguished by extensive variation, although the melodic content is mostly retained:

Ex. 7 *Fields at Harvest* – ‘A’ section repeat, bars 32-35

Similarly to *Dance*, the sectional balance is maintained by keeping the length to nineteen bars – although unlike *Dance* the piece ends without a coda. The final three bars of the second ‘A’ section are modified such that they prepare and present a satisfactory perfect cadence.

In summary, there is less to say about *Fields at Harvest* not because the piece is more conservative in idiom than *Dance* – as McNeill claimed – but because it is more tightly and competently constructed. Although at first sight it appears to be less adventurous harmonically, closer examination shows that this is due to the more flowing use of note combinations and chord sequences. As shown in his later folksong arrangements, Moeran developed a fine judgement for the harmony suggested or implied by melody and his discernment in the use and management of less expected chords eventually became very fine. While *Dance* displays no such discernment, being reliant on examples from other music Moeran had heard, *Fields at Harvest* suggests that some progress towards this had been made. The more sophisticated use of form in *Fields at Harvest* also suggests that when this piece was composed, Moeran had further developed his formal techniques and ideas. Finally, the use of folksong-type thematic material in *Fields and Harvest* and the complete absence of such material in *Dance* imply that *Fields at Harvest* was composed after Moeran’s discovery of folksong.

While McNeill compared *Fields at Harvest* stylistically with *Dance*, he did not extend his comparison to the only other surviving compositions from Moeran's late teens and early twenties *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'*, dated 'Midsummer 1916' – presumably on the basis that he believed that *Fields at Harvest* dated from a few years earlier and that 1912 or 1913 were the only possible years. However, as has been suggested, Moeran would also have been in a position to compose this piece in December 1914, 1915 or even 1916 – thus the possibility of an even later dating cannot be excluded. McNeill was obviously not able to compare *Fields at Harvest* with *The North Sea Ground* for the simple reason that at the time McNeill was writing, the existence of the song was not known. By including 1914, 1915 and 1916 in the list of possible years for the composition of *Fields at Harvest*, a more flexible approach to the dating analysis may be taken and even a superficial comparison with the *Four Songs* and *The North Sea Ground* reveals that *Fields at Harvest* has a much greater stylistic similarity with them than does *Dance*. As was suggested above, *Dance* bears the hallmarks of a juvenile composition, while *Fields at Harvest* suggests more thought and experience has been applied. Finally, the apparent influence of folksong suggests that *Fields at Harvest* was composed after Moeran's first folksong collecting expedition – which, as was discussed above, most probably took place in July 1915. It is therefore asserted that *Fields at Harvest* was probably composed either in December 1915 or December 1916 and thus *Dance*, composed at Bacton in May 1913, is established as the earliest surviving work by Moeran.

Moeran maintained his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* for 1913 by paying his annual subscription of three guineas on 30 January 1913¹⁹⁰ and on 8 May he again featured in the Thursday evening recital.¹⁹¹ On this occasion, Moeran took a much more prominent role than in his first appearance the previous December. He again accompanied Geoffrey Garrod in the songs: Three Madrigals: *When Laura Smiles* (Philip Rosseter), *Go to Bed, Sweet Muse* (Robert Jones) and *Come Again* (John Dowland), followed by *Love Sounds th'Alarm* from Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. He also performed the central solo item, playing

¹⁹⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.961, 16

¹⁹¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 10

Bach's *Fantasia in A minor* and he took the piano part in the final item, Mozart's *Pianoforte Trio No. 2 in B flat*. Moeran was again central to the recital programme on Thursday, 5 June 1913.¹⁹² In addition to taking the solo spot – performing *Minuet on the name of Haydn* (Ravel), *Chant d'hiver Op23, No.2* (Rebikoff) and *Noel* (Balfour Gardiner) – he was the accompanist for a set of songs sung by W. J. Smith, including *Canzone Napolitana* (arr. Mascagni) and *Henrik Wergeland* (Grieg). These two programmes provide a sense of the range of music that Moeran was experiencing at the Club and it is readily apparent how Moeran was absorbing a multitude of stylistic influences that would re-emerge in his own music.

Moeran was not only establishing a network through the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. At the Royal College of Music, Moeran befriended a number of students who were studying composition under Sir Charles Stanford and at some point during 1913 he decided to change his own course of study from piano to composition. His contemporaries at the RCM included Arthur Benjamin, Herbert Howells, Arthur Bliss, Ivor Gurney, Heathcote Statham, Edgardo Guerra and Adolphe, Leon and Mariel Goosens.¹⁹³ It may be reasonably assumed that Moeran spent much of his time composing – either as exercises from Stanford's classes or his own work. Although Stanford apparently would not countenance original work from his students, this clearly did not prevent them from doing so and it may be supposed that the few scores that remain represent just a small proportion of the music that Moeran set down in manuscript. The only other items of evidence for Moeran's activities during the remainder of 1913 are the October programmes of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. On 9 October 1913, Moeran took part in the programme playing both the central solo item – Schumann's *Kriesleriana Nos. 2 & 6*.¹⁹⁴ Again, he accompanied the solo singer in songs by Warburg, Gretchaninow and Easthope Martin¹⁹⁵ and the flute solo in the *Idylle* by Theo. Akimenko. Although the Thursday programmes in which Moeran participated provide a good snapshot of the composers whose music he was studying in detail – in preparation for performances – he undoubtedly attended

¹⁹² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 13

¹⁹³ Royal College of Music Students Register, No. 10 1911-1914, RCM Records & Archives MS P35.03

¹⁹⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 21

¹⁹⁵ Frederick John Easthope Martin (1875-1925), best known for his popular song *Come to the Fair*

many of the other programmes. Knowing which composers and works were represented in these adds considerably to the knowledge of the repertoire that Moeran was absorbing. Although Philip Heseltine wrote that on leaving Uppingham School Moeran's knowledge of music did not extend beyond Brahms,¹⁹⁶ it is clearly apparent that this lack of knowledge – if such it was – was remedied soon after his arrival in London. From the establishment of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* in 1899, new music appeared on the programmes of the fortnightly Thursday evening recitals almost as frequently as did the standard chamber music repertoire – thus Moeran would have had the opportunity to discover a wide range of music, well beyond the boundaries of that with which he had become intimately familiar during his schooldays.

On 23 October 1913, the 323rd Club programme was presented and on this occasion, Moeran's involvement was as recital coordinator.¹⁹⁷ This involved managing the programme, arranging such things as canvassing members to contribute an item, securing an accompanist and the compiling and printing of the actual evening programme. As far as can be determined, this programme was the first that Moeran organised. Apparently it was not a total success; the printed programme in the *O&MCM* archives has several hand-written alterations and it may be supposed that each of the printed programmes would have had to have been so modified. As the hand-writing is that of Moeran, it is clear that he had some considerable work to do during the day of the recital!

The last piece of evidence to show Moeran's activities during the remainder of 1913 is the 327th Club programme, which took place on Thursday, 18 December.¹⁹⁸ Moeran performed the central solo item, playing the *Tocatta and Fugue in E minor* by J. S. Bach. He also played the piano part in a performance of William Hurlstone's *Suite for Clarinet and Piano*. Hurlstone had

¹⁹⁶ Heseltine (June 1924), 172

¹⁹⁷ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 23

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 28

produced a considerable amount of chamber music during his short composing career and it featured on the Club programmes quite frequently.¹⁹⁹

In February 1914, Moeran paid his annual Club subscription, again giving his address as his great-aunt's house in Upper Norwood.²⁰⁰ On 26 February, Moeran was again a performer in the 332nd Club programme.²⁰¹ As the solo item, he played the *Theme and Variations Op.72* by Alexander Glazunov and he was accompanist in the songs sung by Dr A Shadwell: a short set of fourteenth-century German Carols, *Ode von dem Namen Jesu* from the *Krüger'schen Gesangbuch* of 1644, *Der am Abend Dankende* by Georg Christoph Strattner, 1691 and a set of songs by Schubert: *Der Wanderer*, *Memnon*, *Schatzgräber's Begehr* and *Wehmuth*.

As with the previous year, details of Moeran's day to day activities during the first few months of 1914 are scarce but there is no reason to doubt that he remained active at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, spending time there in the practice rooms and playing through items of chamber music with his fellow members. He also made considerable progress in his composition studies at the Royal College of Music. The Midsummer Term 1914 issue of the college magazine reports that Moeran '... was awarded a Council Exhibition for Composition at the close of the Midsummer term to the value of £7'.²⁰²

Summary

Moeran was born into an artistically and culturally wealthy and financially privileged family. From an early age, he exhibited a musical talent that was encouraged and developed by his mother. The family fortune enabled him to attend a public school that fostered his talent both for playing the piano and for composition and he was fortunate enough to have had a music master that recognised his potential. After school, he attended the Royal College of Music in

¹⁹⁹ Hurlstone works performed included the *Piano Quintet in E minor* at the 167th Programme on 14 February 1907, the *Phantasia for String Quartet in A major and minor* at the 224th Programme on 24 June 1909 and the *Piano Trio in G major* at the 423rd Programme on 9 May 1918; all from *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967

²⁰⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.961, 75

²⁰¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 34

²⁰² Royal College of Music Magazine, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 95

London and, probably due to his exceptional musical talent and his family or school connections, he was accepted for membership of the prestigious *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. Membership of this Club enabled him to begin the construction of a network of influential friends and acquaintances that would eventually provide him with the means to establish himself in London musical circles.

While it seems likely that Moeran's first attempts at composition were made as a child, possibly even as early as the age of seven or eight, it is a matter of speculation what he may have composed prior to the date of his earliest extant works. However, it is possible to extrapolate backwards from these earliest surviving compositions, bearing in mind Moeran's compulsion to reject and destroy work that did not entirely satisfy him, either at the time or, indeed, months or even years later. This suggests that what remains represents both a relatively small proportion of his total compositional output during the period covered by this chapter and the best (by his own criteria) of that output. Additional evidence is supplied by Moeran's own testimony, both from his letters and during interviews, and circumstantially from what can be discovered about his home and school lives. Moreover, the facility and fluency shown in some of his earliest acknowledged compositions indicate a considerable degree of practice. Moeran must have composed far more during his adolescence and early adulthood than the few works that survive.

The next chapter chronicles Moeran's experiences during the First World War and examines in depth the facts behind the most sensational aspect of the *Moeran Myth* – his war wound. The chapter continues by narrating the story of Moeran's first visit to Ireland. It is established how his love for the country was awakened and the consequences of this are presented and considered.

Chapter 3

“... a composer goes to war”

Chapter three follows Moeran as he suspended his studies at the Royal College of Music and joined the army shortly after the outbreak of the First World War. His life as a soldier is traced – so far as the remaining evidence permits – from his enlistment through to his release from service at the beginning of 1919. This period of Moeran’s life was crucial in his formation as a composer and determined, to a considerable extent, the direction of his career during the decade or so following the end of the war. It is also fundamental to the development of the *Moeran Myth*. Thus, it is essential to establish the facts and to distinguish them from the persuasive but unsupported stories that have, until now, been the basis for any examination of Moeran’s music.

Intensive investigation and consideration of the evidence shows conclusively that the reality of Moeran's life between September 1914 and January 1919 is so different from that which has been assumed and written about, that a complete re-examination of his later life as a composer and consequently the music that he produced is necessary. While the bulk of this re-examination is the subject of Chapters 4 and 5, the narrative sequence of this chapter that presents the evidence also establishes its basis. The sequence is complemented by analyses of the few extant compositions that remain from the period, and these illustrate how Moeran incorporated the influence of folksong into his evolving style. One work, the *String Quartet in E flat*, the origin of which has been the subject of considerable debate, is examined forensically and a considered conclusion as to its dating is offered.

Moeran's introduction to Ireland is presented and the beginnings of his enduring love for and association with the country are described. Again, the reality as evidenced differs from the currently accepted understanding and an alternative is presented. It is also shown how some of Moeran's early mature works apparently dating from 1920 onwards most probably have their origins during his wartime service.

Answering the Call

During the weeks leading up to the declaration of war on Germany on 4 August 1914 it had not been expected that Britain would have any involvement in what was increasingly seen as an inevitable European war, and public life carried on as normal. However, once the German army had violated Belgian neutrality and the British Government were obliged to stand by their declared support for the country there was a surge of patriotic fervour that quickly spread throughout the United Kingdom.²⁰³ Countless young men of fighting age enlisted, strongly encouraged by their families.²⁰⁴ The mood in the country was optimistic – the might of the professional British Army and the immense power of the Royal Navy, several orders of magnitude larger than the German fleet, would ensure that the war would be short and end in total victory – ‘It will all be over by Christmas’ was the common thought. The Moeran family played their part in the national adventure. Moeran’s brother enlisted as an army chaplain and the Rev. J. W. W. Moeran began to compile a book of inspirational quotations from scripture and classical poetry, linked to episodes of the War as reported in the newspapers.²⁰⁵ Instead of re-enrolling for his third year at the Royal College of Music, with the approval of the RCM Director, Sir Hubert Parry, Moeran’s studies were suspended for the duration of the war.²⁰⁶ On 30 September 1914, Moeran presented himself at North Walsham barracks for a medical examination, was passed as fit for service as a motorcycle despatch rider and enlisted with the

²⁰³ The literature on the First World War is prodigious and the present (at the time of writing) marking of the centenary of the outbreak of war has served to increase this substantially. An immensely wide range of perspectives have now been examined thoroughly and this has led to many, sometimes contradictory, conclusions. Thus, the research for this part of the thesis has been necessarily superficial, ascertaining only the general public reaction to the declaration of war, which is now thought to be well-understood and documented. Specific sources used were *Dear Old Blighty* by E. S. Turner (Michael Joseph, London 1980), *Social History of the First World War* by James Bishop (Angus & Robertson, London 1982) and *English Life in the First World War* by Christopher Martin (Wayland, London 1974).

²⁰⁴ By 1914, Great Britain had become virtually unassailable militarily and had detached itself from most wars and conflicts as a somewhat stand-alone super-power. Such wars as it engaged in were generally of short duration and almost all resulted in overwhelming victory. Although the British public was used to their young men fighting and losing their lives in distant parts of the world, the notion of an extended war without the certainty of a swift victory and with large or even huge numbers of casualties was inconceivable. Thus, the families expected their sons, husbands and fathers to return home fairly quickly as heroes. The dawning of reality did not begin until the War had been in progress for some months.

²⁰⁵ This book was eventually published in 1915 as *Illustrations from the Great War*

²⁰⁶ Parry was very proud of those of his students that had volunteered to serve their country. In his annual Director’s Address for 1914 – reported in the *Royal College of Music Magazine* issue volume 11, number 1 – he expounded at length on the moral justification for the war and mentioned individually those students that had joined up.

rank of Private in the 6th (Cyclist) Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment.²⁰⁷ The Norfolk Regiment was part of the Territorial Force and, as such, was not deployed to France during the early years of the war. On the outbreak of war, much of the Regular Army was dispatched as an Expeditionary Force to the front and the Territorial strength was increased to take over peacetime Regular Army duties. Generally, members of the Territorial Force did not serve outside the United Kingdom unless in the circumstances of a National Emergency and each recruit that assented to such deployment had to sign an Agreement to that effect. Moeran was clearly willing to serve outside the United Kingdom and his Agreement to Overseas Service is dated 2 October 1914.²⁰⁸ The significance of Moeran having signed this Agreement will become apparent later in the chapter.

As a member of a Territorial Force battalion, at first Moeran would not have lived in the barracks – rather he would have lived at home, attending at the barracks when his duties required it. His Army Form E. 50 (Attestation) detailed the training requirements prior to ‘embodiment’, which included a few days of drill and other instruction per year. However, according to Moeran’s service record,²⁰⁹ he was ‘embodied’ – i.e. became a full-time member of the battalion – just a few days after his enlisting. Although details of Moeran’s day to day activities in the regiment can only be guessed at on the basis of what has been written generally about army life at the time, it is likely that his duties would have been relatively light and concerned primarily with practising his riding proficiency, learning how to maintain his

²⁰⁷ E. J. Moeran Military Record: Medical Inspection Report, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁰⁸ E. J. Moeran Military Record: Conditions of Service and Army Form E. 624 – Agreement to Overseas Service, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

The restrictions on the use of the Territorial Force serving abroad were very clear. Since the Regular Army was a professional and highly trained force intended to project the power of the United Kingdom around the world, the deployment to any theatre of operations of what were essentially lightly trained volunteers was considered to be unlikely, and probably undesirable. Moreover, any member of the Territorial Force who was so deployed was confined to serving with his own unit. The Conditions of Service were precise: ‘The engagement on Army Form E. 624, of an officer or man of the Territorial Force to accept liability for service outside the United Kingdom in time of national emergency, will be to serve with his own unit, or with a part of his own unit, only. He cannot, under this agreement, be drafted as an individual to any other unit’.

²⁰⁹ E. J. Moeran Military Record: Statement of Services, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

motorcycle and acquiring other necessary skills – such as map-reading.²¹⁰ However, as a soldier, he would also have been required to attend basic training and drills, as outlined in Army Form E. 50. A few weeks later, on 19 November, Moeran was promoted to Lance-corporal.²¹¹

Whatever his duties were, it is apparent that Moeran had time to continue to participate in musical activities in London. This is evidenced by his continued membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – whose records confirm that he paid his annual ‘army’ subscription of one guinea on 28 January 1915.²¹² He also continued to compose and in April 1915, he produced a setting of a patriotic poem – *The North Sea Ground* – that had been published in the 24 March 1915 edition of the magazine *Punch*.²¹³ The poem appeared in the magazine without attribution but it was eventually included in a number of later anthologies of war time poetry.²¹⁴ The text of *The North Sea Ground* refers to the use of North Sea coast fishing fleets – particularly the Grimsby fleet – as minesweepers and anti-submarine vessels during the early years of the war. The poem describes the duty felt by the fishermen crews and suggests the terrible dangers faced by the trawlers when carrying out their tasks. A large number of the boats became victims of the mines and submarines and many crew members lost their lives. It is clear

²¹⁰ Of the many books written about the British Army during the First World War, the series *The British Army in World War I* by Mike Chappell (Osprey Publishing, Wellingborough 2005), and *The British Army 1914-18* by D.S. V. Fosten and R. J. Marrion (Osprey Publishing, Wellingborough 1978) are especially informative.

The best-known standard reference histories of the war are: *The First World War*, (Hutchinson, London 1998) and *The First World War: An Illustrated History*, (Hutchinson, London 2001) – both by John Keegan.

²¹¹ E. J. Moeran Military Record: Statement of Services, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²¹² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.961, 123

²¹³ *Punch*, Vol. 148 (24 March 1915), 230

²¹⁴ The writer of the poem was Cicely Fox Smith who was known as a prolific writer of verse – especially poems with the sea or maritime matters as the subject. She generally signed herself as ‘C Fox Smith’ to disguise the fact that she was a woman.

from the sense of the verse that there is a low expectation of survival. Nevertheless, the fishermen felt it was their duty to put out in all weathers to ensure the safety of other vessels.²¹⁵

The manuscript of Moeran's setting of *The North Sea Ground*, under normal circumstances, would probably have suffered the same fate as most of his other juvenile and early works, being lost or deliberately destroyed, and the story of its survival and re-discovery is remarkable.²¹⁶ The setting suggests a familiarity with the Victorian parlour song genre and it is likely that this derived from hearing his mother play and sing these songs during his childhood. Its most notable feature is the sea-shanty style of the melody – characterised by the repeated quaver patterns and the step-wise melodic construction. A search of a number of sea-song and folksong thematic databases²¹⁷ has not located any similar melody – thus, it may be reasonably supposed that the tune is Moeran's invention:

²¹⁵ At the outbreak of the war, the Royal Navy had no warships dedicated to the clearing of mines. Indeed, the concept of the minesweeper did not exist at that time. It had been realised for some years that, in the event of war, minefields would be a real danger and a contingency programme to requisition or compulsorily purchase trawlers had already been decided upon. Although this was regarded as an interim measure until specialist vessels could be constructed and launched, up to three-quarters of the entire fishing fleet were on minesweeping or anti-submarine duties when the first dedicated minesweepers appeared in 1915. Many of the trawlers were armed and served as Q-Ships – decoys intended to lure German submarines into a deadly trap. In most cases, the trawlers' original crews remained on board with the captains given the rank of Skipper Royal Navy Reserve.

The information about the use of trawlers as minesweepers and general facts about the North sea during the First World War has been gleaned primarily from the extensive archives and online resources of the Scarborough Maritime Heritage Centre <http://www.scarboroughsmaritimeheritage.org.uk/> (accessed 21 June 2011)

²¹⁶ The manuscript was discovered in a collection of loose songs, both manuscript and printed, that formed part of the library of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. Until the end of the twentieth century, the club had storage facilities at the Senate House of the University of London. In 2000, the University requested the club to move the library as they required the space. The former secretary of the club, the late Mr Gordon Cumming, purchased the residue of the club library after it became apparent that, during the relocation, many items were being widely distributed and subsequently lost. Mr Cumming realised the importance of the Moeran manuscript and attempted to contact Moeran family members and 'The Moeran Society' to ascertain what they would like to see done with it. Entirely by chance, Mr Cumming met Professor Brian Moeran, a distant cousin of the composer. After some discussion as to what to do with the manuscript, they decided that it should be lodged with the Rare Books and Music Department of the British Library. It was thought that it would not be appropriate to send the manuscript to join the principal Moeran archive held in the Lenton-Parr Library at the University of Melbourne in Australia. During spring 2008, the author of this thesis was in the process of creating a definitive catalogue of the works of Moeran as part of this research programme. In order to locate as many references to Moeran works as possible, use was made of a number of Internet search-functions. One of the search-term combinations used coupled Moeran's name with the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The results thus returned led directly to the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* archives held by Oxford University Library and subsequently to Mr Cumming's catalogue of the songs and chamber music that he had acquired from the club music library. Moeran's manuscript of *The North Sea Ground* was included in the catalogue and the author was eventually able to meet Mr Cumming and to view a copy of the manuscript. How the manuscript came to be in the possession of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* is not known, but it may be presumed that it was donated by the composer. The song was eventually published by Novello's in 2010 in an edition by the author of this thesis.

²¹⁷ such as *Themefinder* <http://www.themefinder.org>

Allegro



Oh, Grims-by is a plea-sant town as a - ny man may find An' Grims-by wives are thrif-ty wives an' Grims-by girls are kind An'

Grims-by lads were ne - ver yet the lads to lag be - hind When there's men's work do - in' on the North Sea Ground.

Ex. 8 *The North Sea Ground* – first verse

The song represents Moeran during the very early part of his compositional evolution and illustrates well how some of the influences he had experienced were shaping that development.

The Young Officer

On 4 May 1915, Moeran received a commission as Second Lieutenant in the Royal Norfolk Regiment.²¹⁸ The Director of the Royal College of Music, Sir Hubert Parry, attested to Moeran's 'good moral character'.²¹⁹ The commission, together with the fact that his unit had still not been assigned any duties abroad, would have increased Moeran's leave opportunities and he continued to travel regularly to London for meetings of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* although there is no record of his having participated in any of the Thursday evening recitals during 1915 or 1916. More significantly, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, Moeran visited the village of Winterton-on-sea, some fifteen miles along the coast from Bacton, in July 1915 to collect folksongs as sung in the local pub. Whether or not this was Moeran's first folksong-collecting expedition was pondered in Chapter 2. Having presented the details of

²¹⁸ E. J. Moeran *Military Record: Commission*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²¹⁹ E. J. Moeran *Military Record: Certificate of Moral Character*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

Moeran's life between 1912 and 1915, it is useful to re-examine the 1946 *Countrygoer* article in which Moeran recalled his first folksong collecting experience. The key details are that Moeran had heard one of the Vaughan Williams *Norfolk Rhapsodies* at a Balfour Gardiner concert, that he said he was living in Norfolk and, as a result of hearing the *Rhapsody*, he was inspired to seek out and collect folksongs himself. It was shown in Chapter 2 that there is no possible sequence of events that accords both with Moeran's recollections and the available historical evidence, and two possible scenarios were presented. This first was that Moeran heard the *Norfolk Rhapsody* at a Balfour Gardiner concert in April 1912 while he was still at Uppingham School, and collected folksong during a visit to his grandparents' home. The second is that he heard the *Norfolk Rhapsody* on a different occasion, either in 1913 or 1915, and that the folksong collecting ensued still later. The main shortcoming of the first scenario is that in the summer of 1912, Moeran was still just seventeen years old and possibly not welcome on his own in a public house, however remote and rural. Thus, the alternative and probably more likely scenario is that he heard the *Norfolk Rhapsody* after he became a Royal College of Music student and that the folksong collecting took place as recorded in Winterton during July 1915. The fact that Moeran would have been several years older by this time and consequently more likely to have been accepted in a public house lends weight to this alternative.

Among the songs that Moeran collected in July 1915 were: *The Bold Richard*, *The Captain's Apprentice*, *The Royal Charter*, *The Pressgang* and *The Farmer's Son*. Each song is in the Dorian mode and has a nautical subject to its lyrics. These five songs were included in the first set of folksongs *Songs Collected in Norfolk by E. J. Moeran* in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* in December 1922.²²⁰ The set of seventeen songs also included some noted by Moeran in subsequent collecting expeditions in 1921 and 1922. Of the four surviving works by Moeran that can be dated with confidence to 1916 or earlier, two – *Fields at Harvest* and *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* – show the influence of folksong in their style, and, as has been shown in the case of *Fields at Harvest*, the folksong style suggests that the piece post-dates Moeran's

²²⁰ Moeran (1922)

first collecting expedition. Conversely, the lack of any folksong influence in the other pieces – *Dance* and *The North Sea Ground* – would suggest that Moeran’s awakening to the possibilities of folksong post-dated the composition of these works. Thus, the assertion that Moeran’s excursion to Winterton in July 1915 was his first folksong collecting activity and that the interpretation of his recollections about this must accommodate this date, is supported by persuasive evidence.

It is now possible to devise a coherent account of Moeran’s recollections, known activities and the historical evidence as provided by newspaper and magazine records. The anecdote by Philip Heseltine included in his *Music Bulletin* article is based on Moeran’s first hearing of the Delius *Piano Concerto* on 18 March 1913, while he was a student at the Royal College of Music. The recollection by Moeran in the *Countrygoer* magazine article derives from his hearing one or more of the Vaughan Williams *Norfolk Rhapsodies*. The resemblance of the recollection to the Heseltine anecdote is probably due to conflation by Moeran of the memories of different events and also the memory that he had told Heseltine something similar. The recollection by Moeran that he went home ‘the following weekend’ after hearing the *Norfolk Rhapsody* and asked the choir members about the singing of folksongs most probably refers to a later visit made by Moeran to his parents’ home in Bacton after January 1914 and probably as late as mid-1915.

An examination of the songs known to have been collected during the Winterton excursion reveals nothing specific about the use of the tunes or the style in which they are cast, except that several of them appeared in Moeran’s set of arrangements *Six Norfolk Folk Songs*, published in 1923. The stylistic link between the songs and *Fields at Harvest* and aspects of the *Four Songs from ‘A Shropshire Lad’* is, as will be shown shortly, general rather than specific.

Towards the end of 1915, Moeran had what was probably his first experience of personal loss when his grandfather, Thomas Warner Moeran, died shortly after his ninety-sixth birthday. Although Moeran rarely mentioned anything about family in either his recorded memories or

his letters, a number of his recollections refer to visits to Bacton during his youth and late teens, and it is likely that, at that time, such visits were made to his grandparents. Further speculation about Moeran's reaction to his grandfather's death is not necessary except to suggest that it may be that the piano piece *Fields at Harvest* was composed in the aftermath of this event.

Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'

In common with many other composers during the first few decades of the twentieth century,²²¹ Moeran set several poems from A. E. Housman's cycle *A Shropshire Lad* during his career and, with the exception of *The North Sea Ground*, the set of *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* dated 'Midsummer 1916' is his earliest surviving attempt at song-writing. Much has been written about the attraction of Housman's verse for composers but the factors that probably most influenced Moeran are the metrical simplicity and folksong characteristics of the texts. Although Geoffrey Self, amongst others, has suggested that Moeran's wartime experiences heavily informed his approach to composition²²² and that the obsession with death in its various forms evident in virtually all the poems of *A Shropshire Lad* would have struck a chord – so to speak, this is mistaken – as will be shown conclusively later. For the present, it is sufficient to state that, by mid-1916, Moeran had had little experience of death in war of relatives or friends – the only exceptions being possible acquaintances from his school or college days²²³ – and there can be no attribution of the choice of verse from *A Shropshire Lad* to any sense of loss or the futility of death in war or any other meaning that may previously have been attached to this cycle. However, as shown above, Moeran's grandfather had died just a few months before the composition of these songs and it is possible that Moeran's awareness of mortality and its inevitability had been awakened. Geoffrey Self also suggested that Moeran was deeply affected

²²¹ Standard references on English Song include Christopher Palmer and Stephen Banfield, 'A. E. Housman', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, (London: Macmillan, 2001), Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985) and Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi*, (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2002)

²²² Self (1986), 245-7

²²³ From 1915 onwards, the *Royal College of Music Magazine* included in each issue a list of those former students and staff members that were on active service. By mid-1916, several of the names had been marked as 'killed' or 'missing', but whether any of these were friends or colleagues of Moeran is not known.

by the death of George Butterworth and that this also strongly impacted his music – indeed, Self asserts that Moeran’s *Symphony in G minor* was a requiem of sorts for Butterworth and other artists that perished during the war.²²⁴ However Butterworth’s death occurred during the Battle of the Somme on 5 August 1916, a date which by any definition must lie after ‘Midsummer 1916’, and thus Moeran had already completed the *Four Songs*.

While it is demonstrably true that Moeran deeply regretted Butterworth’s death – even going so far as to use it as justification for Benjamin Britten (a composer whose music he seems to have disliked²²⁵) to remain in the United States during the Second World War²²⁶ – there is no evidence from any part of Moeran’s life that indicates that he was particularly emotional. Moeran generally led quite a solitary life, evidently finding the development of close relationships to be difficult, and the kind of amiable personality that Geoffrey Self, Lionel Hill and others tried to establish for Moeran over the years does not accord with the available evidence.²²⁷ It is reasonable to assert, therefore, that Moeran selected the poems for his *Four Songs* on the basis of little more than those that first took his fancy. Until John Talbot published his four-volume *Collected Solo Songs* in the *E. J. Moeran – Centenary Edition* in 1994, the *Four Songs* – with one exception detailed below – had not been published and remained in manuscript as part of the Moeran Archive at the Lenton-Parr Library of the University of Melbourne. The *Four Songs* were included as an Appendix to volume three of the *Collected Solo Songs* with the following editorial comment:

²²⁴ ‘... my belief is that the *Symphony in G minor* is some kind of Requiem or In Memoriam’, Self (1986), 132

²²⁵ Hill (1985), 70

²²⁶ Moeran wrote: ‘It seems to be assumed that Mr Britten went to America at the beginning of the war. The very title of this unfortunate correspondence implies it. In fairness to Mr. Britten I would point out that he left this country many weeks earlier, and that at the time of the outbreak he was already fulfilling engagements in the U.S.A. Provided that he keeps valid his artistic integrity, I consider that he is doing his duty by remaining where he is. The death of Butterworth in 1915 [*sic*] was a tragedy, the nature of which no country with and pretensions to the preservation of culture and a respect for art can afford a recurrence ... Whether or not one likes his work, the very existence of a musician of Mr Britten’s unique natural gifts is exceptional. No contemporary British composer ever did more in his early twenties towards placing his country’s music on the map of Europe ...’ from a letter Moeran wrote to *The Musical Times*, Vol. 82, No. 1184 (1 October 1941), 377 – although the impact of Moeran’s endorsement was moderated slightly by his having stated the year of Butterworth’s death incorrectly.

²²⁷ In a letter to Edith Buckley Jones (mother of Philip Heseltine) dated 27 December 1930, Moeran wrote ‘... I have very few really close friends ...’; part of *Heseltine Papers*, Add.MS 964, British Library, London. The subject of Moeran’s personal relationships will be discussed further during the course of the remaining chapters.

These four early Housman settings are published together here for the first time, primarily in the interests of scholarship. Although Moeran did allow the second song to be published early in his career, in an arts journal [see below], his significant revision of the fourth some nine years after it was written indicates perhaps his ultimate dissatisfaction with the set.²²⁸

John Talbot's assertion that Moeran was dissatisfied with them was made on the basis that Moeran did not publish the songs in their original form and that when the fourth song, *Far in a western brookland*, was published, it was in a significantly revised version. However, Moeran being 'dissatisfied' with his compositions almost invariably led to their destruction on the fire²²⁹ and thus the survival of the *Four Songs* is worth considering briefly. Moeran's peripatetic lifestyle ensured that manuscripts would be either overlooked or left behind somewhere – such as *The North Sea Ground* at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, or other items at his parents' home – and it is possible that the *Four Songs* fell into this category. The principal arguments supporting this contention are the discovery of *The North Sea Ground* and the documented evidence that Moeran occasionally forgot about some of his compositions – in one of his first letters to Lionel Hill at the beginning of their friendship, he included a list of his published works and omitted some of the most significant.²³⁰ If this is the case, then the songs can only have survived due to chance or circumstance, rather than any definite intention by the composer. However, unlike *The North Sea Ground*, which was preserved due to its location, the fact that the manuscript of the *Four Songs* is in the Lenton-Parr Library archive indicates that it must have remained in Moeran's possession until his death. It may therefore be that his failure to destroy the songs was not due to forgetfulness, but rather that he genuinely had some

²²⁸ John Talbot, E. J. Moeran, Centenary Edition, Collected Solo Songs, Vol. 3 (Thames Publishing, London 1994), 64

²²⁹ '... I have been getting out the MS of another string Trio I wrote some time ago, but I came to the conclusion it is quite unsuitable for public performance and so I put it on the fire, together with a very long-winded pianoforte trio I wrote about the same period'. From a letter Moeran wrote to Elizabeth Wieniawska, dated Lingwood Lodge 11 November 1932; transcribed in McNeill (1983), 359

²³⁰ '... there are piano works (early) at Schott's, Augener's and the Oxford Press; songs at Boosey & Hawkes; Novello, Oxford Press, Curwen's and Augener's ... I have a *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* at the Oxford Press, and an anthem *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem*. Another short unaccompanied anthem is at Novello, the title of which I forget. There is chamber music at Oxford Press (Piano Trio), Chester (Violin Sonata & String Quartet), Augener (String Trio) and Boosey & Hawkes (Sonata for two violins). Hawkes publish a full score of my 1st Rhapsody, and Oxford Press *In the Mountain Country*, symphony impression for orchestra. Full scores of *Lonely Waters* and *Whythorne's Shadow* are at Novello, also the vocal scores of *Nocturne*, *Songs of Springtime* and a recent work, *Phyllida and Corydon*.'; from a letter written by Moeran to Lionel Hill, dated Kingston, 12 June 1943, and quoted in Hill (1985), 13. The most significant works missed from Moeran's list were the *Symphony in G minor*, the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* and the 2nd Rhapsody.

regard for these examples of his earlier works and perhaps intended a later revision or even publication. In support of this contention is the evidence that the songs did achieve a level of success in the immediate aftermath of their composition. As will be shown below, they received a number of performances both at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* and elsewhere. The following examination of the songs endeavours to establish the merits, or otherwise, of each.

Although Moeran was presumably seeking originality in his settings, a brief examination of the Housman songs that had been published up to 1916 and with which Moeran would have been familiar reveals a number of obvious models and parallels. Sets such as *On Wenlock Edge* (publ. 1909) by Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Six Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* (publ. 1911) and *Bredon Hill* (publ. 1912) both by George Butterworth, and the cycle *A Shropshire Lad* (publ. 1904) by Arthur Somervell were all popular items for performance at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* and Moeran would have known them from accompanying the club's singing members in their practice and performances. The influence of these and other composers is readily apparent in Moeran's songs.

With the exception of *When I came last to Ludlow*, none of the settings follows closely the natural rhythms of the poem metres and, at times, the strophic form is ignored. Moeran seems to have allowed the music to dominate the texts and the appropriateness of the word-setting is sometimes mistaken. For example, the vocal line of the first song; *Westward on the high-hilled plains* is set in a dramatic, declamatory style, whereas the sense of the verse is more nostalgia:

West-ward on the high-hilled plains— Where for me the world be-gan.

Still, I think, in new-er veins Frets the change-less blood of man.

Ex. 9 *Westward on the high-hilled plains* – first verse – opening

Even less suitably, Moeran provided a quasi-Brahmsian accompaniment that, while mirroring the sense of the text better than does his tune, adds little to the melody apart from a distraction:

Allegro ♩ = 120

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system shows the piano accompaniment with a *mf* dynamic and a triplet motif in the left hand. The second system includes the vocal line with the lyrics "West - ward on the high - hilled plains. Where for" and the piano accompaniment. The third system continues the vocal line with "me the world be - gan." and the piano accompaniment. The fourth system shows the final part of the piano accompaniment with a *p* dynamic and a triplet motif.

Ex. 10 *Westward on the high-hilled plains* – beginning

Moeran maintained this pattern for the accompaniment for the first two stanzas, changing to a different motif for the third, and more introverted stanza:

meno allegro
sotto voce

There, where hue - less is the west

And the dark-ness hush-es wide. Where the lad lies down to

rest Stands the troub-led dream be - side.

Ex. 11 *Westward on the high-hilled plains – verse 3*

The motif of triplet quavers the third of which is tied to the first of a following quaver pair is a characteristic feature of Moeran's style and is also found in the accompaniments for other songs and in instrumental works. As an exercise in word-setting in the style of Brahms or Schumann, *Westward on the high-hilled plains* is competent and the effect is quite pleasing. However, as an original, twentieth-century setting of a Housman poem, it lacks real distinction of idea and, in the opinion of the author, fails to convince.

The second song, *When I came last to Ludlow*, is by far the most successful of the set. After an introspective introductory two bars, the sense of optimism and determination apparent in the first verse is well reflected in the striding quaver accompaniment:

Allegretto leggiero e semplice

p

When I came last to — Lud - low A —

p

midst the moonlight pale, Two friends kept step be - side me,

f

Two ho - - - nest lads and hale.

sfz *f*

Ex. 12 *When I came last to Ludlow* – first verse

Moeran clearly intended the lilting, staccato broken chords to represent the striding toward Ludlow of the protagonist and his two friends: ‘Two honest lads and hale’. However, as with many of the poems in *A Shropshire Lad*, a sinister aspect appears in verse two and Moeran rose to the challenge of providing a contrasting setting that continued the sense of the opening verse:

Più lento *p* (*lugubrioso*)

Now — Dick lies long in the church-yard, And —

p

p *rit.* *a tempo*

Ned lies — long in jail, And I come home to — Lud-low, A -

midst the moon - light pale.

Ex. 13 *When I came last to Ludlow* – second verse

Drawing on the introduction and thus maintaining stylistic consistency, the accompaniment of minim chords and the semiquaver and triplet quaver setting of the text emphasise the change of mood. While the *lugubrioso* marking is perhaps a little gratuitous – suggesting Moeran’s relative novice status as a songwriter – it does accentuate the sentiment.

The melody is folksong-influenced, as is the prolongation on the words ‘Two honest lads’ at the end of the first verse. The effect achieved by adding one or more beats into an established rhythm was exploited by Moeran throughout his composing life and this is one of the earliest examples. In this case, Moeran also altered the syllabic stresses in the third and fourth lines of

the first verse, with the result that the regular iambic metre of the first two lines changes to an irregular metre combining trisyllabic dactyls and tetrasyllabic paeons. While this is the consequence, it is unlikely that Moeran constructed his setting in this way – it probably just seemed ‘right’ to him. However, the aural effect of the vocal line alone is a little unsatisfactory with the listener feeling there should perhaps be more to come. Moeran provided this in the piano accompaniment which cleverly prepares the second verse melody:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/4 time and begins with the lyrics "and hale." followed by a pause and then "Now ___ Dick lies long in the". The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time and features a trisyllabic dactyl and tetrasyllabic paeon rhythm. The score includes markings for "Più lento", "p" (piano), and "(lugubrioso)".

Ex. 14 *When I came last to Ludlow* – link between verses

It will also be noted that the tonality of the introductory chords for the second verse is changed from the melodic A minor to the Dorian mode. This also achieves the subtle effect of preparing the ear for the harmonic ambiguity of the second verse accompaniment. *When I came last to Ludlow* is an excellent example of the economy of material that would become a characteristic of Moeran’s mature compositional style. As will be shown later, his studies with John Ireland showed him how to achieve the intended effect in the most economical way, to make every note and marking have a purpose and to eliminate padding. Although Moeran did not achieve exactly that in *When I came last to Ludlow* – for example, it could be argued that the six-note minim chords in the accompaniment for verse two are too thick and a sparser texture would be better – the song stands out in the set of four as the most successful inventively. However, its similarity of form and content to song IV of Vaughan Williams’ *On Wenlock Edge, Oh, when I was in love with you* cannot be overlooked and so the apparent originality must be tempered by the existence of this model. *When last I came to Ludlow* was

published, after a fashion, three years after its composition. A facsimile of the manuscript was included in the Autumn 1919 edition of the magazine *Arts and Letters*.

The third song, *This time of year a twelvemonth past* also has an evident model in *On Wenlock Edge* – in this case it is song VI, *Clun*. However, Moeran's rather staid and hymn-like song lacks the impetus that carries the Vaughan Williams song forward. Moeran keeps adjusting the time signature between 6/4, 5/4 and 4/4 and the recitative-like result is a rhythmic confusion that does not reflect the natural metre of the text. The underlying form of the setting is strophic but this is not immediately apparent – either in the vocal line or in the accompaniment. The most interesting aspect of the song is in the variation of the melody of each of the four stanzas and it is instructive to examine them in parallel. The text, like many of the *A Shropshire Lad* poems is in *ballad metre* (common metre) – a line of iambic tetrameter followed by a line of iambic trimeter, followed by a repeat of this pairing. However, Moeran ignored this rhythm, to a greater or lesser extent, in each of the stanzas – only the second line of each stanza is consistent:

stanza 1 This time of year — a twelve-month past, — When Fred and I would meet, We —
needs must jan - gle, till at — last We fought and I was — beat.

stanza 2 So then the sum-mer fields a - bout, Till rain - y days be - gan, Rose —
Har - land on her Sun - days out — Walked with the bet - ter man.

stanza 3 The bet-ter man she walks with still, Though now 'tis not with Fred: A
lad that lives — and has his will Is worth a do - zen — dead.

stanza 4 Fred keeps the house all kinds of wea-ther, And clay's the house he keeps; When —
Rose and I — walk out to-ge-ther Stock-still lies Fred and — sleeps.

Ex. 15 *This time of year a twelvemonth past* – vocal line of each verse

Comparing these indicates that Moeran was imaginative in devising different rhythmic arrangements for essentially the same melody. His intention may have been to emphasise certain words that he judged to be carrying the dramatic force, but which fell naturally on an unstressed syllable – for example ‘Walked’, in the second stanza, and ‘Fred’, in the fourth stanza. Conversely, Moeran may also have contrived to weaken the naturally stressed syllables, such as ‘time’, in the first stanza, ‘days’, in the second stanza and ‘keeps’, in the fourth stanza. Rhoderick McNeill described the piano accompaniment to the second verse: ‘Delicate quaver

figuration colours the second stanza, thereby adding a fitting countermelody suited to the pastoral sentiment of a walk in summer fields contained in the text'.²³¹

The fourth song, *Far in a western brookland*, features a Dorian mode, folksong-like melody that matches well the sentiment expressed in the text:

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Far in a western brookland'. It consists of two staves of music in 3/4 time, written in a Dorian mode. The melody is simple and folksong-like. The lyrics are: 'Far in a west - ern brook - land That bred me long a - go The pop - lars stand and trem - ble By pools I used to know.'

Ex. 16 *Far in a western brookland* – first verse

Moeran chose to provide a high register harp-like accompaniment with simple triad chords in the left hand:

²³¹ McNeill (1983), 20

Andante ♩ = 84

Far in a west - ern
brook - land That bred me long a - go The
pop - lars stand and trem - ble By pools I used to

Ex. 17 *Far in a western brookland* – opening

It is possible that Moeran intended to represent the trickling sounds of the water in the brook, but it was a poor choice to complement the inventive and characterful tune. Moeran cast the song in AABA form, with a contrasting but derived melody for the third stanza. The harp-like accompaniment is abandoned for the third and fourth stanzas and a more harmonically interesting chordal texture, similar to that employed in *This time of year a twelvemonth past*, provides a better frame for the vocal line. Moeran revised this song for publication in 1925, keeping most of the tune but entirely recasting the piano accompaniment. The result was a far superior and atmospheric setting that skilfully reflected the nostalgic sentiment of the text.

Despite the criticisms levelled against some of songs in this assessment and in others, generally the song-cycle is both competent and aesthetically consistent but with sufficient internal contrast to maintain interest throughout. The manuscript dating of ‘Midsummer 1916’ means that Moeran was twenty-one when he composed these settings and therefore several years younger than were the composers of the model Housman songs that were clearly his inspiration. The songs indicate a distinct advancement in structural and stylistic proficiency from the rather simple and four-square setting of *The North Sea Ground* composed some fifteen months earlier, and consequently provide strong evidence that Moeran must have been exercising and practising his compositional technique during this period.

Notwithstanding the fact that the set was not published until 1994, it was apparently very popular for a time. It was first performed by Mr Walter T. Ivimey (baritone), accompanied by Mr H. V. Anson at the 417th *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* Thursday recital on 14 February 1918,²³² and Ivimey and Anson repeated their performance twice during the next few months.²³³ A professional performance of the set was given by the baritone John Goss, accompanied by Harriet Cohen, at the 100th recital of Walter Willson Cobbett’s *Sunday Evening Concert Society* at the Working Men’s College, N.W.1 on 14 December 1925.²³⁴ However, as far as can be ascertained, Goss’s performance was the last, and the set was forgotten until its publication in the *Collected Solo Songs* in 1994.

String Quartet in E flat

Apart from the piano piece *Fields at Harvest*, the case for which was presented in Chapter 2, no other works survive that can be definitively dated to 1915 or 1916, but it is implausible to suggest that Moeran did not compose other works during these years. As will be shown below, mention is made in programmes of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* of performances of

²³² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 141

²³³ at the 423rd Programme on 9 May 1918 in London and at a repeat of this programme in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 11 May 1918, *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 148-149

²³⁴ *A.L. Bacharach Collection Box 7 1923-26*, Oxford University Library Mus 317 c.7, fol. 45

songs that are now not known and references in programme notes and biographical pieces do make mention of other works. However, there is an extant composition for which there is persuasive evidence that Moeran did compose at least some of it during the latter part of 1916. After Moeran's death in December 1950, it took some time for his effects to be collected and dispatched to his widow Peers Coetmore in Melbourne.²³⁵ Eventually, Coetmore discovered amongst the papers the manuscript of what was apparently a string quartet in two movements and the work was published a few years later by Novello as the *String Quartet in E Flat*. No composition date was indicated in the published edition – but the following note was included at the beginning: 'The autograph score of this quartet was found among the composer's MSS by his widow, Peers Coetmore. The MS bears no date, but it is clearly an early work'.

Over the years since the quartet was published, various commentators have either agreed with or disputed the assertion that it is 'an early work'. In *The Music of EJ Moeran*, Geoffrey Self attempted to make a case that the E flat quartet is one of Moeran's last compositions.²³⁶ This is strongly supported by Barry Marsh in his commentary on the work on the 'Worldwide Moeran Database' website – although Marsh presented no musicological reasons for his agreement with Self, preferring to regard the work emotionally as a kind of swansong.²³⁷ Conversely, Rhoderick McNeill favoured the early work theory and put its date of composition at 1918-1920, providing plausible musicological reasons for his conclusion.²³⁸ Significantly, all these commentaries accept the coupling of the two movements as published, as a complete string quartet. It is possible that Moeran intended the extant two movements to be part of a coherent three or four movement quartet and possibly even completed it, but the former or planned existence of one or more additional movements is entirely speculative and need not be considered any further. However, the survival of the two extant movements does merit some examination – in particular to determine whether the work should be considered as a two-movement string quartet or whether it comprises two distinct quartet movements, composed

²³⁵ Self (1986), 268

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 253-255

²³⁷ Commentary on <http://www.moeran.net/Chamber/Second%20String%20Quartet.html>; (accessed 23 January 2013)

²³⁸ McNeill (1983), 27-32

separately. The fact that the quartet was not published until after his death could suggest that Moeran was dissatisfied with the work. On the other hand, and as has been shown, works with which Moeran was dissatisfied frequently ended up on the fire.²³⁹ Although the very existence of the quartet movements might imply that they are late works – possibly amongst his last, as Geoffrey Self claimed – the points made by McNeill against such dating are compelling. Moreover, all the extant works from Moeran's last few years receive some mention in his letters and, with a single exception that will be mentioned below, there are no references to a string quartet or quartet movements. Thus, the weight of the evidence is that the quartet movements do date from the composer's early period and therefore a satisfactory explanation for their survival is required – and the most straightforward of these is that, like the *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'*, Moeran either forgot about them or intended to revise or publish either or both later.

An examination of the manuscript score reveals some clues both with regard to the dating of the composition and whether the two movements were intended to form a single work. After publication by Novello in 1956, the manuscript was accessioned by the Royal College of Music Library and remains in their keeping, with the catalogue number MS 4985.²⁴⁰ A comparison of the handwriting on the manuscript with that of other Moeran autograph scores shows sufficient similarity to confirm that it is in the composer's hand:

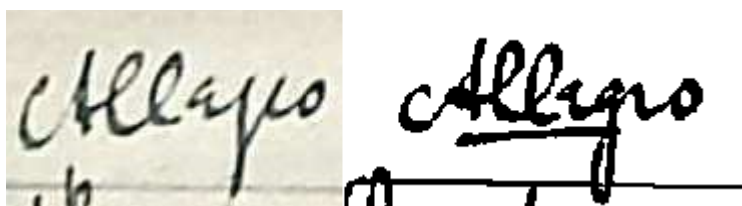


Figure 5 String Quartet (left); The North Sea Ground (right)

The most immediately noticeable feature of the manuscript of the first movement is that a determined effort has apparently been made to obscure any possible dating information.

²³⁹ (see footnote 229)

²⁴⁰ *Moeran String Quartet in E flat*, Royal College of Music Library MS 4985

Handwritten notes on the front page and at the end of the movement have been scratched out – even to the extent of creating holes in the paper. However, it is possible to decipher the words ‘Co. Roscommon’, immediately below Moeran’s signature in the top right corner of the first page:

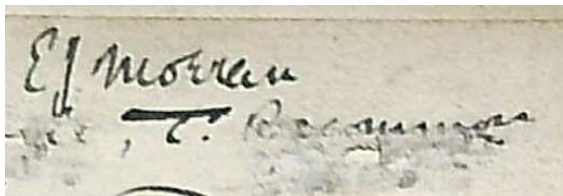


Figure 6 Moeran Signature

On the final page of the first movement below the last bar, two lines of handwriting have also been obliterated. However, there remain traces to suggest that the first word may originally have been ‘Finished’, and that the second word was ‘April’. Taken together, these imply that the work was composed, or at least completed, while Moeran was in County Roscommon in April. As will be shown shortly, Moeran spent some time during the first few months of 1918 with his unit stationed at Boyle, County Roscommon, and, since there is no evidence that he ever went there again, it may be reasonably asserted that there is a high degree of probability that the first movement of the quartet dates from April 1918. No such remaining evidence is to be found in the manuscript of the second movement. The first page only contains the symbol ‘II’ as a heading, with no signature or title. The lower part of the final page has been cut off, so any signature or dating or location information that was originally extant has been removed. Thus it is not possible from a physical examination of the manuscript to determine whether the ‘II’ movement was composed contemporaneously with the first, or, indeed, before or after.

The first question to be addressed is whether the two movements together form a work that stands coherently as a whole. It is the opinion of the author that the two movements are distinct in almost every respect – other than they were composed for string quartet by Moeran. In particular, the manuscripts of the two movements exhibit considerable differences, both in appearance and in the physical properties of the paper on which they are written. Comparison

with other Moeran autograph scores confirms that both movements are in Moeran's hand, but there are differences – such as the instrumental spacing and the form of the tempo markings – that suggest the two movements were written at different times, although there is nothing to indicate which movement is the earlier.

The first movement is constructed in what might be called an unmodified sonata form – and this is unusual in the context of Moeran's oeuvre. While sonata form was a basic element of Moeran's formal toolbox, his application of it in his mature works was, without exception, modified from a two subject-group exposition, development and recapitulation model, in which the first movement is cast.²⁴¹ The basic elements of sonata form can be found in a large proportion of Moeran's compositions – even being employed in miniature pieces, such as the *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano*, composed for Peers Coetmore in 1943²⁴² – but in each case, with the application of innovative and imaginative modification. The most likely reasons for the use of unmodified sonata form in the string quartet first movement are: a) the movement was composed before Moeran had started to experiment with modifications to the form, or b) the movement was the result of an exercise. While an examination of the formal structure might favour the second possibility, the probability that it was composed during Moeran's service in Ireland in 1918 mitigates against it being an academic exercise – since Moeran was not an active student at that time.

The most significant aspect of the second movement is its structure. It appears to be in the form of an 'English Phantasy' or 'Fancy' – popularised by the chamber music enthusiast Walter Wilson Cobbett and specified as the requirement for entries to several of the Chamber Music Composition Competitions that he promoted between 1905 and 1919.²⁴³ The name of Walter Wilson Cobbett has become synonymous with the revival and encouragement of the

²⁴¹ The subject of sonata form is extensive and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss it in any more detail. The standard reference is James Hepokoski and Darcy Warren *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006).

²⁴² The *Prelude* is a miniature work that encapsulates what by that time had become Moeran's remarkable formal technique and demonstrates in its fifty-six bars how a classical form could be successfully applied in small-scale. The piece will be examined in detail in Chapter 6.

²⁴³ Frank Howes and Christina Bashford. 'Cobbett, Walter Willson', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, Vol. 6, (Macmillan, London, 2001), 70-71

composition and performance of chamber music in England during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His influence on the genre, beginning in England but later spreading to other countries – especially the United States of America – was pivotal.²⁴⁴ In addition to organising composition competitions, Cobbett sponsored several chamber music performing competitions. He also commissioned a number of works and he established prizes for chamber music at the Royal College of Music – with which institution Cobbett had a close association during much of his later life. As an RCM student, Moeran would certainly have known about Cobbett but it would probably have been through the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – of which Cobbett was a founder member – that Moeran knew him personally. The archive of the fortnightly Thursday evening musical soirées at the club confirms several occasions on which Moeran and Cobbett performed together.²⁴⁵ The Cobbett Chamber Music Composition Competitions took place every two or three years between 1905 and 1919. Each had a different theme but they all required the composition of an ‘English Phantasy’ – a genre devised by Cobbett himself.²⁴⁶ Composition competitions had become popular during the nineteenth century as a means of generating relatively large numbers of new works – naturally of varying quality and durability but many of which (and not just the prize-winners) were taken up by performers, thus increasing the repertoire. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, many such competitions were promoted and composers had opportunities both to increase their creative output and to earn a cash prize.²⁴⁷ It is reasonable to suppose that Moeran would have thought about entering some of the competitions and possibly actually did so. The apparent lack of any surviving works by him that indicate that they were competition entries is certainly

²⁴⁴ Until recently, the Cobbett Association in the United States existed to promote Cobbett’s legacy and ideals in the composition, performance and study of chamber music.

²⁴⁵ For example, at the 465th Programme on 1 April 1920, Moeran, Cobbett and H. T. Triggs performed Tchaikovsky’s *Pianoforte Trio in A minor (Op. 50)*, *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 201

²⁴⁶ See Betsi Hodges, *W.W. Cobbett's Phantasy: A Legacy of Chamber Music in the British Musical Renaissance* (unpubl. DMA Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greenborough, 2008), and Kathryn L. Lent, *Walter Wilson Cobbett and the English Phantasy* (unpubl. MMus Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2008), for more information about Cobbett and the chamber music competitions.

²⁴⁷ Such prizes could be substantial and earn for the winners a significant amount of money. For example, *The British Music Bulletin* reports in its January 1922 issue that: ‘Mr Waldo Warner, of the London String Quartet; has been awarded a prize of \$1,000, offered by Mrs Frederic Coolidge, of Pittsfield, Mass., for the best Chamber music composition. The prize-winning work is a Trio’.

not evidence that Moeran did not compose anything for competitions. Indeed, given Moeran's later and continuing intense self-criticism, it is possible that a work composed as a competition entry that was unsuccessful would have been put on the fire, or otherwise disposed of.

The two Cobbett competitions that would have been most likely to have attracted Moeran's attention would have been those of 1915 and 1917.²⁴⁸ The 1915 competition was announced in (amongst other places) *The Times* issue of Thursday 9 April 1914. The announcement specified:

The quartet may be in the usual four (or three) movement sonata form, or in suite form, or in phantasy (one movement) form. An essential condition is that the two violin parts shall be of positively equal interest and importance. There should be no 1st or 2nd violin part – each being inscribed as follows: “Violin part, one of two”. The viola and violoncello parts should be no less important.²⁴⁹

The announcement went on to indicate that the closing date was 31 December 1914 and that entries should be sent directly to Cobbett himself and that he would judge the competition himself. The 1917 competition – a ‘Folk Tune Phantasy Competition’ – was originally announced in Cobbett's magazine *Chamber Music* (published between 1913 and 1916 as a supplement to Royal College of Music magazine *The Music Student*) in March 1916:

... the thematic material is to consist solely of folksong, each composer being asked to take examples from that of the country in which he was born ... The advantages which will accrue from this scheme are manifold. 1) it will help to popularise chamber music, witness the extraordinary success with general audiences of Percy Grainger's *Molly on the Shore*, and Frank Bridge's *Londonderry Air*. 2) being of a popular character it will be more acceptable to publishers. 3) there is a chance that from the compositions sent in there may emerge something like a national idiom, which, according to some writer has been hitherto to seek in British music. 4) The Phantasy or Fancy will consolidate its position as an essentially British form of composition. 5) It will keep alive the keen interest in British chamber music which has been recently displayed, awakened in some degree by feelings of patriotism, evoked by the war, and liable to slacken in after years through the chilling influence of alien propaganda. Under whose auspices the competition will be organised, and what prizes will be offered I am unable to say at present, but I may add that composers

²⁴⁸ The first competition was for the composition of a ‘Phantasy String Quartet’ took place in 1905 and was announced in the *Musical Times* - see ‘Occasional Notes’, *The Musical Times* 46 (1905): p791. In addition to those of 1915 and 1917, the other competitions were held in 1907 (Phantasy Piano Trio), 1909 (Sonata for Violin and Piano) and 1919 (Dance Phantasy for Piano and Strings).

²⁴⁹ ‘String Quartet Competition’, *The Times*, issue 40493, (9 April 1914), 10

are free to choose the combination of instruments they prefer, provided it belongs to the order known as chamber music.²⁵⁰

The somewhat orotund statements of intent for the competition were very characteristic of Cobbett. He provided a brief update in the following issue of *Chamber Music*, writing that he was presently ‘much too ill’ to give any more detail about his proposed *Folk Tune Phantasy* competition. However, he said that the particulars of the competition would be sent out ‘in about a month's time’ and that anybody interested in receiving these particulars should provide his (or her) address. Evidently, such details were eventually provided, as an article in *The Times* issue for Saturday 30 December 1916 indicated that the closing date for the competition would be the following day:

... The present competition, for which entries are due on the last day of this year, is for phantasies (pieces made on any plan the composer thinks fit), which are to be quartets or trios lasting about a quarter of an hour in performance, and are to be on the basis of folksong.²⁵¹

Is it possible that Moeran composed what is now the second movement of the *String Quartet in E Flat* for one of these competitions? In order to establish this, it is necessary to show that the work fulfils the competition specification, that Moeran knew about the competition and would have been likely to compose a work for entry, that the work is stylistically consistent with having been composed when Moeran was in his early twenties and, most importantly, that Moeran had the opportunity to compose an entry. Both competitions required the composition of a string quartet (or alternatively a string trio in the case of the 1917 competition), although the 1915 competition specified – as an essential condition – that the two violin parts be marked in such a way as to emphasise their equal status. An examination of the published scores of the joint winning entries of the 1915 competition – the *Phantasy in B Major* by Albert Sammons²⁵² and the *String Quartet in G Minor* by Frank Bridge²⁵³ confirms that both feature the conventional Violin I, Violin II, Viola and Violoncello instrument inscriptions, so it is quite

²⁵⁰ *Chamber Music*, issue 19, (March 1916), 51

²⁵¹ ‘Chamber Music – Mr Cobbett’s Enterprise’, *The Times*, issue 41363, (30 December 1916), 9

²⁵² Published by Hawkes & Son, 1916

²⁵³ Published by Augener 1915

possible that the inscription requirement of the competition was either discarded or ignored. As will be shown below, Cobbett was prone to amending or even abandoning some of the conditions he had earlier set when it came to judging the entries. Moreover, an examination of the score of the Sammons *Phantasy* reveals very clearly that the equal importance condition has not been fulfilled in any way. Although the Violin II part does occasionally carry the melodic interest, this is a) very rare and b) without exception as a contrapuntal response to the Violin I part. Moreover, the register of Violin I is consistently higher than that of Violin II throughout the work, with only occasional notes from Violin II lying higher than those in the same bar for Violin I. Indeed, the equal importance condition has been disregarded to such an extent that an impartial observer may be left wondering how the work came to be awarded the joint first prize.²⁵⁴ In the case of the Bridge *String Quartet in G Minor*, the competition brief has been much more obviously and successfully fulfilled. The two violin parts regularly exchange melodic interest and share the contrapuntal lead responsibility. Each has periods of register dominance although, overall, the part marked Violin I has the greater proportion of the higher register notes. Applying the same criterion to Moeran's quartet second movement clearly reveals an attempt to distribute the instrumental importance not only between the two violin parts but also across the entire quartet ensemble and is demonstrably more successful in this than either of the 1915 competition winning entries. Moreover, the manuscript of the quartet second movement bears no instrument labels.

²⁵⁴ The fact that Albert Sammons, his father-in-law and mother-in-law were members of the judging panel would certainly be considered inappropriate today, but does not appear to have raised an eyebrow at the time! In his report on the competition, Cobbett wrote in *Chamber Music*: 'It was found impossible to make a satisfactory comparison between lengthy Quartets in full sonata form and works written, as many of those submitted were, in the shorter Phantasy Form so much affected by British composers. Consequently a line of demarcation was drawn, and the prize divided in two parts, Mr Albert Sammons gaining the one awarded in the Phantasy section. I hear on all sides that his success is very popular. His Phantasy certainly realised my idea of a Conversation Quartet; it is a homogenous whole and conjures up the modern atmosphere in an attractive way. If some of the chords seem strange at a first hearing to unaccustomed ears, they win acceptance, in most instances later. The work has already been played in public three times by the London String Quartet, and is announced for the second concert of the Philharmonic Quartet'; from *Chamber Music* issue 15, July 1915, 84

Cobbett wrote more about the competition in the subsequent issue of the magazine, providing a list of the judges – of whom there were thirty-seven (!), including Cobbett himself, several of the competitors and numerous luminaries from the musical world – and further details of the judging process: 'Every Quartet had its admirers, and it must be remembered that this was an audience of experts. The merest trifle made a difference in the voting. For instance, enquiry was made whether certain themes were original or culled from folk song. The reply being to the latter effect, the composer of a masterly work, strong all through, and especially strong on the contrapuntal side, lost several votes. Another, romantically conceived, and containing a delightfully humorous Scherzo, was thought to be *not* strong on the contrapuntal side, and so it went by the board' – from *Chamber Music*, issue 16, (September 1915)

It is also necessary to determine whether or not the second movement of the quartet really is a phantasy – since this was specified as one of the allowed forms for the 1915 competition and was the required form for the 1917 competition. Cobbett’s exact definition of ‘phantasy’ form varied over the years of the competition but the basic requirements remained constant:

The Phantasy [is] to be performed without a break, and to consist of sections varying in tempo and rhythm; in short, to be in a one-movement form and not to last more than twelve minutes. The parts [are] to be of equal importance.²⁵⁵

It should be emphasised here that the specification required that the work be a ‘one-movement form’ – that is to say, a phantasy movement should not form part of a multi-movement work. The formal definition of a (British or English) Phantasy had been presented in the 1910 edition of Grove’s Dictionary as follows:

A piece for concerted instruments in a continuous movement (with occasional changes of tempo and measure), occupying a shorter time than the usual classical works, and free from the structural laws of the *classical* form. In place of these it is enjoined, or at least recommended, that the development section of the sonata-form is to be replaced by a movement in slow tempo, which may include also a scherzando movement. In any case a logical connection with the thematic material of the first part is maintained. A return to the characteristics of the first part of the movement is made, but not necessarily a definite repetition; and a developed coda is added as a finale. Thus the fundamental outlines are retained, but there is not a hard and fast line. It will be seen that the revival of an old form takes proper cognizance of the tendencies of modern music since Liszt, with his *transformation* of themes.²⁵⁶

Sir Charles Stanford also provided a useful guide in his 1911 book *Musical Composition*:

The reason for [the Phantasies’] existence may not improbably be a natural rebellion against the excessive length (and disproportionate interest) of many modern works ... The form which the remedy has taken is to condense all the movements of a work in sonata-form into one ... This tabloid preparation of the three or four movements of a sonata must contain all the ingredients of the prescription and yet not exceed the proportions of any one of them.²⁵⁷

The movement begins with a seven-bar introduction:

²⁵⁵ ‘British Chamber Music’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 52, No. 818 (April 1911), 242

²⁵⁶ Article by A Fuller-Maitland; quoted in *The Chamber Music Supplement*, No. 17, (November 1915), 18

²⁵⁷ C. V. Stanford, *Musical Composition*, (London, 1911), pp 162-163; quoted in *The Chamber Music Supplement*, No. 17, (November 1915), 18

Ex. 18 *E flat Quartet* – Introduction to second movement

The first and most obvious question to be resolved at the outset is, if the movement does stand alone as a phantasy, is this seven-bar introduction part of it, or was it added later, perhaps as a link when the two movements were combined into a single work? Although the tonality of the section does not become finally apparent until the last chord, it is clearly not fulfilling a modulatory function, since the first movement begins and ends in E flat major and the seven-bar introduction to the second movement begins in either F major or D minor. The section is based on a six-note motif played three times on the viola with added variation in each of the repeats:

Ex. 19 *E flat Quartet* – Introduction to second movement – viola motif

There is an evident similarity between this six-note motif and the principal thematic material of the first movement of the E flat quartet. The beginning of subject group Ia presented by Violin I clearly resembles the six-note motif:

Allegro moderato ma ben animato

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of the E flat Quartet. It consists of two staves of music in 6/8 time. The first staff has a red box around the first four notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The dynamics are marked as *mf* and *p*.

Ex. 20 *E flat Quartet* – first movement – subject group Ia, opening

The motif is further exploited in the development section and is also presented in an augmented form in the coda. The multiple appearances of the motif in the first movement cannot be dismissed as coincidence, so it appears that the two extant movements of the E flat quartet may be thematically linked by the motif. This will be considered again shortly.

The movement proper then begins with a statement of what may be regarded at first sight as the principal theme, played by the first violin. The other three instruments provide an accompaniment, the flowing lines of which combine to produce an interesting and satisfying harmonic effect. The theme itself comprises a sequence of five two-bar sub-phrases:

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of the E flat Quartet. It consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff is marked *Andante* and the second staff is marked *mp con espressione*. The dynamics are marked as *p*, *mf*, and *pp*. There is a *rall.* marking at the end of the first staff.

Ex. 21 *E flat Quartet* – second movement – subject group Ia

Parts of this theme resemble other tunes that would almost certainly have been known to Moeran. The probable range of music books available in the Moeran household was mentioned earlier, as was the likelihood that Moeran became familiar with these songs, first by hearing his mother play and sing them, and later, when he was able to pick out the tunes on the piano himself and experiment with alternative harmonies – the ‘great chords’ to which he referred in the 1947 Irish Radio interview transcribed in Chapter 2. The first four bars are reminiscent of such songs as *Loch Lomond*, *The Minstrel Boy* and *Shenandoah*. Other commentators have

described the idiom of the theme and much of the movements as Irish: ‘some of the melodic material in the quartet bears a resemblance to Irish folksongs and dances’²⁵⁸ but Scottish ballad elements are equally apparent. Other possible features of folksong may also be identified: a sequence of rising phrases – each of which reaches a higher top note than the previous one, the use of an imperfect cadence to conclude the first melodic phrase, followed by modulation first to the relative minor and then to the sub-dominant, and the inclusion of one or more idiomatic motifs – such as the triple reiteration of the tonic at the end of the tune:



Ex. 22 *E flat Quartet* – second movement – subject group Ia, final motif

A close scrutiny of the subject group Ia reveals a possible purpose for the introduction. The viola motif may be portending the final two bars and by stating it clearly and with increasing emphasis at the start of the movement, the motif is established as a recognisable marker that will subsequently punctuate the sections of the movement. Thus, the question posed above is satisfactorily answered – the introductory section is not a later added link but is an essential opening to the movement with the dual purposes of establishing the tonality of the piece, and of guiding the listener’s attention to a particularly important thematic motif that will re-appear later. However, this does not solve the problem of this motif being common to both movements, and to determine a plausible answer, it is necessary to establish which movement precedes the other. It is apparent from the residual evidence on the manuscript of the first movement that it was most probably composed in early 1918, and the case the author is attempting to make here is that the second movement was composed some two to three years earlier. If this is correct, then, if a thematic relationship exists, the first movement theme must be derived from the viola motif in the second movement.

²⁵⁸ McNeill (1983), 27

Overall, the structure of the second movement follows the principle of Cobbett's folksong phantasy in that it comprises a series of clearly defined sections, varying in tempo and rhythm, based on thematic material that, while not authentic folksong, exhibits some folksong characteristics. The sections are as follows:

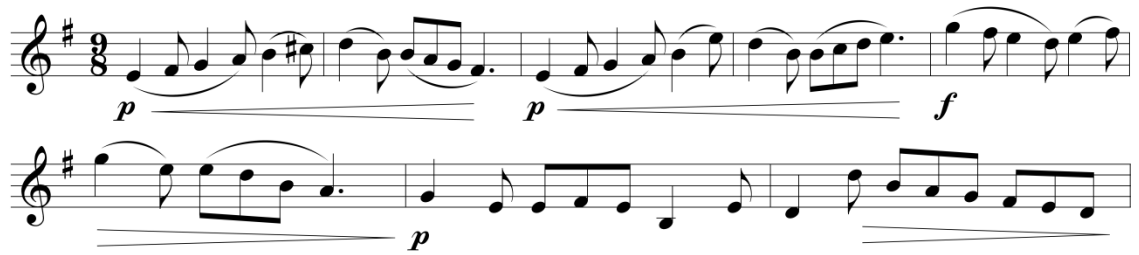
Bars 1-7 *Lento* introduction;

Bars 8-39 *Andante* section based thematically on the theme presented in Ex. 21;

Bars 40-121 *Vivace*; a two-subject fugue; the exposition of which presents entries in turn on cello, viola and violin two:

Ex. 23 *E flat Quartet* – fugue section, beginning

violin one then enters with a contrasting eight-bar Dorian mode subject unrelated to the fugue subject but related to the theme of the *Andante* section:



Ex. 24 E flat Quartet – fugue section, violin 1, counter-melody

Bars 122-186 *Allegretto* section based thematically on a further folksong-inspired melody, cast in this case as a march:



Ex. 25 E flat Quartet – folksong theme – variation 1 – development section

the section ends by merging into a recapitulation of the final sixteen bars of the *Andante* section – with the tonality raised by a perfect fourth; a bar-by-bar comparison reveals that while the first two bars of the recapitulation maintain the 3/4 time signature of the original, from the third bar, the time signature does not change to 4/4, as it does in the exposition. However, three bars of 4/4 equals four bars of 3/4 and by the end of the quoted section, the recapitulation is back in step with the exposition:

Musical score for Ex. 26, E flat Quartet, bars 22-26. The score is in E major and 3/4 time, changing to 4/4 at bar 24. It features four staves with various dynamics and articulations.

Staff 1 (Violin I): *arco*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*³

Staff 2 (Violin II): *arco*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *f*, *ff*

Staff 3 (Viola): *mp*, *mf*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *sfz*, *f*, *ff*

Staff 4 (Cello/Double Bass): *mp*, *mf*, *arco*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *f*, *ff*

Dynamics range from *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). Articulations include *arco* (arco) and *pizz.* (pizzicato).

Ex. 26 E flat Quartet – bars 22-26

Musical score for Ex. 27, E flat Quartet, bars 168-174. The score is in E major and 3/4 time. It features four staves with various dynamics and articulations.

Staff 1 (Violin I): *mp*, *mf*, *f*

Staff 2 (Violin II): *mp*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *f*

Staff 3 (Viola): *mf*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *sfz*, *f*

Staff 4 (Cello/Double Bass): *mp*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *f*

Dynamics range from *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). Articulations include *arco* (arco) and *pizz.* (pizzicato).

Ex. 27 E flat Quartet – bars 168-174

this is followed by a modulation to E flat major for the remainder of the recapitulation of the *Andante* section;

Bars 187-282 an extended coda incorporating elements from each of the preceding sections – beginning with a restatement of the *Andante* melody, this time harmonised modally (Dorian); this harmonisation, together with the instrumentation – the melody is played on the viola – imbues an impression of a wistfulness that provides a starting point for an increasingly energetic and frenetic tumble towards the end of the movement;

The conclusion that may be drawn is that the work is consistent with phantasy form. While the thematic material is apparently not based on authentic folksongs, the themes at least recall folksong. Additionally, the melodic interest is well distributed across all four instruments and the duration of the work lies within the maximum time allowed. Thus the first requirement – that the work fulfils the competition specification – is reasonably established.

Could Moeran have known about the competitions? The answer is yes and it is straightforward to demonstrate that he could have obtained information about both the competitions in a number of ways. The 1915 competition was announced in April 1914, while Moeran was still a student at the Royal College of Music and, given Cobbett's close association with the college, it is reasonable to assert that it would have been made known to students. As regards the 1917 competition, although Moeran was in the army, his home duties were probably not arduous. As will be shown below, his military record shows clearly that he spent less than five months on active service abroad – in France – and since this period ended with his injury in May 1917, it may be deduced that his unit was sent to France no earlier than mid-December 1916. Thus, Moeran would have spent most of the year 1916 based in Norfolk either at home or at his regimental barracks. It has been shown that he was able to travel to London for meetings of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – and was thus able to meet and associate with the other members, including Cobbett himself. It is also possible that Moeran maintained contact

with the Royal College of Music in some form – even if it was confined to occasional visits whenever he might be in London. It is known that he read *Punch* magazine (shown by his setting of *The North Sea Ground*) and it is quite possible that he read, at least periodically, newspapers such as *The Times* and magazines such as *The Musical Times*. It is also probable that he continued to receive and to read the Royal College of Music magazine *The Music Student*, which, as stated above, between 1913 and 1916 was accompanied by the *Chamber Music* supplement, edited by the boundlessly energetic Cobbett. Thus, although it cannot be asserted with certainty, it is reasonable to suppose that Moeran could have seen the announcement of a string quartet or chamber music competition.

Establishing that Moeran would have had time and opportunity to compose an entry for either competition is also straightforward. The closing date for the 1915 competition was 31 December 1914, by which time Moeran had left the Royal College of Music and had been in the army for a few months. However, he had several months remaining as a student after the announcement of the competition – more than sufficient time to complete an entry. The deadline for the 1917 competition was 31 December 1916 but during the previous few months, Moeran had been undertaking home duties in Norfolk. The existence of the *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'*, composed 'Mid-Summer 1916' shows that he was certainly able to find time for composition during the year. The lack of any other works definitely dating from 1916 does not necessarily indicate that they did not exist – for the reasons presented above – and it may be supposed that he was able to devote time to composing music.

Thus, it may be safely asserted that Moeran had the means and opportunity to enter either or both the 1915 and 1917 Cobbett competitions. As has been shown, examination of the work itself suggests that it is more likely to have fulfilled the requirements of the 1917 competition. A comparison with the *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* supports the notion that it could have been composed during the same period of Moeran's stylistic evolution. Considered together, this evidence certainly suggests that the work may have been composed as an entry for the 1917 Cobbett competition. However, Rhoderick McNeill, in his analysis of the *String*

Quartet in E Flat in his thesis asserts that: ‘... some of the melodic material in the quartet bears a resemblance to Irish folk songs and dances’.²⁵⁹ If this is correct, then it is reasonable to question how Moeran could have become familiar with the idiom of Irish folk music by 1916 and the stylistic origin of the principal fugue theme and its derivatives requires closer scrutiny. There is no evidence that Moeran visited Ireland during his childhood and adolescence. Although Moeran’s father was born in Dublin, he had been brought up in Liverpool and Norfolk and was, to all intents and purposes, an Englishman. His own father, Thomas Warner Moeran remained vicar of Bacton in Norfolk well into his nineties and if he spent time in Ireland, it can only have been brief visits to relatives. It may be reasonably asserted that Moeran had not visited Ireland before, as will be shown below, his army unit was deployed there in January 1918. Moeran certainly collected folksongs in Ireland later but had not done so by 1917 – some other explanation has to be found for Moeran’s apparent familiarity with Irish folk music. In fact, it probably came with all the other music with which he had grown up, first by hearing it played and sung by his mother, and later by playing it himself. The Irish origins of his father’s family were probably sufficient in themselves to ensure that, amongst other music, a copy of *Moore’s Irish Melodies* would have been available. It is not unreasonable to suggest that a variety of national song books – covering Scottish and English music in addition to Irish songs – would have been in Moeran’s mother’s possession. In support of a later date of 1919 for the quartet, Rhoderick McNeill refers to ‘Moeran’s Last Notebook’, a manuscript notebook now in the possession of Trinity College, Dublin, which contains a number of examples of folksong that Moeran apparently collected in Ireland during 1918 and 1919. The significance of this notebook will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4. However, in the context of the quartet in E flat, it is a particular melody noted by Moeran and titled ‘W. Ireland 1919’ that McNeill suggests has similarities with the main folksong-style theme of the quartet:

²⁵⁹ McNeill (1983), 27



Ex. 28 Folksong noted by Moeran in the west of Ireland 1919

Examined more closely, the similarities noted by McNeill's are confined to the final three notes, and, as has been shown, this characteristic motif is unique neither to the 'W. Ireland 1919' melody, nor to Moeran's own tune. There is nothing else that suggests that Moeran's tune derives in any way from the 'W. Ireland 1919' tune, so the existence of the manuscript can have no persuasive value as dating evidence. It therefore remains reasonable to assert that Moeran's familiarity with Irish and other nationality folksong in 1916 would have been sufficient to have conceived the tunes and consequently been able to compose the work at that time. Of perhaps more concern to the 1916 dating conjecture is that the themes on which the quartet movement is based are manifestly original to Moeran and not actual folksong tunes – as was specified in the competition requirements: '...the thematic material is to consist solely of folksong, each composer being asked to take examples from that of the country in which he was born ...'.²⁶⁰ Had Moeran composed the string quartet for the 1917 competition strictly according to the rules, he should have used English folksong tunes, perhaps one or more of those that he had collected in Norfolk the previous summer. However, it seems that some of the competition entries were compositions based on original tunes devised by the composer himself and not previously known or collected folksongs – indeed the second prize in the 'Quartet' section (the competition was eventually split in two and one set of prizes awarded for a Trio and another set for a Quartet) was awarded to Herbert Howells for his *Phantasy Quartet in C major*, which was based entirely on Howells' own tunes. Cobbett himself wrote that many of the entries had not accorded with the original conception of the competition and it seems that he must have adjusted the rules to accommodate the entries. Thus, Moeran having invented his

²⁶⁰ *Chamber Music*, Issue 19, (March 1916), 51

own folksong-inspired tunes seems not to have been a barrier to the work having been composed for the 1917 competition. Given that the rules of all the Cobbett competitions were liable to change according to the varying whims of the organiser and that Moeran knew Cobbett anyway, it is possible that Moeran had cleared this modification with Cobbett before completing the work for entry.

Therefore, with this slight adjustment, it is clearly apparent from the above analysis that the *String Quartet in E Flat* (second movement) is in the appropriate form for the requirements of the 1917 Cobbett competition. Finally, as has been shown, an examination of the manuscript score reveals no identification marks – such as signature, place of composition, or even a title – and this would be consistent with the manuscript being submitted anonymously, as was the requirement for the competitions.²⁶¹ In contrast with the manuscript of the first movement, it is not the case that the identification marks have been obliterated – the manuscript is entirely free of anything that immediately identifies the composer of the piece.

Thus it is the contention of this thesis that the second movement of the quartet in E flat is an original phantasy, composed by Moeran as an unsuccessful entry for the 1917 Cobbett Chamber Music Composition Competition.

However, this hypothesis clearly accounts neither for the existence of the first movement, nor for the resulting two-movement *String Quartet in E flat* as published after Moeran's death. As shown, the first movement was probably composed in the spring of 1918 while the composer was stationed in Boyle, Co. Roscommon. The title on the first movement manuscript is 'Quartett', which has at some point been crossed out in pencil and the words '? Quartet in E flat' in pencil added alongside. A comparison of the script confirms that both titles are very probably in Moeran's hand. The first movement contains many annotations, also in Moeran's hand, that are clearly typesetting instructions. Thus, it is apparent that at some point, Moeran was preparing the manuscript for publication. Since the complete quartet was not published

²⁶¹ Entries were accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the composer's name and address. While the unsuccessful entries were returned, only the prize winners' names were announced and recorded.

until several years after the composer's death, it is apparent that he did not carry through this plan. Possible evidence of Moeran's intentions may be found in a letter to Peers Coetmore, written 31 May 1949, Moeran wrote: 'I am hung up again with the Symphony, so am seriously considering your idea of trying to concoct another quartet'.²⁶² While this is entirely circumstantial, it may be that the quartet Moeran was 'trying to concoct' was the *String Quartet in E flat*, being comprised of the two quartet movements that he had composed some thirty years earlier, and that he made the annotations sometime after the end of May 1949. It will be shown in Chapter 6 that Moeran did re-present earlier compositions – in at least one case, note for note – as new works, so by 1949, a precedent for such an action existed. It may be also speculated that the obliteration of the dating evidence in the first movement is thus likely to have been carried out by Moeran himself, possibly in order to conceal the actual age of the work. In order to determine further the plausibility of this hypothesis, a more detailed forensic examination of the manuscript, together with a close analysis of Moeran's handwriting over the years would need to be undertaken. However, it is offered here as a possible explanation for the eventual combination of the two string quartet movements into a single work.

Active Service and Injury

Moeran had been commissioned as an officer with the rank of Second Lieutenant in June 1915.²⁶³ While there is no mention of promotion in Moeran's military record, all references to him after January 1917 address him as Lieutenant Moeran, so it may be reasonably supposed that his promotion to the more senior rank took place between June and December 1916. Meanwhile, as the war progressed, the demands on the Regular Army regiments multiplied and the losses suffered became unsustainable. As a consequence of this, an increasing number of

²⁶² Letter to Coetmore dated Cheltenham, 31 May 1949, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 628; this is the only mention in his letters to Coetmore between 1943 and 1950 of Moeran possibly producing a (string) quartet. While it is not known exactly what Coetmore has suggested, it is interesting that Moeran used the word 'concoct' to describe the creation of a quartet.

²⁶³ *E. J. Moeran Military Record: Commission*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

Territorial Force units were deployed to the battle fronts in France.²⁶⁴ It was inevitable that Moeran would eventually see some sort of active service and on some date between mid-December 1916 and early January 1917²⁶⁵ he began his duties as a motorcycle despatch rider in Northern France.²⁶⁶

As set out in Chapter 1, the war wound aspect of the *Moeran Myth* holds that the composer received a serious and severe injury that led to ‘crude surgery’ to install a metal plate in his skull and also left him with fragments of shrapnel embedded too close to his brain to be removed safely.²⁶⁷ It is also asserted that he was subsequently declared unfit for service and that he was discharged from the army at 80-90% disabled and awarded a pension on this basis.²⁶⁸ This has been one of the most compelling aspects of the *Moeran Myth* that has endured and been the subject of embellishment over the years. The after-effects of his injury are said to have plagued Moeran throughout the remainder of his life – initially manifest as heightened susceptibility to the effects of alcohol, where the consumption of even a small quantity would cause apparent intoxication.²⁶⁹ Later effects would be observed as general clumsiness and a tendency to dizziness.²⁷⁰ Moeran’s metal plate and his fragments of shrapnel have also been frequently cited as the explanation for his every personal foible and are even referenced as the indirect cause of his death from a suspected cerebral haemorrhage at the age of fifty-five.²⁷¹ These supposed facts have formed the basis of the accepted view of Moeran’s personality. Analyses of his music, in juxtaposition with the events of his life, also make frequent reference to them.

²⁶⁴ A detailed excursus into the Territorial Force deployments is beyond the scope of this thesis. More information may be found in K. W. Mitchinson, *England’s Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-14*, (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008), Ray Westlake, *British Territorial Units 1914-18*, (Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 1991) and Matthias Strohn, (ed.) *World War I Companion*, (Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2013)

²⁶⁵ These dates are deduced from Moeran’s military record; *E. J. Moeran Military Record*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁶⁶ Although there is no evidence remaining that details exactly what these duties would have been for Moeran and his day to day activities are unknown, the general life of a despatch rider during the early days of the First World War is presented in intimate detail in the 1915 book *Adventures of a Despatch Rider* by Captain W. H. L. Watson (William Blackwood & Sons, London, 1915)

²⁶⁷ Self (1986), 19

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 20

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, 19

They form a key introduction to any biographical statement or article.²⁷² Indeed, the story has become so implanted in Moeran conventional wisdom that its veracity or otherwise is of great importance to a complete understanding of the man and his music. It is, therefore, essential that the circumstances of the injury and its consequences be established correctly.

On first consideration, the story has some persuasion. There is no doubt that Moeran was wounded on 3 May 1917 and that he did require medical treatment.²⁷³ He never returned to the front and the evidence of his later life might support the assertion that he had some kind of persistent injury to his brain. But how has what is now known to have been a relatively minor injury been embroidered and elaborated into one of the dominant characteristics of Moeran's life and become a major part of the *Moeran Myth*? What is the origin of the stories of shrapnel too close to his brain to be removed, of a metal plate in his skull and of a disability pension?

The earliest documentary evidence comes from the *Chesterian* article written by Heseltine in 1924: 'In 1914 he joined the army, serving throughout the war, with the exception of a period in 1917, when he was wounded at Bullecourt'.²⁷⁴ Heseltine also mentioned the event in his article for the *Music Bulletin*: '[Moeran joined] the army at the outbreak of war, was severely wounded in France in May 1917, and after his recovery was attached to the transport section of the R.I.C, remaining in Ireland until demobilised in 1919'.²⁷⁵ Heseltine also referred to Moeran's war wound in his miniature essay written in 1926: '... He was wounded in 1917 in an attack at Bullecourt, and rendered unfit for further active service'.²⁷⁶ Clearly, the source of the basic information in Heseltine's articles must have been Moeran himself but it is interesting to compare the emphases in the articles. The 1924 *Music Bulletin* piece has Moeran as 'severely wounded', whereas the later essay simply states 'wounded'. The *Music Bulletin* article was written not long after Moeran and Heseltine had become friends and was part of a series of such

²⁷² Geoffrey Self, 'Moeran, Ernest John Smeed (1894–1950)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004)

²⁷³ Numerous papers in *E. J. Moeran Military Record*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620 refer to the injury. These will be presented individually below.

²⁷⁴ Heseltine (January 1924), 124

²⁷⁵ Heseltine (June 1924), 171

²⁷⁶ Heseltine (1926), 5

articles under the general heading *Introductions*. The purpose of *Introductions* was to present the early careers and music of young or recently prominent composers and it may be reasonably supposed that Heseltine's intention was to portray Moeran as favourably as possible. Thus, a severe wound, suffered in the service of his country, could have been a useful positive attribute – so it is possible that the insertion of the word 'severe' was Heseltine's initiative.

Writing in 1950, Evan Senior in the article on Moeran in the *Australian Musical News and Digest* mentioned in Chapter 2, simply stated that Moeran had been wounded during the war.²⁷⁷ The greater part of Senior's article was based on an interview he had conducted with Moeran some months earlier but he had also consulted other sources, such as the Heseltine items mentioned above – so it is not clear whether the information about being wounded came from the interview or from the Heseltine writings. In any case, Senior did not think that it was sufficiently noteworthy to merit more than a few words. The first documentary suggestion that the war wound had a more serious consequence is to be found in the 24 August 1962 letter written by Moeran's brother William Graham Moeran to Colin Scott-Sutherland. In the letter, the Rev. Moeran wrote:

Eventually the Norfolks were sent to France where my brother was seriously wounded in the head at Bullecourt and invalided home. To his dying day he carried about some bits of shell which had to be left where they were, being too near the brain to be removed.²⁷⁸

As with the other references, the source for Moeran's brother's information could only have been Moeran. Further information was discovered by Geoffrey Self in 1994. A collection of letters written by Moeran to the singer George Parker during the early 1930s was examined, and in one of these, Moeran wrote: '... I ought to be a teetotaller on account of five lumps of shrapnel in my head ...'²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Senior (1950), 30

²⁷⁸ from a letter from William Graham Moeran to Colin Scott-Sutherland, dated 24 August 1962; quoted in Talbot (2009), 8

²⁷⁹ From a letter to George Parker, dated 10 February 1935; quoted in Geoffrey Self, 'E. J. Moeran – Unpublished Letters and Songs', *British Music, Vol. 16, 1994*, (British Music Society, London, 1994), 33-43

As far as can be ascertained, these are the only war injury references, the sources of which can be confidently attributed directly to Moeran himself. All other references, of which there are many, are indirect and thus must draw on one or more of these direct references. Since none of them, apart from the enigmatic mention of ‘lumps of shrapnel’ in Moeran’s letter to George Parker – a reference that was not known until the mid-1990s – allude to any details of the injury, it may be reasonably supposed that everything else is a later embellishment, contributed by various friends, sympathisers and commentators.

A few years after the death of Moeran’s wife Peers Coetmore in 1975, Maurice Walter Knott wrote a brief essay of reminiscences of his friendship with and eventual marriage to Coetmore.²⁸⁰ He called the essay *The Moeran-Coetmore-Knott Connection* and it contains a reference to Moeran’s wartime injury:

In the First World War [Moeran] was a despatch rider and received shrapnel wounds so severe some of the shrapnel could not be removed from his skull. In 1917 he was posted from France to Ireland where he remained until his demobilisation in 1919. It is possible this shrapnel played a part in his fatal and final illness.²⁸¹

Walter Knott, of course, never spoke with Moeran himself so the source of his testimony must have been Peers Coetmore and it may be reasonably assumed that her knowledge came directly from Moeran. Further elements of the story were in general circulation by 1982 when Rhoderick McNeill wrote his doctoral thesis *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E J Moeran* for the University of Melbourne, clearly using both the Heseltine *Chesterian* article and Knott’s essay as references:

During an attack at Bullecourt in May 1917 he received a serious shrapnel head wound which rendered him unfit for further active service in France. Several particles of shrapnel could not be removed because they were lodged too close to his brain, so he retained them as perpetual ‘souvenirs’ until his death. Due to this, Moeran later became susceptible to severe depression and to alcohol in any form. Even a relatively small intake was often sufficient to cause both intoxication and varying degrees of memory loss.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Maurice Walter Knott was the fourth husband and widower of Peers Coetmore.

²⁸¹ from an essay written by Maurice Walter Knott; quoted in Talbot (2009), 17

²⁸² McNeill (1983), 8

However, there is no mention of a metal plate or disability pension. McNeill's documentary sources at the time were mainly those in the possession of the above-mentioned Maurice Walter Knott and the Moeran archive held at the Library of the (then) Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne.²⁸³ Mr Knott also provided anecdotal evidence through interviews with McNeill of details of Moeran's life that he had learned during his marriage to Peers Coetmore. At the time of these interviews, Peers Coetmore had been dead for some six or seven years and, as was the case with the testimony of Moeran's brother, Mr Knott was recalling conversations and events from long in the past, perhaps as many as twenty or more years. Therefore the reliability of Mr Knott's evidence may be questionable.

In 1986, Geoffrey Self described what he believed to have been the entire sequence of events, complete with shrapnel fragments and the metal plate:²⁸⁴

On 3 May of [1917], at Bullecourt in France, he was severely wounded in the head, with shell particles too near the brain to be removed. ... After many Medical Boards he was awarded a disability pension assessed (according to Michael Bowles) at 80-90 per cent. These are the bald facts ... The treatment for his injury involved the fitting of a plate into the skull and it is probable that this injury permanently affected his physical health and may ultimately have contributed to his death. For the rest of his life Moeran appeared to be accident-prone: his correspondence frequently refers to injury of some degree or other from falling over or colliding with things....²⁸⁵

Self did not query the rather obvious unlikelihood of 'shell particles too near the brain to be removed' being treated by 'the fitting of a plate into the skull'. The 'bald facts', as presented by Self, seem doubtful when considered objectively – yet they have been subsequently accepted without question. After the publication of Self's biographical study of Moeran and his music, the story of the severe head injury, the pieces of shrapnel too close to the brain for operation, the metal plate and the disability pension has appeared in most biographical articles, including *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. It has also been asserted, although without any evidence or verification, that a

²⁸³ Now the Lenton-Parr Library of the University of Melbourne

²⁸⁴ Self attributes these facts to a letter that he received from Michael Bowles dated 26th January 1981. In the same letter, Michael Bowles also offers his opinion: 'From my years of acquaintanceship, I would say he was unreliable and unpredictable in drink. This was due, in my view, to the effects of his wound in World War I'.

²⁸⁵ Self (1986), 19

medical examination of Moeran in the late 1940s confirmed the existence of the metal plate.²⁸⁶ However, even if the doctors actually were able to do this, there are alternative explanations for why it was there. It is possible that Moeran suffered a later accident that did necessitate the insertion of a metal plate into his skull. As will be shown later, he was prone to periods of drunkenness and it is not inconceivable that he suffered a fall or a motoring accident that led to him fracturing his skull. The Reverend William Graham Moeran in the letter to Colin Scott-Sutherland also mentioned a motorcycle accident:

About his recent illness to which the letters you have seen refer. I think this must have been the time when he was laid up for some months at Ipswich where my parents were then living following a bad accident when on his Motor Bike (I think this was the cause though I can't definitely remember).²⁸⁷

A Minor Injury

Before a conjecture that would account for the gradual embellishments in the story can be introduced, the truth about the war wound must be determined, as far as that is possible. The facts are straightforward to establish since there is sufficient information available in Moeran's military service record.²⁸⁸ Contemporary newspaper reports also enable certain aspects of the story to be substantiated. *The Times* war correspondent reports for 3 May 1917 confirm that there was extensive action in and around Bullecourt, with a number of casualties being suffered by British and Allied Forces.²⁸⁹ It is not known exactly what duties Moeran was performing on that day but, as a despatch rider, it is likely that he was conveying messages between the command centre and the front line. It is probable that he was, from time to time, in locations of considerable danger. Moeran's injury was initially diagnosed as a '[s]hrapnel wound in

²⁸⁶ 'Medical examination reports from Dr Groves and Dr Haslett both of whom attended Moeran in the late 1940s do confirm the existence of the metal plate', Barry Marsh, in a communication with the author dated 29 July 2007

²⁸⁷ Talbot (2009), 7

²⁸⁸ *E. J. Moeran Military Record*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁸⁹ 'Throughout Thursday [3 May] night the enemy persisted in the counter-attacks, which are so costly to him, along the 13-mile front east of Arras, on which our troops had won ground during the day. On the wings, at Fresnoy and Bullecourt, where our progress had been greatest, no impression was made on our defences, but we were compelled to give up advanced positions ...': from 'Our Gains at Arras', *The Times*, issue 41470, (5 May 1917), 6

neck'.²⁹⁰ However, the first Medical Board Report, dated 10 May 1917 revised this to 'a small Gun Shot Wound on the side of his [n]eck beneath the [right] [m]astoid process of the temporal bone'.²⁹¹ The report continued: 'The X-ray plate shows a [m]etal fragment near the [v]ertebra beneath the wound. There are no [n]erve complications'.²⁹² The Medical Board summary was that the wound was not severe, resulted in no permanent disabilities, injuries or effects and that Moeran would be incapacitated for no more than two months but was to remain in hospital for the time being.

The second Medical Board Report followed an examination on 22 May 1917 and appears to have concluded that Moeran's injury was due a fragment of bullet lodging in his neck – hence the initial apparent confusion between 'shrapnel wound' and 'gun-shot wound'. The report noted: 'the metallic fragment is still in situ. Wound has healed and leaves no disability. There is considerable thickening around wound. No operation is advised meantime'.²⁹³ Moeran was discharged from hospital and sent on three weeks leave. It is readily apparent that his condition was not serious – less than three weeks after the event, he had been sent home on leave. Moeran had not suffered from any kind of injury to his skull and the shrapnel fragment was small – although it remained in place. It is important to note here that the use of x-ray techniques, while primitive in comparison with twenty-first century technology, were certainly sufficient to detect even small metallic particles and it is inconceivable that one or more additional larger fragments would not have been detected, even if they were lodged close to his brain. There was no indication of any kind of skull injury – the metal fragment being located lower down in his neck. However, the relatively insignificant nature of Moeran's injury is most effectively substantiated by the record of his participation in the 408th *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme on 2 August 1917.²⁹⁴ Moeran contributed the central, solo feature of

²⁹⁰ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Arrival Report, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁹¹ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Research Hospital, Cambridge, 15/5/17 National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁹² *ibid.*

²⁹³ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Prince of Wales Hospital, 22/5/17, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁹⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 129. In this programme, Moeran is credited as 'Lieut. E.J.S. Moeran'.

the programme by performing the *Sonate Fantastique* Op.44 by the Ukrainian composer Theodore Akimenko.²⁹⁵ The work is technically demanding, and while it is probable that Moeran already had this work in his repertoire, rather than that he learned it specifically for the 2 August 1917 programme, its preparation would have certainly required some concentrated effort by the performer. This would hardly have been likely if Moeran had suffered any kind of severe injury less than three months earlier.

There are stylistic aspects of the *Sonate Fantastique* that are found in Moeran's own piano music and this strongly suggests that Moeran knew the work well. Akimenko composed the work in 1910 and it is cast in three movements – *Visions*, *Lucioles au Soir* and *Rondeau Fantastique*. Although far from unique, the use by Akimenko of parallel octaves in the left hand as a means of emphasising the tonal underpinning in *Visions* and *Rondeau Fantastique* find a parallel in *At a Horse Fair*, the *Toccata* of 1921 and the later *Elegy* (from the *Three Fancies* of 1922). The characteristic split arpeggiated chords that appear in Akimenko's *Lucioles* were also extensively used by Moeran throughout his piano music. Moeran employed this pianistic device in many of his song accompaniments in order to lighten the sound texture without compromising the harmonic effect. Whilst it is unreasonable to suggest that this derived solely from playing the piano music of Akimenko, the fact that Moeran knew these works well and was apparently able to perform them competently a) provides evidence for his own high level of skill on the piano, b) adds to the repertoire of musical ideas that Moeran drew on for his own creations, and c) further reinforces the contention that Moeran was not in any way debilitated by injury.

A few days after the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme, Moeran was examined again by the Army Medical Board. In the report dated Smallburgh 9 August 1917, Moeran was

²⁹⁵ Akimenko was born in Kharkov in 1876 and died in Paris in 1945, having spent much of his life in France. He had been a student of Rimsky-Korsakov and Balakirev. Amongst his own pupils at the St. Petersburg Conservatory was the young Igor Stravinsky. Almost one hundred compositions by Akimenko are known, including two operas and a number of orchestral tone poems. However, he is primarily known as a composer of songs, piano pieces and works for chamber ensemble. Akimenko was also a celebrated virtuoso pianist and much of the piano music was composed for his own recitals. From 'Akimenko, Fedir Stepanovych' in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, Vol. 1, (Macmillan, London, 2001)

assessed thus: ‘... his condition has improved. The discharging wound mentioned in [Medical Board Report] of 10/5/17 has now healed. Any excessive muscular exertion gives rise to pain on right side of neck, at other times, he is quite free from any inconvenience’.²⁹⁶ A further handwritten comment notes: ‘It is not necessary that this Officer should, in future, appear before the same Board’.²⁹⁷ Taken together, the comments of the Medical Board suggest that they believed Moeran had recovered from the worst of his injury. However, the recommendation remained that he was still not fit for active or general service and he was ordered to return to his unit for what was termed ‘Light Duty at Home’. Moeran had been on medical leave for some three months but was now considered fit enough to recommence some form of military duty. His unit was based at Worstead Camp, near Norwich – which was a short railway journey from his parents’ home at Bacton. Thus, it is likely that Moeran was able to spend considerable time there. However, he was still suffering from some discomfort and he appeared before a further Medical Board at Smallburgh on 21 September 1917. His condition was reported as follows: ‘He has improved, but there is still some pain on excessive movement of neck. A recent skiagraph shows a foreign body just below right mastoid process’.²⁹⁸ He was assessed as now being fit for ‘Home Service’ but remained unable to re-join any form of active service. Despite this, Moeran was clearly still able to pursue his musical activities. The 412th *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme on 15 November 1917 again featured Moeran as the central item soloist.²⁹⁹ On this occasion, he performed Ravel’s *Sonatine*. Similarly to the Akimenko *Sonate Fantastique* that he had performed three months earlier, the *Sonatine* is a technically demanding work that would also have required preparation and practice – further testifying to Moeran’s generally good state of health. As with the Akimenko work, stylistic elements apparent in the *Sonatine* may also be found in some of Moeran’s own piano music. However, the influence of Ravel pervades Moeran’s music during the next ten or so years and

²⁹⁶ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Smallburgh, 9/8/17, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

²⁹⁷ *ibid.*

²⁹⁸ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Smallburgh, 21/9/17, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620. The word ‘skiagraph’ refers to X-ray photography.

²⁹⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 134

can be detected particularly in the *String Quartet in A minor*. Moeran's debt to Ravel will be further considered in Chapter 4.

By the end of 1917, Moeran had spent more than six months on leave or undertaking light duties and had clearly been in a favourable position to pursue his musical activities. Thus, it may be asserted that, at least in a musical context, his injury at Bullecourt turned out to be to his considerable advantage. Compared with countless of his contemporaries, he was extremely fortunate, first that his injury was minor, and second that it led to his removal from the front line. It had been clear from the outset that the shrapnel fragment would probably have to be removed at some point but the Medical Board Reports do not elucidate why this was not done more immediately after Moeran suffered the injury. In December 1917, his condition seems to have worsened slightly in as much as physical exertion of the neck muscles was causing him increased pain in the affected region. The Medical Board Report at Wroxham on 21 December 1917 noted that: 'An operation will be necessary' although it did not specify a timeframe.³⁰⁰ Moeran continued to be signed off active service for a further three months and remained assigned to home duties in Norfolk. It is probable that he was still able to spend time at home and he may well have been given leave over Christmas 1917.

It is evident that his condition deteriorated further during December and he attended a further Medical Board at Wroxham on New Year's Day 1918. Moeran was now suffering from considerable pain when he moved his head: 'The board finds that the wounds in the right occipital region have healed. He complains of pain in the head at times especially if he moves it quickly - A skiagraph shows fine pieces of metal embedded'.³⁰¹ This is the first (and only) Medical Board Report that specifically mentions 'fine pieces of metal embedded' although it is not clear from the Report in which part of Moeran's head they were embedded. Apparently the original x-ray investigation had overlooked these, so the metallic pieces must have been very

³⁰⁰ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Wroxham, 21/12/17, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³⁰¹ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Wroxham, 1/1/18, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

small. Moreover, the Medical Board Report does not clarify whether the ‘fine pieces of metal’ were something other than the ‘metallic fragment’ that the earlier x-ray examination had detected. However, it is apparent from this that the notion of shrapnel fragments embedded in Moeran’s head may have had some basis in reality. These ‘fine pieces of metal’ were not alluded to in subsequent Medical Board Reports and so it is probable that they were not considered to be a serious problem. As will be shown, the metallic fragment **was** considered so and it was removed later in the year. The 1 January 1918 Medical Board Report also reassessed the initial severity of Moeran’s injury. In answer to the question ‘Was the injury, in the first instance, very severe in character?’ the response provided was ‘Yes’. However, the next question ‘Are its effects still very severe?’ was responded to by ‘No’. It is clear, therefore, that the initial examination in May had perhaps been optimistic in its prognosis. However, Moeran was described as ‘fit for general service’, his disability degree was rated as ‘nil’ and he was instructed to return to his unit.

Ireland

In January 1918, Moeran’s regiment was deployed to Ireland to support efforts to control increasing Nationalist disturbances.³⁰² As Moeran was still assigned to light duties, he probably would not have taken part in patrols or any form of military activity that might involve engaging an enemy of any kind. Indeed, as a despatch rider, his requirement actually to fight would have been virtually zero throughout his service, although he would have received training in the use of various types of gun. One aspect of the *Moeran Myth* is that Moeran was attached to the ‘transport section of the R.I.C.’ – the Royal Irish Constabulary. This derives from the 1924 *Music Bulletin* article written by Heseltine. However, extensive research in the archives of the Royal Irish Constabulary, now in the care of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, fails to find

³⁰² Although no military archives have been located that confirm this deployment, it is a reasonable assertion given that from January 1918 Moeran’s medical examinations took place in Ireland.

Further examination of how the First World War affected life in Ireland is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, an interesting perspective is provided in Adrian Gregory & Senia Pašeta (eds.), *Ireland and the Great War: ‘A War to unite us all?’*, (University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 2002)

an E.J. Moeran on attachment to the Constabulary. In any case, as was shown earlier, the Conditions of Service in the Territorial Force, under which Moeran had been recruited, specifically excluded his attachment as an individual to any other unit of the armed forces. The most likely explanations for this notion having arisen are either that Moeran misremembered his attachment or that Heseltine misunderstood Moeran's story. As a part of the *Moeran Myth* it is relatively minor but its importance is in its illustration of how simple mistakes of memory or understanding have led to unquestioned assumptions about Moeran's life – and this is the common factor across the entire *Moeran Myth*.

Moeran's next Medical Board Report was dated 23 March 1918 and it confirms that he was based at Boyle Barracks in County Roscommon although the Medical Board itself was held at the King George V Hospital in Dublin.³⁰³ No mention is made of any pain that Moeran was suffering and the conclusion of the Report was that Moeran's condition had: 'considerably improved since [the] last board' and that '[t]he foreign body is to be removed from his neck tomorrow'.³⁰⁴ It appears Moeran had been sent to the neurological unit at the King George V Hospital specifically to have the piece of shrapnel extracted. Moeran's good fortune thus continued. He remained in relatively good health while sustaining an injury that caused him little discomfort but also signed him off any arduous military duties. As shown above, the surviving dating evidence – 'Co. Roscommon' – apparent on the manuscript score of the first movement of the *String Quartet in E flat* strongly suggests that the movement was composed during his time stationed in Boyle, and that he must have been free to spend considerable time composing. Additionally, he was receiving treatment at one of the most modern hospitals in the country and under the care of some of the best doctors. However, Moeran's medical condition seems to have deteriorated a bit further after the 23 March 1918 Medical Board and the next Report, from the Officers' Hospital located at 33 Upper Fitzwilliam Street in Dublin is a bit

³⁰³ The King George V Hospital in Dublin had been built in 1913 and was one of the most advanced in the world. It included a specialist neurological unit to which many officers that had suffered head wounds were sent. The requirement to travel from his unit at Boyle to Dublin for the medical examination would have provided Moeran with his first opportunity from travel on the, at the time, extensive Irish railway network.

³⁰⁴ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Dublin, 23/3/18, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

confusing in its content. It records: ‘About two weeks after Medical Board of 23.3.18, the piece of metal in back began to cause pain. He was admitted into above hospital on 4 May 1918’.³⁰⁵ Since the previous Report stated that the shrapnel fragment was to be removed from Moeran’s neck the following day, reference in the next Report to a ‘piece of metal’ in his back is mystifying. By the time of the 22 May Report, Moeran had been in the Officers’ Hospital for two and a half weeks, which even for the time was quite an extended stay. The Report goes on to say that Moeran’s present condition was as follows: ‘Operation wound healed. Fit for home service’ and he was directed to return to his unit, which was then stationed at Castlebar in County Mayo. Clearly, the ‘piece of metal in back’ cannot refer to a metal plate in his skull – firstly because the wording of the Report does not suggest that and, secondly because such an operation would require more than a few day recuperation. The most likely explanation is that the operation referred to in the Medical Board Report of 23 March 1918 was postponed or cancelled for some reason and that the metal object was removed in an operation at the Officers’ Hospital at Upper Fitzwilliam Street shortly after Moeran’s admittance on 4 May 1918. That an operation actually took place is confirmed by the next Medical Board Report dated 2 July 1918 at the King George V Hospital; it notes: ‘Fit to re-join unit’ and ‘Operation wound healed’.³⁰⁶ Again, Moeran is assessed as fit for light duties but not for active service and was directed to re-join his unit at Castlebar. Moeran’s final Medical Board Report took place at his barracks at Shanes Park Camp, Randalstown on 5 September 1918 and he was finally signed off as fit for general service. The Report concluded: ‘He has completely survived[!]’.³⁰⁷

In the light of this final assessment of Moeran’s health, it is worth returning for a moment to that day at Bullecourt some sixteen months earlier, and to speculate on the exact nature of Moeran’s injury. It is germane for two reasons: a) as has been shown, the circumstances of Moeran’s war wound have been the subject of extensive exaggeration over the years, and

³⁰⁵ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Dublin, 22/5/18, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³⁰⁶ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Dublin, 2/7/18, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³⁰⁷ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Board Report – Randalstown, 5/9/18, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

attempting to ascertain exactly what happened places the event into its most likely context, and b) determining the actual nature of Moeran's injury is important to any assessment of how, if at all, it affected him in later life. The conclusion of the Medical Board Reports is that Moeran suffered a 'gun-shot wound', which resulted in a metallic piece lodged in his neck and 'fine metallic fragments embedded' – presumably in the bone of his skull. A reasonable supposition would be that Moeran was hit by a fragmenting bullet, the momentum of which had been dissipated to some extent such that the depth of penetration was limited. Since he was probably riding his motorcycle at the time, it is conjectured that a bullet hit the frame of the vehicle and shattered, and Moeran's injury was the result of his being on the trajectory of some of these fragments. From this, it can only be concluded that Moeran was 'in the line of fire' and that he was extremely fortunate. Being shot at is a different conclusion from that suggested by Self and others, which is that the injury resulted from shell shrapnel – and this could have happened anywhere within a few miles of the front line.

Additionally, it is worth noting the degree of care that Moeran received for a relatively minor wound. In comparison with other injuries, Moeran's seems hardly worth an immediate repatriation and the number of Medical Boards that he attended. However, reading the Board Reports in their entirety raises the suspicion that Moeran was receiving particular attention. It is quite possible that his prompt repatriation and his extensive course of treatment over the next sixteen months were due to either his *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* or Royal College of Music influential connections.

Irish Folksong

By September, Moeran had been in Ireland for about eight months and, apart from two short stays in hospital and a period of recuperation, may well have been relatively free to spend time as he wished. The medical board reports confirm that his military duties were light – which probably implied that he did nothing strenuous or requiring extensive effort. It may have been that travelling around the countryside, befriending the locals and collecting folksongs was in

some way a positive contribution. That he was able to collect a number of songs is not in doubt although how and exactly when and where he did it can really only be speculated.³⁰⁸ If Moeran's own testimony is to be believed, he had become aware of his own Irish heritage through conversations with his father. Although Moeran's father rarely, if ever, visited Ireland as an adult, it seems that he retained a strong affection and affinity for the country.³⁰⁹

It is also certain that Moeran was able to compose during his eight months in Ireland. Rhoderick McNeill writes: 'Although Moeran continued to write music during the latter part of the war – chiefly chamber music with some orchestral works – these were later discarded'.³¹⁰ While McNeill does not provide any references for this assertion and therefore it must be considered to be speculation, it is safe. As has been suggested, in between his medical examinations and stays in hospital, Moeran would have had few in the way of duties with his unit until September and would have had abundant time to devote to his music. As shown above, the manuscript of the *String Quartet in E flat* first movement indicates that it was probably composed during his stay in Co. Roscommon, and further evidence in the form of at least two of his other extant works, strongly suggests that he composed music inspired by his travels around the country. Although the locations of his unit as reported in the Medical Board Reports place Moeran in certain parts of Ireland on those dates, his day to day movements are unknown – so it is not possible to follow him around the country with any certainty. However, educated guessing on the basis of the known or suspected locations and the likelihood that his unit spent at least several weeks at each location suggests the following itinerary during 1918:

Early January to end April:	Boyle, Co. Roscommon
End April to end June:	Castlebar, Co. Mayo (three weeks in May in Dublin hospital)
Beginning July to end September:	Randalstown, Co. Antrim

³⁰⁸ The evidence for this derives from the manuscript notebook "Moeran's Last Notebook" mentioned above and which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

³⁰⁹ During the 1947 Irish Radio interview to which reference has already been made, Moeran was asked why he preferred to compose in Ireland. He replied: 'Well, being the son of an Irishman - my ancestors are from Cork City - although I was born in England, I very naturally... I used to hear so much about Ireland from my father, that from a very early age I longed to visit this country, and when once I came over for the first time I was fascinated, and I've been coming and going ever since.'

³¹⁰ McNeill (1983), 9

This plan assumes between two and four months in each barracks.³¹¹ Most significant in the context of the present discussion are the weeks he was in Castlebar in County Mayo. Moeran's first acknowledged orchestral work *In the Mountain Country* was originally titled *Cushinsheeaun*. The work itself will be considered further in Chapter 4 but it is germane now to examine the probable circumstances of its conception. Moeran himself provided the main clue in a letter he wrote to Aloys Fleischmann dated 10 February 1937: '... I wrote a work on an Irish landscape subject some years ago; it is called *In the Mountain Country* and was the direct outcome of a stay in Co. Mayo'.³¹² Cushinsheeaun is a village in County Mayo near to the coast in the mid-west of Ireland and lies a few miles to the south-west of Castlebar. As an officer with the job of despatch rider, Moeran would have had the use of a motorcycle and thus it may be confidently asserted that he would have had some degree for freedom to travel around about the countryside surrounding Castlebar. Modern technology enables virtual visits to be made to much of the world without leaving one's armchair – so to speak – and Moeran's possible footsteps (or rather motorcycle rides) through the area may be followed, courtesy of Google Maps. What is revealed is a remote part of the country – a moorland landscape, punctuated by lakes and tarns, woods and rocky hills and small mountains that, even nearly a century later, can be little changed from how Moeran must have seen it. However, it is the proximity of Cushinsheeaun to Castlebar that is relevant in the context of this discussion. It was asserted above that there was evidence that Moeran devoted time to composition during his period serving in Ireland and the existence of *Cushinsheeaun (In the Mountain Country)* constitutes part of that evidence. The other part is provided by another programme work, the *Three Piano Pieces: The Lake Island, Autumn Woods and At a Horse Fair*. As will be shown in Chapter 4, Moeran's use of environment and location both as inspiration for and representation in his music was extensive and it is apparent that where a title has a specific connection, it is probable that Moeran spent time at or near the place suggested by the title. While it is

³¹¹ A further assumption made here is that the locations mentioned in the Medical Board Reports represent the only ones where Moeran's unit was based. Since there is no evidence he was anywhere else, it is reasonable to restrict the speculation to these three towns and Dublin.

³¹² Letter written by Moeran to Aloys Fleischmann, dated Wellington House, Valencia Island, Co. Kerry, 10 February 1937; a transcript of this letter was provided to the author by Dr Ruth Fleischmann

impossible to assert with any confidence that Moeran composed *At a Horse Fair* as the result of actually seeing one, it is straightforward to find the sites of such events in the vicinity of each of Moeran's known locations between January and September 1918. Indeed, going even further, some of the horse fair locations are near to woods and lakes containing islands. Thus, it is possible that each of the *Three Pieces* was inspired by a single excursion into his surroundings.

Three Piano Pieces

As suggested above, the collection of *The Lake Island*, *Autumn Woods* and *At a Horse Fair* into a set may reflect their common origin. Alternatively, it may simply have been convenience for Moeran when selecting three of his works for publication. Apart from the fact that they were published as a set, there appears to be nothing intrinsically in the music that links the three pieces together. Once the title of each piece is known, the reception of the music may conjure the apparently intended mental imagery: for example, the shimmering nature of the almost continuous triplet-quavers that run through *The Lake Island* may suggest the rippling surface of a small body of water, and the 'clip-clippety-clop' beat that pervades *At a Horse Fair* is very evocative musical onomatopoeia. It is also possible that the heavily Irelandesque harmonic language and frequent cross-tuplet decoration employed in *Autumn Woods* is somehow suggestive of an autumnal woodland scene, but this is much less convincing. The published editions of the three works assert that they were composed in 1919 and published as a set in 1921. *At a Horse Fair* was given its first performance by its dedicatee, Archy Rosenthal,³¹³ in London on 24 May 1919 and thus it must obviously have been composed some time before that date.³¹⁴ As will be shown in Chapter 4, it is the contention of this thesis that Moeran spent a few months in Ireland during 1919 and the earliest he could have travelled there was 23 May 1919. Thus, if *At a Horse Fair* was composed in Ireland, it must have been during 1918, and,

³¹³ Archibald (Archbold) Joseph Rosenthal (1874-1947) was a Dublin-born composer and pianist. For a time, he was a professor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and later spent eleven years as Senior Professor of Piano at the Trinity College of Music in London.

³¹⁴ The brief review in *The Athenaeum* (6 June 1919), p437 ran: 'And one forgave [Mr Rosenthal] everything for introducing us to such an alluring trifle as Mr Moeran's *At a Horse Fair*, of which he caught the spirit most happily'.

by extension, if the three piano pieces were composed at the same time as the result of a set of landscape inspirations experienced by Moeran, they must have been composed during the time when Moeran was in Ireland with his regiment – i.e. between January and September 1918. The style and obvious debt to the piano works of John Ireland of *Autumn Woods* suggests that it may be a later work – possibly composed during Moeran’s studies with Ireland – so the weight of evidence from the music would militate against the notion that they were actually composed as a suite or coherent set. Moreover, the clearly discernible folksong style of the melodic aspects of *At a Horse Fair* and *The Lake Island* and the absence of any such style in *Autumn Woods* further distinguishes the latter from the other two pieces.

A close examination of *At a Horse Fair* and *The Lake Island* reveals some striking structural features that indicate that Moeran, even at this early date in his composing career, thought very carefully about every aspect of his music. The two pieces are each based on an identifiable folksong-style melody but one that in performance is difficult to distinguish. In the case of *At a Horse Fair*, the extremely fast tempo continually propels the listener onwards. The piece is in the form of a continual variation on an eight-bar folksong-style pentatonic melody that is stated twice after an introductory twelve bar section that hints at the forthcoming tune:

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'At a Horse Fair'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The melody in the treble clef is a pentatonic scale: G4 (quarter), A4-B4 (eighths), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (eighths), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). The bass clef provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system continues the melody, with dynamic markings of mezzo-piano (*mp*) and piano-piano (*pp*) appearing. The melody concludes with a final G4 note.

Ex. 29 *At a Horse Fair* – folksong-style melody

This melody does not appear again in its entirety, although fragments form the basis of the continually evolving variations that make up the remainder of the piece. Rhythmically, while a

time signature of 3/4 persists throughout the piece, the juxtaposition of off-beat chords in the left-hand conveys what Rhoderick McNeill called: ‘... the impression of a simultaneous presentation of 3/4 and 2/4’.³¹⁵ However, this is not maintained and the strong first beat throughout pushes the momentum forwards. Harmonically, the piece is diatonic but with some early examples of Moeran’s use of chord substitution – a technique that he made increasing use of throughout his career. Rhoderick McNeill’s analysis refers to the harmony being: ‘... chromatically soured ...’³¹⁶ and quotes this passage as an example:

Ex. 30 *At a Horse Fair* – bars 110-117

The Lake Island also features a folksong-style melody that is difficult to distinguish aurally – in this case, because it is played so slowly and, in performance, is liable to be submerged by the other activity. Indeed, Moeran emphasises notes in the left hand by *tenuto* markings, possibly further to disguise the folksong-style melody. The entire piece derives from the three-note motif of the first quaver triplet. Geoffrey Self calls this the ‘parent cell’ technique.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ McNeill (1983), 26

³¹⁶ *ibid.*

³¹⁷ Self (1986), 29

Lento ♩ = 48

Ex. 31 *The Lake Island* – bars 1-12

Indeed, this particular ‘cell’ or any of its three variations – retrograde, inversion and retrograde inversion – appears frequently in Moeran’s compositions, either as the basis for a melody or dictating the harmonic foundation.³¹⁸ In *The Lake Island*, it can be found in one form or another in almost every one of the forty-eight bars and the piece contains examples of structural techniques that characterise Moeran’s individual style, techniques that pervade his entire oeuvre.

³¹⁸ For a further example of its use, see the examination of the *Sonata in E Minor for Violin and Piano* on pages 223-227

Home

Moeran had maintained his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* during 1918 by paying the one guinea army subscription on 16 April.³¹⁹ Although he did not participate in any of the recitals between January and the end of October, his *Four Songs from 'A Shropshire Lad'* were performed at three of the recitals. On 14 February, at the 417th programme, Walter T. Ivimey sang the cycle accompanied by Mr H. V. Anson, and in view of the fact that Ivimey and Anson performed the cycle again a few weeks later at the 423rd programme on 9 May and in a repeat of that programme at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge on 11 May, at the invitation of the *Cambridge University Musical Club*,³²⁰ it may be asserted that the work was well-received.

Moeran's regiment returned from Ireland to Norfolk on some date between 5 September and 14 October 1918.³²¹ With the end of the war approaching, it was clear that Moeran would not return to active service abroad and he seems to have decided to join the Royal Air Force. When he enlisted in 1914, he had signed up for four years or the duration of the war, whichever was the longer period and he was into his fifth year of service. Moeran's military record indicates that he joined the No.1 School of Military Aeronautics in Reading on 14 October 1918.³²² This record also provides a possible hint to Moeran's plans for his future after his imminent demobilisation: under the section 'Occupation in Civil Life', he wrote 'Undergraduate at Clare College, Cambridge'. As was shown in Chapter 2, the archives of Clare College, Cambridge – although only partially complete for the period – contain no record of Moeran applying for entrance to or attending the college in any capacity. While it may have been his intention to go

³¹⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 27

³²⁰ (see footnotes 232 and 233)

³²¹ No military archive record has been found that substantiates this assertion, but the documented dates of Moeran's final Medical Board in Ireland and his entry into the School of Military Aeronautics in Reading make it safe.

³²² *E. J. Moeran RAF Record*, National Archives AIR 86/352/471

to Clare College once his army service was over, actually claiming that he was an undergraduate would seem to have been presumptuous.³²³

On 11 November 1918, the Armistice was declared and the war was over, but this meant little, in practice, for Moeran and he continued his training for the Royal Air Force. However, he was clearly able to spend time away from the School of Aeronautics. On 21 November, he was back in London playing at the 433rd programme of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – again featuring as the central item soloist.³²⁴ On this occasion, he performed *Poème* and *Enigme* from Three Pieces Op.52 by Scriabin and *Sylphides* from *Crépuscules* Op.56 by Florent Schmitt. As with the solo performances at previous recitals, an examination of the three pieces indicates that a considerable piano technique would be necessary to deliver a convincing performance and, thus, Moeran must have spent some time preparing them for the programme. However, he successfully completed the initial four-week training period at the School of Aeronautics and his military record shows that he was struck off ‘the strength of the school’ on 4 December 1918 and ordered to report to the 3rd Reserve Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment at Felixstowe to resume military duty.³²⁵ However, it is apparent that Moeran did not travel there immediately. The archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* record that he participated in the next programme, the 434th, on 5 December 1918,³²⁶ accompanying Walter Ivimey in three of Moeran’s own songs: *Looking Back*, *A Cradle-Song* and *The North-West, Canada*. While *Looking Back* and *The North-West, Canada* are now lost,³²⁷ *A Cradle-Song* was eventually re-titled *Mantle of Blue* and is a setting of the well-known poem *A Cradle Song* by Padraic Colum beginning ‘O, men from the fields’ and published in 1907 as part of the cycle

³²³ The truth of Moeran’s association or otherwise with Clare College, Cambridge remains unknown. While his mention of it as a convenient device to support his election to membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* is plausible, his claim that his civilian life occupation was being a student there is less so. Exhaustive examination of the college archives has failed to uncover any reference to or mention of Moeran during the years 1912 to 1920. On the other hand, Moeran’s attendance at the Royal College of Music between 1912 and 1914 is fully substantiated by the records in the college archives.

³²⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 161

³²⁵ E. J. Moeran Military Record, No. 1 School of Aeronautics letter dated 4 December 1918, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³²⁶ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 162

³²⁷ *Looking Back* and *The North-West, Canada* are both poems from the set *Songs of the Glens of Antrim* by Moira O’Neill, published in collection around 1909

Wild Earth. In his centenary edition of the *Collected Solo Songs of E. J. Moeran, Vol.2*, John Talbot notes that the manuscript of *Mantle of Blue*: ‘... was found among the papers of singer George Parker, with whom Moeran maintained a correspondence for some ten years, between 1931 and 1941’.³²⁸ Talbot speculated that the song was composed ‘pre-1920?’ and its appearance on the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme in December 1918 confirms this. Although quite simple, Moeran’s setting contains a number of characteristic features. While the melody is clearly not folksong-based, the form of the song – ABBA – is a common feature of both Irish and English folksong and Moeran may well have been influenced structurally by the songs he had collected during the previous two or three years. The most interesting aspect of the song stylistically is the form of the piano accompaniment for the second two stanzas. For the first two verses, Moeran employed a rocking, triplet quaver effect, clearly intended to evoke the gentle motion of a baby’s cradle:

Andante ♩ = 120

O, men from the fields! Come gently within. Tread

softly, softly, O! men coming in.

Ex. 32 *Mantle of Blue* – verse 1

³²⁸ John Talbot, *E. J. Moeran, Centenary Edition, Collected Solo Songs, Vol. 2*, (Thames Publishing, London 1994), 66

For the third and fourth verse accompaniment, Moeran widened the piano register and employed the cross-beat rhythmic motifs and melodic interplay that would become a signature feature of his piano music, both in his later solo pieces and in the accompaniments for other songs and instrumental works:

The image shows a musical score for the song "Mantle of Blue". It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the end of verse 3, with the vocal line singing "cold of the floor, - And the peer-ing of things A - cross the half-door." The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with cross-beats and melodic interplay between the hands. The second system shows the beginning of verse 4, with the vocal line singing "O, men from the fields! Soft,". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic motifs and melodic interplay. The score is in 6/8 time and the key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Ex. 33 *Mantle of Blue* – end of verse 3 and beginning of verse 4

The re-use of earlier material or ideas was a fundamental aspect of Moeran's working method. Consider the following extract from *Stalham River*, composed just three years later:

Ex. 34 *Stalham River* – bars 22-33

At first sight, the Ex.33 and Ex. 34 appear quite different, but, aurally, they bear a striking resemblance to each other and this is indicative of the problem. There are numerous occasions in Moeran's music where a basic familiarity with his oeuvre is sufficient to recognise apparent repetitions and material re-use. However, a closer examination generally reveals that, as in the examples just presented, while the underlying ideas may be similar, the details can be quite different.

On the other hand, Moeran was occasionally not averse to lifting an entire section from one work and incorporating it in another. Bars one to four of the opening of *Invitation in Autumn* (1944):

Andante con moto ♩ = 68

Ex. 35 *Invitation in Autumn* – piano accompaniment – bars 1-6

are more or less identical to bars 46-49 of *Stalham River*:

Ex. 36 *Stalham River* – bars 46-51

In this case, the intentional nature of the self-plagiarism is exposed not only by the correspondence of the notes, but also by the appearance of a three quaver rest in the first bar. Since there is no vocal line interest until bar seven, the inclusion of a full bar with rests, instead of using a three-quaver anacrusis, suggests that Moeran began with the *Stalham River* bars and

crossed out the first three quaver beats. However, in common with most composers, the repetition and re-use of musical ideas and features is part of what identifies a composer's individual style and to suggest that this should be any different for Moeran is surely unreasonable.

In early January 1919, the orders for Moeran to re-join his battalion were cancelled³²⁹ and he was discharged – disembodied – from the Territorial Force as of 8 January 1919. His Medical Category was given as 'A1' – perfect health.³³⁰ Moeran's military service was over.

Summary

Like many young men of his time, Moeran answered the national call and joined the army on the outbreak of the First World War – although it must be noted that he opted to join the Territorial Force, rather than to enlist in the Regular Army. While in comparison with most, his war was exceptionally easy, he did spend some weeks in service as a motorcycle despatch rider on the Western Front in France and was wounded in May 1917. As a result of his injury, Moeran was repatriated and eventually sent for light duties in Ireland where his medical treatment continued. By the end of the war, he had completely recovered from his injury, being discharged from service in 'A1' medical condition.

In order to determine the extent to which Moeran's wartime experiences may have shaped the rest of his life, some effort must be made to put them into an objective perspective and this has required an exhaustive examination of all the available evidence. It is of immense importance that Moeran's Military Record has survived and may be examined.³³¹ While much else can be deduced from the Army Medical Board Reports and the other items from Moeran's military record presented in this chapter, the crucial facts they reveal are that his injury was minor and he

³²⁹ E. J. Moeran Military Record, orders cancellation, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³³⁰ E. J. Moeran Military Record, Protection Certificate, 7 January 1919, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

³³¹ About sixty percent of the seven million service records from the First World War were destroyed when the War Office Repository in Arnside Street, London was struck by bombs in September 1940. Some 2.8 million records survived or have been reconstructed from other records.

eventually recovered completely, he was removed permanently from the front line, and there is no medical indication of psychological effects. The records also show that even before he was wounded, his unit had only been in France for a few weeks at the most. Thus, the evidence shows that, far from living through ‘three years of [the war’s] horrors’, as Geoffrey Self maintains,³³² Moeran had little time to experience anything and his deployment as a motorcycle despatch rider meant that he would have spent most of his time either at the command headquarters or en route between there and the front line. While it is impossible to know exactly what Moeran experienced during the few months he spent near the action, the general experiences of despatch riders have been documented and it is reasonable to assert that Moeran’s would have been similar.³³³

Compared with the regular and enlisted soldiers at the front line and in the trenches, it is readily apparent that Moeran did not experience the worst horrors of the First World War. However, he was evidently shot at and wounded – and from the comfort of a peaceful twenty-first century Britain with very little chance of experiencing such an event, it is difficult to imagine the effects that may have had on him. Nonetheless, he was a young man, the injury was slight, it meant that he was immediately removed from further similar dangers and it appears possible that he received preferential treatment. Moeran’s minor injury and its consequences – his removal from the theatre of operations, the periods of extended home leave, his deployment on light duties to Ireland with the result of his becoming enamoured with the country and the people – are key factors that helped to determine his later course as a composer.

The narrative sequence presented in the latter part of this chapter traced Moeran’s life from the day he was wounded, through to his discharge from the army in January 1919. A detailed consideration of this provides sufficient information to form a reasonable conjecture for the eventual establishment of the war wound characteristics of the *Moeran Myth*: it is asserted that the origin of all the stories was Moeran himself – initially providing biographical information

³³² Self (1986), 245

³³³ Capt. W. H. L. Watson, *Adventures of a Despatch Rider*, (William Blackwood & Sons, London, 1915)

but later exaggerating and even fabricating aspects of the seriousness of his condition. While Medical Board Reports were confidential, it is likely that Moeran was told some details of his condition – especially if he was accompanied at any of the earlier examinations by either of or both his parents. Thus, it is probable that Moeran knew about the ‘metallic fragment’ or the ‘fine pieces of metal’ referred to in the Reports and that he retained a memory of the diagnosis and treatment that he later – whether deliberately or subconsciously – exaggerated, and that this subsequently evolved into the ‘pieces of shrapnel too close to the brain for removal’ aspect of the *Moeran Myth*.³³⁴ Moeran’s reference in the George Parker letter to ‘lumps of shrapnel’ is clearly exaggeration – indeed, the very mention of the word ‘shrapnel’ suggests something entirely more substantial than ‘fine pieces of metal’. It is evident from the Medical Board Reports that the pieces of metal embedded in Moeran’s skull were tiny, and the facts that there was no suggestion that they be removed or any reference to them in subsequent Reports strongly imply that they were not considered to be serious.

With regard to the ‘metal plate’ and the ‘disability pension’, the earliest documentary evidence of both stories was the correspondence between Geoffrey Self and Michael Bowles, from which Self drew to present the conclusions he reached in *The Music of E.J. Moeran*. Although it is possible that Self had originally gathered this information during his M.Mus research programme at the University of Exeter, the accounts were first published in his later book and subsequently in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* which he wrote about the same time. The appearance in subsequent writings verifies this assertion. The obvious question is; from where did Michael Bowles get the notion about the ‘metal plate’ and the ‘disability pension’? Again, the only possible source is Moeran himself. An examination of the evidence provided both by the letters Moeran wrote to Peers Coetmore between 1944 and 1950, and the testimony from friends such as Lionel Hill indicates that Moeran was aware of his alcohol-dependency and that he made numerous and extensive efforts both to overcome it and to

³³⁴ A creative interpretation of this idea forms the central theme of the BBC Radio Play *Moeran’s Last Symphony*, written by Martyn Wade, first broadcast in December 2010 as part of the BBC’s marking of the 60th anniversary of the composer’s death. The plot of the play centres on Moeran’s deliberate exaggeration of his injury (seemingly on the suggestion of his friend Philip Heseltine) to explain away his frequent and excessive drunkenness.

excuse it.³³⁵ It is entirely plausible that he invented the ‘metal plate’ story to explain the effects of his more excessive alcoholic over-indulgences, and the ‘disability pension’ to cover the source of his private income. As suggested above, it is also possible, though less likely, that Moeran really did suffer a severe head injury as a consequence of one of his many accidents and that the insertion of a metal plate was the treatment. However, if this had been the case, it is scarcely conceivable that there would be no evidence of any kind for such an event. Whatever the truth, it is unlikely that Bowles would have invented the stories – even in defence of his friend.

The overstatement of the severity of the injury, the exaggeration of embedded shrapnel, the embellishment of the insertion of a metal plate and the story of the disability pension were all either invention – perpetrated by friends or sympathetic commentators – or fabrications by the composer himself. However, even dismissing the facts and consequences of the injury, is it possible that, in the long term, Moeran was psychologically damaged by his wartime experience? The credibility of the portrayal by Self and others of Moeran as primarily a victim of these experiences depends upon them having been sufficiently traumatic to have affected the rest of his life and thus to have had an identifiable influence on his creative output. However, the burden of providing evidence is upon those making the assertion – and no such evidence has

³³⁵ ‘I think that what is required is a short spell of the discipline of Mount Milleray [sic]: it had such a generally beneficial effect on me for a long period after I had been there in 1944 and, under the circumstances, I propose making the trip there in the New Year. Both my mode of living and also the work benefitted to a good extent for a long period afterwards, so much so, that I regret I did not go there again when these unfortunate occurrences [sic] set in, but I really thought I was finished with the trouble.’ in letter to Coetmore dated Ledbury, December 1946, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 537-538 (The Cistercian Abbey at Mount Melleray was a ‘drying-out’ centre for alcoholics and those with drink problems; see Finola Kennedy, *Frank Duff: A Life Story*, (Burns & Oates, New York, 2011), 59)

‘I take a pint or 1½ pints of stout every night in the kitchen last thing, but that does not seem to ease me. Incidentally, that is my drinking limit now I am hard at it, barring possibly a sherry before lunch. I have made a rule not to take a drink before 9.30 p.m. & to limit myself to the above.’ in letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 10 February 1948, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 565-566

‘I shall not be able to write much to you these next few days, as I fell in the woods behind the Lodge & damaged my right wrist again. Now, my darling, I did not do this by having too many drinks. Actually, I am completely "on the dry" as I promised you I would be when I got here.’ in letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 19 April 1948, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 571

‘... I have at last real faith that my sojourn here will prove to be better than doctors. I may say here that the kindness & broadmindedness has been infinitely helpful, & though I am not a Catholic, I am assured that this makes no difference. I have taken a vow before the altar never to touch spirits again except medicinally, e.g. under Doctor's orders for illness such as chill or flu.’ in letter to Coetmore dated Mount Milleray [sic], 29 October 1948, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 576

‘Another of Jack's traits that only gradually became apparent was his fondness for the “hard stuff”. At our first meeting, at the Albert Hall, we noticed his flushed complexion and somewhat dazed eyes. I could now look back and realize that he must have just emerged from the bar suitably fortified ... at this point [I] would stress that Jack never drank alcohol in our house, except to join me in a glass of beer sometimes.’ Hill (1985), 29

been provided. It is insufficient to suggest that Moeran must have been traumatised by his wartime experiences, simply because many survivors of the First World War were so traumatised. Although any statistics relating to periods where documentary evidence is scant or non-existent will be speculative, it has been suggested that between ten and thirty percent of those exposed to trauma during combat operations will subsequently develop post-traumatic stress disorder.³³⁶ It is thus far from probable that Moeran would have been so affected. Most significantly, his Military Record, with its numerous Medical Board Reports, makes no mention of any condition other than the neck injury for which he was treated.

As will become clear in the next chapter, there is no evidence at all that suggests that Moeran suffered from any form of post-traumatic condition that would have affected his behaviour during the years following the end of the war. The subject of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is immense and complex and entirely beyond the scope of this thesis to examine in any detail.³³⁷ Whether Moeran suffered from it and, if so, the extent to which it affected him in later life cannot be determined precisely, since there are no psychiatric examination records available. Indeed, it is unlikely that such examinations were undertaken in Moeran's case, although it is possible that a diagnosis of what was then called shell-shock could have been made if considered appropriate. Retrospective diagnosis of PTSD may be possible through techniques that have been developed since its recognition as a condition in the 1970s but the best that can be achieved is a level of probability. However, since (as will be shown later) Moeran's later development of an alcohol-dependency is well-supported by anecdotal evidence from his contemporaries, circumstantial evidence from observation and by the medical evidence from the descriptions of his treatment towards the end of his life, any suggestion that he also suffered from PTSD must necessarily accommodate the symptoms and effects of alcohol-dependency – and no such explanation, other than to state it as axiomatic, has been presented in any Moeran scholarship or writing hitherto. There exists no *prima facie* support for any

³³⁶ <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/how-common-is-ptsd.asp> (accessed 30 June 2014)

³³⁷ Amongst numerous authoritative references on the subject is Christopher. R. Brewin, *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder: Malady or Myth?* (Yale University Press, Yale MA, 2003)

assertion that Moeran suffered psychological problems in later life that resulted from his experiences during the First World War, and there is, therefore, no need to introduce this as an additional theory for which there is no evidence. Consequently, the suggestion by Self and others that Moeran's 1940s personality was principally the result of his wartime trauma fails. Self's dismissal of alcoholism as 'too facile'³³⁸ an explanation is consequently revealed to have been incorrect.

The next chapter chronicles Moeran's life during the years 1920 to 1924 and reveals the facts behind his astonishing rise to prominence in London musical life during the three or four years after the end of the war. A convincing explanation for his apparent financial independence is proposed and some of the principal works he composed during the period are examined.

³³⁸ Self (1986), 237

Chapter 4

“... construction of a composer”

Chapter 4 follows the progression of events that led to Moeran establishing himself as a leading figure in British Music during the early 1920s. The narrative sequence begins with the immediate aftermath of Moeran’s discharge from the army in January 1919 and traces his probable movements over the course of that year. The circumstances of his return to Ireland are examined and their possible consequences are assessed. A hypothesis is advanced to account for the beginnings of his career as a composer in London.

Moeran’s almost meteoric rise to prominence between 1920 and 1924 is presented in the narrative sequence, and it is shown how he was able to do this so rapidly. Representative compositions are examined, and Moeran’s developing style is illustrated.

Ireland

In January 1919, Moeran had just turned twenty-five and had spent the previous four and a half years in the army. His war had been comparatively easy and although he had been wounded, the injury was minor and he had completely recovered. As was shown in Chapter 3, Moeran had composed numerous works during his army service and for much of the time he was able to continue his active membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. This enabled him to maintain an active role in London musical life. However, for the year after his discharge from the army, there are very few archive references that provide any evidence about what he did. An aspect of the *Moeran Myth* is that he returned to Uppingham School at the invitation of his former teacher Robert Sterndale Bennett to take up a post as assistant music master – indeed one source asserts that he re-joined the school orchestra, playing in the second violins. This assertion seems to be based on the evidence provided by this photograph:³³⁹

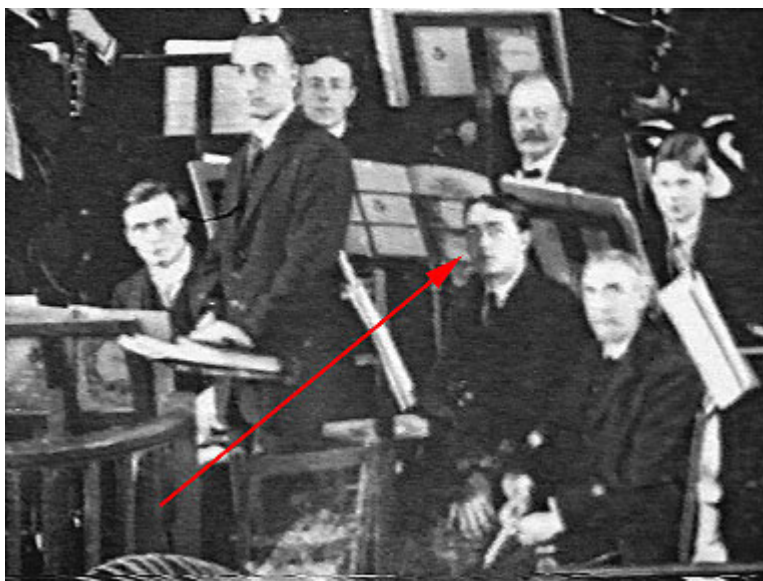


Figure 7 Moeran (arrowed) in the Uppingham School Orchestra

That the indicated person is Moeran is not in doubt. However, a visual comparison with other photographs of him as a young adult suggests that this picture portrays him as a teenager –

³³⁹ Barry Marsh, writing in the Worldwide Moeran Database (www.moeran.net); (accessed 3 August 2013). The photograph itself is a still from the RTE film documentary *E.J. Moeran 1894-1950* which was written and produced by the late Bill Skinner. It was originally broadcast in 1971. See <http://www.moeran.net/Film/article.html> for more details of the programme.

consistent with his being a senior pupil aged 16 or 17 – and so this photograph most probably dates from about 1911.

A return to Uppingham is unlikely for a number of reasons. Firstly, the school has no record of Moeran ever having been an employee – although their records are incomplete and it is possible that Moeran was engaged on an informal basis. More significantly, the school regards Moeran as one of its most distinguished ‘Old Uppinghamians’, celebrating his time there with a photograph on the wall of the Speech Room. It is therefore more than likely that if Moeran had been a staff member in addition to having been a pupil, this would have been recorded or commemorated. Secondly, in the letter written by William Graham Moeran to Colin Scott-Sutherland, Moeran’s brother stated categorically: ‘...he was never Music Master at Uppingham School ...’.³⁴⁰ Thirdly, and most conclusively, is the obituary written for the Uppingham School Magazine issue of March 1951 by Moeran’s former music teacher, Robert Sterndale Bennett. Sterndale Bennett made extensive mention of Moeran’s time at Uppingham as a pupil and wrote glowingly about his musical abilities and activities. Since the obituary did not refer to Moeran having spent time at the school as an assistant music master – as would have been likely had he done so – it may be reasonably supposed that he did not.

It is probable that on his discharge from the army in January 1919, Moeran returned to his parents’ home in Bacton for a period of a few weeks. Although during the earlier part of his service life, he had actually been based quite near there, he had been in Ireland for much of 1918. Thus, a period of rest and recuperation at home would have been quite natural. There is reliable documentary evidence that places Moeran in London in April and May 1919 and it may therefore be supposed that from January, he divided his time between Bacton and London. The only reference to Moeran’s name in the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* archives covering the year 1919 occurs on Thursday, 10 April 1919, where, in the Visitor’s Book, Moeran is recorded as having signed in Mr L. Jellinek, of *The Nook*, Hampstead and Mr J. E. Norbury, of

³⁴⁰ William Graham Moeran; quoted in Talbot (2009), 7

Boston, USA.³⁴¹ Although Moeran did not participate in the musical evening that took place on that date, he and his guests would undoubtedly have been at the Club in order to attend the recital. The Club premises at that time included rooms that the members could use for occasional periods of residence and it is quite possible that Moeran availed himself of this for accommodation in London.

There is just one newspaper or periodical reference that constitutes direct evidence placing Moeran in London during 1919. A month after the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* archive reference for 10 April 1919, a recital took place at the Wigmore Hall in London and this was briefly reported in the *Musical Times*: ‘Two new Violin Sonatas, by E. J. Moeran and Miss Mary Barber, were performed at Wigmore Hall on May 10 by M. Edgardo Guerra,³⁴² accompanied by the composer, on the occasion of a joint recital with M. José de Moraes (vocalist)’.³⁴³ The reference is ambiguous and does not establish unequivocally that Moeran was at the recital since two composers are mentioned – Moeran and Miss Mary Barber – and it is not at all clear which is referred to by ‘accompanied by the composer’. Moreover, the issue of *The Times* for 8 May 1919 had announced that while the soloists would be ‘assisted’ by Mary Barber and E. J. Moeran, the accompanists would be Miss Charlotte Sealy and Mr Herbert Morris. A clarification emerges from the review of the concert in *The Musical Standard*: ‘A first performance of a sonata for violin and pianoforte in one movement by E. J. Moeran (with the composer at the piano) introduced one to a work of optimistic but fragmentary character’.³⁴⁴ This review is sufficient evidence to verify that Moeran was the accompanist. The sonata for violin and piano that was performed by M. Guerra is unlikely to have been the *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Pianoforte* that has survived as Moeran’s only work for this medium.

³⁴¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits Box Dep 5, Visitors Book 1914-1937, 20

Lionel Jellinek had been a contemporary of Moeran’s at Uppingham School and later became a judge. Moeran supported Jellinek’s own election to membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* on 7 April 1921 – the record of which indicates that he had attended Lincoln College, Oxford and was a viola player. He later became a close friend of Philip Heseltine. Although no reference to J.E. Norbury of Boston, USA has been found, it is probable that he was also one of Moeran’s Uppingham School contemporaries.

³⁴² Edgardo Guerra had been a contemporary of Moeran at the Royal College of Music. (see page 107)

³⁴³ ‘London Concerts’, *The Musical Times*, vol. 60. no. 916 (Jun. 1, 1919), 306

³⁴⁴ *The Musical Standard*, (24 May 1919), 181

Little can be gleaned from the reviewer's comment that the sonata movement as performed had an 'optimistic but fragmentary character' except that it is clear that none of the extant movements of the *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Pianoforte* could be easily thus described. It is likely, therefore, that the sonata played at the Wigmore Hall recital was either the original or a revised version of one of those that Moeran had composed during his later years at Uppingham or at the Royal College of Music.

A passing reference to Moeran's possible presence in London during 1919 comes from the reminiscences of Sir Arnold Bax, included in an obituary he wrote for Moeran in the April 1951 issue of *Music & Letters*. Bax wrote:

It must have been in the summer of 1919 that I was invited to an evening party somewhere in Kensington or Chelsea – I forget which ... Before starting out that evening, I had become involved in a futile and miserable quarrel with an old friend, and as I reached the doors of the house where the party was to be given my mind was not a little disintegrated and I felt in no mood to entertain or to be entertained. However, only a few minutes after my arrival I found myself conversing appreciatively with as charming and as good-looking a young officer as one could hope to meet. This was my first encounter with Jack Moeran and the beginning of a close friendship which was to continue unbroken until the tragic day when his body was found in the Kenmare River ... At the time of our earliest acquaintance he was about to be demobilized after serving in the army all through the war and, in the course of it, suffering a head wound to the after-effects of which may perhaps be attributed a certain instability in his character later on ... He told me that he was a pupil of John Ireland, whom he always declared to be a most painstaking and conscientious teacher.³⁴⁵

As with each of the obituaries and appreciative memories of Moeran written during the years immediately after his death, Bax's testimony has been held to be authoritative. Given what has been presented about Moeran's early life in the previous two chapters, it may be readily seen that Bax's recollections were fragmentary and confused. Of course, this is understandable given that Bax, at the time of his writing, was recalling events of more than thirty years earlier. Scrutiny of Bax's obituary piece suggests that several aspects of Moeran's life which are known to have taken place at different times have been collected together and as a result give the impression of simultaneity and continuity. Bax dates his first meeting with Moeran as the 'summer of 1919', and he says that Moeran was 'about to be demobilized' and that he was 'a

³⁴⁵ Sir Arnold Bax, 'E. J. Moeran: 1894-1950', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr., 1951), 125

pupil of John Ireland'. As has been shown, Moeran was demobilized in January 1919; by the summer of that year, he was no longer in the army and would not have been entitled to continue wearing his uniform.³⁴⁶ Moeran certainly became a pupil of John Ireland but, as will be shown, this was not until 1920. The most likely facts that underpin Bax's conflated reminiscences are that he met Moeran at a party in Chelsea or Kensington, shortly after Moeran's return from Ireland in September 1918. At this time, Moeran would probably have worn his uniform to social events and his continuing membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* would have ensured that he had the opportunity to associate with the class of people that would hold parties in Chelsea or Kensington. However, in September 1918, Moeran could not have told Bax that he was a pupil of John Ireland. The assertion that he did so was either a false memory implanted as the result of Bax's later knowledge, or he was confusing it with a later occasion on which Moeran did mention this to Bax. Thus, the obituary cannot be regarded as conclusive evidence that Moeran was in London during the summer of 1919.

Possibly the most compelling circumstantial evidence for Moeran's absence from London during much of 1919 is that fact that he does not appear in any of the programmes of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* for that year. Given Moeran's very close involvement with the Club during the previous six years – and especially his continuing participation during most of his army service, it is unlikely that he would have been in London and not taken part in any recitals. While absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, his non-appearance in the club records for 1919 does strengthen the conjecture that he was not in London during the course of some of that year, and there is evidence that Moeran did spend at least part of 1919 in Ireland. This evidence is principally the contents of a manuscript notebook now in the

³⁴⁶ 'The undermentioned officer of the Territorial Force will be Disembodied with effect from 8 January 1919 ... He will be entitled to wear uniform for one week from the above date and upon occasions authorized by regulations'; from *E. J. Moeran Military Record, Medical Inspection Report, Protection Certificate*, National Archives WO 374/48245 C457620

possession of Trinity College Library in Dublin.³⁴⁷ The notebook includes several pages of notated folk songs with dates and locations in the west of Ireland during 1918 and 1919. On page 13 of the notebook, an entry dated 'May 23rd' states: 'on RMS Scotia'. An examination of steamer catalogues reveals the former existence of at least two vessels with the name 'Scotia' that operated the route Holyhead to Dublin (Kingstown – now Dún Laoghaire) between 1918 and 1939. The first, *TSS Scotia*, was built in 1902 and remained in service until 1920,³⁴⁸ while the second, also *TSS Scotia*, was a replacement for the first, smaller vessel and came into service in 1921, operating the route until the outbreak of the Second World War.³⁴⁹ If the date of 23 May is assumed to be when Moeran embarked for Ireland, a scrutiny of his life reveals that it is only feasible for him to have done this in 1919, his location on that date for every other year to 1940 being reasonably well accounted for. Thus, the notebook is a strong indication that Moeran sailed for Ireland on 23 May 1919. The notebook also mentions a number of other dates which again suggest that Moeran was in Ireland during the summer of 1919 and thus it constitutes additional circumstantial evidence concerning Moeran's activities during the year.

The only direct evidence that testifies to Moeran's whereabouts on any date in 1919 after 10 May is the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* accounts book entry for 25 September in which it is recorded that Moeran paid his subscription for the year 1919,³⁵⁰ giving as his address: 10 Victoria Grove, W8. The paying of his subscription three quarters of the way through the year is consistent with his having been absent during the summer and autumn. However, he paid the full, so-called 'Town' rate, which indicates that he was (or at least considered himself to be)

³⁴⁷ References to this notebook in other scholarly writings on Moeran have apparently regarded it as a genuine record of contemporary material – that is to say, dating from around 1919. However, a simple examination of the notebook reveals that it cannot be so. The notebook contains a stamp indicating that it was purchased in Hereford, and as far as is known, Moeran did not visit that part of England until his parents moved there in 1937. Moreover, the notebook contains both references to Cahirciveen in the 1930s – Moeran spent considerable time there from 1936 onwards, and references to Peers Coetmore's cello. The contents of the notebook are evidently transcriptions of other material in Moeran's possession during the 1930s and 1940s. However, why it is labelled 'Moeran's Last Notebook' is not known.

³⁴⁸ C. L. D. Duckworth & G. E. Langmuir, *Railway and Other Steamers*, (Shipping Histories Ltd., London, 1948), 5

³⁴⁹ *TSS Scotia* was part of the fleet of ships that took part in the Dunkirk evacuation. The ship was sunk off Dunkirk on 1 May 1940; Duckworth & Langmuir (1948), 5

³⁵⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 79

resident in London.³⁵¹ While it would have been possible to make this payment by posting a cheque and thus it does not confirm that Moeran was in London, it is the date of payment, the provision of the London address and the fact that it was a ‘Town’ payment that are the significant aspects that imply he was in London on 25 September 1919. The lack of any evidence placing Moeran in London between 10 May and 25 September 1919, together with the compelling evidence of the manuscript notebook, makes a good case for Moeran having spent a few months of the summer of 1919 in Ireland.

If this is true, what was he doing there? It is possible that for at least part of the time he was visiting other members of the Moeran family. Although his immediate family resided in England, the Moeran family tree features numerous cousins, uncles and aunts that lived at the time in different parts of Ireland.³⁵² The Trinity College manuscript notebook provides evidence that he collected folksongs over a period of a few months in various locations around the country and these coincide with some of the towns and cities where his relatives lived. As was shown in Chapter 3, Moeran had spent part of 1918 in Ireland with light if any military duties during his convalescence. He had probably explored the landscape around the various towns at which his unit was stationed and had undoubtedly composed a number of works – including the *String Quartet in E flat* (first movement). Moeran’s use of landscape as the basis for composition is well-documented and has been researched and written about.³⁵³ Thus, it is possible that Moeran’s intention to spend time in Ireland during 1919 was at least partly motivated by a desire to seek further compositional inspiration in the countryside with which he had become familiar the previous year.

³⁵¹ When the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* was established in 1899, two categories of membership were defined: ‘Town’ and ‘Country’. A ‘Town’ member was defined as one whose permanent residence was within twelve miles of Charing Cross or who had his place of business or regular occupation within four miles of Charing Cross. ‘Country’ members were everybody else. Additional categories of membership were introduced over the years to cater for members living in Scotland and those living abroad. *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.e.487

³⁵² According to census and other records available on the Ancestry resource (<http://www.ancestry.co.uk>) Moeran’s second cousins Archibald Hamilton Moeran (1901-1934) and Francis Douglas Moeran (1899-1962) lived in Loughrea, Co. Galway. He also had first and second cousins in Dundrum and Killeagh, both Co. Down, and other relatives in Dublin, Cork and Armagh.

³⁵³ Huss (2009)

As proposed in Chapter 3, the titles of the works that Moeran composed could be regarded as evidence of where he was. Although it was suggested that both *The Lake Island* and *Autumn Woods* were composed contemporaneously with *At a Horse Fair* during 1918, it is possible that these two works at least date from mid-1919 and the plethora of possible locations of serene lakes with islands and stirring woods can be readily evidenced. Moeran had relatives in both Cork and Galway cities³⁵⁴ and suitable lakes and woods abound in the countryside around both these places. However, probably in mid-September, Moeran returned to England. He would have spent some three months in Ireland and it is likely that he had produced a number of complete works, or at least sketches and ideas for works.

Moeran's movements during 1919 may be conjectured thus:

- after his demobilisation in January, he returned to his parents' home at Bacton-on-Sea for a few months – during which he composed or worked on a number of pieces, including the one-movement violin sonata performed at the Wigmore Hall on 10 May 1919;
- between January and mid-May, Moeran made occasional visits to London including some time spent at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*; while there is no evidence to show by whom the Wigmore Hall recital was arranged and how Moeran's sonata was programmed, he must have spent some days at least in London for rehearsals with the soloist – thus Moeran was probably in London during the two or three weeks prior to 10 May 1919;
- on 23 May, he embarked on *RMS (TSS) Scotia* at Holyhead, en route to Dublin
- during the next few months, he travelled to and stayed in various places in the west of Ireland – during which time he composed *The Lake Island* and *Autumn Woods*
- around mid-September, he returned home and shortly afterwards took rooms in London at 10 Victoria Grove, W8

After Moeran's return to England, there is no record of his having gone back to Ireland at all for at least the next thirteen or fourteen years. From April 1920, he regularly appears on the programmes of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* and, increasingly, mention is made of him in newspapers and music periodicals. As will be shown, in a very short time, Moeran established himself in London musical life and society.

³⁵⁴ (see footnote 352)

Before proceeding, a satisfactory answer to the question as to why Moeran, after spending several months in Ireland in both 1918 and 1919, should then abandon the country for so long. If Moeran's own testimony is to be taken at face value, he had developed a love at second-hand for Ireland during his childhood by hearing his father (and probably also his grandfather) talking about the place.³⁵⁵ During his posting to Ireland in 1918, he had evidently been able to travel about, to experience the landscape of the country and to meet the people. However, he would probably have become aware that in 1918/1919, compared with London, Ireland was something of a musical backwater with little in the way of professional music-making and no professional orchestra in Dublin. The musicians and composers that did gain international recognition, such as John Field, William Vincent Wallace, Michael W. Balfe and Sir Charles Stanford, had done so outside of country. Thus, it is possible that Moeran simply gave up on Ireland musically and decided to concentrate on London.

However, there is one intriguing item of evidence to be examined that may suggest another possibility. In 1937, Moeran wrote to the musician and critic Herbert Hughes:

I am happy to say that I have succeeded in falling out with that impossible crowd of British Imperialists at the cable station here [in Valentia, Co. Kerry] ... I gather they do not approve of my IRA acquaintances & friends ...³⁵⁶

Again, if Moeran's testimony is to be believed, in 1937 Moeran had friends and acquaintances who were members of the IRA. An exhaustive search of the accessible Moeran archives reveals no other mention of this, so any conjecture that may be based on it is speculative. Whether Herbert Hughes had any Nationalist sympathies himself, beyond his interest in the Gaelic language revival is not suggested here,³⁵⁷ but it is apparent that Moeran's mentioning of the IRA in a letter to him seems not to have been expected to be contentious – therefore the claim may reasonably be considered to be genuine. If Moeran had friends who

³⁵⁵ 'I used to hear so much about Ireland from my father, that from a very early age I longed to visit [the] country ...', from Irish Radio Interview (see footnote 309)

³⁵⁶ From a letter written to Herbert Hughes, dated 11 February 1937; quoted in Angela Hughes, *Chelsea Footprints: A Thirties Chronicle*, (Quartet Books, London, 2008), 161-2

³⁵⁷ A more detailed examination of the circumstances and activities of Hughes and others involvement in the *Gaelic Revival* can be found in Eamon Phoenix, *et al* (eds.), *Feis na nGleann A Century of Gaelic Culture in the Antrim Glens*, (Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, 2005)

were members of the IRA in 1937, the question is whether he made those friends after his return to Ireland in 1936,³⁵⁸ or whether they were renewed friendships from his earlier time in the country in 1918-1919. Since there is no primary information available that can provide an answer to this question, it is necessary to resort to circumstantial evidence. While an examination of the history of the IRA is beyond the scope of this thesis,³⁵⁹ it seems more probable that Moeran would have made his IRA ‘acquaintances & friends’ during his time in Ireland in 1918/1919, for the principal reason that, according to Brian Hanley, membership of the movement was much smaller and its activities more limited in 1937 than it had been twenty years earlier.³⁶⁰

Thus, another reason for Moeran’s abandonment of Ireland for more than fifteen years may be hypothesised. It may be that at some point during his months in Ireland in 1918 or 1919, he became acquainted with some of those campaigning for Irish independence and perhaps developed some sympathy for their cause – possibly based on a desire to save the culture of the country, in the form of folk song. Eventually realising that the Nationalist cause was supported by violence, he perhaps decided (or was persuaded by his family) that he should no longer be a part of it, and this was the reason for his return to England in 1919 and his not returning to Ireland until 1936. However, since there is no evidence other than that presented, such a supposition remains speculative, and Moeran’s abandonment of Ireland for more than fifteen years is open to alternative explanations.

The Privileged Composer

One of the unresolved questions about Moeran has been how he was able to spend most of his adult life composing music, without the necessity of earning a living. Even a cursory survey of Moeran’s life shows that he had no extended gainful employment, and that he was able to spend

³⁵⁸ Moeran’s eventual return to Ireland in 1936 is covered in Chapter 6.

³⁵⁹ See Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*, (Pan Books, London, 2003) for a detailed history

³⁶⁰ See Brian Hanley, *The IRA: 1926-36*, (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2002) for an in-depth history of the IRA during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

his time mostly as he pleased, for a period of more than thirty years. Although he eventually received some income from royalties, an explanation must be found for his evident freedom to compose as he wished and when and where he wished, from the age of about twenty-five onwards. Since there is no direct evidence of Moeran's financial affairs – such as bank statements or personal documents – available, the most likely scenario must be derived through the consideration of circumstantial evidence. Moeran must have had a private income and the most probable source of this would have been his mother. It was shown earlier that Moeran's mother had been one of the beneficiaries of the will of her grandfather, George Smeed. According to the terms of the will as detailed in the case documentation presented in Chapter 2, from the age of twenty-five, she received an annuity of £1000, and that twenty-one years after Smeed's death, the fund was wound up and the proceeds distributed to the surviving beneficiaries.³⁶¹ Thus, at some point during the early 1900s, Moeran's mother would have received a substantial capital sum. While no documentary evidence has yet been found for the value of the eventual inheritance, it is reasonable to suppose that it enabled Moeran's parents to live comfortably for the remainder of their lives, and it would certainly have provided the basis for Moeran's mother supplying her son with an allowance. Further evidence for the allowance may be found in the testimony of Maurice Walter Knott: 'He had an allowance from his mother, £10 per week, and when he couldn't obtain it wherever he might be at the time he needed it, then he returned to London'.³⁶² It seems likely that Moeran's mother began supplying this allowance monthly from early in 1920 and it continued for at least the next twenty years.

This quite extraordinary generosity on the part of Moeran's mother requires some examination. Why did she decide to take such a course of action and to prolong it for so long? Parents are usually quite naturally interested in and concerned about the welfare of their children but the provision of, effectively, an income-for-life is beyond what most are able or willing to afford. As has been shown, Moeran's mother was much wealthier than many ladies in her position but, being married to a clergyman it is probable that her life-style was

³⁶¹ (see footnote 88)

³⁶² From an essay written by Maurice Walter Knott; quoted in Talbot (2009), 16

constrained by the requirements of her husband's position. On the other hand, it is conspicuous that after Joseph Moeran retired in 1907 from regular employment in the Anglican Ministry, according to William Graham Moeran due to ill-health, over the next twenty-five years, the Moerans built or bought as their homes a series of very large country houses – all of which included some kind of domestic staff. The terms of George Smeed's will had provided for the education of Ada Esther's children but this did not include post-education support. Thus, her decision to finance Moeran's career as a composer was hers alone and she must have been able to afford this. Wisely invested, Ada Esther's inheritance would have provided additional income for the Moerans and further enabled Ada Esther to afford the provision of support to her son. Although the life of a gentleman, financed by parents or other relatives, is a common feature of 1920s literature and happened quite often in reality, this is clearly not what Moeran's mother intended. As has been shown, her own education had included music – most probably playing the piano and singing, but also possibly composition – and she had also participated closely in Moeran's early education. His musical talent would probably have been evident to her and she must have been confident that, if released from financial concerns, Moeran would make good use of his abilities and the most of the opportunity she was providing.

The Composer Constructed

On his return to London, Moeran began to establish himself centrally in the musical life of the city. He also immersed himself in the creative and artistic milieu that formed during the years immediately following the end of the war. Moeran was part of a generation of artistic talent, born during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and who embraced a cultural freedom that was perhaps due in part to the changes brought about by the social upheaval consequent upon the global conflagration. With almost indecent haste, Moeran became part of this creative and social tumult of parties, concerts, recitals, readings and gatherings – employing what would now be called networking. He knew people – from his time at Uppingham School and the Royal College of Music, and from his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – and the people he knew, knew people themselves. In a very short space of time, Moeran's circle encompassed many of the prominent people in the artistic and creative world of 1920s London – names that are now redolent of the time, such as Augustus John, D. H. Lawrence, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Herbert Hughes, Arnold Bax, Jack Lindsay and the Sitwells.

Many of Moeran's musical activities in London are recorded in the archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – which are especially valuable in that they contain key information that establishes Moeran's locations on particular dates – and in newspapers and music periodicals. The Club Accounts Book for 1918-1923 records the dates on which Moeran's subscriptions were paid each year during that period and the address he was occupying at the time of payment. By combining all the available documentary evidence, a quite detailed record of Moeran's life and work from the beginning of 1920 may be reconstructed. His 1920 'Town' subscription had been paid on 9 January 1920³⁶³ and he gave his address as 110, Heath Street, Hampstead.³⁶⁴ The fact that he was willing to pay a 'Town' subscription strongly suggests that he was resident in London and intended to spend considerable time at the club.

³⁶³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 126

³⁶⁴ Possibly the address of his friend Lionel Jellinek

The archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* indicate that Moeran was a fully active member during the next ten years. His participation in the fortnightly musical soirées recommenced with the 465th programme on Thursday, 1 April 1920 – his first performing inclusion since December 1918.³⁶⁵ The programme followed the established format by beginning and ending with a chamber music work, which framed a central solo item and two sets of songs. The first item of the programme was the *Pianoforte Trio in A minor* by Tchaikovsky – in which Moeran took the piano part, with the violin part played by Walter Wilson Cobbett and the cello part played by Harold Thomas Triggs. Moeran also acted as accompanist for the two vocal sets – the first comprising songs by Debussy and Reynaldo Hahn and the second featuring songs by Purcell, A.F. Jones, Roger Quilter and Arthur Somervell. Moeran and Triggs completed the evening by playing the *Sonata for Pianoforte and Violoncello in A minor* by Grieg. From his extensive involvement in the programme and the technical challenges of some of the music performed, it may be readily appreciated that Moeran must have spent considerable time practising and rehearsing with those with whom he was playing. Although most of the performing members of the Club were amateur musicians, many professionals also played there regularly and the standard was very high indeed. The participation of W. W. Cobbett in the programme is significant corroboration for this. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, Cobbett was a very fine violinist and had studied with Joseph Dando. His enthusiasm for and dedication to chamber music would have ensured that these performances were as professional as possible. Harold Thomas Triggs also featured in many musical programmes and was an active member of the club for more than three decades.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 201

³⁶⁶ Triggs was elected to membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* in 1912 under the terms of ‘Rule IV’. This was the allowance for a proportion of the membership to be invited to join the club without the requirement to be a graduate of either Oxford or Cambridge University. The rule was: ‘Amateurs not being members of either University may be elected members of the Club, provided that the number of persons so elected shall not at any time exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members, of which one-half at least must possess special musical qualifications. Members elected under this Rule after January 1st, 1919, shall permanently pay a town member subscription; unless in any case the committee for special reasons decide otherwise’. Other members elected under Rule IV included: W. W. Cobbett, A. H. Betjeman, H. Heathcote Statham and Baron Frédéric d’Erlanger. Triggs was a member of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* committee in 1931 and was still participating in club musical programmes as a cellist until the outbreak of the Second World War. Census and National Archive records show that Triggs was born in Sussex in 1887, served with distinction in the Royal Sussex Regiment during the First World War, and died in Oxford in 1964.

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* was central to Moeran's developing career both as a musician and a composer in London during the 1920s. Primarily, it provided him with almost limitless opportunities for networking amongst the influential people of the day – whether musicians or not. As will be shown, Moeran became acquainted with numerous people that were eventually sufficiently prominent to be the subjects of published biographies, and many of these were members of the Club. Secondly, the Club was an environment within which the playing of music was of an importance equal to its social aspects. Moeran played and heard a sizeable repertoire of solo performances, song and chamber music – an experience that must have informed his own compositional style to a considerable extent and one that it would have been difficult for him to gain elsewhere. The unique nature of the Club – a group of intelligent and educated men, most of whom were members of the professions and many occupying senior positions in government, the law and the colonial service and those that were not professional musicians were amateurs of a very high standard – clearly accelerated Moeran's rise to prominence over a very short period of time. The Club archives contain much information that supports these assertions and they will continue to be referenced frequently throughout this chapter.

At the 466th Club programme a fortnight later on 15 April 1920,³⁶⁷ Moeran performed the central solo item, playing Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, and a few weeks later, at the 469th programme on 27 May,³⁶⁸ he gave the first performance of his recently composed *Theme and Variations in F minor*. During this period, Moeran was clearly spending considerable time at the Club – in the 'Suggestions Book', there is an entry dated 29 May 1920: '... that it should be possible for members to buy tobacco at the club', signed by Moeran.³⁶⁹ While this certainly constitutes evidence that Moeran was (or planned to be) on the premises for much of his time, as a suggestion, it didn't impress the committee; they responded that they doubted whether '...

³⁶⁷ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 202

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 206

³⁶⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.3, Suggestion Book 1900- ; Moeran seems to have taken up pipe smoking during his time in the army and kept the habit for the rest of his life. Lionel Hill mentions that fact several times in *Lonely Waters*.

there could be a sufficient market ...’ and that ‘... stocks could become very dry’. Moeran was again heavily involved in the 471st programme which took place on 24 June 1920.³⁷⁰ In addition to performing the central, solo items – two piano studies by Scarlatti and a *Choral-Prelude* by Bach (arr. Busoni) – he accompanied W. T. Ivimey who sang Moeran’s *A Cradle Song* and *A Dream of Death* in the first set of songs, and his Norfolk folksong arrangements *The Bold Richard*, *The Captain’s Apprentice* and *The Press-Gang* in the second set. The appearances in this programme of the Norfolk folksong arrangements and of *The Dream of Death* – a setting of a poem by Yeats – are significant. The performance of the folksong arrangements *The Bold Richard* and *The Press-Gang* pre-date the known first performances – by John Goss, accompanied by Hubert Foss – on 9 December 1923 at the Wigmore Hall in London.³⁷¹ The third Norfolk folksong arrangement, *The Captain’s Apprentice*, unlike the other two songs, was not included in the published *Six Norfolk Folk-Songs* of 1923. All three songs were published by Moeran in their original ‘as collected’ forms as part of *Songs Collected in Norfolk* in the December 1922 edition of the *Journal of the Folk Song Society*.³⁷² Interestingly, Moeran included two versions of *The Captain’s Apprentice*, one collected at Winterton in July 1915 and the other, without words, collected at Potter Heigham in October 1921. It may be reasonably presumed that the version sung at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* recital was the one from Winterton. It is impossible to be certain whether the arrangements performed at the recital were the same as those eventually published by Moeran three years later but their existence in June 1920 proves that Moeran had been engaged in the composition of arrangements of songs that he had collected some five years previously much earlier than had been thought. The performance of *The Dream of Death* appears to pre-date the composition of the song, in that the manuscript version now in the Lenton-Parr Library of the University of Melbourne is dated 1925. The first documented performance by John Goss – to whom the song is dedicated – took place in June 1925. It is likely, therefore, that this 1920 performance was of

³⁷⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 208

³⁷¹ *The Musical Standard*, (15 December 1923), 196

³⁷² Moeran (1922)

an earlier version of the song and that Moeran revised it for Goss a few years later. There is no evidence that connects Moeran and Goss as early as 1920.

During 1920, Moeran began composition studies with John Ireland. Although it has previously been assumed that these studies were at the Royal College of Music, this is unlikely since the college archives record that Moeran re-entered on 21 February 1921 and remained an enrolled student for just five weeks.³⁷³ In fact, according to both Moeran's and Ireland's reminiscences, many of the instruction sessions took place at Ireland's flat at Gunter Grove in Chelsea. In an interview in 1950, Moeran spoke about his time studying with Ireland and gave an impression of how the tutoring process worked in practice:

Ireland was a marvellous teacher and a good friend. It wasn't just a question of going to his studio for a few hours of lessons – he took a personal interest, and often I would go to him for tea and then continue with a lesson for the rest of the evening. He would even go to the extent of sending me home while an idea was still fresh in my mind, to rewrite and correct, and then, later in the same evening, I would go back to him...³⁷⁴

During the course of the year, Moeran moved from Hampstead to rooms at 20 Glebe Place,³⁷⁵ just off the King's Road, and a short distance from Ireland's flat. The anecdote related by Moeran and quoted above is brought to life by a glance at the London A-Z map and his walk to and from his teacher's flat can be readily visualised. John Ireland's interest in him clearly meant a great deal to Moeran and much was revealed by the younger man in an article he wrote about Ireland in the issue of *Monthly Musical Record* for March 1931. Ireland's influence is most easily observed in compositions of Moeran – most especially in some of the piano music – that actually quote from works by the older composer or use particular 'Irlandesque' elements. However, at a deeper level, the most profound influence Ireland exerted on Moeran was in imbuing a sense of the importance of detail. Throughout his composing life, Moeran was intensely self-critical and the creation of music was often a lengthy and laborious process. Each

³⁷³ Royal College of Music Students Register, No. 10 1911-1914, RCM Records & Archives MS P35.03, 3768

³⁷⁴ Quotation included in Senior (1950), 31

³⁷⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, Accounts 1918-1923

note or score marking had to be exactly correct and both necessary and precisely notated. The *Monthly Musical Record* article clarifies this:

[Ireland] has no use for padding in any form, and he does not consider a piece of work done with until the minutest detail has been scrutinised again, down to the last semiquaver rest and the smallest mark of phrasing and dynamics. ‘What about that sforzando?’ he will ask. ‘Have you thought carefully about it?’³⁷⁶

Moeran also enjoyed a rich and extensive social life. As mentioned above, his circle of friends and acquaintances quickly expanded to include many of the leading figures in the creative arts and it is worth taking a short diversion to examine how this came about, as Moeran’s social connections directly influenced the music he composed – for example, his friendship with the Belgian violinist Désirée Defauw eventually led to the composition of the *Violin Sonata in E minor*. One of the aspects of the *Moeran Myth*, fostered extensively by Lionel Hill in his book *Lonely Waters*, was that Moeran was ‘lovable’ and he is said to have had a natural ability to attract people. Hill was writing about the Moeran he knew during the 1940s, but the character portrayed is more suited to the younger man-about-music of the relaxed 1920s. An objective examination of Moeran as presented by Hill suggests an entirely different personality. Moeran of the 1940s is revealed by Hill to have been a rather unpleasant, socially inept and exploitative person who relied on his ability to manipulate people to his own advantage. However, the Moeran that Lionel Hill depicted so mistakenly was the product of events that, for the developing composer in 1920, still lay in the future. Much of what is known about Moeran as a man, rather than as a composer, during the 1920s comes from the biographies and autobiographies of many of the painters, writers, poets and other creative artists who themselves later became renowned, and with whom Moeran developed friendships. Moeran’s membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, together with his private income and military status³⁷⁷ would have facilitated his making the acquaintance of people who themselves knew people. The anecdote of Arnold Bax about the ‘Chelsea party’, presented and

³⁷⁶ E. J. Moeran, ‘John Ireland as a Teacher’, *Monthly Musical Record*, (March 1931)

³⁷⁷ Moeran relinquished his commission at the end of 1921 but retained the rank of Lieutenant thereafter – ‘London Gazette Supplement’, *The Times*, issue 42909, (Tuesday, 13 December 1921), 15

examined above, testifies to this. Amongst his close friends was the author and artist Robert Gibbings and during the summer of 1920, Moeran and Gibbings went on a motorcycle tour of France and Spain. In his biography of Gibbings, Martin J. Andrews writes:

Gibbings ... journeyed to the Pyrenees in a side-car belonging to his friend the composer E.J. Moeran. As a result of his army activities, Moeran was a passionate and expert motorcyclist and Gibbings accompanied him on this adventure just after he had composed his symphonic impression, *In the Mountain Country*.³⁷⁸

Andrews' biography provides no indication as to how Gibbings and Moeran became friends but their common Irish roots (Moeran and Gibbings each had ancestors that lived in Cork) and the fact that their fathers and grandfathers were Irish-Anglican clergymen may well have drawn them together. Robert Gibbings was fond of his glass – also from Martin J. Andrews' biography: '...Edward Gibbings [Robert Gibbings' father] was a staunch believer in temperance ... which perhaps accounts for Robert's rebellious nature and later love of good wines and whiskey'.³⁷⁹ However, perhaps most significantly was their common experiences during the First World War. The evidence of Moeran's gun-shot wound in the neck was presented in Chapter 3 and it seems that Gibbings had also received a bullet wound in the neck – which had led to his being invalided home. It is likely that once they had met, these shared experiences would have established a bond that led fairly quickly to close friendship.³⁸⁰ It is probable that the motorcycle tour with Gibbings took place during August or September 1920 – after his appearance at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme on 24 June, Moeran did not participate in another musical evening until the 477th programme on 28 October 1920.

³⁷⁸ Martin J. Andrews *The Life and Work of Robert Gibbings*, (Primrose Hill Press, Bicester 2003), 53

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 75

³⁸⁰ According to the introduction to a catalogue of Robert Gibbings wood engravings that was held at the Blonde Fine Art Gallery in London 4-25 March 1990, Gibbings saw a clear parallel between his engravings and music – and this may have been a result of his association with Moeran. The introduction says: 'As an artist [Gibbings] work between 1919 and 1930 established him as one of the most original wood engravers of his time. His interpretation of the strong light and shade he found in buildings in snow or strong sunlight, although paralleled by Wadsworth, was a personal discovery. His use of them to build a rhythm of black and white rectangles which he likened to musical chords, resulted in a series of prints in the early twenties which established him among the first rank of British wood engravers in this century'.

In the Mountain Country?

The quotation above from Martin J. Andrews' biography of Gibbings comes from Gibbings' own book *Coming Down the Wye*, which begins thus:

Once upon a time I travelled to the Pyrenees with E. J. Moeran, in the side-car of his motor bike. He had recently composed his symphonic impression, *In the Mountain Country*, and no doubt crystallizations of this work were appearing constantly before his eyes. My thoughts were of a more mathematical nature. While his vision was carrying him in harmonies from peak to peak, from waterfall to waterfall, and from sunlit mist to vaporous shadow, my whole interest was centred on determining how long it would take a falling body to reach the bottom of a three-thousand foot abyss, accelerating at the standard rate of thirty-two feet per second per second, in accordance with Sir Isaac Newton's law of gravitation. Moeran was driving the machine, and I was in the side-car, and invariably the side-car seemed to be on the outer side of the road. There are few protecting walls on those high mountain passes. You just get a clear, uninterrupted view to the very bottom.³⁸¹

Leaving aside Gibbings' fear for his very life, his suggestion that Moeran's thoughts – derived from the composition of *In the Mountain Country* – were fixated on peaks and waterfalls indicates a problem with the work, which will be examined shortly. In the meanwhile, it is apparent that *In the Mountain Country* was essentially complete by the time of Gibbings' and Moeran's departure for the Pyrenees. Although the work was not performed until a Royal College of Music Patrons' Fund Concert in the November of the following year, there are sufficient references in various sources to Moeran's presence in various locations during the summer of 1921 to make it reasonable to assert that the France/Spain motorcycle tour did not take place at that time. Thus, *In the Mountain Country* was probably composed before the middle of 1920 at the very latest.

One of the first observations that may be made about the work is that it is very assured to be, apparently, the first orchestral composition by a composer whose mature works up to that point had been solo piano pieces, songs and a string quartet. In Moeran's chronological list of surviving compositions, *In the Mountain Country* stands out as an exception to such an extent that one is inevitably led to suppose that he must have worked on other orchestral or large ensemble compositions – both during his two years at the Royal College of Music and his

³⁸¹ Robert Gibbings, *Coming Down the Wye*, (Dent, London, 1947), 1-2

private studies with John Ireland – and which he later destroyed or have otherwise not survived. While the piece is not without flaws, the evident mastery of orchestral technique shown by Moeran’s scoring – especially in the central, fast section – surely cannot be the result of a first attempt in the genre. The instrumental contrast and combination and the juxtaposition of various ensembles within and across orchestral families reveal a capacity for fine textural judgement – again, something that comes with practice, rather than appearing spontaneously or serendipitously. The work is in a ternary ‘slow/fast/slow’ form but one in which the basic elements of sonata form – exposition, development and recapitulation – may be identified. As with many of Moeran’s works, the underlying structure reveals much thought and careful attention to detail. The aurally perceived result is a generally satisfying ‘impression’ that was enthusiastically received by audiences at numerous performances during the 1920s. However, a close examination of the manuscript score reveals an interesting and informative detail. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the original title of the work was *Cushinsheeaun* and that this was later changed on the score to *In the Mountain Country*.³⁸² It was shown in Chapter 3 that at least the first sketches for *In the Mountain Country* were probably made as long as two years before the apparent completion date. It was also clearly shown in Chapter 3 that Moeran had very light duties, if any at all, during the period of his being stationed in Ireland and it is certain that he spent much time composing. As has also been shown in the case of the *Three Piano Pieces*, one at least of which was completed while he was in Ireland in 1919, Moeran was profoundly affected by rural landscapes. Indeed, it has been suggested by Fabian Huss that his very ability to compose to his own satisfaction eventually became dependent to a large extent upon the appropriateness of his environment.³⁸³ This is also reflected in the titles of some of his works. For most of Moeran’s extant compositions, the titles were either dictated by the words being set – in the case of songs and folksong arrangements, or the genre – for example *String Quartet in*

³⁸² *In the Mountain Country* bears a dedication to Sir Hamilton Harty, although this was added in 1924 – as will be shown later in this chapter.

³⁸³ Huss (2009)

A minor. However, for a small number of pieces, the title has an environmental association and is possibly an indication of where the work was either composed or conceived.³⁸⁴

Other commentators have not been complimentary about *In the Mountain Country*. For example, Geoffrey Self dismissed it as derivative ‘nature-worship’ and stated that its principal ideas are ‘dull’. He went on:

... Moeran aspires to mountain music and his earth-bound and wooden little tune does not have within it the potential for ecstasy inherent in [for example] the *Song of the High Hills* and thus can never soar to reach that rapt contemplation of nature in solitary splendour which we would reasonably expect from the title.³⁸⁵

However, Self also stated: ‘... as a student work, its orchestral assurance is astonishing, showing itself in an adventurousness, a willingness to use open, spare textures, with little *fail-safe* doubling’.³⁸⁶ While, there is no doubt that the orchestration does owe some debt to both Sibelius and Ravel, its accomplishment is unmistakable and as an early orchestral work by a young composer that had apparently little experience in the technique, it is, as Self suggested, astonishing. Having made this acknowledgement, Self’s earlier criticism of the work as ‘dull’ is therefore difficult to understand. The only explanation is that, like Robert Gibbings, Self took the title *In the Mountain Country* literally and probably had a mental image and expectation possibly more like the Swiss alps or the Scottish mountains, both which are far removed from the undulating moorland countryside that surrounds Cushinsheeaun and which Moeran’s music was perhaps intended to evoke.

It is not known for certain when and why Moeran changed the title of the work but its first performance at the Royal College of Music Patrons’ Fund Concert may have provided that opportunity. The work is certainly billed in the programme as *In the Mountain Country*, so the decision to change the title must have been made prior to that date.³⁸⁷ It is possible that Moeran considered the earlier title to be too obscure for a London audience, or possibly that having

³⁸⁴ The complete list is: *Fields at Harvest, In the Mountain Country, On a May Morning, Stalham River, Windmills, Lonely Waters* and *Summer Valley*

³⁸⁵ Self (1986), 33

³⁸⁶ *ibid.*

³⁸⁷ (see footnote 382)

made the decision to abandon Ireland at the beginning of the previous year he wanted to remove the specific Irish association. However, the retitling does perhaps imply a grandeur that the music fails to deliver fully when compared with other ‘mountain music’. As well as the *Song of the High Hills* by Delius mentioned by Self, another example is Hamish MacCunn’s *Land of the Mountain and the Flood*, composed in 1887 and which successfully conjures visions of cloudy, snow-covered ‘Munro’ peaks in all their magnificence.

After returning from his motorcycle tour of France and Spain, Moeran was back at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* for the 477th programme on Thursday 28 October.³⁸⁸ Again, he took a major role, playing in four of the five items presented. He accompanied D. J. Wardley in a set of songs by Roger Quilter; he undertook the central, solo spot – performing the piano pieces *The Holy Boy* and *Fire of Spring* by John Ireland, followed by his own *At a Horse Fair*, he again accompanied D. J. Wardley in songs by John Ireland and H. Walford Davies. Finally, he and Harold Triggs played the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* by Delius. Again, such a varied and extensive programme must have required considerable rehearsal and practice time.

1920 had been a particularly fruitful first year for Moeran. In addition to the works mentioned above, he had composed the song-cycle *Ludlow Town* to words from A. E. Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*, the songs *Twilight* – a setting of a poem by John Masefield, and *Spring goeth all in white* – a setting of a poem by Robert Bridges. The dates of these works are taken from the manuscript scores held in the Moeran archive at the University of Melbourne.³⁸⁹ He had also worked on a *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano* and probably several other compositions that have, for various reasons, not survived. As has been shown, it is unlikely that *In the Mountain Country* came into existence without any previous attempts at orchestration and orchestral composition, so it is probable that the known and extant works represent only a part of his output for the year.

³⁸⁸ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 216

³⁸⁹ *E. J. Moeran Collection*, Lenton-Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library, University of Melbourne, Catalogue made by Stephanie Brown, 2009

The Composer Established

On 10 January 1921, Moeran paid his annual ‘Town’ subscription of four guineas for his continued membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, giving as his address, 20, Glebe Place, Chelsea, SW3.³⁹⁰ As was the case the previous year, although Moeran spent part of his time living at his parents’ home in Bacton-on-sea, his payment of the full ‘Town’ rate indicates that he regarded London as his place of work and residence. As shown above, the address was a mews flat a short distance from John Ireland’s home in Chelsea. It was also not far from the Royal College of Music – at which he re-enrolled on 21 February.³⁹¹ However, he remained enrolled at the college for just over five weeks, leaving on 2 April. It is not clear exactly why Moeran decided to discontinue at the college – possibly lack of time and the realisation that he could continue his studies with John Ireland privately were the principal factors.

There are four extant compositions that are thought to have been composed by Moeran during 1921.³⁹² These are three piano pieces: *On a May Morning*, *Toccata* and *Stalham River*, and the *String Quartet in A minor*, and under close examination they all reveal the distinct influence of John Ireland. However, it is reasonable to suppose that these four works are not the only music that Moeran produced during the year – which the evidence shows was, again, a busy one for him both musically and socially. The records of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* indicate that Moeran made extensive use of his membership. He participated in four Thursday evening programmes during the year and he is recorded on 4 May 1921 as endorsing a suggestion that the book containing members’ names and addresses should be more easily available in the club sitting room.³⁹³ At the 490th programme on 5 May, Moeran and Harold Triggs performed the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* by Delius.³⁹⁴ A fortnight later in the

³⁹⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 149

³⁹¹ Royal College of Music Students Register, No. 10 1911-1914, RCM Records & Archives MS P35.03, 3768

³⁹² According to MSS and publication dates

³⁹³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.3, Suggestion Book 1900-

³⁹⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 232

491st programme on 19 May,³⁹⁵ Moeran performed Ravel's *Sonatine* as the central solo item.³⁹⁶ He took a more major role in the 493rd programme on 16 June,³⁹⁷ playing piano pieces by John Ireland (*The Towing Path*), Frank Bridge (*Fireflies*) and Eugene Goossens (*The Clockwork Dancer* and *Punch and Judy*) as the central solo items. He also accompanied Capt. E. Meldal in two sets of songs: *Volksleichen*, *Seit ich ihn gesehen* and *Allnächtlich* by Schumann in the first set, and *Lisette* by J.B. Weckerlin and *O Mistress Mine* and *Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind* by Roger Quilter in the second. Later in the year, at the 500th anniversary programme on 27 October,³⁹⁸ Moeran again performed the central solo item, playing piano pieces by Scarlatti (*Sonata in F major*), Brahms (*Intermezzo in B flat minor*) and his own *Toccata*. The Club also marked its twenty-first anniversary on Wednesday 23 November with a celebration dinner at Oddenino's Imperial Restaurant in Regent Street. Moeran participated in the after-dinner musical programme,³⁹⁹ accompanying W. T. Ivimey who again sang some of Moeran's *Norfolk Folksong Arrangements* – including *The Bold Richard*, *The Captain's Apprentice* and *The Pressgang*. Moeran's musical involvement in both these events suggests the degree of esteem with which he was probably regarded as a musician by the club membership.

Another String Quartet

Examining Moeran's activities and documented movements during 1921, it seems likely that he completed the composition of the *String Quartet in A minor* during the summer months – most probably in July and August. There is evidence that suggests that he spent several weeks living at his parents' home at Bacton-on-sea: a) the manuscript of the piano piece *Stalham River* is marked 'Bacton, Norfolk, September 1921', and b) there are records of his folk-song collecting in both Norfolk and Suffolk in September and October 1921.⁴⁰⁰ However, he may well have begun the composition earlier in the year while he was still officially a member of the Royal

³⁹⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 233

³⁹⁶ Moeran had previously performed the Ravel *Sonatine* at the 412th programme on 15 November 1917

³⁹⁷ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 236

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 244

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 247

⁴⁰⁰ Moeran (1922)

College of Music. The *String Quartet in A minor* was certainly not Moeran's first venture into the genre. It was shown earlier that he composed a number of string quartets either while still at school or during his first period of study at the RCM and it was conjectured that each of the movements of the *String Quartet in E flat* were probably also composed a few years before the A minor quartet. Thus, when Moeran embarked on this work, he was fully familiar with the genre – both creatively and from the point of view of knowing the repertoire. On listening to the quartet, the most immediate impact is its apparent debt to the *String Quartet in F major* by Maurice Ravel. This work was a favourite of the various string quartets that were played at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* and it is probable that Moeran knew it intimately. Certain stylistic aspects of the work would have struck Moeran and fixed themselves in his musical memory – either consciously or subconsciously. Ravel's extensive use of secondary harmony would have immediately attracted Moeran's attention and the almost orchestral texture would have impressed Moeran by its impression of fullness. A full analysis of the *String Quartet in A minor* is not in the scope of this thesis but an example will suffice to illustrate the extent to which Moeran emulated Ravel's instrumental textures. At the opening of the first movement, the two violins are cast in an accompanying role with shimmering tremolos that carry the harmonic duty for the first dozen or so bars, while the first subject is presented both in the cello and the viola:

Allegro ♩ = 92

The musical score consists of six staves. The top two staves (Violin I and Violin II) play a continuous sixteenth-note pattern with sixths, marked *mp*. The third staff (Violin III) also plays a similar pattern, marked *mp* and *pizz.*. The fourth staff (Viola) is mostly silent, with a few notes in the later measures, marked *mf* and *arco*. The fifth staff (Cello) plays a slower, more melodic line with triplets, marked *mf* and *pizz.*. The sixth staff (Double Bass) plays a similar line with triplets, marked *mf* and *arco*. The tempo is marked Allegro with a quarter note equal to 92 beats per minute.

Ex. 37 *String Quartet in A minor* – first movement, bars 1-16

This texture has several parallels in the Ravel quartet, for example, the first movement second subject at bar 55:

Ex. 38 Ravel – *String Quartet in F major* – first movement, bars 55-64

If the hypothesis about the *String Quartet in E flat* presented in Chapter 3 is correct, then the E flat quartet must predate the *String Quartet in A minor*. The hypothesis may therefore be tested either by establishing that the compositional style of the A minor quartet is consistent with its being a later work, or by demonstrating that the circumstances of its composition must place its genesis at a later date. As has been asserted, the A minor quartet is heavily influenced by the Ravel F major quartet and this does not seem to be the case with the E flat quartet. The A minor quartet is dedicated to Désirée Defauw, the Belgian violinist with whom Moeran had

become friends at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. Moeran's admiration of Defauw – and perhaps his gratitude to him – is clearly shown by the dedication not only of the A minor quartet but also of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor*, which Moeran composed in 1922. It is possible that Moeran became acquainted with Defauw as early as 1915, when the latter first began performing at the Club. Defauw, along with several other Belgian musicians had been stranded in London at the time of the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914 and the Club had provided a musical refuge.⁴⁰¹ However, as has been shown, Moeran paid an 'army' subscription for each of the years 1915, 1916 and 1917, and the evidence provided by the Thursday evening programmes – that is to say, Moeran's absence from these – suggests that he did not spend much time actually at the Club premises during these years.⁴⁰² It is therefore more probable that Moeran became friends with Defauw after he resumed regular attendance at the Club – which would have been from November 1918 onwards. Thus the dedication to Defauw and the dependency upon the Ravel model strongly suggest that the A minor quartet was composed after the E flat quartet – and since the A minor quartet is known from the date on the manuscript score to have been completed in 1921, the hypothesis of the earlier dating of the E flat quartet is accordingly further supported.

Moeran also spent some time during the autumn of 1921 on further folk-song collecting expeditions in East Anglia. The evidence from his own notebooks and from the material that he submitted for publication by the Folksong Society shows that amongst the places that he visited were Potter Heigham, Hickling and East Stoneham.⁴⁰³ Moeran also spent considerable time in London as there were several recitals featuring his music and he performed at two *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* evenings. An announcement on page 16 of the issue of *The Times*

⁴⁰¹ 'One weekly engagement I enjoyed in the early 1900s was the Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club in a lovely house in Bedford Square. The Club was open daily for ensemble playing and the delight of reading music at sight ... Early in the War many Belgian refugees came to England. Among them was a most excellent violinist Désiré Defauw, and a fine cellist, Emile Doehard, and Joseph Jongen, a composer and pianist and head of the Liège Conservatoire. I joined with these three to form the Belgian Piano Quartet', Lionel Tertis, *My Viola and I*, (Paul Elek, London, 1974), 27

Defauw, Doehard and Jongen were made Honorary Members of the Club in 1915; Graham Thorne (ed.), *The Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club: An 80th Anniversary History*, (Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club, London, 1980), 16

⁴⁰² According to the Club archives, Moeran was absent between 26 February 1914 and 2 August 1917, *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967

⁴⁰³ Moeran (1922)

dated 10 October 1921 suggested that Miss Dorothea Vincent would be giving the first performance of Moeran's *Theme and Variations in F minor* at the Wigmore Hall the following Friday afternoon. Indeed, Miss Vincent did perform the work as announced and *The Times* music critic duly gave his opinion:

We did not make out Mr Moeran's music. It seemed as if it demanded the orchestra; for when the seven diatonic notes are sounded together it is obvious that some of them are substantive and intended, therefore, to be louder than others which are passing notes, and this distinction is easy for the orchestra, but difficult for fingers to make. Still, that the effect was a little 'muddy' did not seem to be any fault of the player; on the contrary, one was surprised that it came out as clearly as it did.⁴⁰⁴

As has been shown however, Moeran himself had given the first performance of the *Theme and Variations* at an *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* recital the previous year.⁴⁰⁵ As the work was not published until 1923, it must be presumed that both performances were from the manuscript score and it is interesting to speculate whether Moeran had made any revisions to the version he had himself played some eighteen months earlier. The work as it now stands is reminiscent of the piano music of John Ireland. In April 1920, Moeran had only been studying with Ireland for a few weeks – so it is possible that the Ireland influence was still embryonic at that time. However, more relevantly and as had been shown, Moeran performed some of Ireland's piano music at the Club during 1921 – so it is clear that his familiarity with his teacher's style must have been greater than a year or so earlier.

During 1921, Moeran must also have worked further on his *Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano*. A short item on page 16 of the issue of the *Observer* newspaper dated 13 November 1921 reported on a Wigmore Hall recital given the previous day by the *Harmonic Trio* – Dorothea Walenn (violin), Edith Vance ('cello) and Olive Byrne (piano) – at which was performed 'a new work by E. J. Moeran'. The report went on:

... [the work] proved to be rather too dependent on rhythmical considerations, so that the lengthy slow movement loses interest, and the whole trio, which is in modern vein, and couched in the language with which John Ireland's chamber music has made us familiar,

⁴⁰⁴ 'Miss Dorothea Vincent's Recital', *The Times*, issue 42852, (Saturday, 15 October 1921), 8

⁴⁰⁵ (see page 202)

does not grip very well. But the composer has ideas not without originality, and if he can develop them into more closely knit movements, with a power in them other than that of rhythm alone, he will produce some strong work one day.⁴⁰⁶

Moeran evidently took these criticisms on board and over the next three years, he revised the trio substantially. The original version, as performed by the *Harmonic Trio*, is no longer extant.

It is reasonable to suppose that Moeran was present at the Wigmore Hall recital on 12 November and that he remained in London for the next two or three weeks. As was shown above, on 23 November Moeran attended the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* twenty-first anniversary dinner and the next day, on 24 November, he conducted the first performance of *In the Mountain Country* at the Royal College of Music Patrons' Fund Concert.⁴⁰⁷ Finally, on 1 December, Moeran's recently composed short piano work *On a May Morning* was played by Mr Howard-Jones at another Wigmore Hall recital.⁴⁰⁸

As was the case with 1920, 1921 had been a good year for Moeran. In addition to the works mentioned above, he had completed two more piano works, *Stalham River* and *Toccata*. According to the original published score, *Stalham River* was composed at Bacton in September 1921 and was titled *Ballade for Pianoforte*. The change of name was made for the published edition of 1924 and is probably another example of Moeran's wish to establish rural credentials for his music. Similarly to the *Theme and Variations* mentioned above, *Stalham River* is heavily influenced by the piano music of John Ireland. *Toccata* is also heavily indebted stylistically to John Ireland and harmonically to Delius and contains at least three distinct folksong-style tunes – each of which appears to be original. The tunes are disguised within the overall arrangement and stand out only if emphasised as such in performance. However, they contribute to a more traditional impression than that evoked by *Stalham River*. As a composition, *Toccata* was the most advanced work Moeran had composed (of those that have survived) up to the end of 1921. It has a fast/slow/fast ternary form with a short coda based on

⁴⁰⁶ 'The Harmonic Trio', *The Observer*, (13 November 1921), 16

⁴⁰⁷ 'Concerts – The Royal College of Music', *The Times*, issue 42885, (Wednesday, 23 November 1921), 8

⁴⁰⁸ 'Mr Howard-Jones's Recital', *The Times*, issue 42894, (Saturday, 3 December 1921), 8

the opening few bars. However, it is the *Andante con moto* central section that is the most impressive and while the influence of Ireland and Delius is undoubted, a distinctive individual sound is beginning to emerge. The appeal of the *Observer* reviewer for ‘more closely knit movements’ (quoted above) certainly seems to have been satisfied by *Toccata* and also, perhaps, by *Stalham River*.

Consolidation

Compared with 1920 and 1921, there is relatively little archival material that enables Moeran’s activities during 1922 to be traced with certainty. On 8 February, he paid the ‘Country’ subscription of one and a half guineas for continuing membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – giving as the address, his parents’ home, *Cliff House*, in Bacton.⁴⁰⁹ This suggests that Moeran did not intend to spend as much time in London that year as he had the previous two years. One of the recurring issues of his composing life was that ‘peace and quiet’ was essential for him to ‘think out his tunes’ and with his increasing output of music, perhaps he felt that he would be more successful away from London more of the time. However, the Club archives record that Moeran was present at events during the first few months of the year. He performed at the 507th Thursday Evening Programme on 9 February,⁴¹⁰ playing the *Sonata for Piano in F, No.12* by Mozart,⁴¹¹ as the central solo item and then again at the 515th Programme on 1 June,⁴¹² in which he accompanied Harold Triggs in further performance of the Delius *Cello Sonata*. Between these dates, Moeran was certainly on the Club premises in Bedford Square, London on 8 March – when he attended the Annual General Meeting and proposed a special vote of thanks to Dr Horace Abel for the sterling work he performed for the Club⁴¹³ – and he

⁴⁰⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 191

⁴¹⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 253

⁴¹¹ Moeran later recalled this performance in one of the first letters he wrote to Peers Coetmore, soon after their meeting in 1943. Moeran’s performing ability at the time may be judged by the anecdote in which he says that the person turning the pages in the Mozart piano sonata was not very competent but it didn’t really matter since Moeran knew the sonata from memory.

⁴¹² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 263

⁴¹³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.2, General Meeting Minutes 1899-1939

was also there on 8 April, when he noted in the *Club Suggestions Book* that the sustaining pedal on one of the practice pianos needed attention.⁴¹⁴ Finally, at the end of March, Moeran was co-opted onto the Club Music Sub-Committee – which advised on and managed the musical activities, including the coordination of the recitals repertoire and the maintenance of the music library.⁴¹⁵ Moeran served on this committee for the next four or five years, for a while acting as its chairman. Philip Heseltine, in his 1926 essay on Moeran also records that the composer took part in the 1922 *Motor-Cycling Club* London to Land's End trial – which took place over the Easter weekend (15-16 April 1922).⁴¹⁶ Indeed, Heseltine notes that Moeran gained a Gold Medal for the event.⁴¹⁷

Apart from these distractions, Moeran's plans for spending periods of quiet in the country in order to compose appear to have been disrupted by his parents' decision to sell their house in Bacton and to move to The Old Rectory in Laverton, near Bath.⁴¹⁸ The decision to sell *Cliff House* – which was announced in *The Times* newspaper⁴¹⁹ – may be accounted for by a close examination of contemporary maps of the area. Comparing the location of the North Walsham cliff-top coastline as it was when the house was built in 1914 with the location in 1922, reveals that a considerable amount of erosion had occurred and that, consequently, the house was now much nearer the cliff edge than it had been eight years earlier. It is possible that the Moerans took note of this and decided to realise the value of their property before its endangered location

⁴¹⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.3, Suggestion Book 1900-

⁴¹⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.4, Committee Minute Book 1907-1929

⁴¹⁶ The Land's End Trial, as it is now known, was established in 1908 by the then president of the Motor Cycling Club Charles Jarrott and, with breaks of a few years during each of the two world wars, has been run every year since. The Jarrott Cup was presented to the overall winner and Gold Medals were awarded to competitors who completed the London to Land's End course and who successfully negotiated the defined test sections. In the decades before the Second World War, the conditions of the roads leading to the far south-west of England gradually deteriorated as the distance from London grew, and by the time competitors reached Somerset and Devon, the event was a true test of man and machine.

⁴¹⁷ Heseltine (1926), 8. Moeran's achievement of being awarded a Gold Medal proves him to have been a motorcyclist of exceptional skill. According to the report in *The Times*, the weather conditions that year were particularly poor: 'Owing to the bad weather of the previous days, which had left the route beyond Beggar's Roost in an almost impassable state, the road had to be changed at the last minute ...'; 'London to Land's End Trial: Heavy Test of Man and Machine', *The Times*, issue 43012, (22 April 1922), 6

⁴¹⁸ Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1923, (Horace Cox, London, 1923), 978

⁴¹⁹ 'Messrs. Marten and Carnaby (New Bridge Street and Dulwich) have sold Cliff Home, Bacton-on-Sea, Norfolk, with 2 ¾ acres, before auction' – from 'The Estate Market', *The Times*, issue 43011, (21 April 1922), 4

reduced its life expectancy much further.⁴²⁰ However, retreating as far as Somerset would seem to be excessive! In any case, Moeran had to adjust himself to a new home location and a different railway route into ‘Town’.

In the meanwhile, Moeran’s music was beginning to be performed abroad. The above-mentioned Mr Howard-Jones was engaged to give piano recitals of music by living British composers in several European capital cities, and he included on his programme two pieces by Moeran – *On a May Morning* and *Theme and Variations*. The exact dates of the recitals and the names of all the cities in which he played are not known, but the *Musical Times* reports that one recital took place in Amsterdam in January,⁴²¹ and another in Paris in March.⁴²²

The only other reference to Moeran’s activities during the remainder of 1922 is his appearance at a Royal College of Music Patrons’ Fund Rehearsal Concert on 22 June, in which his *First Rhapsody* was the last item on the programme. There was a brief report in *The Times*:

The new music brought forward at the Patron’s Fund public rehearsal at the Royal College of Music yesterday was hardly so interesting as usual. There was decided promise in a Rhapsody by E. J. Moeran though more or a technical than inventive nature. Certainly the music was well-made and well-orchestrated, but the actual thematic material seemed to reflect the folk-song influence in a too conscious and artificial manner to sound convincing.⁴²³

Moeran must have composed this work during the last few months of 1921 and the first months of 1922 and, stylistically, it appears to follow on quite naturally from *In the Mountain Country*. It was, as was shown above, inspired as a work by the earlier example of Vaughan Williams – *Norfolk Rhapsody* – and it follows in the tradition of other similar orchestral ‘rhapsody’-type works composed during the first two decades of the twentieth century, such as Holst’s *Somerset Rhapsody* and George Butterworth’s *Rhapsody A Shropshire Lad*. It is on a larger scale than *In the Mountain Country* and demonstrates even further that Moeran was

⁴²⁰ The Norfolk coastal erosion did continue over the years but the Moerans’ house actually survived long enough to gain the protection of the coastal defences that were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. As of August 2013, the house remains and is the residence of the owner-managers of a holiday park.

⁴²¹ ‘Musical Notes from Abroad’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 63, No. 948 (1 February 1922), 130

⁴²² ‘Musical Notes from Abroad’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 63, No. 950 (1 April 1922), 280

⁴²³ ‘New British Music’, *The Times*, issue 43065, (23 June 1922), 7

confident working with orchestral forces in an almost symphonic genre. The work occupies its position in Moeran's stylistic evolution well as it develops further the harmonic and rhythmic ideas that he had begun to explore in the *String Quartet in A minor* and the two piano works *Toccata* and *Stalham River*. Several themes that are reminiscent of folksong are used and, again, all – as far as can be ascertained – are original.⁴²⁴ According to Rhoderick McNeill, on the first few hearings of the work, 'critics believed that Moeran has used some Norfolk folksongs as [the] basis for [the] *First Rhapsody*' and this 'incorrect observation ... demonstrated how thoroughly Moeran had assimilated many of the stylistic characteristics of folk songs into his personal melodic idiom'.⁴²⁵ McNeill's implication is that folksong had become one of the principal influences underpinning Moeran's evolving musical style and this may be tested by examining the proportion of his compositions that actually do include melodies that are reminiscent of folksong. Of the works mentioned thus far in this study – excluding the *Norfolk Folk Song Arrangements* – no fewer than three quarters of them contain melodies that exhibit characteristics of folksong.⁴²⁶ Moreover, this continued throughout his composing career – of the approximately one hundred and ten catalogued works by Moeran, folksong-style melodies are used as principal themes in more than half the works, and all are, as far as can be determined, original.⁴²⁷ This represents an impressive feat of invention that sets Moeran's melodic imagination apart from many of his contemporaries. When Vernon Lee

⁴²⁴ Given that there are tens of thousands of individual folk songs that have been collected in England and catalogued over the past one hundred and twenty years, and that such thematic databases as have been compiled (such as *Themefinder* <http://www.themefinder.org>) are selective in those that are included, stating categorically that the thematic material in the *First Rhapsody* is original, is not possible. However, since the work was composed in 1922, no scholar or writer on Moeran has yet managed to identify a catalogued folk song as a model for any of the themes.

⁴²⁵ McNeill (1983), 65

⁴²⁶ The characteristics of folksong are many and varied and have been examined and described in numerous scholarly writings. A detailed exposition on English folksong is beyond the scope of this thesis. In the case of Moeran's *First Rhapsody* and other works, the observations that some of the thematic material is reminiscent of folksong is derived primarily from contemporary critical comment and not subjected to further analysis.

The many treatises on English, British, European and World folk music include: Maud Karpeles, Peter Kennedy (ed.) *An Introduction to English Folk Song*, (Oxford Paperbacks, Oxford 1987), Britta Sweers, *Electric Folk: The Changing Face of English Traditional Music*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004), Jan Ling, *A History of European Folk Music*, (University of Rochester Press, Rochester NY, 1997) – this last contains a comprehensive bibliography. For an examination of specific musical characteristics of English folk music, see Cecil J. Sharp, 'Some Characteristics of English Folk-Music', *Folklore*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (30 June 1908), 132-152

⁴²⁷ These statistics exclude those compositions that are based on collected folksongs – such as the Norfolk, Suffolk and County Kerry folksong arrangements, the piano folksong arrangements *The White Mountain* and *Irish Love Song*, and other songs and choral music (for example: *The Sailor and Young Nancy*, *The Jolly Carter*, *Christmas Day in the Morning* and *Ivy and Holly*)

Yenne asserted mistakenly that Moeran was principally a composer of songs, he was missing the obvious – that Moeran was a composer of melody. Melody was the most prominent feature of Moeran's compositional process – his letters contain frequent references to ‘themes’ and ‘tunes’. In a letter written to Peers Coetmore dated Kenmare, 20 October 1943, he wrote – referring to a proposed cello concerto: ‘I have started thinking out themes for you, & I must go on before I leave my beloved Kerry’.⁴²⁸ Moreover, in the Irish radio interview, when asked what he was planning to do next, Moeran answered:

Well for the immediate future I'm planning a new symphony. I've just been down in County Kerry, Kenmare, and transport is difficult but I'm making plans to try and get back there, and I'm planning a new symphony that I've been commissioned to write by John Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra. I want to write this symphony about the mountains of Kerry and I'm planning to get back there and walk the mountains and think out the themes and try and get on with the work, and get it done.⁴²⁹

Thematic originality was paramount to Moeran and any new work began with the tunes. However, he was not merely a tune-writer; rather his tunes provided the raw material for a sophisticated composing style that, while it drew on many influencing resources, may be considered truly original in the results it produced. This melodic creativity may have had its origin in the hours and days that Moeran spent at the piano with song-books such as *Ships, Sea-songs & Shanties* and the *National Song Book*. Objectively considered, the quality of some of his themes was better than others, but his ability to create numerous original melodies and to capture a folksong idiom in many of them was prodigious.

A Masterpiece?

Although Moeran's activity during the latter part of 1922 has mostly not been recorded, it is likely that he remained active musically in London and that he continued his social life, centred primarily on his musical friends and acquaintances. It is also very evident that he worked diligently on composition – completing several more works. The titles of the piano works

⁴²⁸ Letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 20 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 415-416

⁴²⁹ A recording of the interview is at <http://www.moeran.net/Writing/Radio-Interview.html> (accessed 1 January 2013) and this transcript is taken from that.

Three Fancies: Windmills, Elegy and Burlesque suggest a variety of sources of inspiration and do not immediately indicate that they were composed as a set. There is nothing thematically within the pieces that links them and it may be supposed that the collection was ad hoc, rather than contrived. *Windmills*, of course, may be thought of as a representation of the many working and ruined windmills that peppered the Norfolk landscape at the time Moeran was travelling around the country on his folksong collecting expeditions. However, the main work that Moeran composed during the latter months of 1922 was the *Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte in E minor*. As has been shown, this violin sonata was neither the first nor the only work for this instrumental combination that was composed by Moeran. In his 1924 *Music Bulletin* essay, Philip Heseltine had referred to ‘... three or four predecessors of the form lying in manuscript ...’⁴³⁰ and, as was shown above, a violin sonata was performed at the Wigmore Hall on 10 May 1919.

The *Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte in E minor* was subjected to a brief description and analysis by Geoffrey Self in *The Music of E J Moeran*⁴³¹ and a slightly more extended analysis is provided by Rhoderick McNeill in his *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E J Moeran*.⁴³² The work is variously described in these writings as ‘angry’, having a ‘thrusting passion’ or ‘impetuosity’, ‘complex and energetic’ and ‘Moeran’s first real masterpiece’. However, if anger is perceived in the sonata, so may calm – and, indeed, numerous other emotional responses. There are periods of evident unrest but all are resolved either with a peaceful moment or by an equally energetic but optimistic climax. This author’s principal emotional response on listening to the sonata is certainly not anger – rather a vigorous determination that culminates in exuberant triumph. As regards the work being a masterpiece, certainly it is structurally very satisfying. Apart from a number of places where the harmonic momentum seems to get a bit lost, there is no sense of being let down or of incompleteness. Of course, these are subjective responses but part of the purpose of structure in music is to guide

⁴³⁰ Heseltine (June 1924), 173

⁴³¹ Self (1986), 36-39

⁴³² McNeill (1983), 68-71

the listener, to provide reference points in creating an ordered sequence of events as the music progresses – expectations are generated and are satisfyingly fulfilled.

But is it Moeran's 'first real masterpiece'? A masterpiece is usually defined as the most accomplished work of an artist – the achievement of a lifetime's creative effort. Alternatively, a masterpiece could be an exceptionally good piece of creative work. Since the sonata was composed in 1922 when Moeran was 27 and had most of his career still ahead of him, clearly the first definition cannot be applied. Is it an exceptionally good piece of creative work? The scale and form of the sonata certainly demonstrates Moeran's ability to create an extended musical composition exhibiting consistency both within each movement and across the entire work. This is difficult to achieve unless the composer uses themes or elements that relate each movement to one or more of the other movements. Moeran did not do this explicitly but he did provide reminders in the latter two movements that recall aspects of the first. In a sense, these are impressionistic reminders in that while exact repeats or quotations were avoided, the listener may be redirected to what has already been heard. Such consistency and the overall sense of continuity through the movements is a significant accomplishment, but is insufficient in itself to warrant the description 'exceptionally good piece of creative work'.

Moeran's membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* had provided him with ample opportunity to hear and play numerous pieces of chamber music, including many violin sonatas. The *Violin Sonata No.2 in E minor* by Emil Sjögren appeared frequently on the programmes and other late nineteenth century and early twentieth century sonatas – especially those by Scandinavian composers – were popular items. By 1922, Moeran's repertoire of instrumental sonatas would have been extensive. While influences from many of these works may be detected in his violin sonata, the overwhelming one that is immediately apparent is that of Moeran's teacher John Ireland. Moeran would have known his teacher's own violin sonatas well and very probably played the *Piano Sonata* of 1920 himself. Ireland's use of secondary harmony, note cluster chords, extreme rhythmic complexity and ambiguity, polyrhythmic structures and arch-like melodic forms was intimately known to Moeran and so it is hardly

surprising that these devices appear in his own violin sonata. As a tribute to Ireland and the valuable instruction and advice he provided, Moeran's violin sonata stands as a fine example. But again, this does not make it a 'masterpiece' – indeed it may be argued that such overt imitation would militate against it being so described.

The sonata displays the fast-slow-fast three movement structure common to many such sonatas. As indicated above, there are subtle thematic links across the three movements, but each also stands as an individual piece. The work may be regarded as existing on three levels: 1) the solo violin line, 2) the piano accompaniment and 3) the two parts played together. In the first two movements, the violin and piano parts generally show little relationship – the violin part being the structural line, bearing the responsibility for establishing the formal components. In the third movement, there is more thematic inter-relationship between the solo and accompanying parts but it remains tenuous.

In their analyses, Self and McNeill both affirm that the first movement is in a *modified sonata form* – although McNeill calls it a *concise sonata form*. *Modified sonata form* can, of course, mean more or less anything. At the very minimum, however, one should expect to encounter an exposition of thematic material, a developmental section that exploits this material, perhaps also incorporating new thematic ideas and a final part that restates, in some form, aspects of the exposition or development – or even both. Moeran had many models available to him where modifications to the classic sonata form principle had been successfully accomplished. The violin sonata was a very popular genre during the nineteenth century – there were many virtuoso violinists playing in Europe and many new works were composed, either directly to commission or in the hope that they would be performed regularly.

As one of the purposes of sonata form is to provide a consistent framework, within and upon which the music is arranged, modifying the basic form requires the ability to maintain consistency whilst also achieving structural originality. Unless the composer intends to create an entirely through-composed work with no repetition or development of thematic or harmonic

ideas, a structure is, by definition, necessary. One of the most effective techniques for achieving this is to conceive a strong motif, state this clearly at or near the outset and then use it as the base for the subsequent thematic ideas – and Moeran does precisely this. After the first two bars of slight harmonic ambiguity in the piano introduction, he makes a bold statement with the first four notes of the solo line. This motif is immediately memorable and is fundamental as the main structural component, not only of the first movement but of the entire sonata:



Ex. 39 *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano* – motif

In isolation, this phrase is suggestive of four tonal centres: E minor, A minor, C major and G major and Moeran fully exploits this tonal ambiguity – indeed, as was shown in the examination of the *String Quartet in E flat major* in Chapter 3, exploitation of tonal ambiguity was a characteristic of Moeran’s composing style. The main intervals the phrase contains and their inversions – minor 3rd/major 6th and major 2nd/minor 7th – are the defining intervals of the pentatonic scale, which Moeran made extensive use of during this period of his stylistic evolution.⁴³³ This opening motif is stated many times throughout the work – variously in its original form and in inverted and retrograde variations. While such a brief examination cannot establish categorically whether the claims made on behalf of the work to be a ‘masterpiece’ are justified, its intricate structure certainly sets the sonata apart from most of the music that Moeran had previously composed. However, the style of the sonata was not repeated for some considerable time and Moeran returned to a more pastoral, folksong-based style for his music during the next two or three years.

⁴³³ See the entry on ‘Pentatonic’ in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Second Edition*, Vol. 6, (Macmillan, London, 2001) for more information about the occurrence of the scale in world folk music. Perhaps surprisingly, pentatonic melody in British folk music seems to be rare (see Norm Cohen, *Folk Music: A Regional Exploration*, (Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 2005), 78)

Rapid Rise to Prominence

At the beginning of 1923, Moeran seems to have decided to raise his public profile by staging a concert of his own music. He retained the Wigmore Hall on 15 January and arranged a programme promoting some of his recently composed chamber works. The recital began with the Allied String Quartet⁴³⁴ performing the *String Quartet in A minor*. This was followed by the *Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte in E minor*, played by Désiré Defauw (violin) and Harriet Cohen (piano). Harriet Cohen also played some of Moeran's piano works and the recital ended with the Allied String Quartet playing Ravel's *String Quartet in F major*. Edwin Evans, in an oft-quoted review in the *Musical Times*, gave his impressions of the two principal Moeran works, succinctly encapsulated in the phrase: '... we cannot entirely overlook the circumstance that with the pentatonic scale it is next to impossible to go wrong'.⁴³⁵ However, the observation is a generalisation when applied to both the string quartet and the violin sonata and Evans' intimation that Moeran's reliance on the pentatonic scale made things easier for him is effectively refuted by more detailed analysis of each work. More important than his apparent reliance on the pentatonic scale for the 'fashioning of his thematic material'⁴³⁶ is what he did with the thematic material and the examinations presented thus far have revealed Moeran's use of imaginative forms. Moeran's ability to contrive ingenious and original structures that derive from classical forms, the knowledge of which he acquired, as has been shown, during his studies both at Uppingham School and under Stanford at the Royal College of Music, is encountered repeatedly when his works are subjected to thorough-going analysis. The associated exhaustive attention to detail was the principal legacy of his later studies with John Ireland. Further examples will be provided later in this thesis.

⁴³⁴ The Allied String Quartet had been formed in 1914 by musicians who had met at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. The Belgians Désiré Defauw (violin) and Emile Doehaerd (cello) played together with Charles Woodhouse (violin) and Lionel Tertis (viola) for many years in a quartet that celebrated the alliance that had eventually drawn Great Britain into the First World War as the result of the German violation of Belgian neutrality. Together with Joseph Jongen (piano), Defauw and Doehaerd also formed the Belgian Piano Trio. On the occasion of the Wigmore Hall recital, the quartet comprised Defauw and Woodhouse, with James Lockyer (viola) and Ambrose Gauntlett (cello). (see also footnote 390)

⁴³⁵ 'E. E.' (Edwin Evans) 'E. J. Moeran', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 64, No. 960, (1 February 1923), 131

⁴³⁶ *ibid.*

However, the purpose of the concert was to bring more of his music into the public awareness and, in this, Moeran was distinctly successful. ‘P.A.S.’, writing in *The Observer*, said:

[E. J. Moeran] is a name to note, for it is likely to be met with again before long. It has been seen once or twice during the past year on piano recital programmes as that of the composer of some small pieces, but only came into prominence last Monday, when ... to a surprisingly large audience for such an occasion, its owner submitted to public judgement his qualities as a composer.⁴³⁷

‘P.A.S.’ liked the string quartet but didn’t care much for the piano pieces or the violin sonata.

On the string quartet his verdict was:

Perhaps there was nothing strictly ‘original’ anywhere, but, at any rate, here was evidence of the ability having been gained by which original thought can express itself when it arises, and that is as much as we expect of a composer at his first appearance ...⁴³⁸

The coupling of his own string quartet with that of Ravel was a risky strategy for Moeran – given the clear influence of the latter on the former – and may well have been naïve, but as a means of attracting an audience to a recital of new music, it was certainly successful. In retrospect, the beginnings of Moeran’s rapid rise in the esteem both of his peers and the music-loving public may be found at this Wigmore Hall recital. Although not acknowledged, it is possible that Moeran’s mother provided the funds for the hire of the hall and any payment to the performers – although it is possible that all five musicians provided their services free of charge, as they were all close friends of the composer.

There is evidence that Moeran also maintained his non-musical interests. He again entered the *Motor-Cycling Club* London to Land’s End Easter trial, riding his Matchless sidecar combination, and was again awarded a Gold Medal.⁴³⁹ However, in general, 1923 was a year of consolidation for Moeran. After the 15 January Wigmore Hall recital, he continued his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, again paying a ‘Country’ subscription and providing his parents’ house in Laverton, Somerset as his home address.⁴⁴⁰ During the year

⁴³⁷ ‘P.A.S.’, ‘Music of the Week: E. J. Moeran’, *The Observer*, (21 January 1923), 8

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*

⁴³⁹ ‘Motoring – London-Land’s End Trial’, *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, (10 April 1923), 6

⁴⁴⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.962, 200

he took part in just two of the Thursday evening musical programmes – at the 538th programme on 31 May⁴⁴¹ and the 550th programme on 20 December⁴⁴² – although Harold Rutland played Moeran's piano piece *On a May Morning* at the 536th programme on 3 May.⁴⁴³ Prior to this programme, Moeran had performed his piano music himself and his absence from the recital is, perhaps, explained by the contents of a letter Philip Heseltine wrote to Delius a few days later, dated 125 Cheyne Walk, 14 May 1923:

A great friend of mine E. J. Moeran ... has gone to Norway for the wedding of a friend of his, and if his money lasts out he wants to stay there a bit and take a trip up to the North Cape. He is a very good composer and a great admirer of your work and would very much like to come and see you if you are in Norway and have no objection. According to his plans when he left, his trip would finish up at Bergen about the 28th of this month.⁴⁴⁴

It is not known whether the suggested visit to Delius in Norway materialised. Indeed, from the earlier content of the letter, Heseltine was unsure of Delius' location at the time and sent copies of the letter to Delius in Germany and Norway. However, the letter provides evidence that by the middle of May 1923, Moeran and Philip Heseltine had become friends. According to Ian Copley: '... Moeran had first met Warlock when the latter had called on him to say how much he had liked one of Moeran's songs ...', although Copley did not provide a source for this assertion.⁴⁴⁵ The two young men (just a few months apart in age) seem to have discovered almost immediately on meeting that they shared many musical tastes and interests – in particular, there was a mutual appreciation of the music of Frederick Delius. They also seemingly took a liking to each other – probably stimulated by these common musical enthusiasms. At a distance of ninety years and with the benefit of hindsight, Moeran's subsequent life-long problems may well have originated with his meeting with Heseltine and this assertion will be examined in detail in Chapter 5. It is sufficient here to say that Heseltine's effect on other people is well-documented and those that managed to forestall falling under his

⁴⁴¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 292

⁴⁴² *ibid.*, 307

⁴⁴³ *ibid.*, 289

⁴⁴⁴ Barry Smith (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Peter Warlock, Vol. 4 1922-1930*, (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2005), 73

⁴⁴⁵ Ian A. Copley, *The Music of Peter Warlock: A Critical Survey*, (Dennis Dobson, London, 1979), 45

(unconscious) spell, such as William Walton, did so by the preventive measure of avoiding his company:

It was the drinking that was the undoing of a number who were drawn into the Heseltine circle ... Walton wisely steered a clear course away from such influences. 'I knew [Heseltine] well but well enough to avoid his somewhat baleful influence'.⁴⁴⁶

Clearly Moeran had returned to London in time for the 538th Club programme on 31 May. This programme was significant in that he introduced some works by 'Peter Warlock' – the first time Warlock had been performed at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. The 550th programme links Moeran's name with that of Geoffrey Garrod in that Moeran accompanied Garrod in one of the sets of songs.⁴⁴⁷ However, the next stage of Moeran's progress as a composer was prompted by the inclusion of one of his piano works at a recital in the north of England. The concert was attended by Hamilton Harty, who was apparently so impressed by the piano piece that he wrote to Moeran to ask if he had composed any orchestral music. Moeran later recalled the time during his interview with Evan Senior for the *Australian Musical News & Digest*, first mentioned in Chapter 2:

"You can imagine how I felt", comments Moeran. He took to Harty the work now widely known as his *First Rhapsody for Orchestra*. Harty listened while he played it through on the piano, and then said, "If you're in Manchester, perhaps you'd like to come and hear it played?".⁴⁴⁸

Moeran's gratitude for Harty's interest in him took the further form of his adding a dedication to the score of *In the Mountain Country*.

By the middle of 1923, Moeran's friendship with Heseltine had progressed to the point where they were spending considerable time in each other's company and Heseltine accompanied Moeran on some of his folksong collecting trips to East Anglia. Since Moeran's parents had left Bacton and were living in Somerset, it is probable that he and Heseltine found accommodation in the various pubs they visited during the quest for folksongs and it is also very likely that these

⁴⁴⁶ Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire*, (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2001), 81

⁴⁴⁷ Geoffrey Garrod was an acquaintance of Moeran's parents and, as suggested earlier, may have been instrumental in engineering Moeran's original election to membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*.

⁴⁴⁸ Senior (1950), 31

trips marked the beginnings of the excessive drinking that ultimately resulted in Moeran becoming an alcoholic. According to the attributions in the collection published in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* in December 1931, Moeran collected songs in Potter Heigham, Hickling and Catfield.⁴⁴⁹ On one of these expeditions, Moeran was also accompanied by Augustus John – and it may have been that which gave rise to the well-known anecdote quoted by Heseltine in his *Music Bulletin* article: ‘... the remark of an old man at Sutton after a sing-song to which Moeran had brought a visitor from London: “We were a bit nervous of him; but with you it’s different, of course – you’re one of us – but he was a regular gentleman, he was.”’.⁴⁵⁰ Moeran’s association with the *English Folksong Society* became greater when, at the end of the year, he was elected to be a committee member.⁴⁵¹

Moeran’s music was being performed more frequently and the *String Quartet in A minor* continued to be successful. The *British Music Society* promoted a concert of new music on 24 October which included the quartet. The reviewer for *The Times* was quite impressed: ‘We liked Mr Moeran’s quartet much; there is a warmth and large-heartedness in it that lend conviction to a melodic flow which is far from being trite’.⁴⁵² It is apparent from the increasing number of performances of his music that Moeran was achieving success as a composer. However, it is unlikely that royalties and performances fees had yet reached the level that would have provided Moeran with a living, so it is probable that he was still reliant on the allowance he received from his mother.

The Established Composer

1924 began auspiciously for Moeran with the promised performance of the *First Rhapsody for Orchestra* given by Harty and the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester on 24 January. Moeran was in Manchester for the event and wrote to express his gratitude a few days later:

⁴⁴⁹ E. J. Moeran, Maud Karpeles, A. Martin Freeman, A. G. Gilchrist and Frank Howes, ‘Love Songs and Ballads’, *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, Vol. 8, No. 35, (December 1931), 257-269

⁴⁵⁰ Heseltine (June 1924), 173

⁴⁵¹ ‘Annual General Meeting, 1923’, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. 7, No. 27 (December 1923), xi

⁴⁵² ‘Concerts – British Music Society’, *The Times*, issue 43483, (27 October 1923), 8

My dear Harty,

I feel I must write you just a few lines to express my thanks & appreciation of the splendid performance you gave of my Rhapsody. I am quite sure it will be a very long time before I shall hear another performance to equal it.

Apart from your own splendid enthusiasm & the trouble you took, I was immensely impressed by the good-feeling & keenness of the orchestra – apart from their efficiency. These qualities, alas, seem to be too rare among orchestras today.

I saw [Sir Henry] Wood yesterday : he is putting the [Rhapsody] on at the "proms", & my new work [the Second Rhapsody] will be done at Norwich, as originally arranged.⁴⁵³

The press response was also enthusiastic, although slightly muted. The part of the review pertaining to the Moeran work contained some very perceptive observations:

Last night's Hallé Concert had a good deal of freshness, but a price was paid in that greatness was almost totally absent from it. One was able to welcome a new English composer of parts in the *Rhapsody* by Moeran, a musician of Laverton, near Bath, whose Christian name was not disclosed to the audience. Mr Moeran himself attended the concert and on appearing after the playing of his *Rhapsody* had an enthusiastic reception. One might venture to call it a Celtic Rhapsody from the lilt of its melody, but its quality was rather in the treatment of the melodies than just in their character. The composer had brought into the Celtic scale⁴⁵⁴ something of the old contrapuntal manner, and showed much ingenuity in snatches of imitation and interlocked melody at the half-octave in the way of the old fugal writers. Yet there was nothing fugal in development or even exposition, but an enrichment of the melodic character itself. One subject on the solo flute had even something of Delius in its softness, and though the sense of the whole Rhapsody was a little miscellaneous and there was no attempt at greatness of style, there was a vitality in the music which will make us look eagerly for something more from the same hand. As Mr Moeran is still a young man our hopes may be the more confident.⁴⁵⁵

The reviewer had astutely identified three key aspects of Moeran's compositional style, as demonstrated in the *Rhapsody*:

- the prominence of melody and melodic development
- the use of classical forms and structures to provide internal consistency
- the absorbing of influencing factors – such as the music of Delius and folksong

⁴⁵³ Letter to Sir Hamilton Harty, dated 54, Elm Park Mansions, SW 10, 28 January 1924

⁴⁵⁴ The reviewer was perhaps referring to the Mixolydian Mode or Scale, since the use of the flattened leading note is very apparent in the *Rhapsody*.

⁴⁵⁵ 'The Hallé Concerts', *The Guardian*, (25 January 1924), 9

The reviewer concluded the piece by saying: ‘Mr Harty was in a good mood throughout [!]’.⁴⁵⁶ The regional reporter for *The Musical Times* was more concise in his assessment, although equally as enthusiastic about the work:

Amongst the novelties heard during the month, first place must be given to Moeran's *Rhapsody*, on January 24, only heard hitherto, I believe, at Bournemouth. Its style is generally reminiscent of Delius, and although devoid of any definite strength or marked characteristics, he contrives to maintain and rivet the listener's attention. Its scoring is clear and free from miscalculated effects.⁴⁵⁷

Thus began Moeran's lifelong relationship with Manchester and the Hallé orchestra – a relationship which, as will become apparent, could have delivered so much more and, perhaps, led eventually to the ‘greatness’, the absence of which was so bemoaned by the *Guardian* reviewer. The rhapsody had another outing at the Bournemouth Festival in April, conducted by Moeran himself, and he also conducted a performance of *In the Mountain Country* at the same festival. The first few months of 1924 also saw numerous performances of Moeran's smaller works, including the *String Quartet in A minor* by the Philharmonic String Quartet on 8 February,⁴⁵⁸ the *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano* at the Wigmore Hall on 1 March,⁴⁵⁹ and on 28 March, the *Six Norfolk Folk Songs* were sung by John Goss at the Wigmore Hall.⁴⁶⁰ There were also smaller recitals and concerts featuring his piano music and songs.

In the meanwhile, Moeran maintained his other activities. As shown above, he was now on the committee of the *English Folk Song Society* and continued with his song collecting activities in East Anglia – visiting villages in Norfolk and Suffolk on at least two occasions. After again paying a ‘Country’ subscription for membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*,⁴⁶¹ his position on the House Music Sub-committee was renewed at the Annual General Meeting on

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Music in the Provinces’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 973 (1 March 1924), 264

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Concerts – Mr. Gerald Cooper’, *The Times*, issue 43573, (12 February 1924), 10

⁴⁵⁹ ‘Week-End Concerts – Guild of Singers and Players’, *The Times*, issue 43590, (3 March 1924), 18

⁴⁶⁰ ‘London Concerts’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 975 (1 May 1924), 456

⁴⁶¹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.963, 17

12 March.⁴⁶² Moeran found the time for just one appearance during the year in a Club Thursday Evening Musical Soirée, and that was the 558th Programme on 17 April 1924.⁴⁶³ He performed the *Piano Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs* by Béla Bartók, he took the piano part in the *Piano Trio in G Op. 15* by Smetana, and he was accompanist for the other items: Brahms *Violin Sonata in D minor*, Op 108, and a set of songs sung by Mr B. E. C. Davis, including *As I Walked Out* and *Bushes and Briars* from Vaughan Williams' *Eastern County Folksongs* and *To Gratiana dancing and singing* and *Diaphenia* by William Denis Browne.⁴⁶⁴

Moeran also featured over the air-waves – the *First Rhapsody*, conducted by the composer, was broadcast in a studio performance from 2LO on 17 July,⁴⁶⁵ and as part of the sixteenth Promenade Concert of the 1924 season from the Queen's Hall, again conducted by the composer, on 27 August.⁴⁶⁶ *In the Mountain Country* was also broadcast⁴⁶⁷ and there were more performances of Moeran's smaller works during the year: John Goss continued to sing Moeran's songs and folksong arrangements,⁴⁶⁸ piano works were heard in London, Oxford and Manchester⁴⁶⁹ and the choral work *Weep You No More, Sad Fountains* was selected as the test piece in one section of the Blackpool Music festival.⁴⁷⁰

The year ended for Moeran possibly even more auspiciously than it had begun. He fulfilled the Norwich Festival commission (mentioned in his letter to Harty quoted above), completing the *Second Rhapsody* well in time for rehearsals and its première at the St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich on the morning of Friday 31 October. There were numerous newspaper and periodical reviews of the Festival, including the performance of the rhapsody, conducted, as was now

⁴⁶² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.2, General Meeting Minutes 1899-1939

⁴⁶³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 317

⁴⁶⁴ William Denis Browne was a promising young English composer whose life was tragically cut short at Gallipoli in 1915 at the age of twenty-eight. Most of his manuscripts were destroyed on his posthumous instruction and just a handful survives. *To Gratiana singing and dancing* is a delightful setting of a text by the seventeenth century English poet Richard Lovelace. The fifteen extant manuscripts are held in the archives of Clare College, Cambridge: *Denis Browne Music Manuscripts*, Cambridge University Archives Repository Reference CLARE/CCPP/BRO

⁴⁶⁵ 'Broadcasting – Programmes, July 17', *The Times*, issue 43706, (17 July 1924), 20

⁴⁶⁶ 'The Promenade Concerts', *The Times*, issue 43742, (28 August 1924), 8

⁴⁶⁷ 'Broadcasting – Programmes, Aug 12', *The Times*, issue 43728, (12 August 1924), 6

⁴⁶⁸ 'Recitals of the Week', *The Times*, issue 43713, (25 July 1924), 12

⁴⁶⁹ 'Music in the Provinces', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 982 (1 December 1924), 1126.1130

⁴⁷⁰ 'Blackpool Musical Festival', *The Guardian*, (20 October 1924), 15

becoming normal, by Moeran himself. The reviewer for *The Times*, although admiring the work, bemoaned the fact that the rhapsody followed immediately after a performance of Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* and felt that the enduring impact of the symphony had overshadowed the première of the new work. He felt that on another occasion, with the rhapsody given prominence, the reception would be enhanced. Percy Scholes, writing in *The Observer*, noted that neither Vaughan Williams nor Moeran could be regarded as the best conductors for their own music. He continued: 'I feel that the whole question of the advisability of composers conducting their own works is worth a little more consideration by festival committees'.⁴⁷¹ It was the reviewer for *The Guardian* who again seemed to be most informed about the actual music:

The novelty of the morning, and indeed of the whole festival, was Mr E. J. Moeran's *Second Rhapsody for Orchestra*. If it were not for the fact that the composer and the work are intimately connected with Norfolk one might be inclined to quarrel with the inclusion of this one novelty in a scheme which otherwise departs from the usual festival practice of introducing new native works. Considered by itself purely as a work of art the rhapsody certainly has its merits. Mr Moeran limits its appeal deliberately by the very drastic application of local colour. It is a piece of painting whose interest lies chiefly in its subject and associations. The thematic ideas are loosely strung together, and one has the feeling that the orchestral tints result here and there from an experimental blending of the colours, but within the bounds the composer has set himself he has achieved a fresh, healthy, and pleasant work.⁴⁷²

The reviewer had noted earlier that the entire concert had been appreciated by the audience, with 'sincere enthusiasm [!]'. However, most significantly for Moeran was the fact that the Queen, accompanied by the Duchess of York, attended the concert, and he was amongst those presented to the royal party after the event.⁴⁷³

To end the year, Harty performed *In the Mountain Country* with the Hallé orchestra – again with Moeran in attendance and, again, the audience was appreciative. The reviewer for *The*

⁴⁷¹ 'Music and Musicians – The Norwich Festival', *The Observer*, (2 November 1924), p10. Scholes' opinion would hardly have been regarded by Moeran as authoritative. As a friend of Heseltine, he may well have shared Heseltine's stance that Scholes was, amongst less printable things, a '... stinking bag of putrescent tripe ...'; from letter 809, Smith (ed.) (2005), 118

⁴⁷² 'The Norwich Musical Festival', *The Guardian*, (1 November 1924), 14

⁴⁷³ 'The Queen attended the morning performance, and so heard Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* as well as a new orchestral rhapsody by E. J. Moeran. Both works were conducted by their composers who, with Sir Henry Wood and other prime movers of the festival, had the honour of being presented to the Queen before the Royal party left the hall' – from Norwich Music Festival', *The Times*, issue 43798, (30 December 1916), 10

Guardian noted the work's '... intoxication of orchestral colour and purely poetic melody' and concluded that it '... left a quite likeable impression'.⁴⁷⁴

Although Moeran's main work for 1924 was the *Second Rhapsody*, he had also been working on at least two other short orchestral works – the folksong-based piece which was eventually completed as *Lonely Waters* and an overture, the uncompleted manuscript of which resides in the Lenton-Parr Library at the University of Melbourne.⁴⁷⁵ As far as is known, Moeran never finished it but he may have made use of some of the ideas in the *Overture to a Masque* composed some twenty years later. He also created some imaginative folksong arrangements for John Goss, who performed enthusiastically them on numerous occasions during the year. These included: *Can't You Dance the Polka*, *Mrs Dyer*, *the Baby Farmer*, *The Sailor and Young Nancy* and *Gaol Song*.

Summary

At the end of the First World War, Moeran had completely recovered from his injury and he decided to return to Ireland for a time. After spending several months there, he returned to London at the end of the year and, probably with the financial support of his mother, he began the process of establishing himself as a composer. In this, he was assisted by the networking opportunities available to him both as a gentleman of private means and as a member of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, and he was able to build up a wide circle of friends and acquaintances in the artistic milieu of bohemian society in 1920s London. It was not long before Moeran's opportunities to secure performances of his compositions were such that he could almost count on anything he produced being performed somewhere. The effect of this was to stimulate his output to the extent that, of Moeran's extant and known works, more than half date from the period 1920-1925. Moeran had several significant advantages that enabled his career to move forward rapidly:

⁴⁷⁴ 'The Hallé Concerts', *The Guardian*, (28 November 1924), 12

⁴⁷⁵ *E. J. Moeran Collection*, MS number VCA 16, Lenton-Parr Music, Visual and Performing Arts Library, University of Melbourne, Catalogue made by Stephanie Brown, 2009

- his private income released him from the burden of spending time earning a living
- his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* provided him with a venue for performances of his compositions – both formally in a recital setting and informally in the practice rooms
- membership of the Club also provided access on an equal basis both to many of the important and influential members of London society and to active musicians; in particular his associations with Hubert Foss and W. W. Cobbett were significant

A major opportunity presented itself when Hamilton Harty, impressed by a piano piece he heard at a recital in Manchester, contacted Moeran to ask if he had composed anything for orchestra. This led directly to performances of the *First Rhapsody* and *In the Mountain Country* by the Hallé orchestra.

At the end of 1924, Moeran was on the cusp of greatness. He was an established composer in two of the major musical centres of England – London and Manchester – and he had the support and patronage of one of the great musical personalities of the period, Hamilton Harty. His individual style of melodic-based, folksong-inspired and harmonically innovative, attractive music was ensuring a popular following. But with the development of his friendship with Philip Heseltine, the germ of failure and collapse was beginning, albeit imperceptibly, to exert its malignant influence.

The next chapter follows Moeran as he and Heseltine established their *ménage* and traces what may be seen retrospectively as the inevitable consequences of that fateful decision.

Chapter 5

“... the composer ruined”

Chapter five presents an account of Moeran’s gradual succumbing to indolence and alcoholism, during the years when he and Philip Heseltine shared a cottage in Eynsford, Kent. This is shown by illustrating how subtle changes in his musical and compositional priorities began soon after Moeran moved into the cottage in mid-January 1925, and subsequently how his ability to compose anything at all eventually deserted him. The disintegration of Moeran’s compositional capacity is examined and the few works that he did complete between 1925 and 1928 are briefly considered. The chapter concludes by tracing the beginnings of Moeran’s painful and protracted recovery from the end of the ‘Eynsford Cottage’ episode to Heseltine’s death in December 1930.

The Eynsford Cottage Years

On 2 January 1925, Moeran paid his one and a half guineas ‘Country’ subscription for the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, again providing his parents’ house in Laverton as his home address.⁴⁷⁶ Although he had apparently taken rooms at 162 Haverstock Hill, NW3, near Hampstead towards the end of the previous year,⁴⁷⁷ he decided in mid-January to join Philip Heseltine in the cottage in Eynsford that Heseltine had leased from Hubert Foss. Foss had lived in this cottage with his wife since 1921, but their separation caused Foss to seek other accommodation. During the years that the Fosses lived there, the cottage had been the centre of musical gatherings, where composers in whom Hubert Foss took an interest were invited to talk and play their works.⁴⁷⁸ In leasing the cottage, Heseltine’s intention was not only to continue Foss’s tradition but also to establish an artistic and creative commune where ‘open house’ was kept, and writers, painters, sculptors and other artistic members of 1920s London society – in addition to composers and musicians – were welcome to visit and remain as long as they liked.⁴⁷⁹ This estimable and well-intentioned objective was rapidly overwhelmed by the increasingly hedonistic lifestyle indulged in by the cottage inhabitants – both long- and short-term. Regular visitors and longer term residents of the cottage included Constant Lambert, Cecil Gray, Augustus John, Patrick Hadley, William Walton, Bernard van Dieren, Jack Lindsay, Nina Hamnett and John Goss. Tales of the ‘Eynsford Cottage’ have entered the folklore of English Music in the 1920s and a detailed excursus on what did or did not happen during its

⁴⁷⁶ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.963, 43

⁴⁷⁷ “Members”, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. 7, No. 28 (December 1924), iv

⁴⁷⁸ Composers such as Constant Lambert, Bernard van Dieren and Heseltine himself were frequent visitors. See Stephen Lloyd, *Constant Lambert: Beyond the Rio Grande*, (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2014), 83

⁴⁷⁹ Hubert Foss described the cottage life after Heseltine had taken the lease: ‘It was not an orderly house, the habits were in no sense regular. On the other hand, it was acutely, sometimes insanelly, alive; each day it blossomed into a new unpredictable, semi-exotic flower. It was not exemplary, but it contained genius. The inmates and many visitors were joined in a pursuit of art. The underlying interest was a quest for beauty ... They just were brilliant, eccentric, passionately alive ...’; from Hubert Foss, ‘The Warlock Gang’, *The London Symphony Orchestra Observer*, (November 1951), 99-100

four-year duration is not necessary for this research project.⁴⁸⁰ It is sufficient to record that Heseltine evidently thrived in the environment – composing, writing, researching, drinking and debauching in more or less equal proportions⁴⁸¹ – while the effect on Moeran was ultimately nothing short of catastrophic.

The works Moeran is known to have composed between 1925 and 1928 include two more original piano works, *Bank Holiday* and *Summer Valley*, two piano arrangements of Irish folksongs, *Irish Love Song* and *The White Mountain* and several songs, including *The Merry Month of May*, *Come Away, Death*, *'Tis Time, I Think, by Wenlock Town* and the folksong arrangement *The Little Milkmaid*. He also composed an orchestral work, which he called *Whythorne's Shadow*, and which was based on an Elizabethan madrigal *As Thy Shadow Itself Apply'th*, originally composed by Thomas Whythorne in 1571 and transcribed and edited by Heseltine. Perhaps not surprisingly, these are some of the works by Moeran that are stylistically most similar to the music of Peter Warlock – although Delian and Graingerseque elements are readily detectable, as the following examples sufficiently illustrate. Ex. 40 is the ending of *Bank Holiday* and demonstrates the block chord emphasising effect employed particularly by Percy Grainger in works such as *Mock Morris*. Note particularly the diminished seventh chord with flattened fifth, typical of Warlock, in the left-hand at example bars 10 and 11 (indicated):

⁴⁸⁰ Much has been written about “the cottage” and Peter Warlock scholarship and literature abounds with tales and anecdotes and analyses of the varying visiting and resident personalities. The books *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine* by Barry Smith (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994), *Fanfrolico and After* by Jack Lindsay (The Bodley Head, London 1962) and the autobiography of Nina Hamnett *Is She A Lady? A Problem in Autobiography* (Wingate, London 1955) describes life in the cottage between 1925 and 1928 in varying detail.

⁴⁸¹ Having claimed that the cottage was exactly what Heseltine was searching for: ‘... It is very peaceful and congenial for work, and one can easily get to town if one wants to.’; from letter 808, Smith (ed.) (2005), 117, he soon discovered that it also had disadvantages: ‘The only drawback is when one goes to sleep in the last train down and finds oneself penniless in the small hours of the morning at Maidstone whence I had to walk a few nights ago. I have also visited Whitstable under similar circumstances’; from letter 823, Smith (ed.) (2005), 133

The image displays a musical score for the ending of 'Bank Holiday'. It consists of four systems of music. The first system shows a piano introduction with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system continues the piano accompaniment, marked *allargando*. The third system features a vocal line starting with *Più lento* and a piano accompaniment with dynamic markings *sfz p subito*, *mp*, and *p*. Two specific piano accompaniment chords in the bass line of this system are highlighted with red boxes. The fourth system concludes the piece with a piano accompaniment marked *Tempo I*, *pp*, *f*, *allargando*, and *fff*.

Ex. 40 *Bank Holiday* – ending

The stylistic similarity between *Bank Holiday* and *Mock Morris* forces the observer to conclude that Moeran was very familiar with the piano works of Grainger. The *Musical Times* reviewer, writing about both *Bank Holiday* and *Summer Valley* also detected this:

E. J. Moeran's *Bank Holiday* is in a mood reminiscent of Grainger: there is a swinging diatonic tune, and an ostinato middle section that provides effective contrast—the whole thing being very high-spirited and game. Moeran's *Summer Valley* is an essay in the manner of Delius, dedicated to that composer. The piece might easily have been called *After*

hearing Brigg Fair. It has many beautiful moments, even if the voice is not the voice of E. J. Moeran.⁴⁸²

Indeed, the correspondences of both works with their apparent models are such that one wonders why Moeran published them – given his recorded concerns about achieving originality and his music sounding derivative. This assertion is supported by anecdotal evidence from *Lonely Waters*; Lionel Hill wrote:

After supper on the Sunday I was able to surprise Jack with the news that I had just bought the newly released records of Delius' opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. "Oh, do let's hear it!" he said ... As the lovely opera unfolded I noticed that he was becoming more and more restless, clouds of smoke coming from his pipe ... and when the beautiful music of the love scene engulfed us he was so moved that he leapt to his feet ... and paced to and fro, repeatedly muttering "What's the use, it's all been done before! All said better already".⁴⁸³

It is chiefly on the basis of the songs composed during the mid-1920s and early 1930s that the assertion of Moeran's heavy debt both to Warlock and 'Delius-via-Warlock' mechanism has been predicated. In the following example, from *In Youth is Pleasure* (1925), the influence of Warlock is certainly apparent, and the highlighted harmonic progression is intensely redolent of Delius:

⁴⁸² 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 69, No. 1023 (1 May 1929), 426

⁴⁸³ Hill (1985), 92

There-fore my heart is sure-ly pight of her a-lone to have a
sight, which is my joy and heart's de-light: In youth is pleas-ure, — in youth is
pleas - ure. —

Ex. 41 *In Youth is Pleasure* – third verse

However, the assertion fails to account for the equally apparently Warlockian elements in Moeran's earlier music – music composed before he would have heard anything by Warlock and long before his friendship with Heseltine began. Is it conceivable, therefore, that Moeran influenced Warlock and that the stylistic similarities – especially the harmonic language – actually derive more from Moeran than from Warlock? Thus far in Moeran scholarship, nobody has made such a claim and supporting it would require a close comparative analysis of the two composers' works, together with the creation of a timeline showing conclusively when each composer could possibly have heard or known about the other's music. However, Ian Copley

did suggest that some influence from John Ireland may have passed to Warlock through Moeran, acting as a kind of conduit:

It may be wondered whether there existed between the two composers [Warlock and Moeran] any ... artistic relationship ... and whether they influenced each other's music. Warlock's style was firmly fixed in its essential features before he met Moeran, but there is some evidence that in the layout of the piano parts of one or two of the later songs he was influenced by John Ireland. Warlock may, of course, have been directly influenced by Ireland, but it is more likely that the influence was felt at second hand via Moeran ...⁴⁸⁴

Comparative analyses of the songs of Warlock and Moeran have been attempted, most helpfully by Trevor Hold in chapters eighteen and nineteen of his book *Parry to Finzi*, and Kenneth Avery compiled a chronology of Warlock's songs, which he published in *Music & Letters* in 1948.⁴⁸⁵ However, Hold's conclusion that Moeran was heavily influenced by Warlock, not only directly but also that Warlock introduced him to Delius, appears to have been based on the premise 'how could it be otherwise?' Thus, according to Hold, both these influences, clearly detectable in Moeran's music (a fact that is not challenged here), derive from Moeran's close friendship – working relationship, even – with Philip Heseltine. Nevertheless, works such as *The North Sea Ground* (1915), *At a Horse Fair* from *Three Piano Pieces* (1919), *Twilight*, *Spring Goeth All in White* and the song-cycle *Ludlow Town* (all 1920) contain stylistic elements that may be regarded as similar to some of those employed by Warlock in his earlier songs – for example: *As Ever I Saw* (1918), *There is a Lady* (1919), *Mr Belloc's Fancy* (1921) and *Good Ale* (1922) – all of which were all composed either contemporaneously with or later than the Moeran works mentioned. Thus the similarity between the composers in these cases must have an alternative explanation, and the conclusions of Hold and others may be contested.⁴⁸⁶ The following example – perhaps the most Warlockian of all Moeran's songs, both in its style and in the choice of text – was composed in 1934 and provides a final puzzle.

⁴⁸⁴ Copley (1979), 45

⁴⁸⁵ Kenneth Avery, 'The Chronology of Warlock's Songs', *Music & Letters* Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 1929), 398-405

⁴⁸⁶ Other commentators have written about the Warlock influence on Moeran, including Geoffrey Self and Anthony Payne in their entries on Moeran in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (op. cit.) and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (op. cit.) respectively.

Does the intense harmonic character derive ultimately from Warlock, was the song a posthumous tribute by Moeran to his friend, or is the similarity the result of musical symbiosis?

Lento ♩ = 72

mp

p *sempre legato e sostenuto*

Lay a gar - land on my hearse, Of the dis - mal yew;

Mai - dens, wil - low bran - ches bear; Say I died true;

Ex. 42 *Willow Song* (from *Four English Lyrics*) – verse 1

The assertion that Moeran was heavily influenced by Warlock probably derives from a conflation of three factors: a) the perception that Warlockian elements exist in Moeran's own style, b) the observation that they were close friends and, c) the superior prominence of Warlock as a song composer. However, after examining all the available facts objectively, this researcher asserts that, while 'Warlockian' stylistic features certainly exist in Moeran's music, it is incorrect to claim that these features necessarily derive originally from Warlock. The reasons

are: both composers were admirers of Delius, both were harmonic innovators using the same original material and with similar motivating inspiration and, most importantly, their close association from early 1923 onwards ensured that a mutual sharing of ideas would inevitably lead to similarities in their own, individual compositions. The subsequent establishment of Warlock as the dominant figure is probably the result of his more extrovert personality and his much more public and sensational later life and death.

An Increasing Reputation

For the first few months in the cottage, Moeran was able to compose and, perhaps more importantly, maintain his musical presence and activities in London. The Royal Musical Association had planned to hold a discussion at their council meeting on 10 February 1925 on 'Modern Harmony from the Standpoint (*a*) of the Composer and (*b*) of the Teacher'. According to the *Musical Times*, this was with: '... a view to breaking new ground ...'.⁴⁸⁷ They invited Moeran to speak from the composer's perspective and Professor C. H. Kitson of Trinity College, Dublin to provide the teacher's point of view. The *Musical Times* report noted that, at the last minute, neither participant appeared, both citing illness as the reason. Professor Kitson sent a transcript of his presentation, which was read to the assembled members. Moeran did not send anything. In the absence of other evidence, there would be no reason to doubt Moeran's claim to have been unable to attend due to illness. However, in a recital at the London Contemporary Music Centre in Bloomsbury the same evening, Winifred Small, accompanied by Gordon Bryan, performed Moeran's *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano*,⁴⁸⁸ and the following evening, a performance of 'a new song-cycle by E. J. Moeran' took place at the Kingsway Hall.⁴⁸⁹ The proximity of these performances of his own music to his failure to attend the R.M.A. event seems unlikely to be coincidental. In any case, Moeran had clearly recovered from his illness, if such it was, by the following week, because he participated in the

⁴⁸⁷ 'Modern Harmony', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 66, No. 986 (1 April 1925), 351-352

⁴⁸⁸ 'London Concerts', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 66, No. 985 (1 March 1925), 255-258

⁴⁸⁹ *ibid.*

577th *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* programme on the evening of Thursday 19 February.⁴⁹⁰ The 577th programme was Moeran's final appearance at a Club musical evening – the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* archive in Oxford University Library records no mention of Moeran as a participant after that date. Consequently, it is perhaps fitting to note that his contribution to the concert was comprehensive – as soloist, accompanist and composer. In addition to playing a Bach suite as the central, solo item, he accompanied Mr B. E. C. Davis, singing *The Shooting of his Dear* and *The Sailor and Young Nancy* – two of Moeran's own Norfolk folksong arrangements, Davis's own *The Cloths of Heaven* and *Evening Voices* by Delius. Moeran also took the piano part in Mozart's *Trio in E flat for Piano, Violin and Viola*, and the evening finished with the *Rhapsodie Gaelic for Piano Duet* by Paul Ladmirault, in which Moeran was joined by fellow pianist Mr H. V. Anson. The inclusion of the Ladmirault piano duet would undoubtedly have been the suggestion of Philip Heseltine. Ladmirault, along with Béla Bartók and Bernard van Dieren, was a composer for whom Heseltine had developed a strong affinity during his early twenties and whose cause he strongly espoused.⁴⁹¹ The specific context of the inclusion of the *Rhapsodie Gaelic* in the 19 February concert was that Heseltine had begun a correspondence with Ladmirault a few weeks earlier and had specifically discussed this work, suggesting that a transcription for orchestra might result in its receiving greater attention in England.⁴⁹²

Several more performances of Moeran's music took place in London during the first few months of 1925 – principally repeat performances of those already mentioned: Winifred Small again performed the violin sonata⁴⁹³ and John Goss sang *Ludlow Town* at the Wigmore Hall.⁴⁹⁴ Goss, together with the Cathedral Male Voices Quartet, also recorded *O sweet fa's the eve* and *Can't you dance the polka* for H.M.V. in March.⁴⁹⁵ On 5 May, the first London performance of

⁴⁹⁰ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.967, 341

⁴⁹¹ Ladmirault was the dedicatee of Warlock's *Capriol Suite* (1926)

⁴⁹² Smith (ed.) (2005), 115

⁴⁹³ 'Aeolian Hall Concert', *The Times*, issue 43925, (1 April 1925), 14

⁴⁹⁴ 'Songs and Sonatas', *The Times*, issue 43916, (21 March 1925), 12

⁴⁹⁵ 'HMV Advertisement', *Dundee Courier*, (3 June 1925), 7

the *Second Rhapsody*, conducted by Dan Godfrey was broadcast by 2LO.⁴⁹⁶ Clearly, at least for the first few months of 1925, Moeran's removal to Eynsford was having little effect on his public presence and the frequency of his London performances was continuing to increase.

In May and June, the first fruits of the Moeran-Heseltine artistic collaboration were presented. The April 1925 issue of the monthly journal of the British Music Society – *The Music Bulletin* – had announced on page 122 that a series of concerts would shortly be presented by 'Mr. Moeran' at the Aeolian Hall.⁴⁹⁷ The announcement ran:

Mr. Moeran's Concerts.

The programmes given below should be of particular interest to members of the B.M.S. and the Society has arranged with Mr. Moeran for special terms for its members. Tickets at the reduced prices can only be obtained through the Secretary, B.M.S., 3 Berners Street.

Aeolian Hall, Saturday, May 23, at 3.15.

Rispetti e Strambotti : Malipiero

Piano Quintet : Arnold Bax

Quartet : E. J. Moeran

The Brussels String Quartet

Miss Harriet Cohen

Aeolian Hall, Saturday, June 6, at 3.15.

Motet for String Quartet : R. O. Morris

4th String Quartet : B. van Dieren

The Curlew : Peter Warlock

Pastoral Fantasy for String Quartet : Arthur Benjamin

John Goss, R. Murchie, J. MacDonagh

Quartet led by Charles Woodhouse

Aeolian Hall, Saturday, June 13, at 3.15.

Pianoforte Trio : E. J. Moeran

Poem for 'Cello and Piano : H. V. Anson

2nd Pianoforte Trio : John Ireland

John Goss, André Mangeot, John Barbirolli, and the Composers

Cathedral Male Voice Quartet

Single tickets 10s. 6d., 5s. 9d. (reserved), 3s. (unreserved).

Subscription tickets 25s. and 15s. (reserved)

Special terms to B.M.S. 7s. 6d. and 4s. (reserved)

⁴⁹⁶ 'A symphony concert conducted by Mr. Dan Godfrey, jun., will be broadcast from 2LO next Tuesday. It will include the ... first London performance of E. J. Moeran's *Second Rhapsody* ...' from 'Broadcasting – Programmes, May 1', *The Times*, issue 43950, (1 May 1925), 24

⁴⁹⁷ 'Mr. Moeran's Concerts', *The Music Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 4, (April 1925), 122

There were some errors in the printing of the announcement and a correction was given in the next issue.⁴⁹⁸ It is readily apparent that the series of recitals must have taken some considerable time to plan and organise. As was probably the case with his January 1923 chamber music concert, Moeran's mother may have provided at least part of the funding for this series of concerts. The purpose of the recitals was to showcase both Moeran's music and also that of composers he admired. However, in suggesting that the non-Moeran works were by composers he admired, it might be more accurate to state that they were composers that Heseltine admired, and that Moeran admired them as a consequence. Some of the programming – such as the inclusion of the van Dieren string quartet – was transparently influenced by Heseltine. Indeed, it might well be no exaggeration to suggest that the title of the series – 'Mr. Moeran's Concerts' – was due solely to his financing the enterprise and that the programming was mostly Heseltine's work. However, the series achieved its objective and Moeran's music was brought further to public attention, although reviews were mixed. 'E.B.' in *The Guardian* wrote:

Moeran's work reminds one of Grieg's quartets, not because of any idiomatic resemblance, but because it is national in colour, and the composer is so absorbed in uttering the music he has in him that he cares comparatively little if he does not always write ideal quartet music. The texture of the finale, for instance, is orchestral, but the violation of the medium is justified by results that are agreeable in their own way.⁴⁹⁹

The reviewer for *The Times* was a bit less generous:

The third of Mr. Moeran's chamber concerts took place at the Wigmore Hall on Saturday. It included a Pianoforte Trio of his which was sound enough music but contained little that was arresting. The final two allegros were, as usual with him, the best of it.⁵⁰⁰

Despite these lukewarm appraisals, the concerts had been well-attended but more importantly for Moeran, they had further established his reputation amongst his musical friends and

⁴⁹⁸ 'Apology is due to Mr. Moeran for the announcement which appeared in the April Bulletin to the effect that he was giving his concerts at the Aeolian Hall, whereas they are to be at the Wigmore Hall. The announcement is therefore repeated in its correct form below. '; from *The Music Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 5, (May 1925), p148

The first item of the first recital was also changed from Rispetti e Strambotti by Malipiero to the String Quartet by Debussy.

⁴⁹⁹ 'London's Week-end Music', *The Guardian*, (25 May 1925), 10

⁵⁰⁰ 'Week-end Concerts', *The Times*, issue 43988, (15 June 1925), 12

admirers. Of these admirers, none had greater significance for Moeran than Hamilton Harty. The practical effect of this admiration will be considered shortly.

In July, Moeran and Heseltine travelled to Grez-sur-Loing to visit Fred and Jelka Delius but it seems they found the composer: ‘... in a very sad state – completely blind and so paralyzed that he [could not] stand or walk even with assistance, or hold anything in his hands’.⁵⁰¹ Unfortunately, their funds became depleted and the visit had to be cut short.

The Beginning of Decline

The testimony of Moeran from the Evan Senior article quoted earlier suggests that Harty had developed a considerable esteem for the younger composer. This eventually led to Harty commissioning Moeran to write a symphony for the Hallé Orchestra. Although no documentary evidence for the actual commission has been found, the symphony was included in the prospectus for the 1925-26 season of the Hallé Concerts Society announced in *The Guardian* on 26 September 1925, and it may safely be assumed that Moeran had accepted the commission with alacrity. His motivation was probably twofold: firstly, in Harty, he had a very influential champion and by agreeing to compose his first symphony for Harty and his orchestra, he could reasonably have imagined that a successful completion would lead to multiple performances and almost certainly further commissions; secondly, although Moeran lived in the south of England and regarded London as his musical base, cementing his reputation and becoming equally accepted in Manchester, with its proximity to other northern musical centres – such as Liverpool, Leeds and Huddersfield – was a sound career move.

However, the freedom that Moeran had enjoyed during the preceding three or four years to compose what he liked and when he liked had ill-prepared him for the task of composing to deadlines. Accepting the commission of a major orchestral work – far more extended than anything he had previously attempted – and with an actual performance date a matter of a few

⁵⁰¹ Letter 826, Smith (ed.) (2005), 138

months hence already decided, suggests that Moeran's confidence in his ability to deliver was, at best, misplaced. From correspondence published in *The Guardian* towards the end of 1925, it appears that the Manchester concert-going public had a more realistic appreciation of the problems such a commission might encounter. In a letter to the editor published in the edition dated 7 December 1925, 'Musicus' wrote, after having complained about the habit of substituting programmed works at the last minute: 'Can we be blamed if we speculate on the eventual fate of Elgar's *Second Symphony*, or of the new works by [Benjamin] Dale or Moeran which have been announced?'⁵⁰² Harty replied in the edition published the following day:

A letter from 'Musicus' in today's *Manchester Guardian* makes some complaints regarding the Hallé programmes. It is very difficult to carry out a series of twenty-one concerts without making some alterations; but I should like to assure 'Musicus' that such alterations are not merely the result of caprice. The Elgar Symphony will be given as announced, as well as the Symphony of Moeran and other new works.⁵⁰³

Thus, a mere three months before its scheduled performance, Harty was providing a public pledge that Moeran's symphony would be performed according to the published programme. It is probable that this was not simply Harty's own initiative and that he had himself received an assurance from the composer that the work was on track. Such an assertion is supported circumstantially by a line in a letter Philip Heseltine wrote to Jelka Delius, even before the announcement of the symphony in *The Guardian*. Dated Eynsford, 21 September 1925, Heseltine wrote: 'Moeran has just finished a Symphony, commissioned by the Hallé orchestra. It will be produced in Manchester next March'.⁵⁰⁴ It is unlikely that Moeran had actually completed the score of the symphony by 21 September and it is interesting to reflect on why Heseltine would have thought it so. As suggested, it is quite possible that Moeran believed that he was making excellent progress with the work and that the task of writing it down on paper would be relatively trivial. Thus, Heseltine's assessment of the symphony as finished may well have been based on Moeran's assurances that he had it all worked out in his head.

⁵⁰² 'Manchester Letters', *The Guardian*, (7 December 1925), 11

⁵⁰³ 'Manchester Letters', *The Guardian*, (8 December 1925), 13

⁵⁰⁴ Letter 836, Smith (ed.) (2005), 146

Perhaps Moeran was being optimistic, but by the end of 1925, it must have become abundantly apparent to him that life in the Eynsford cottage was not conducive to his working needs. An examination of the locations where Moeran had composed most of his music up to that time clearly reveals a set of common factors that were evidently necessary for him to be able to work – and principal amongst these were absolute quiet and a guarantee that he would not be disturbed. While at his parents' home, or whatever temporary rooms he took in London, he could generally rely on these circumstances most of the time, at the cottage work eventually became impossible. Even accepting that Moeran had the symphony more or less complete in his head, he still had to write out the score and the conditions that were indispensable to Moeran for such a task – despite Heseltine's opinion that the cottage was 'peaceful and congenial for work' – simply did not exist.⁵⁰⁵ An obvious question that may be posed here is that if Moeran realised the reality of this, why didn't he go somewhere else to ensure the completion of the most important composition of his life thus far? The probable answer is that he indulged in alcohol-fuelled procrastination.⁵⁰⁶ By February 1926, Moeran was forced to communicate to Harty that the symphony would not be ready in time – claiming that he was not satisfied with the form and that the consequent 're-modelling' would take some considerable time. The change of programme was announced in the edition of *The Guardian* published on 27 February 1926 – just five days before the concert took place:

⁵⁰⁵ Evidence for this may be found in Moeran's own recollections. In Gerald Cockshott, 'E. J. Moeran's Recollections of Peter Warlock', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 96, No. 1345 (March 1955), 128-130, the author paraphrases Moeran: '[Warlock] went to the piano and began fumbling about with chords, and whistling ... quite undisturbed by conversation from the next room. All his work was written in this way – quickly, at the piano, and often in an atmosphere that was far from quiet'.

⁵⁰⁶ First-hand accounts of Moeran's drinking in the cottage have been made by a number of writers, including Jack Lindsay: 'Of the other persons who come in the narrative, Moeran and Lambert drank heavily and thus destroyed themselves ...', from Jack Lindsay, *Fanfrolico and After*, (The Bodley Head, London, 1962), 190, by Heseltine himself in numerous letters, and in most detail by Nina Hamnett: 'Generally, on a Sunday afternoon, as Moeran had a large motor, we would visit a distant pub where drinks could be had. There were several and so our Sundays, instead of being dreadful and boring days, became quite one of the brightest of the week', from Nina Hamnett, *Is She A Lady? A Problem in Autobiography*, (Wingate, London 1955), 30; 'In the neighbouring village ... was a pub called the Two Brewers. It was kept by a remarkable character called Robert. Heseltine had arguments with him because he did not like the beer. Moeran and I used to go there more frequently', from Hamnett (1962), 31 and 'The butler of a celebrated peer who lived in the neighbourhood came for a drink sometimes. He was tall and very distinguished-looking and had a drink now and then with Heseltine or Moeran' from Hamnett (1962), 33

Plans for the Hallé concert on Thursday have been broken up, first by Mr. Moeran's resolution to remodel his promised symphony, which will consequently not be ready; and next by the inability of Miss Yolando Mero to reach England in time for the concert.⁵⁰⁷

It seems that the entire programme was changed – thus realising the earlier-expressed worst fears of 'Musicus' – and Moeran's *Second Rhapsody* was announced as the substitute for the symphony. Even then, things did not go well and at the very last minute, Moeran's rhapsody was itself replaced on the programme by Stanford's *Irish Rhapsody No. 1*. Thus, the concert that Moeran had perhaps anticipated just a few months earlier as the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between him and the Hallé orchestra, in reality probably marked the beginning of his disintegration as a successful composer of the 1920s. While Harty evidently accepted and even sympathised with Moeran's reasons for withdrawing the symphony at such short notice, it can be seen in retrospect that the proposed remodelling of the symphony may have been a ruse to cover that fact that it was not ready, perhaps nowhere near ready. The issue of *Musical Opinion* of April 1926 published a letter from Moeran purporting to explain the non-appearance of the symphony:

The work was practically in a state of completion when I came to the conclusion that I was (and still am) discontented about its structure. I have decided to rewrite a large portion of it...⁵⁰⁸

Those of a generous disposition may believe Moeran's apparent artistic concern; the more cynical might well read this as an excuse for failure. Harty, however, resolutely continued to support Moeran and to believe in him, even though every indication must have been that the symphony was a hopeless case.⁵⁰⁹ Even ten years later, when Moeran started work again, Harty wrote to him:

[Robert Nichols] spoke of your symphony as being partly completed. This was good news, and I am looking forward so greatly to seeing the work finally completed, with the orch:

⁵⁰⁷ 'Music and Drama', *The Guardian*, (27 February 1926), 9

⁵⁰⁸ *Musical Opinion*, (April 1926), 701

⁵⁰⁹ This keeping the faith by Harty over a period of more than a decade, considered objectively, is quite extraordinary and warrants some investigation. Recent research by Professor Jeremy Dibble following the publication of his book *Hamilton Harty: Musical Polymath* (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2013) has uncovered evidence that raises the intriguing possibility of a familial connection between Harty and Moeran. A further link is suggested by the common interest in Spiritism that was shared by Harty and Moeran's father.

[sic] parts ready – and the score lying between us as we discuss various points of interpretation. Good luck to your pen, and may this summer bring you the necessary inspiration and lucky moods for work so that the Symphony may be finished.

All your friends, like myself, are steadfast in their trust in your gifts.⁵¹⁰

Whatever the truth, it is clear that by January 1926, Moeran had more or less abandoned composition, not just of the symphony, but of anything at all, and that this abandoning remained in place for the next three years. Since there is no direct evidence that fully accounts for Moeran's subsequent fallow period, the researcher can only resort to speculation on the basis of a plausible scenario. Moeran himself wrote about this period in a letter to Peers Coetmore in 1948: '... I lost faith in myself once round about 1926 & composed nothing for several years. I even nearly became a garage proprietor in partnership with Cockerill, the ex air ace ...'.⁵¹¹ The context of the recollection in the letter is that Coetmore had evidently suggested that Moeran leave Ireland (by 1948, he was spending most of his time in Kenmare, Co. Kerry) and join her in South Africa. According to Rhoderick McNeill, she had become aware of a teaching post at the University of Cape Town and she had apparently mentioned this as a possibility to Moeran. In the letter he continued:

... I probably lost faith in myself in 1926 because I had an awfully lazy period in Eynsford. If you knock off for a long time it is frightfully hard to get going ... the same thing would happen were I to spend 8 months of the year lecturing & teaching.⁵¹²

Moeran's admission to laziness does provide some support for the suggestion that he gave way to the multitude of distractions presented by life in the cottage and that he just did not want to leave. The *laissez-faire*, even hedonistic way of life there had perhaps liberated Moeran from a lifetime of reserve and abstemiousness that was probably a legacy of his strict Anglican childhood. It is also possible that there was an even more inhibiting factor at work, and this was Heseltine himself. As has been shown, Heseltine thrived in the Eynsford cottage milieu. The drinking, the society, the sex and free-living in which the inhabitants indulged seem to have

⁵¹⁰ Letter from Sir Hamilton Harty to Moeran, dated St. John's Wood, NW 8, 29 March 1935; transcribed in McNeill (1983), 681

⁵¹¹ Letter to Peers Coetmore dated 9 February 1948 and transcribed in McNeill (1983), 563

⁵¹² *ibid.*

been exactly the stimulation and nourishment that his intellect and imagination craved. It is possible that observing Heseltine's ability to consume quantities of alcohol throughout the day and evening and then work all night on an article or a composition that was completed by the morning may have led Moeran to some kind of despair. This supposition is supported by the description of Moeran's reaction to hearing *A Village Romeo and Juliet* in the anecdote related by Lionel Hill in *Lonely Waters*, quoted above.

It is also possible that Moeran just ran out of steam, so to speak, and suffered a protracted period of lack of inspiration. Such periods have been observed in the lives of a number of composers and the reasons are many and varied.⁵¹³ However, the way of life in the cottage was so different from that to which Moeran had been used that an effect on his creative ability must be considered as a strong possibility for his lack of musical output between 1926 and 1929.

The barren period was punctuated by a few high points where Moeran found the inspiration to produce something. The collaboration with Heseltine on *Maltworms* has been well-documented⁵¹⁴ but a number of piano works at least are also known to have been composed during the cottage sojourn: *Bank Holiday* and *Summer Valley* in mid-1925, *Irish Love Song* in January 1926 and *The White Mountain* in August 1927. Nonetheless, it is significant that the latter two pieces are arrangements of Irish folksongs and thus may hardly be regarded as substantial original compositions, and it has been shown that *Bank Holiday* and *Summer Valley* were stylistic imitations of Grainger and Delius respectively. Naturally, it is possible that he composed other works that have not survived, but given his own testimony that he experienced 'an awfully lazy period', this seems unlikely.

Even if he was unable to compose much, Moeran did continue his other musical activities sporadically during 1926 and 1927. He continued as a 'Country' member of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* for a further year and while he again provided Laverton as his

⁵¹³ The biographies of various composers provide accounts of these fallow periods and the varying reasons for them. See Barry Cooper, *Beethoven*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000), Tomi Mäkelä, *Jean Sibelius*, (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2011) and Roger Nichols, *Ravel*, (Yale University Press, Yale MA, 2011) for well-known example.

⁵¹⁴ Cockshott (1955), 129

address,⁵¹⁵ his parents moved shortly after the New Year to a townhouse at 11, Constitution Hill in Ipswich.⁵¹⁶ Their move to Ipswich was convenient for Moeran as it provided him again with a base in East Anglia. Moeran was also the subject of occasional items in various newspapers and periodicals – and these were not confined to the United Kingdom. In February 1926, *Billboard Magazine* of New York featured a brief article on the singer John Goss, in the course of which was written: ‘E. J. Moeran is another collector and editor of folk songs whose work would seem well worth the serious consideration of theater men on the lookout for original and attractive material’.⁵¹⁷ On 8 February, Moeran was invited to give a talk to the Birmingham University Music Society and he chose the subject ‘The Influence of Spohr on Contemporary Music’. What Moeran actually said about Spohr has not survived but the *Midland Musician* issue of 3 March 1926 reported that the talk by ‘Mr Ernest Moeran, the well-known Norfolk composer ...’⁵¹⁸ had been ‘... interesting.’⁵¹⁹

Regular performances of works by Moeran also continued – in particular, the popular *String Quartet in A minor* received a number of performances.⁵²⁰ However, it may be observed from newspaper and periodical announcements and reviews that the number of performances and the range of works included declined steadily from 1926. Moeran seems to have made much less effort to promote himself, in comparison with the preceding five years, and it is apparent that the musical establishment gradually forgot about him. His absence from London, most particularly from the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* would not have gone un-noticed, and while visitors to the cottage would have been reminded that Moeran was still alive, his failure to

⁵¹⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.963, 77

⁵¹⁶ Crockford’s Clerical Directory for 1929, (Horace Cox, London, 1929), 941

⁵¹⁷ *Billboard Magazine*, 38.6 (26 February 1926), 29

⁵¹⁸ *Midland Musician*, (March 1926), 118

⁵¹⁹ When Moeran’s Norwegian folksong arrangement, *Oh, Sweet Fa’s the Eve* was originally published as *Sæterjentens Søndag*, the reviewer for *The Musical Times* observed that: ‘One or two touches of harmony at the end are distinctly Spohrish’. ‘Male-Voice’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 66, No. 993 (1 November 1925), 994

⁵²⁰ Performances included: 28 February at the 132nd Concert of the *Sunday Evening Concert Society* at the Working Men’s College, Crowndale Road, NW1 (*A.L. Bacharach Collection Box 7 1923-26*, Oxford University Library Mus 317 c.7), 8 June at the Court House, Marylebone Lane, NW1 (‘Music this Week’, *The Times*, issue 44291, (7 June 1926), 19), 19 July broadcast on 2LO (‘Broadcasting – Programmes’, *The Times*, issue 44327, (19 July 1926), 6), 19 October at a Liverpool Contemporary Music Centre recital in the Rushworth Hall, Liverpool (‘Music and Drama’, *The Guardian*, (9 October 1926), 7)

produce any new music and lack performances of the works he had previously composed may have reinforced the impression that he was no longer a central figure.⁵²¹

Moeran's abandonment of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – or perhaps more accurately, its abandonment of Moeran – requires some examination. It had been central to his musical life in London for the previous dozen or so years, and it had been on the foundations created from the opportunities presented by membership of the Club that Moeran's post-war career had been built. Although he maintained his membership (at the 'Country' rate) until the end of 1929, his last recorded participation at a Club recital evening was, as shown above, on 19 February 1925 – just a few weeks after his move into the Eynsford cottage. The minutes of the 1925 Annual General Meeting, held on 11 March 1925, record that Moeran was still a member of the House Music Sub-Committee and it is also recorded that he donated some scores to the Club.⁵²² It may be reasonably supposed that Moeran's decline in interest in the Club began at around that time and there are two possible reasons why this might have happened. First, although Eynsford is quite near London and in the 1920s the railway service was frequent, fast and prompt, more of an effort would have been required to leave the cottage and make the trip into town – far more so than while Moeran actually maintained rooms in the city. Second, it may well have been that Heseltine did not favour the Club. Having failed to graduate from Oxford, he was not eligible for automatic membership himself and his notorious reputation and unconventional lifestyle possibly disqualified him from selection under the other available entry routes.

Thus, Moeran would have faced something of a dilemma; to continue his membership and active participation in the activities of the Club would have necessitated frequent journeys to London, while abandoning it altogether meant that he would lose the important and useful contacts he had established and perhaps even his own reputation in the Club. Although there is

⁵²¹ Hubert Foss made efforts to bring Moeran back to the attention of the music public in his article Hubert Foss, 'E. J. Moeran: A Critical Appreciation', *The Musical Times* (January 1930), 26-29

⁵²² *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.2, General Meeting Minutes 1899-1939

nothing recorded, it is justifiable to suppose that Moeran's decision was one of prevarication – in that he continued to pay his subscription, but no longer participated actively. This assertion is supported by the Club archive record that shows that from 1926, Moeran no longer paid 'programme money'.⁵²³ This was a supplement to the annual subscription that was intended to cover the costs of producing the printed programmes for each of the fortnightly Thursday evening musical soirées. While it was not compulsory, any member not paying the supplement was not entitled to keep a copy of each printed programme. That Moeran stopped paying this is a good indication that he didn't attend any musical evenings after 1925. Although the minutes of the 1926 *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* Annual General Meeting, held on 10 March 1926, record Moeran as still a member of the House Music Sub-Committee,⁵²⁴ there is no other mention of him in Club records after that date – save for a note of his ejection from the Club in January 1930.⁵²⁵ It is likely, therefore, that he did not attend actively as a Sub-Committee member after perhaps mid-1925 and that he was removed from this position a few months later.

At the end of 1926, Moeran drove in his car to the south of France to stay with Augustus John in Martigues, apparently to collect French folksongs. John later recalled the occasion in his autobiography *Chiaroscuro*:

The composer E. J. Moeran, spent some time with us, whether profitably or not I cannot say. He came to collect folk songs but, as far as I could see, only succeeded in getting hold of a defective piano on which to record them. We made, at any rate, some memorable jaunts together, for he had brought his car with him.⁵²⁶

John's autobiography contains a number of references to Moeran's visits to various locations in the south of France but the dating is problematic as John did not write chronologically, preferring to sprinkle the book with anecdotes ('fragments' – as he called them) from various episodes of his life. However, the accounts provide evidence that Moeran did travel intermittently in France over a period of several years. Evidently, Moeran visited Delius again

⁵²³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*; Oxford University Library Dep.3, Account Book

⁵²⁴ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Additional Deposits, Box Dep.2, General Meeting Minutes 1899-1939

⁵²⁵ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*; Oxford University Library Dep.3, Account Book

⁵²⁶ Augustus John, *Chiaroscuro; Fragments of Autobiography*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1954), 114-115

on his way back from Martigues – another letter from Heseltine to Jelka Delius makes a passing reference: ‘I was so glad to hear from Moeran the other day that Fred seemed better than he was when we were last in Grez’.⁵²⁷

A number of Moeran’s works are recorded as having been performed during the course of 1927, but the frequency was lower than it had been in 1926, and, again it was his chamber music works – the *String Quartet in A minor* and the *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano* that accounted for the majority of performances.⁵²⁸ However, by the middle of the year, he was apparently back living with his parents at their large townhouse in Constitution Hill, Ipswich. From mid-1927 to the expiry of the Eynsford cottage lease a year or so later, it is impossible to say how Moeran divided his time between Eynsford and Ipswich, but it is evident that something had changed in his relationship with Heseltine. Heseltine’s letters written during 1927 and 1928 make little mention of Moeran, which reinforces the suggestion that Moeran spent less time in the cottage than he had during the previous two years. Moreover, Moeran’s own surviving letters that date from 1927 and 1928 were all written from Ipswich.

The Beginning of Recovery

In January 1928, Moeran paid the ‘Country’ rate for his membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, but continued to give Laverton as his address.⁵²⁹ Since his parents had moved to Ipswich at the beginning of 1926, Moeran’s failure to change his home address as recorded at the Club adds to the evidence suggesting that his commitment to membership was weaker than it had been before he moved to Eynsford. Moeran also began the process of re-establishing himself in London musical life by writing to Edward Clark at the BBC on 12

⁵²⁷ Letter 856, Smith (ed.) (2005), 166

⁵²⁸ Performances included: 5 January *In the Mountain Country* broadcast from Belfast (‘Broadcasting – Belfast’, *Irish Times*, (5 January 1927), 9), 20 January *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano* at the Wigmore Hall (‘Music this Week’, *The Times*, issue 44481, (17 January 1927), 10), 14 February *Sonata in E minor for Violin and Piano* at the Wigmore Hall (‘Recitals of the Week’, *The Times*, issue 44509, (18 February 1927), 12), 21 July *String Quartet in A minor* broadcast on 2LO (‘Broadcasting – Programmes’, *The Times*, issue 44639, (21 July 1927), 25), 1 December Two piano works (not specified) performed by Alan Bush at the Wigmore Hall (‘Week-end Concerts’, *The Times*, issue 44756, (5 December 1927), 12)

⁵²⁹ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.963, 123

January 1928, asking Clark to have lunch with him.⁵³⁰ Moeran wanted to discuss a forthcoming broadcast performance of the *Second Rhapsody* and it was evident that he intended to make some amendments to the score. It is not known whether the lunch invitation was accepted, but in any event, the broadcast of the *Second Rhapsody* did not materialise until some eighteen months later.⁵³¹ From the dating evidence provided by this and his other surviving letters, Moeran seems to have spent most of 1928 in Ipswich – apart from visits in October to Heseltine in Wales and Bruce Blunt in Hampshire. However, Hamilton Harty continued to keep faith with Moeran and conducted the Hallé orchestra in a further performance of *In the Mountain Country* on 23 March, this time in London at the Queen’s Hall.⁵³²

In October 1928, the Eynsford *ménage* finally came to an end – largely because the perpetually impecunious Heseltine was no longer able to pay the rent. The lease on the cottage was terminated, and Heseltine left Eynsford and returned to his mother’s home in Wales. Although Moeran would probably have been well able to afford the entire rent, and to bail Heseltine out of his financial difficulties, it is quite possible that his mother, as the source of his income, gave him an ultimatum. However, it may be deduced from a letter written after Heseltine had vacated the cottage, that Moeran had been left to sort out the financial disarray:

I have been gathering up the energy to clear out of Eynsford and have got so far as to clear myself out, never to return, though Colly [Hal Collins], cats and Raspberry [Moeran] are remaining until the quite preposterous financial situation is eased a little ...⁵³³

The Eynsford artistic experiment was over. For Heseltine, it had been (mostly) a huge achievement, compounding the successes – albeit erratic – of the previous ten years, and he was (again mostly) unaffected by the unremitting hedonistic lifestyle in the cottage. Moeran, in contrast, having entered the cottage as a successful composer in the course of an increasingly

⁵³⁰ ‘Dear Clark, Can you lunch with me the latter end of next week ...?’; from a letter to Edward Clark dated 11, Constitution Hill, Ipswich, 12 January 1928, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 350

⁵³¹ ‘Mr Ansermet will conduct the Wireless Symphony Orchestra in a symphony concert to be given tonight from 2LO ... The programme will include ... Moeran’s *Second Rhapsody* ...’, from ‘Broadcasting – The Programmes’, *The Times*, issue 45219, (3 June 1929), 28

⁵³² ‘B.B.C. Symphony Concert’, *The Times*, issue 44850, (24 March 1928), 7

⁵³³ Letter 897 (undated but must be October 1928), Smith (ed.) (2005), 200; since their landlord was Hubert Foss, a friend of both Moeran and Heseltine, it is difficult to conceive precisely what was the nature of the ‘preposterous financial situation’, unless perhaps Foss was dissatisfied with the state in which the cottage had been left and was demanding some sort of recompense.

glittering career, had emerged, nearly four years later, more or less forgotten, having composed practically nothing for several years. Perhaps Moeran had endeavoured to keep pace with Heseltine's boundless energy, endless enthusiasms and capacity for drinking, but it had become too much for him and the years of hard drinking had probably turned him into an alcoholic. While there is no formal diagnosis of the condition of alcoholism dating from this time, such diagnoses were produced later in Moeran's life.⁵³⁴ Thus, there cannot be any doubt that Moeran became an alcoholic at some point, and, equally, there can be no doubt that he was not an alcoholic before the Eynsford cottage period. Thus, the condition must have developed either during the Eynsford cottage period or shortly after. Evidence that alcohol had become an integral part of Moeran's life is provided by a passing reference in another of Heseltine's letters, from which much may be deduced. On 23 October 1928, Heseltine wrote to Bruce Blunt from Cefn-Bryntalch:

I can easily postpone my departure until the first few days of November if necessary. Raspberry, who has been pronounced "not guilty", leaving the court without a beer stain on his waistcoat, so to speak, wishes to come here at the end of this week, to recuperate from the strain, and attendant insomnia, of his period of suspense.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ In October 1948, Moeran spent another few days at Mount Melleray Abbey (see footnote 335), apparently in another effort to control his drinking: 'My dear Peers, I am getting better here, but we shall have to wait & see whether the result of being here is going to work. You see I have been very ill otherwise apart from the liquor question but originally induced by it.' from a letter to Coetmore dated Mt. Melleray Abbey, Cappoguin, Co. Waterford, 25 October 1948, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 574

After returning to England, he seems to have consulted a Dr Hazlett in Cheltenham, who, reading between the lines of Moeran's correspondence, made the diagnosis of alcoholism. Moeran wrote to Coetmore: 'I am just back from Cheltenham; Mother came with me & saw the Dr. also. For the next few days he would like me to get out in the fresh air as much as possible, & has given me two kinds of medicine. He wants to see me again this day fortnight. I was with him for ¾ hour & I told him the truth, i.e. how I have been liable to bouts for years past, also of attempts in the way of treatment I had gone in for, and of my experiences in that direction. He is very strongly of the opinion that I should get into harness as regards my work & be under Doctor's care at the same time in quiet surroundings. To this end, I should find accommodation in Cheltenham & be under him for treatment which he proposes to carry out with a long course of medicinal treatment. Mother & I both liked him & I really feel that I could place confidence in him. The first condition is that I never touch any alcoholic beverages even of the mildest & most innocent kind. He says I have made a mistake in the past in trying to make up my mind to stick to only such things as mild & bitter or a glass of wine, because for some psychological reason, he says, it is far harder in the latter end to do that than to essay to go completely dry. Sooner or later, one takes too much beer or cider & the result is that recklessness sets in & one goes on to other drinks & the damage is done. I have never before willingly or consciously set out to go entirely teetotal permanently, although as you know there have often been periods when I haven't [sic] wanted a drink, but during those periods haven't [sic] thought much about it. Now, under his care, if I go to Cheltenham & put myself in his hands I have to cooperate by going consciously, completely teetotal altogether.'; from a letter to Coetmore dated Ledbury, 22 November 1948, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 577

Although alcoholism is not mentioned specifically, the course of treatment prescribed by Hazlett as described by Moeran is consistent with such a diagnosis. Amongst numerous reference works on alcohol dependency and alcoholism are Elvin Morton Jellinek, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism*, (Hillhouse, New Haven CT, 1960) and Irving Maltzman, *Alcoholism – Its Treatments and Mistreatments*, (World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, 2008)

⁵³⁵ Letter 902, Smith (ed.) (2005), 205

'Raspberry' was Heseltine's nickname name for Moeran, bestowed after Moeran had developed a ruddy complexion – probably due to his excessive alcohol consumption.⁵³⁶ It may be inferred from Heseltine's remarks that Moeran had been up before the magistrate on some drink-related charge, and from that time on, such events were to be not uncommon for Moeran. A few weeks later, Heseltine related a similar incident in a letter to Colin Taylor dated 78, Denbigh Street, S.W.1, 28 January 1929:

[Moeran's] last composition – a fantasy for small orchestra on a theme by Whythorne – was unfortunately not picked up by the kindly Brussels gendarme who found its composer in a state of beatific coma in the gutter some years ago ...⁵³⁷

With the possibility of returning to the cottage and its associated distractions eliminated, Moeran settled at his parents' house in Ipswich and gradually began the task of reconstructing his life and career. He submitted some of his earlier compositions to publishing houses, and during the course of the year the piano pieces *Bank Holiday* and *Summer Valley*, and the choral piece *Christmas Day in the Morning* appeared in print. In the more stable and peaceful environment of his parents' home, Moeran's ability and urge to compose seems gradually to have been restored. He turned to James Joyce's *Chamber Music* collection, originally published in 1907, and which is a set of thirty-six poems, mostly concerning love in its various forms and many having barely concealed sexual connotations. Moeran eventually set seven poems from the collection as a cycle, simply called *Seven Poems of James Joyce*. An examination of the poems that Moeran selected reveals that each is concerned in some way with the meeting of the poet and his lover and the unspoken consequences that may follow such meetings. It is quite possible that this subject resonated with Moeran, given that, during the Eynsford cottage years, he had experienced the physical aspects of relationships with women.

Each of the *Seven Poems* settings is interesting, but it is *Donnycarney* which is perhaps the most significant. *Donnycarney* is the thirty-first poem in the Joyce set and superficially seems

⁵³⁶ ... and probable resulting high blood pressure.

⁵³⁷ Letter 917, Smith (ed.) (2005), 218

to recount a tryst by the poet and his lover in the rural idyll of Donnycarney (*Domhnach Cearnach*) on a balmy summer's evening:

O, it was out by Donnycarney
When the bat flew from tree to tree
My love and I did walk together;
And sweet were the words she said to me.

Along with us the summer wind
Went murmuring -- - O, happily! -- -
But softer than the breath of summer
Was the kiss she gave to me.

Although Donnycarney is now a residential suburb, east of the centre of Dublin, at the time of the poem's composition it was a wooded area with dells and thickets. Although the main purpose of the line: 'When the bat flew from tree to tree' is to signify an evening stroll taken by the poet together with his love, it also inserts an undercurrent of the macabre into the otherwise romantic image. The apparent perfection of the scene is therefore disturbed and the lovers' meeting is imbued with uncertainty. However, the sub-text of the poem is clearly sexual and it is very likely that the force of this did not entirely escape Moeran. He was well aware of the power of music to evoke mental imagery and an appreciation of this is essential for an understanding of his ability to manipulate the listener's emotional responses. Moeran's use of nature as an inspirational tool has been examined in several writings about the composer – most recently and in the greatest detail by Fabian Huss in his MA thesis *Inspiration, Influence and Stylistic Development in the Symphonies and Concertos of E.J. Moeran*,⁵³⁸ and subsequently in his paper *The Construction of Nature in the Music of E.J. Moeran*. Although Huss doubts whether actual representation of nature was a component of Moeran's creativity, he asserts that reflection on it in an impressionistic way is an important consideration:

We can trace an obvious preoccupation with nature in Moeran's music from his earliest compositional activity onwards. The frequency of this preoccupation, Moeran's own comments on the significance of nature as a source of inspiration, and his compulsive withdrawal to rural areas of striking scenery and seclusion in order to work illustrate the importance he attached to nature as a stimulus. Works such as... *Dance* and *Fields at Harvest* (both 1913) and his first orchestral work, [the 'Symphonic Impression'] *In the*

⁵³⁸ Huss, Fabian Gregor, *Inspiration, Influence and Stylistic Development in the Symphonies and Concertos of E.J. Moeran*, (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, MA Thesis, 2007)

Mountain Country (1921) refer specifically to nature and rural scenes, but they are rarely descriptive, apparently evoking moods rather than concrete imagery... Moeran's depiction of nature in his music was largely subjective; indeed, throughout his music, it is usually not nature itself which is depicted, but Moeran's experience of it.⁵³⁹

Moeran's setting of the first verse of *Donnycarney* evokes an idyllic pastoral scene as the location for the lovers' walk together. Although the setting of the second verse generates a contrast to the initial effect – leading more to an impression of *Sehnsucht* on the part of the listener, Moeran was clearly concentrating on a romantic interpretation of the text. The uncertainty as to the outcome of the lovers' walk – was this long in the past and the poet is remembering a lost love or is he recalling a happy (“*O! happily!*”) and recent time spent with his love? – is communicated by the ambivalence of the final chord of the song, which may be spelled either as the second inversion sub-dominant major 9th or as a bi-tonal combination of the sub-dominant and tonic triads. Perhaps the lover was still recalling the kiss?

The image shows a musical score for the ending of 'Donnycarney'. It consists of three staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line has the lyrics 'kiss she gave to me.' The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*. There is a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand of the piano part.

Ex. 43 *Donnycarney* – ending

Moeran achieved his desired effect by a combination of melodic line and harmonic redirection. The line of ‘bat flew from tree to tree’ could also have been harmonised as a modulation to the sub-dominant but Moeran didn't do this – and the listener is thus drawn into experiencing a more intimate and lyrical ambiance:

⁵³⁹ Huss (2009), 42

O, — it was out by Don-ny - car - ney When the
 bat flew from tree to tree My love and I did walk to - ge - ther; — And
 sweet were the words she said to me.

Ex. 44 *Donnycarney* – bars 1-10

The Mixolydian mode continuation from bar six and resolution of the modulation to the subdominant in bar seven further emphasises this. Representing, as it appears to, a return to regular composition after a barren period of nearly three years, *Donnycarney* is remarkably fluent and assured – as are the other six settings – and again, the objective listener is left wondering whether these songs really do represent Moeran’s entire compositional output during the two year period 1928 to 1929.

The tune of *Donnycarney* may have been used by Moeran several years later when he composed the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* for Peers Coetmore. A comparison of *Donnycarney* with the second subject of the concerto first movement reveals similarities:

(for convenience of comparison, the following two extracts from each work have been rendered in a common key)



Ex. 45 *Donnycarney* – bars 1-7



Ex. 46 *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* – first movement – second subject

Both extracts are in triple time, both are largely pentatonic, both begin with an octave descent over two bars followed by a rise to the dominant, and both appear to modulate to the flattened leading note. These features are evident in English and Irish folk music – with which Moeran had been imbued since his late teenage years – so, in conjuring up a lyrical, pastoral sensation for the listener, it may be expected that a certain kind of sound would be the result. However, in this case, the similarity between the two thematic ideas – and in particular, the use of the paired descending minor 3rd/major 2nd interval combination – is sufficient to consider the cello concerto melody to be a derivative of the *Donnycarney* tune. The harmonic effect provided by the accompaniment in each case is also similar – but enables a differentiation of melodic purpose. The beginning of Moeran’s relationship with Peers Coetmore will be considered in detail in the next chapter but it is pertinent here to examine whether the sexual-emotional narrative evident in Moeran’s selection of songs for *Seven Poems* would have a parallel in his composition of works for Coetmore. It is apparent from the scant evidence that Moeran’s

relationships with women during his twenties and thirties were not entirely successful.⁵⁴⁰ When a further chance apparently presented itself a few years later, in the form of Peers Coetmore, the memories of these earlier failures would undoubtedly have been at the front of his mind. An assertion that is supported by the repeated seeking of reassurance that is apparent in the first letters that Moeran wrote to Coetmore during the autumn of 1943.⁵⁴¹ Thus, the question to be considered is, to what extent did Moeran deliberately recall his *Donnycarney* tune when engaged in the composition of the cello concerto? Is this another example of his conscious or subconscious self-plagiarism – that is to say, was he simply saving himself time by using and slightly modifying an existing piece, or was his use of *Donnycarney* a metaphor for his love for Coetmore, both emotional and physical? Moeran has been shown to have possessed a very high level of intelligence and very probably a prodigious memory, especially for sound. The cello concerto was composed some fifteen years after *Donnycarney* but it is reasonable to suppose that it remained in Moeran's memory. Thus, there is the intriguing possibility that his reference to *Donnycarney* in the cello concerto may have had a deliberate purpose and therefore becomes more significant than a simple re-composition. It will be shown in the next chapter that Moeran had an innate and ultimately justifiable sense of insecurity in his relationship with Coetmore – although the level of insecurity fluctuated over the months. In writing an overtly romantic second subject theme derived from a song setting in which the sub-text of the poem is sexual, Moeran may have been attempting to ameliorate his constant forebodings by encoding a message to Coetmore. This conjecture is supported by the precedent seen in the *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano*, where Moeran may have used music to express things that he found difficult or even impossible to say with words. The details of this will be shown in the discussion of the *Prelude* in the next chapter.

⁵⁴⁰ 'On my second visit [to Eynsford], Nina [Hamnett] was there, living with Jack Moeran ...', from Jack Lindsay, *Fanfrolico and After*, (The Bodley Head, London, 1962), 84

'... he [Augustus John] wishes he could trust more wholeheartedly her [Eileen Hawthorne's] ability to hide things: for example, pregnancies. Though he shared her favours with the musician E.J. Moeran, it was John who, after some grumbling, paid for the abortions ...', from Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John, Vol.2 The Years of Experience*, (William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1975), 90

⁵⁴¹ These letters will be examined in detail in Chapter 6.

Of the other six settings in *Seven Poems*, four of them contain folksong-style melodies. This suggests that Moeran had been able to recover his melodic invention, although there is no evidence that indicates the time taken to compose these settings. The *Seven Poems* were published towards the end of 1930 and their first broadcast performance possibly took place on 9 December that year.⁵⁴²

Despite his gradual musical rehabilitation, Moeran seems to have made no effort to re-establish himself at the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. There are no records that provide any clues – except for the fact that Moeran is not mentioned in any Club archives during the years 1928-9 – and the researcher is again faced with the problem of determining whether absence of evidence denotes evidence of absence. The fact that Moeran was unceremoniously ejected from the Club at the beginning of 1930 suggests that a more serious rift had occurred between him and the committee and it is not too much of a leap of imagination to attribute this to his probable failure to attend the Music Sub-Committee meetings. The archive of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* clearly records that the work of this sub-committee was one of the most important aspects of the Club and that membership of it was a privilege. Moeran had served conscientiously since March 1922, including a period as its chairman, and his intensifying lack of diligence, together with his failure to attend any of the Club events, was probably met with dissatisfaction. Thus it is reasonable to assert that Moeran had probably burned his boats with the Club during his sojourn in Eynsford and that two years later, he found its doors closed to him. However, on 2 January 1929, Moeran did renew his membership of the Club for another year at the ‘Country’ rate and he again failed to amend his home address.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² The suggestion that the *Seven Poems* were broadcast on 9 December 1930 comes from a letter written by Moeran to the BBC and transcribed by McNeill. The letter runs: ‘Sir, There are a couple of mistakes in the "Radio Times" programme of Chamber Music to-morrow night (London Regional). The first of my songs should read. "Strings in the earth and air"; the last "Now, O now in this brown land" (not is) ...’; from a letter to the BBC dated 11, Constitution Hill, Ipswich, 8 December 1930, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 352. However, a search of the schedules for the 9 December 1930 does not locate the item mentioned by Moeran. Indeed, a search of the broadcasting schedules several weeks either side of 9 December 1930 fails to locate the item. The probably explanation for this is that either Moeran was mistaken or the date of the letter is a transcription error by McNeill.

⁵⁴³ *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club Archives*, Oxford University Library Dep.c.963, 172

In the summer of 1929, Moeran took rooms at 22 Priory Road, London NW6. He continued to correspond with the BBC and his return to the establishment may be regarded to have been completed by the invitation from that body to conduct his *Second Rhapsody* at the Promenade Concert in the Queen's Hall on 12 September. Following Moeran's movements and activities for several months after this date is problematic as there is a gap in his surviving correspondence between 7 September 1929 and 5 April 1930 and no references to him have been located in the press or in magazines or journals. Moreover, the letters of Philip Heseltine make no further mention of Moeran until a letter dated 9 April 1930, written to Bruce Blunt, in which Heseltine states that he is going to move into Moeran's rooms at 22 Priory Road. Moeran's letter dated 5 April 1930 was written on board the *S.S. Buonaparte*, en route for Calvi in Corsica. The content of the letter, addressed to Alan (H) of the BBC, concerned a programme for the *Children's Hour* that Moeran was to broadcast on 12 May. This represents further evidence that Moeran had managed to place himself, if not back at the centre of London musical life, certainly very near it. According to the letters of Heseltine, Moeran suffered yet another accident – on this occasion, on board the ship that returned him to France from Corsica⁵⁴⁴ – and on his return to England, he spent much of the remainder of the year in a nursing home. A further letter from Heseltine explained this:

... I am sorry to say that [Moeran] will be laid up for some considerable time. What was originally diagnosed as water-on-the-knee has now been proved, by blood tests and X-rays, to be a form of localized tuberculosis from which recovery is bound to be a slow and tedious process.⁵⁴⁵

A forensic reading of both the surviving correspondence between Moeran and Heseltine, and the letters they wrote to other people confirms that Moeran was bed-bound at least until 5 November 1930, and that he was not fully mobile for a further few weeks. However, during these few months, he had produced several compositions, the most significant of which were the *Sonata for Two Violins* and the *Songs of Springtime*. He had also composed a set of church

⁵⁴⁴ 'Please forgive this long delay in replying to your letter of a month ago. It lay for some while at 22 Priory Road which is now untenanted owing to Moeran having fallen down (drunk again?) on the boat crossing from Corsica to France and given himself water-on-the-knee which had kept him in a nursing home since his return to England'; from letter 966 to Arnold Dowbiggin, Smith (ed.) (2005), 272

⁵⁴⁵ Letter 968, Smith (ed.) (2005), 274

music works, an *Evening Canticles in D* (now known as “Moeran in D”), a *Te Deum and Jubilate* and an anthem *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem*. While the *Te Deum, Jubilate* and *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem* are now rarely performed, the canticles remain popular and frequently feature on Evensong programmes in cathedrals around the country. Moeran’s final letter to Heseltine, written on 5 November 1930, provides an interesting insight, not only into the composition of the church music, but also how he was able to work under trying circumstances:

I have a fairly easy *Te Deum* all ready & copied out & am well on with an evening service into which I cannot resist inserting some luscious Stainerisms. I spend a good deal of time writing music, but lack of privacy prevents me from doing anything on a larger scale, as I am still too helpless to be free of constant attendance.⁵⁴⁶

Moeran continued in a frank and detailed manner about the practical considerations of being bed-bound and the consequent undignified aspects of that condition. He had evidently sought refuge in composition – by necessity, entirely in his head – and the resulting music, which stands as some of his finest small-scale work, is a testament to Moeran’s ability to overcome adversity. Despite his extended illness, Moeran’s musical recovery was almost complete.

⁵⁴⁶ Letter 979*, Moeran to Heseltine, Smith (ed.) (2005), 286

Summary

Moeran's progress over the decade may be measured in a number of ways but frequency of performance certainly reflects the perception of his music from the perspectives both of performers and audience. The following table shows the known performances of his works for each of the years 1920 to 1929. The data was extracted from newspapers and music periodicals:

Table 1 Known Performances of Moeran's Music – 1920-1929

Date	Work	Venue	Performers
1920			
27-May	<i>Theme and Variations in F Minor</i>	London, O&CMC	Moeran (piano)
24-Jun	<i>A Cradle-Song</i> <i>Dream of Death</i> <i>The Bold Richard</i> <i>The Captain's Apprentice</i> <i>The Pressgang</i>	London, O&CMC	W. T. Ivimey (tenor) Moeran (piano)
28-Oct	<i>At a Horse Fair</i>	London, O&CMC	Moeran (piano)
1921			
14-Oct	<i>Theme and Variations in F Minor</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Dorothea Vincent (piano)
27-Oct	<i>Toccat</i>	London, O&CMC	Moeran (piano)
12-Nov	<i>Piano Trio</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Harmonic Trio
23-Nov	<i>Norfolk Folk-Song arrangements</i>	London, O&CMC	W. T. Ivimey (tenor) Moeran (piano)
24-Nov	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	London, Royal College of Music	Moeran RCM Orchestra
01-Dec	<i>On a May Morning</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Mr Howard-Jones (piano)
1922			
January	<i>On a May Morning</i> <i>Theme and Variations</i>	Amsterdam	Mr Howard-Jones (piano)
March	<i>On a May Morning</i> <i>Theme and Variations</i>	Paris	Mr Howard-Jones (piano)
22-Jun	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	London, Royal College of Music	Moeran (conductor) RCM Orchestra
1923			
15-Jan	<i>Three Piano Pieces</i> <i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i> <i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Harriet Cohen (piano) Désiré Defauw (violin) Allied String Quartet
19-Apr	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	Bournemouth	Moeran (conductor) Bournemouth Festival Orchestra
03-May	<i>On a May Morning</i> <i>Burlesque</i>	London, O&CMC	Harold Rutland (piano)
24-Oct	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London	

1924			
24-Jan	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	Manchester, Free Trade Hall	Hamilton Harty (conductor) Hallé Orchestra
08-Feb	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London	Philharmonic String Quartet
01-Mar	<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	
28-Mar	<i>Norfolk Folk-Song arrangements</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone)
10-Apr	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	Bournemouth	Moeran (conductor) Bournemouth Festival Orchestra
21-Apr	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	Bournemouth	Moeran (conductor) Bournemouth Festival Orchestra
17-Jul	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	London, 2LO	Moeran (conductor) (orchestra unknown)
22-Jul	(unspecified songs)	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone) et al
12-Aug	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	London, 2LO	Moeran (conductor) (orchestra unknown)
27-Aug	<i>Rhapsody No. 1 in F major</i>	London, Queens Hall	Moeran (conductor) New Queen's Hall Orchestra
October	<i>Weep You No More</i>	Blackpool	(various choirs)
21-Oct	<i>The Lake Isle (sic)</i>	Oxford, St. Hugh's College	Fiona McCleary (piano)
01-Nov	<i>Rhapsody No. 2</i>	Norwich, St. Andrews Hall	Moeran (conductor) Norwich Festival Orchestra
27-Nov	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	Manchester, Free Trade Hall	Hamilton Harty (conductor) Hallé Orchestra
14-Dec	<i>Four Songs from A Shropshire Lad</i>	London, The Working Men's College	John Goss (baritone) Harriet Cohen (piano)
17-Dec	<i>Ludlow Town</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone) G O'Conner Morris (piano)
1925			
10-Jan	<i>O Sweet fa's the Eve (Sæterjentens Søndag)</i> <i>The Sailor and Young Nancy</i> <i>The Jolly Carter</i> <i>Under the Broom</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone) Hubert Foss (piano)
10-Feb	<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i>	London, Contemporary Music Centre	Winifred Small (violin)
19-Feb	<i>The Shooting of his Dear</i> <i>The Sailor and Young Nancy</i>	London, O&CMC	B.E.C. Davis (baritone) Moeran (piano)
20-Mar	<i>Ludlow Town</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone) Moeran (piano)
30-Mar	<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i>	London, Aeolian Hall	Winifred Small (violin) Maurice Cole (piano)
07-Apr	<i>Folk-song arrangements (not specified)</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Oriana Madrigal Society
08-Apr	<i>Windmills</i>	London, 2LO	(unknown)
05-May	<i>Rhapsody No. 2</i>	London, 2LO	Dan Godfrey (conductor) (orchestra unknown)
23-May	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, Wigmore	Brussels Quartet

		Hall	
11-Jun	<i>In Youth is Pleasure</i> <i>Troll the Bowl</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	John Goss (baritone)
13-Jun	<i>Pianoforte Trio (revised)</i> <i>The Sailor and Young Nancy</i> <i>O, Sweet fa's the Eve</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	
11-Jul	<i>Windmills</i>	London, 2LO	(unknown)
06-Aug	<i>The Sailor and Young Nancy</i> <i>Mrs Dyer, the Wretched Baby Farmer</i>	London, 2LO	John Goss (baritone) Hubert Foss (piano)
05-Oct	<i>Windmills</i>	London, The Working Men's College	Gordon Bryan (piano)
27-Oct	<i>The Press-Gang</i>	London, 2LO	John Goss (baritone)
16-Nov	<i>Windmills</i>	London, 2LO	Gordon Bryan (piano)
1926			
22-Jan	<i>(five folksong arrangements)</i>	London, Court House, Marylebone Lane	John Goss (baritone)
26-Jan	<i>Troll the Bowl</i>	London, 2LO	(unknown)
28-Feb	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, The Working Men's College	Wood-Smith String Quartet
04-Mar	<i>Rhapsody No. 2</i>	Manchester, Free Trade Hall	Hamilton Harty (conductor) Hallé Orchestra
10-Mar	<i>When June is Come</i>	London, 2LO	
10-Apr	<i>Can't You Dance the Polka</i>	London, 2LO	
15-Apr	<i>Windmills</i>	London, 2LO	
08-Jun	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, Court House, Marylebone Lane	Boris Pecker String Quartet
19-Jul	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, 2LO	
14-Oct	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	Liverpool, Rushworth Hall	
11-Nov	<i>Down by the Riverside</i>	London, O&CMC	
25-Nov	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	Manchester, Free Trade Hall	Hamilton Harty (conductor) Hallé Orchestra
1927			
January	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	Frankfurt	
05-Jan	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	Belfast	
20-Jan	<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Florence Lockwood (violin) Alan Bush (piano)
14-Feb	<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Florence Lockwood (violin) Alan Bush (piano)
17-Feb	<i>The Little Milkmaid</i>	London, O&CMC	
30-May	<i>(orchestral work)</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Queen's Hall Orchestra
4-Jun	<i>The Sailor and Young Nancy</i>	London, 2LO	John Goss (baritone) The Cathedral Male Voices Quartet
21-Jul	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	London, 2LO Broadcast	Charles Woodhouse String Quartet
01-Dec	<i>(two piano pieces)</i>	London, Wigmore Hall	Alan Bush (piano)

1928			
02-Feb	<i>Down by the Riverside</i>	London, O&CMC	
March	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	Leeds	Julian Harrison (conductor) (orchestra unknown)
23-Mar	<i>In the Mountain Country</i>	London, Queens Hall	Hamilton Harty (conductor) Hallé Orchestra
April	<i>String Quartet in A minor</i>	Bangor, University College	International String Quartet
1929			
03-Jun	<i>Rhapsody No. 2</i>	London, 2LO	Ernest Ansermet (conductor) Wireless Symphony Orchestra
12-Sep	<i>Rhapsody No. 2</i>	London, Queens Hall	Moeran (conductor) Henry Wood Symphony Orchestra

Summarising the performances table provides the following interesting data:

Table 2 Total Annual Performances

Year	Concerts/Recitals
1920	3
1921	6
1922	3
1923	4
1924	16
1925	16
1926	12
1927	9
1928	4
1929	2

Table 3 Total Performances by Venue

Venue	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
London		4	1	2	9	15	8	6	1	2
O&CMC	3	2		1		1	1	1	1	
Manchester					2		2			
Bournemouth				1	2					
Amsterdam			1							
Paris			1							
Blackpool					1					
Oxford					1					
Norwich					1					
Frankfurt								1		
Belfast								1		
Leeds									1	
Bangor									1	
Liverpool							1			

It is evident from these statistics that Moeran's rise to prominence between 1920 and 1925 and his subsequent decline is tracked quite well with a lag of one to two years. Thus, the peak performance years of 1924-5 indicate that he had achieved the height of prominence by the end

of 1923 and that this level continued over the next year or so. The decrease in performances between 1927 and 1929 accurately reflects both his lack of compositional productivity and his gradual withdrawal from the London music scene from mid-1925 onwards.

Since these statistics are drawn from data published in selected newspapers and music periodicals, they do not include other performances of these and other works that took place but which were not so recorded. However, as an illustration both of Moeran's varying popularity and as an indication of the works performed, they provide a valuable insight. In particular, the Venues table highlights Moeran's debt to the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*. The first performances at the outset of his composing career were mostly under its auspices and it is clear that the opportunity provided by membership of the Club gave Moeran a head-start as a young composer. There is also an evident decrease in the percentage of performances by Moeran of his works – thus confirming an increasing take-up by other performers. By 1925, a wide range of musicians performing music by Moeran testifies very clearly to his advancing status.

The years in the Eynsford cottage had such a profound effect on Moeran and changed him so much, that it is tempting to speculate on what might have happened had he not joined Heseltine. It is very probable that the symphony would have been completed and performed as scheduled in early 1926. While it would not have been the same as the work that eventually emerged as the *Symphony in G minor*, there is no reason to doubt that the work would have been enthusiastically received and that further such commissions would have been forthcoming. However, the main difference would have been that Moeran would probably not have become an alcoholic. There is no evidence of alcohol over-indulgence before the Eynsford period. Since Moeran's entire life from 1928 onwards was a function of his alcohol dependency, its absence would have meant an entirely different life. It is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the crucial decision to join Heseltine may have cost posterity a British symphonist at least the equal of Bax and Vaughan Williams.

Chapter 6

“... finale”

Chapter six begins by examining Moeran’s reaction to the death of Philip Heseltine in December 1930. An argument is presented that Heseltine’s death afforded Moeran a release which enabled him to complete the process of recovery that he had begun on moving out of the Eynsford cottage some three years earlier. The chapter then provides a brief overview of Moeran’s life and composing career from January 1931 to the summer of 1943. The claim that he underwent a deliberate re-appraisal of his compositional style including a period of isolation in the Cotswold Hills is scrutinised.

Moeran’s continuing efforts to rebuild his career and reputation between 1930 and 1937 are narrated in overview, and eventual completion of the long-delayed symphony is presented in the

context of his return to Ireland in mid-decade. The years 1937 to 1943 are then summarised briefly.

The ability to trace the final seven years of Moeran's life in far greater detail than is possible with his first fifty years is facilitated by two sources of evidence. The first of these is the collection of letters Moeran wrote to Peers Coetmore, beginning in October 1943, one hundred and seventy-five of which have survived. These letters were transcribed by Rhoderick McNeill from the originals then in the possession of Coetmore's fourth husband and widower Walter Knott⁵⁴⁷ and were included as an appendix to McNeill's 1982 doctoral thesis *A Critical Study of the Life and Works of E. J. Moeran*. It is these transcriptions that have been used in this research project. The other source is the collection of reminiscences of Lionel Hill, as recounted in his book *Lonely Waters*. Hill also transcribed letters that Moeran had written to him. The abundance of material available from these two resources has enabled a thorough examination of the third critical event in Moeran's life, his meeting and relationship with Peers Coetmore.

Thus, the main part of the chapter is a presentation in narrative form of the initiation, possible motivations and gestation of the relationship between Moeran and Peers Coetmore from its beginnings in June 1943 until their engagement a few months later. This episode of Moeran's life is shown to have been crucial in his later stylistic development and the impact Coetmore had on Moeran's personal life and creative priorities is also discussed. The main work that Moeran composed during this period – the *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – is examined.

⁵⁴⁷ These letters were bequeathed to the Melbourne Arts Centre on Walter Knott's death in 2004. *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection*, Collection ID 1M27, 1M49, Library of the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Release?

On 17 December 1930 in his flat at Tite Street, Chelsea, Philip Heseltine took his own life. Why he did this, and the circumstances of the few hours prior to the event have been the subject of much speculation and sensational reporting during the subsequent eighty years. The investigation of what really happened that afternoon and who, if anybody, else was involved is beyond the scope of this research project.⁵⁴⁸ However, it is entirely relevant that Heseltine's death had a profound, initially shocking but ultimately beneficial impact on Moeran. Of course, Moeran was shocked and saddened by Heseltine's death. On 27 December 1930, he wrote a letter to Heseltine's mother from his parents' home at 11, Constitution Hill, Ipswich:

Dear Mrs Buckley Jones,

I find it difficult to write to you, because in a time of trouble like this you must needless be overwhelmed with letters of condolence, and it seems hard to express to you the sympathy I feel over Philip's death. But I can assure you that it is very sincerely felt. The news came as a great shock to me, and even now, cut off temporarily as I am through an annoying illness, I can scarcely realise the truth of it.

Philip had only recently written to me proposing to bring some friends up here by car for the day, in order to try through some new music. I had sent a message to him to ring me up for a chat & fix things up, & was hourly expecting to hear his voice over the telephone, when Basil Trier gave me the bad news.

I have very few really close friends, & Philip was one of the closest. During my very long illness, he had been unfailing in kindness to me in all sorts of ways. When I was in the London Nursing Home he was in & out nearly every day, & since I have been here, apart from coming up to see me, he had gone to no end of trouble in doing things for me in London which I could not attend to for myself.

His loss will mean a terrible gap to me when I get back again to normal life & find he is no longer there. Please do not trouble to reply to this: you must be worn out after the sad Christmas.

Yours sincerely

E. J. Moeran⁵⁴⁹

Moeran acknowledged in this letter that he had few close friends and his claiming of Heseltine as one of the closest perhaps reveals more about Moeran than he intended. On the

⁵⁴⁸ For a detailed presentation of the evidence see Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994), 279-290

⁵⁴⁹ Letter from Moeran to Edith Buckley Jones dated 27 December 1930; part of *Heseltine Papers*, Add.MS 964, British Library, London

other hand and in the cold light of pure objectivity, it is tempting to regard Heseltine's death as liberation for Moeran.

Moeran's facility to compose had gradually returned after he moved out of the Eynsford cottage but he never again achieved the fluency and level of productivity that was characteristic of him during the 'pre-cottage' years 1920 to 1925. It has been suggested that he engaged in a deliberate stylistic re-appraisal – one of the aspects of the *Moeran Myth* is that in 1930 he 'retired to the Cotswolds',⁵⁵⁰ seeking the solitude necessary for this re-appraisal. However, there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Moeran spent any time at all living in the Cotswolds. Even at the age of thirty-five, Moeran was spending a substantial proportion of each year living at his parents' home. As has been shown, the Moerans had moved to the address in Ipswich from which Moeran wrote the letter quoted above in 1926 and they remained there for some five years. In September 1929, Moeran was involved in a motoring accident, and the following April, he developed tuberculosis of the knee after a fall on a ship travelling between Corsica and France. This resulted in his first being confined to a nursing home in London and subsequently bed-ridden at his parents' home for several months. Within the timeline of the known events in Moeran's life between September 1929 and the end of 1931, there is no period of sufficient length that could be accounted for by his having spent time in the Cotswolds. In April 1931, Moeran's parents sold the house in Ipswich and moved to Lingwood Lodge – a former rectory near Acle in Norfolk.⁵⁵¹ The evidence of his surviving letters from the period confirms that Moeran's own home base moved with his parents, and he continued to spend much of his time living with them. It is difficult to see how any of Moeran's locations during the period 1929 to 1933 or later can have come to be confused with the Cotswolds. However, a plausible origin of the Cotswolds location could be Moeran's parents' address between 1922 and 1926, which was in Laverton, Somerset. There is another village called Laverton in Gloucestershire, which is a characteristic Cotswolds village. It is quite possible that Moeran, in

⁵⁵⁰ Kenneth Avery, 'Moeran, E. J. (Ernest John)', in Blom, Eric (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Fifth Edition*, (Macmillan, London, 1954), 813

⁵⁵¹ Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1932, (Horace Cox, London, 1932), 909

a later recollection, confused the two villages, or that at some point after his death, the village was found on a map of Britain and it was concluded this was where Moeran spent some time.

The fact that mention of Moeran's Cotswolds retreat appears in three entirely distinct and geographically widely separated sources – Stephen Wild's MA thesis of 1966, Vernon Lee Yenne's DMA thesis of 1969 and the entry for Moeran in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, first published in 1981 – suggests that there must have been an earlier source. The earliest reference article on Moeran that mentions his spending time in the Cotswolds for the purpose of engaging in a stylistic re-appraisal is that written by Kenneth Avery for the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, which was published in 1954. This entry was probably compiled from information garnered mainly from Peers Coetmore and it is therefore most likely that the ultimate origin of the Cotswolds story was her mistake or faulty memory. The relevant section of the current edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* entry for *E. J. Moeran* runs as follows:

At this time Moeran retired to the Cotswolds, and set out to review his achievement and expand his style and technique. Although there was no immediate major change in his music, this period of self-criticism eventually produced a series of large-scale works, and his output of songs, piano pieces and chamber music was greatly reduced.⁵⁵²

Even discounting the Cotswolds aspect, this account makes very little sense; surely an expansion of '... style and technique' would have a major change on the music, otherwise how could it be identified? It is certainly true that Moeran composed a number of larger-scale works during the twenty year period after 1930, but this could be easily be attributable to many reasons other than a deliberate stylistic re-appraisal.

Vernon Lee Yenne puts it thus:

This intense period of song composing was capped with one of his best cycles, *Seven Poems by James Joyce*, of 1930. About this time he moved to Cotswolds Hills [*sic*] in order to engage in further musical study and to consolidate his musical style. From this time forward his interest in composing switched from the solo song to choral music and its corresponding area in the instrumental field, chamber music. His most interesting works

⁵⁵² Anthony Payne. 'Moeran, E.J.', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition, Vol. 16, (Macmillan, London, 2001), 880

from this period include *Sonata for Two Unaccompanied Violins* and a *String Trio* (1931). These combined the composer's continuing development in style with his older traits.⁵⁵³

and Rhoderick McNeill said:

Despite periods of illness during 1930, Moeran decided to overhaul his compositional technique and so he withdrew from Maida Vale, London to the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire for some self-imposed study. Up to this point in time, his music had been primarily conceived in melodic and harmonic terms. During this period of study Moeran addressed himself to the task of concentrating on polyphony and textures relatively free of the rich chordal progressions in which he had previously luxuriated. Furthermore, he began to experiment with passages of bitonality. These new features are evident in Moeran's most important products of this study period, the *Sonata for Two Violins* (1930) and the *String Trio in G* (1931). In these works Moeran resolved the compositional problem of writing in only two or three real parts with melodic and contrapuntal interest, without undue bareness of harmony or austerity in effect.⁵⁵⁴

Geoffrey Self also refers to ‘... evidence of much re-appraisal on [Moeran’s] part ...’⁵⁵⁵ Similarly to McNeill, he cites the *Sonata for Two Violins* and the *String Trio in G* as the works that exhibit the results of the re-appraisal. Self also quotes from a letter in which Moeran appears to support this notion: ‘... I am back again at chamber music and during the past year have occupied my unlimited leisure through being laid up in finishing a Sonata for Two Violins, and a Trio for Strings’. Later in the letter, Moeran seems to have forgotten that he said that he has completed the string trio, because he continued: ‘... I have started a String Trio and if I can keep it up I hope the purgative effect of this kind of writing may prove permanently salutary’.⁵⁵⁶ However, Self provides a further reason for the stylistic re-appraisal: ‘... [Moeran] was suffering from a slump in performances (and therefore income) brought about by his prolonged illness’.

It is both interesting and instructive to observe that the details of the supposed stylistic changes differ in each account – a strong indication that there is little actual evidence in the music to support the claim. The first works that should show evidence of stylistic alteration would be the *Sonata for Two Violins* (1930), the *Songs of Springtime* (1930) – both of which

⁵⁵³ Yenne (1969), 147

⁵⁵⁴ McNeill (1983), 114

⁵⁵⁵ Self (1986), 74

⁵⁵⁶ Letter from Moeran to Philip Heseltine dated 23 November 1930, quoted in Self (1986), 74. (Self does not state where this letter is archived and this researcher has not been able to locate it).

were composed primarily in his head while he was bed-ridden in Ipswich – and the *String Trio* (1931). The stylistic features in the *Sonata for Two Violins* and the *String Trio in G* mentioned by McNeill are more likely to be a function of the selected instrumentation, rather than a deliberate restraint by the composer. To suggest, as did McNeill, that writing in ‘only two or three real parts with melodic and contrapuntal interest’ represents a stylistic change, ignores the fact that Moeran had composed no precedents for such limited instrumental forces. There is nothing with which the *Sonata for Two Violins* and the *String Trio in G* may be compared. The madrigal-like *Songs of Springtime* was composed for unaccompanied SATB chorus, and again, was Moeran’s first work for these forces. Stylistically, the work surely owes more to Moeran’s discovery of Elizabethan music, acquired as a result of his friendship with Philip Heseltine, than any conceivable attempt to review his technique. However, the rich harmonic progressions evident throughout – but particularly those in the fifth song *Sigh no more, Ladies*, the seventh song *To Daffodils* and the occasional juxtaposition of major and minor thirds – certainly belie McNeill’s claim that Moeran was no longer ‘luxuriating’ in such textures.

It has been shown that, up to this point in Moeran’s composing career, there is very little evidence to suggest why he composed the works he did when he did. Since he was free to compose whatever he chose, it might be supposed that ideas came to him, more or less at random. However, this is unlikely to have been the case. While, as far as can be ascertained, Moeran had received just two actual commissions during the preceding ten years – the work for the 1924 Norwich Festival, and the symphony for the Hallé orchestra in 1925 – many of the other works he completed seem to have been intended for specific performers (principally his friends), in as much as performances regularly followed the completion of the works. Moeran’s purpose was evidently to stimulate multiple performances of his music, and his strategy was twofold: a) facilitate the performances by limiting the forces required (hence the preponderance of songs, piano pieces and chamber music), and b) compose music particularly for his musician friends. Thus, the apparent freedom to compose what he liked was, in practice, constrained. Although it is clear that Moeran did not need a piano to compose, there is evidence that he used

the piano for checking and confirming his mental creations. When he was confined to bed and actually incapable of moving about unaided, he was reliant upon his ability to hear precisely the music of his imagination. It is quite possible that he decided to create work for two violins, for string trio and for SATB chorus partly as a mental exercise, and partly because the limited number of parts would be less complicated to hear. However, in the case of the *Sonata for Two Violins*, the combination was unusual and the importance of harmony in his previous music was such that deliberately limiting himself to two note sonorities for most of an entire work strongly supports the conjecture that it was more of an exercise than a planned extension to his oeuvre. Nonetheless, the work was admired by Heseltine, who wrote to Lionel Jellinek:

‘Are you proposing to visit Raspberry in the near future? He has written a very good sonata for two violins (unaccompanied) which I am putting forward next week to the committee of the International Festival. It is by far the best thing he has ever written ...’⁵⁵⁷

Moeran may have been familiar with other music for two violins and, indeed, may have played such music during his time at Uppingham School. The repertoire for the combination is surprisingly large – numerous works were composed by Telemann, Pleyel and Spohr – and the Petrucci Music Library catalogue lists hundreds of pieces by more obscure composers.⁵⁵⁸ Moeran’s familiarity with Spohr was evidenced by the talk he gave to the Birmingham University Music Society in February 1926. While an examination of some of the violin duo music by Spohr does not demonstrate conclusively any stylistic influence on Moeran’s sonata, the possibility certainly exists that he knew some of the music. The closest known precedents for the *Sonata for Two Violins* in Moeran’s own oeuvre up to 1930 were the various string quartets. As has been shown in the examination of these, Moeran knew the techniques for creating the impression of fuller textures on individual and combinations of stringed instruments, and he employed these extensively in the sonata:

⁵⁵⁷ Letter 985, Smith (ed.) (2005), 293

⁵⁵⁸ http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:For_2_violins (accessed 14 April 2012)

Ex. 47 *Sonata for Two Violins* – second movement, bars 61-72

Moeran also invented several folksong-style themes to present a melodic interest. In addition to the violin I tune in the above example, the first movement opens with a beguiling tune:



Ex. 48 *Sonata for Two Violins* – first movement, violin 1, bars 1-4

Apart from the sparse instrumentation, there is nothing stylistically to distinguish the *Sonata for Two Violins* from the *String Quartet in A minor*, composed nearly ten years earlier, and the same is true of the *String Trio in G*.

A more probable explanation than deliberate stylistic re-appraisal for any apparent change in Moeran's compositional style that may be identifiable in the works composed after 1930 would be the simple facts a) of his having composed hardly anything during the previous four years and b) the effects of illness and alcohol on his working method.

Re-construction

Although Moeran was no longer a member of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*, he was re-elected at the beginning of 1931 as a committee member of the Folk Song Society.⁵⁵⁹ He continued his folksong collecting expeditions, and since his home base was now Ipswich, he expanded his geographical range to cover Suffolk. The eventual result of this was the 1931 publication *Six Suffolk Folk Songs*, arrangements of six songs that Moeran had collected during the early part of that year. Moeran, as a committee member, clearly took his folksong responsibilities seriously. In early 1931, he wrote to the *Musical Times* in response to a letter from C.W. Orr in the previous edition in which Mr Orr had stated that the 'folk-song rage' took place principally after the war⁵⁶⁰ and that 'Parties of enthusiasts [had gone] back to the land' to note 'the effusions of rustics'. Moeran pointed out in his reply that Mr Orr was mistaken in stating that the fashion for using folksong in art music was principally a post-war phenomenon and that most of the collecting had taken place long before that. He referred to the publications of the *Folk-Song Society*.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Annual General Meeting', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, Vol. 8, No. 35 (December 1931), xii

⁵⁶⁰ The First World War

During the first few months of 1931, Moeran completed the re-written version of *Whythorne's Shadow*, which was performed, along with *Lonely Waters* as *Two Orchestral Pieces* the following January. From early 1931, performances and broadcasts of Moeran's works gradually increased but it was not until 1934 that the lists of Moeran performances began to approach the frequency achieved in 1925-1926.⁵⁶¹ By the end of 1931, Moeran's compositional facility had returned to the extent that he apparently felt himself able to address larger-scale works and he began work on what became the *Farrago* suite for orchestra.⁵⁶²

Return to Ireland

The most significant event for Moeran during the 1930s was his return to Ireland, but it is difficult to establish exactly when this took place. The earliest record of a concert performance of Moeran's music in Ireland is in December 1932 when the International String Quartet, led by André Mangeot, performed the *String Quartet in A minor* in a recital for the Royal Dublin Society at Ballsbridge. The *Irish Times* reviewer was very enthusiastic about the work but had been under the impression that Moeran was an English composer:

Having heard of this composer previously as a member of a London group, I was surprised when M. André Mangeot, the leader of the International Quartet, spoke of Moeran as an Irishman. From a reference book it may be ascertained that Mr. Moeran was born near London ... It may also be read that he is of Irish extraction. Since M. Mangeot, who knows him, speaks of him as an Irishman, we may conclude that Mr. Moeran maintains among the Saxons a pride in his distinctive origin. The influence of an Irish home must count for more in such a matter than place of birth and residence.⁵⁶³

The reviewer (by-line 'Obbligato') went on to regret that fact that Moeran himself was prevented from attending the concert by the onset of a sudden and severe illness. Moeran's

⁵⁶¹ A search of *The Times Digital Archive 1785-2008* (<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/times.aspx/>) for 1934 results in ten issues where broadcasts or concert performances of Moeran works were reviewed or advertised. The works were: songs (unspecified): 16 January, 12 October, *String Quartet*: 18 June, 9 December, *Seven Songs of James Joyce*: 26 January, 24 May, *Songs of Springtime*: 13 March, 12 April, *Farrago Suite*: 6 September, *Sonata for Two Violins*: 23 October.

⁵⁶² There is no direct evidence for this date but the copies of the manuscript in the Moeran Archive at the Lenton-Parr Library of the University of Melbourne bear the date 1932, so it is reasonable suppose that Moeran began the composition of *Farrago* about this time. According to Rhoderick McNeill, the location of the autograph score is unknown: McNeill (1983), 697

⁵⁶³ 'R.D.S. Musical Recitals', *The Irish Times*, (15 December 1931), 4

entire post-cottage life was punctuated by accident and illness, and, since such episodes were rare during his earlier life, these may also be regarded as a legacy of the Eynsford years.

The datelines of Moeran's surviving letters written between 1932 and 1935 all suggest that he was in England for much of the time during those years. Apart from the dates, the content of the letters provides few clues to Moeran's movements, although in a letter to Sir Adrian Boult, dated 22 July 1935, he did write: 'During the past six months I have scarcely been in London except for the past fortnight. I shan't be there before late Sept as I am on the point of going abroad'.⁵⁶⁴ It is unlikely that this refers to a visit to Ireland as in 1935 this would probably not have been regarded as 'abroad'.⁵⁶⁵ Although most of the letters written during 1934 and 1935 appear to indicate that nothing in Moeran's life was unusual or amiss, dealing primarily with arrangements of performances of his works, the following report in *The Times* dated Tuesday 22 January 1935 reveals that this was very far from the case:

COMPOSER'S MOTORING OFFENCE

ORDER TO ENTER NURSING HOME

Ernest John Moeran, 40, described as a music composer, was bound over for two years at Cambridge yesterday and ordered to enter a nursing home, after he had been found *Guilty* of being drunk in charge of a motor-car at Cambridge on Saturday night.

Detective-constable Cummings said that he saw Moeran staggering about Market Hill. He afterwards entered a motor-car, sat down in the driving seat, and fell forward over the wheel. He said: "It is my car, and I am going to drive home."

Dr Ralph Noble, of Cambridge, a specialist in nervous diseases, said that Moeran was referred to him last November through a professor of medicine at Cambridge, and it was agreed that Moeran should go into a nursing home until he was well enough to live in rooms. Since coming out Moeran had not taken any alcohol until this week-end, when he had been upset by the news

⁵⁶⁴ Letter to Dr Adrian Boult dated Lingwood Lodge, Nr. Norwich, 22 July 1935, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 369

⁵⁶⁵ According to evidence obtained from the *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960*, AR 10707 / MF 911, Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York, United States of America, Moeran visited Vienna during the 1930s, although the exact dates are uncertain – so it is possible that the planned trip abroad mentioned in Moeran's letter to Boult refers to his intention to go to Vienna.

that one of his best friends, a doctor in the country, had died.

Inspector Sharman said that in August, 1929, Moeran was fined £10 at Watford for being drunk in charge of a motor-car, and in October, 1934, at Aylesbury, for a similar offence he was disqualified for driving for five years and ordered to enter a home for nine months. At Aylesbury he absconded from bail.

The Bench ordered Moeran to remain in a nursing home as long as his medical adviser, Dr Noble, thought fit, and he was ordered to pay the costs.⁵⁶⁶

The catalogue of Moeran's offences when read today seems rather alarming. In addition to drunk-driving, he was also driving while disqualified and had previously absconded from bail. The penalties now would have been very much more severe than confinement in a nursing home. However, the consequences of the incident account for Moeran's movements during much of 1935. Moeran told his side of the story in the letter written to the singer George Parker, previously referred to in Chapter 3:

... Nearly a month ago, having been a total abstainer for months, I met some old army companions and broke out. It was only one evening, not a question of a prolonged bout, but I made myself very ill in addition to coming up against the local police force. I was wrongly accused of being drunk in charge of a car. As a matter of fact, I had no car but was looking for a taxi; it seems that in my fuddled state I have inadvertently got into a strange private car standing on the rank. I was not convicted or fined, but the matter was left entirely in the hands of my doctor, who decided I must have a complete rest; hence my being here in a nursing home.⁵⁶⁷

Moeran's claim to have been wrongfully accused is interesting, as is his explanation for the drinking bout, which differs from the one he had given a fortnight or so earlier. According to Geoffrey Self, other letters written to George Parker confirm that Moeran had been working again on the long-abandoned *Symphony in G minor* for some time before this incident and had

⁵⁶⁶ 'Composer's Motoring Offence', *The Times*, issue 46968, (22 January 1934), 4

⁵⁶⁷ From a letter to George Parker, dated 10 February 1935; quoted in Self (1994)

apparently completed the first movement.⁵⁶⁸ The fact that he was not convicted, either for the Cambridge incident or for the absconding from bail in Aylesbury, suggests that the magistrate gave him the benefit of the doubt – probably on the strength of the fact that he wasn't actually driving the car, merely sitting in the driver's seat. However, he had given Moeran something of a dressing-down: '[The magistrate] had the impertinence in a public court to tell me he hoped I would one day make good, as if I were an idler and wastrel!'⁵⁶⁹

On his discharge from the nursing home a few months later, Moeran went back to live with his parents at Lingwood Lodge for a few weeks before taking lodgings again in Cambridge, where he remained for the rest of the year. Finally, a letter dated 24 April 1936 and written from The Lodge, Kenmare, confirms that Moeran had been in Ireland for some weeks prior to that date. Thus, it may be assumed that Moeran's return to Ireland was most probably in early 1936. It is not clear why he went to Ireland, and under what circumstances he visited Kenmare, which eventually became his main home in the country. However, it is apparent that he went to Cork, and this may provide a clue. As was shown in Chapter 2, Moeran's paternal grandfather Thomas Warner Moeran had been born and grew up in Cork, and it may be that Moeran's main intention in visiting the city was to find his family roots. It is also apparent that while in Cork, Moeran had made the acquaintance of Professor Aloys Fleischmann of University College, Cork and his family. According to Joseph Cunningham and Ruth Fleischmann: 'In 1936, Arnold Bax brought another English composer to the Fleischmanns who, like himself, felt very much at home in Ireland: E. J. Moeran'.⁵⁷⁰ It is reasonable to suggest that the initial trip to Kenmare was made in the company of either Fleischmann or Bax, or possibly both, and that Moeran became enamoured of the place during this first visit. A detailed examination of Moeran's motivation in re-visiting Ireland and his rapid adoption of the country as a second

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 34 (although Self does not substantiate this assertion by direct quotations from the relevant letter). The author has not been able to trace the letters examined by Self in 1994.

There is no direct evidence that suggests exactly when Moeran resumed work on the symphony he had abandoned in 1926. However, if Self is correct in his assertion and the first movement was completed at the beginning of 1934, then it would be reasonable to estimate mid-1933 as a probable date.

⁵⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰ Joseph Cunningham & Ruth Fleischmann, *Aloys Fleischmann (1880-1964): An Immigrant Musician in Ireland*, (Cork University Press, Cork, 2010), 217

(possibly even his main) home are beyond the scope of the current thesis. However, the research for this project has suggested that Moeran's influence and impact on music in Ireland as it developed from the mid-1930s onwards may well have been of a considerably greater significance than thought hitherto.⁵⁷¹

Having returned to Ireland after a gap of more than fifteen years, Moeran seems to have crossed to and fro quite regularly. He was in England for the summer of 1936 but by the beginning of November, he was back in Kenmare. It is also evident that he received numerous invitations to visit the Fleischmanns at their home near to Cork. From the content of letters written during the last two months of 1936, it seems that he spent a few days in London and then returned to Co. Kerry, this time visiting Knightstown on Valentia Island. He remained there for several months, returning to London at the end of March 1937 and it is the content of his various letters that clarify what he was doing there – Moeran was, at last, completing his long-delayed *Symphony in G minor*.

It is probable that the symphony had intermittently been on Moeran's mind ever since he abandoned it some ten years earlier and, as suggested above, it seems likely that he resumed work on it during 1933. According to the manuscript full score in the British Library, the symphony was completed on '22 January 1937, Valencia Island'.⁵⁷² Since that is apparently the date of completion of the score, it may be reasonably supposed that the actual composition of the music had been completed some weeks earlier. By this stage of his career, Moeran was composing large-scale works in short score, and dealt with the full orchestration and fair copy production as his last task – and, perhaps curiously, Moeran seemed to enjoy this.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ Aspects of Moeran's involvement in music in Ireland from 1936 are also discussed briefly in Ruth Fleischmann, ed.: *Aloys Fleischmann – A Life for Music in Ireland Remembered by Contemporaries*, (The Mercier Press, Cork 2000) and in Séamas de Barra: *Aloys Fleischmann*, (Field Day Publications, Dublin 2006)

⁵⁷² Moeran consistently spelled the name of the island 'Valencia', rather than 'Valentia', as is more common on maps.

⁵⁷³ 'I am struggling to finish a *Rhapsody* for piano and orchestra in time for the Proms. The piano part is written, thank Heaven, and I am now on the congenial task of making a full score'; from a letter dated Kington, 20 April 1943 and quoted in Hill (1985), 11

While the completion of the symphony might have been a relief for Moeran, releasing a flood of large-scale orchestral creativity that had been restrained for the previous twelve years, there is no evidence that this happened, and Moeran continued to produce major works at approximately two year intervals. In contrast with his facility of the early 1920s, it also seems that he found it difficult to have more than one work in progress simultaneously. As will be shown shortly, this eventually became a problem for him. However, between 1937 and 1943, just three large works appeared, together with the long-awaited revision of the *Second Rhapsody*.⁵⁷⁴ In 1939, Moeran composed the cycle *Phyllida and Corydon*, a suite of pastiche madrigals to texts by various sixteenth-century poets that took their title from that of the first song, a setting of a text by Nicholas Breton; in 1941 he completed the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* and the *Second Rhapsody* revisions, and the *Rhapsody in F sharp minor for Piano and Orchestra* was composed in the summer of 1943. Unlike the years of his twenties, it is reasonably certain that Moeran did not compose much else that has been lost or deliberately destroyed. It is apparent from the foregoing that Moeran was finding composing much more difficult and time-consuming than he did during his earlier years as a composer.

The Composer and the Cellist

Although he claimed to hate writing letters,⁵⁷⁵ Moeran was actually a prolific letter-writer and one hundred and seventy-five of the letters, cards, telegrams and airgraphs that he wrote to Peers Coetmore between October 1943 and March 1950 have survived and form part of the *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection* at the Library of the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne.⁵⁷⁶ Unfortunately, Coetmore destroyed the letters she wrote to him and which were returned to her after Moeran's death. However, while it is not possible to read what Coetmore wrote, Moeran made sufficient specific references in his replies to her that it is frequently

⁵⁷⁴ See page 261

⁵⁷⁵ 'As a rule, I have always hated and loathed writing letters ...'; from a letter to Coetmore dated Kington, 2 January 1944, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 438

⁵⁷⁶ *Coetmore, Knott, Moeran Family Collection*, Collection ID 1M27, 1M49, Library of the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

possible to establish at least the gist of some of what she had said to him. Thus, a considerable insight into both the details of the life of a creative artist and the developing relationship between Moeran and Coetmore may be gained through Moeran's letters alone. Reading them enables the researcher to develop a form of acquaintanceship with Moeran based on an intimate knowledge of many of his innermost thoughts. The letters comprise a sequence of private communications to the woman that became the love of his life and thus reveal aspects of the man's character that would be impossible to discover otherwise.

A comprehensive examination and analysis of the contents of all these letters is beyond the scope of the remainder of this thesis because there is simply too much that can be deduced and presented. However, the beginning of the Moeran-Coetmore relationship, as revealed by the letters written between October and December 1943 is sufficient to show how the course of Moeran's life was yet again, suddenly and irrevocably, thrust into a new and entirely unexpected direction.

Lionel Hill

By June 1943, it is clear that Moeran had again become an established and eminent composer. Although his output was small, he commanded regular performances of his works both in London – especially at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts⁵⁷⁷ – and around the country.⁵⁷⁸ His compositions were frequently broadcast on the BBC⁵⁷⁹ and he received occasional, if

⁵⁷⁷ According to the BBC Proms Archive (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive> accessed 8 July 2014) the works performed were: *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*: 8 July 1942, 30 July 1943, 14 July 1944, 28 August 1945, *First Rhapsody*: 3 October 1939, *Rhapsody in F sharp minor for Piano and Orchestra*: 19 August 1943

⁵⁷⁸ Performances included: 10 February 1941 *Sonata for Two Violins* at the Royal Dublin Society, Ballsbridge, Dublin ('Royal Dublin Society Recitals', *Irish Times*, (11 February 1941), 6), 12 March 1942 *Second Rhapsody* in Dublin ('An Irishman's Diary', *Irish Times*, (13 March 1942), 2), 5 May 1943 *Symphony in G minor* at the Manchester Opera House ('Opera House – The Hallé Orchestra', *The Guardian*, (6 May 1943), 3), 12 January 1944 *Rune* and *Toccata* at the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, ('Lunch-Hour Concerts', *The Scotsman*, (13 January 1944), 4), 5 March 1944 *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* at the Capitol Theatre, Dublin, ('E. J. Moeran's Violin Concerto', *Irish Times*, (6 March 1944), 3)

⁵⁷⁹ Broadcasts included: *Phyllida and Corydon* broadcast by the BBC ('Broadcasting', *The Times*, issue 48449, (30 October 1939), 4), 20 May 1941 *Symphony in G minor* broadcast by the BBC ('An Irishman's Diary', *Irish Times*, (20 May 1941), 4), 4 October 1941 *Symphony in G minor* broadcast by the BBC ('Broadcasting', *The Times*, issue 49048, (4 October 1941), 8), *Phyllida and Corydon* broadcast by the BBC ('Broadcasting', *The Times*, issue 49894, (28 June 1944), 8)

perhaps unwelcome, commissions for music as part of the war effort.⁵⁸⁰ The *Symphony in G Minor* had just been recorded by the British Council.⁵⁸¹ While it is possible that he was still being supported financially to some extent by his mother,⁵⁸² the additional income from royalties, commissions and engagement fees would have enabled him to enjoy a modestly comfortable existence and to travel around the country and to and from Ireland as and when he pleased, subject, of course to wartime restrictions on personal movement. Moeran was a member of the Performing Rights Society and thus received a quarterly royalties cheque.⁵⁸³ When he was not travelling, his home base remained his elderly parents' house at Kington in Herefordshire, to which they had moved in mid-1937.⁵⁸⁴ Moeran spent a considerable proportion of his time there.⁵⁸⁵ However, he continued to be prone to ill-health. It was during one of these illnesses that he was first approached by the man who would later become his close friend, Lionel Hill.

The importance of Lionel Hill to an accurate assessment of Moeran as both man and composer cannot be overstated. Although much of what Hill later wrote and said must be appreciated through the prism of his evident devotion to Moeran, he has nevertheless provided essential anecdotal evidence that – together with the other sources – enables a far more detailed understanding of Moeran to be constructed than would otherwise have been possible. Hill's apparent willingness to see only good in Moeran and to interpret everything he said and did in

⁵⁸⁰ Hill recalled that in September 1943, he arranged a meeting with Walter Legge at *The Cricketers'* pub in Seer Green. He said that Moeran confided in him: 'I don't think you'll care much for this chap; I don't, but one can't choose in these matters and he is pretty influential, and I think he is going to commission a work from me for ENSA'; Hill (1985), 21

⁵⁸¹ 'During the war the British Council began a programme of subsidising recordings of the new British music on the HMV label and there were discs of Bax's third symphony, Moeran's *Symphony in G minor*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, amongst others', from Lewis Foreman, *London: A Musical Gazetteer*, (Yale University Press, New Haven CT., 2004), 15.

Support for Lewis Foreman's assertion is provided by an advertisement for *His Master's Voice* placed in *The Times*, issue 49468, (12 February 1943), 3, in which the entry for Moeran's *Symphony in G minor* also states 'Recorded under the auspices of the British Council', and review of the 11 (eleven) discs of the recording in a subsequent edition of the same newspaper: ('The Gramophone', *The Times*, issue 49472, (17 February 1943), 6).

⁵⁸² It is not known exactly for how long Moeran was fully financially dependent upon his mother. Her own fortune was obviously not inexhaustible and it is likely that the amount and frequency of her payments to him would have declined or even ceased altogether as her own resources diminished.

⁵⁸³ Amongst other references in his letters, in a letter dated Kington, 12 November 1943, Moeran told Peers Coetmore that he 'had a good fat cheque awaiting me here from the P.R.S.', transcribed in McNeill (1983), 438

⁵⁸⁴ The date of Moeran's parents' move to Kington is deduced from the evidence provided by Moeran's letters.

⁵⁸⁵ This assertion is made on the basis that a large proportion of Moeran's archived letters dating from this period were written from this address.

an entirely positive manner, resulted in him innocently detailing many aspects of Moeran's character that, with the benefit of hindsight and a more objective examination lead to a different and less admirable perspective. That he did so is invaluable in that it provides additional insight into Moeran's personality and hence his working method.

As shown in Chapter 1, Hill first wrote to Moeran in April 1943 following his hearing of a broadcast performance of *Lonely Waters*.⁵⁸⁶ Hill states that he was a devotee of the music of Delius and he detected similarities of style in *Lonely Waters* and wished to become better acquainted with Moeran's music. Moeran did eventually reply to Hill's letter but was somewhat reserved in his attitude. The impression obtained from a neutral perspective is one of polite attention to an unexpected and perhaps unwelcome approach from an unknown admirer. Moeran probably hoped that his letter would be the end of the correspondence. However, Hill took Moeran's reply as encouragement and, in a follow-up letter written a few days later, he appears to have mentioned that his father-in-law was the eminent violinist Albert Sammons. Moeran was immediately interested – Sammons was, of course, the leading violinist of the time in the country and Moeran had recently composed a violin concerto. The tone of his next letter to Hill is radically different from the first and it is clear that he was now actively encouraging continued correspondence and eventual contact between the two men. Perhaps Hill actually did realise that he was being exploited but his rapidly developing devotion to Moeran's music enabled him to overlook or ignore any negative aspects of the man's character.

As set out in Chapter 1, some thirty years after Moeran's death, Hill wrote his book *Lonely Waters – The Diary of a Friendship with E.J. Moeran* in which he chronicled the development of their personal relationship that began with these first letters and it is from the information in this book that the above deductions have been made. Hill was in a unique position in that his increasing knowledge and appreciation of Moeran coincided with the beginnings of Moeran's own relationship with the cellist Peers Coetmore and their friendship spanned the entirety of

⁵⁸⁶ 'I was in bed awaiting an operation, and happened to switch on the wireless by my bed. My attention was immediately riveted by the sound coming from the little old-fashioned set ... I had not heard music quite like this before ... "You have been listening to *Lonely Waters* by E. J. Moeran", [the announcer] said.' Hill (1985), 9

Moeran's involvement with Coetmore. Thus Hill's observations take on an additional significance for a consideration of the effect of Coetmore on Moeran. Although Moeran does not seem to have taken Hill into his confidence during the early stages of his relationship with Coetmore, much can be deduced from Hill's reports of what Moeran actually did do and say.

Peers Coetmore

According to Rhoderick McNeill, Moeran and Coetmore had first met in late 1930, when they had both attended a party hosted by the painter Augustus John.⁵⁸⁷ However, he did not cite the source of the assertion. As was shown in Chapter 5, Moeran spent much of 1930 either in hospital or bed-ridden at his parents' house, and from the evidence of his letters to Philip Heseltine, even by late November, Moeran found moving about difficult, so the possibility that he had recovered sufficiently before the end of the year to attend a party in London seems to be low. It is likely, therefore, that, like the Cotswold retreat story, the 1930 Augustus John party anecdote derives from an original misapprehension. However, it is clear that Moeran and Coetmore had met previously and had had occasional contact during the years up to mid-1943. This is indicated in a letter Moeran wrote to Coetmore shortly after they became engaged: '... considering I had known you on & off for some time before without regarding you other than as a happy companion'.⁵⁸⁸ The change from happy companion to *fiancée* over a period of just a few weeks might appear to have been impulsive but, in the light of the evidence provided both by Moeran's letters and what can be deduced from Lionel Hill's account, may now be seen to have been due both to Moeran's parents' and brother's probable coercion and to Coetmore's possible manipulation. The initial attraction seems to have been based on differing motivations and the personalities of Moeran and Coetmore could hardly have been less compatible. However, almost exactly twenty years after the beginning of his fateful friendship with Philip Heseltine, another strong personality entered Moeran's life and, again, the course of that life, together with his compositional priorities, was completely and irrevocably changed.

⁵⁸⁷ McNeill (1983), 238

⁵⁸⁸ Letter to Coetmore dated 31 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 423-4

Very little information exists about Peers Coetmore's early years. From the 1911 census record it can be determined that she was born Kathleen Peers Coetmore-Jones in 1905 in Skegness, Lincolnshire.⁵⁸⁹ Also from the 1911 census record, it is apparent that her father, Stanley Coetmore-Jones, was a land agent, and this is also confirmed by evidence provided by some letters that he wrote to *The Times*.⁵⁹⁰ The household was evidently quite affluent – the 1911 census records the presence of a German governess (Anne-Marie Fischer, originally from Dessau), a cook and a housemaid – and it would probably have remained so but for the fact that Stanley Coetmore-Jones, who had become a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers during the course of the First World War, was killed in action on the Somme in September 1916.⁵⁹¹ Thus, Coetmore spent most of her teenage years without a father. It was this, perhaps, that not only laid the foundation for an independent spirit and relaxed attitude to life but also may have impelled her to seek some sort of father figure elsewhere. According to the reminiscences of Coetmore's fourth husband and eventual widower Walter Knott,⁵⁹² at the age of about twenty-four Coetmore had met and married a considerably older man. Arthur H.T. Davis was a Medical Officer in the army who had been born in 1882.⁵⁹³ He was therefore about forty-seven when he married Coetmore; in fact not that much younger than Coetmore's father would have been had he lived. The marriage lasted less than two years until, again according to Walter Knott it was dissolved for medical reasons.⁵⁹⁴

Despite the family circumstances, Coetmore seems to have been quite determined to succeed as a professional cellist. During her studies at the Royal Academy of Music, she had won the

⁵⁸⁹ 1911 England Census, Class: RG 14; Piece: 19868

⁵⁹⁰ Letters from S. Coetmore-Jones are to be found in 'The New Land Taxes', *The Times*, issue 39372 (8 September 1910), p10 and 'The New Land Taxes', *The Times*, issue 39373 (9 September 1910), 10

⁵⁹¹ Inscription for Stanley COETMORE-JONES on the Skegness War Memorial website <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Lincolnshire/Skegness.html>; (accessed 4 January 2011)

⁵⁹² 'Her first marriage took place in 1929 to a medical officer in the British Army who was nineteen years older' from an essay written by Maurice Walter Knott; quoted in Talbot (2009), 14

⁵⁹³ England & Wales, Marriage Index 1916-2005, Registration District: Hendon, Volume Number: 3a, Page Number: 1085

⁵⁹⁴ The actual "medical reasons" in this case are not explained. However, it was common at that time that a marriage might be dissolved were it to become apparent that one of the parties, usually the wife, was unable to have children.

Piatti prize in 1924 and was very highly commended for the *Vallange* prize in 1928.⁵⁹⁵ After leaving the Academy, she studied with Emanuel Feuermann and Maurice Eisenberg – himself a pupil of Pablo Casals. She was a member of an informal group of young female cellists, all born during the first two decades of the twentieth century and all trying to make a career in a generally male-dominated profession. During the 1920s and 1930s, there were limited performing opportunities for a solo cellist as the repertoire was much smaller than that existing for the violin. Along with Coetmore were cellists such as Florence Hooton, Zara Nelsova, Helen Just, Norina Semino, Eleanor Warren and Raya Garbousova giving recitals in London and around the United Kingdom.⁵⁹⁶ In addition to her musical work, Coetmore took her wartime obligations very seriously; she spent some time in the ambulance service during the Blitz and played in numerous CEMA and ENSA engagements.⁵⁹⁷ Some insight into Coetmore's life during this period can be gained from a letter she wrote to her former teacher

⁵⁹⁵ 'Royal Academy of Music', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 977 (1 July 1924), 642 and 'Royal Academy of Music', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 69, No. 1023 (1 August 1928), 446

⁵⁹⁶ There has been no in-depth study of this group of female cellists and their effect on London and British concert life during the 1920s and 1930s. The evidence used in making this assessment is scant and derives from concert programmes, newspaper and music periodical items and broadcast schedules. The remainder is surmise but has a high degree of probability.

⁵⁹⁷ See Stephanie Browne, *The life and career of Peers Coetmore, English cellist (1905-1976)*, (Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Masters Research Thesis, 2012) for a detailed account of the life of Coetmore.

Emanuel Feuermann in 1940 and which is included in the text of Annette Morreau's biography of him.⁵⁹⁸

The Beginning of a Relationship

In late June 1943, Coetmore, accompanied by the pianist Michael Mullinar, gave a recital in Leominster Priory under the auspices of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA).⁵⁹⁹ Moeran knew Mullinar very well – they had been contemporaries at the Royal College of Music some thirty years earlier and Mullinar had also performed regularly at recitals of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* during the 1920s. Walter Knott wrote that Moeran's brother William Graham, who was Vicar of Leominster at the time of the recital in the Priory,

⁵⁹⁸ 'I thought you might be interested to have a letter from the 'front line' and also from (however humbly) a cellist. You would be surprised how often in the brief hours I can get for work you are at my elbow asking 'is that a note?' Believe me I learnt a very big lesson in the short time I was with you . . . We all live from hour to hour. In the days the sirens wail often seven and eight times a day but daylight seems to dispel their mournful horror. Guns may pound and high up we may hear the zoom of planes with occasional crump of bombs near or far or sometimes watch an exciting dog fight amongst the clouds & see a descending parachute . . . Everything that needs to be done away from home must be crushed in before dusk. The awful hour always comes too soon and gives one the same shivery sick sensation that one gets before a big concert. And with the dusk, wail from far and near, the mournful sirens and almost at once the batteries open up. Anything like the noise is indescribable - the house shakes, windows rattle and the shrapnel tinkles on the roofs or whizzes down on to the pavements. The shells pass over like the rustling of many taffeta petticoats. . . We know all the different sounds of their engines and they can be heard through the loudest cello playing! I usually, as it is better to stay indoors and of course most theatres and cinemas etc. are closed at night, practise in the evenings. Actually the piano is better for drowning the sounds without, and I work my way through the Beethoven and Mozart sonatas of which I have complete editions because I find having to concentrate on reading takes the mind off better than practising something one knows by heart when half one's mind listens for the next bomb. . . Four gardens away a 500lb bomb fell completely wrecking 5 large six storey houses. Another further down wrecked four. . . Franz Osborn was interned for six weeks and as these wrecked houses are opposite his rooms he has had a narrow escape. He was away that night . . . Did you know Harold Craxton? His house is wrecked . . . I have had various chances to leave all this for healthier spots but I feel I'd like to see it through. It just makes me furiously angry to see the terrible and widespread havoc of the war, the lives ruined, people maimed. Surely the time has come when ordinary common folk of the world who are the ones that suffer the most, rise up and say we must have an end to all this barbarism... PS. I forgot one of the most important things I wished to ask you. I know you admired my Testore cello. If I am killed and it has managed to survive, would you be able to find a purchaser in America for me? I have very little to leave my sister and I doubt if it could be sold easily in this country now'; Handwritten letter from Peers Coetmore to Emanuel Feuermann dated 55, Belsize Lane, London, NW3, 13 October, included in Annette Moreau, *Emanuel Feuermann*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2002), p290-291 Although the date of the letter contains no year, it may be reasonably supposed that it was written in October 1940. The main period of the London Blitz was between September 1940 to May 1941 and although there was a renewed period of concentrated attacks in 1944, Feuermann died in May 1942.

⁵⁹⁹ The forerunner of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Coetmore and Mullinar were just two of a large number of musicians and other artists engaged by CEMA to perform around the country partly as a morale-boosting exercise. By mid-1943, the war had been in progress for nearly four years and while the spirit of dogged determination to see things through – under the inspiring leadership of Prime Minister Winston Churchill – never really flagged, considerable efforts were made by the authorities both to provide entertainment and cultural and educational stimuli to relieve, at least in part, the deprivations experienced by the public in general, and to maintain and enhance the perception that Britain would ultimately be the victors in the conflict.

For an in-depth assessment of the contribution of CEMA to the war effort, see Jörn Weingärtner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War: Britain and the Shaping of National Morale in the Second World War*, (Taurus Academic Studies, New York NY, 2006)

entertained Moeran, Coetmore and Mullinar to tea on the day of the concert.⁶⁰⁰ All that can be deduced with any certainty from this scanty evidence is that Moeran and Coetmore spent a short amount of time together. Since they had been acquainted previously, it is probable that conversation would have been relatively easy. The presence of other parties and the musical nature of the meeting make it likely that composition and music for the cello would have been discussed. By 1943, neither of the Moerans' sons had shown any inclination towards marriage. William Graham Moeran would certainly have been aware of their parents' desire to see at least one of their sons settled down and perhaps saw the potential for this in Coetmore whilst at the same time diverting any pressure away from him. It is plausible that he may even have contrived the meeting in the hope of bringing Coetmore and his brother together – although evidence from some of Moeran's later letters indicates that he and his brother didn't always get on especially well.⁶⁰¹

No records have been found that show any further communication between Moeran and Coetmore until a short letter from Moeran to Coetmore – undated but almost certainly written on 8 October 1943 – in which he mentions 'a wonderful week in your company'.⁶⁰² At the end of September or beginning of October, Coetmore was once again engaged to perform in Leominster Priory Church. This engagement was probably arranged by Moeran and his brother and it seems likely that Moeran himself was the accompanist at the recital. This time, she and Moeran stayed at his parents' house in Kington, resulting in the 'wonderful week'. It is unlikely that, over a cup of tea at his brother's vicarage in June, Moeran had become sufficiently acquainted with Coetmore to enable him, a) to make arrangements for a recital and, b) to issue an invitation to stay at Kington, so it is reasonable to assert that they must have met again during July or August in London. Indeed, they must have spent sufficient time together during this period to rehearse the works – including the Delius *Cello Sonata* – that were to be played at

⁶⁰⁰ Maurice Walter Knott; quoted in Talbot (2009), 15

⁶⁰¹ 'My brother is here until Wednesday afternoon. He means well, but I shall not be sorry when he is off the premises.' – letter to Coetmore dated Kington, 27 December 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 434 and 'I have managed to hold myself in check all these weeks without any 'rowings' at breakfast or otherwise with Graham. And, as you know, he is apt to shout & bang the table etc. ...' – letter to Coetmore dated Ledbury, 29 January 1950, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 650

⁶⁰² letter to Coetmore dated Manchester, 8 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 409

the Leominster Priory Church recital. The invitation to stay at Kington was almost certainly inspired by the beginnings of Moeran's infatuation with Coetmore, although it could also have been conceived as a convenient place for her to stay while she fulfilled the local concert engagements. That Moeran was in London on a number of occasions during July and August can be deduced from the evidence in *Lonely Waters*. Lionel Hill states that he met Moeran at the Royal Albert Hall on 30 July after the performance of the *Violin Concerto*. Hill confirms that Moeran was again in London on 19 August for the first performance by Harriet Cohen of the *Rhapsody in F sharp for Piano and Orchestra* – again at a Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall.⁶⁰³ This time, Moeran returned to Seer Green with the Hills and stayed there 'a day or two'. A letter from Moeran to Hill's wife dated 30 August and written from Kington confirms that he spent a further few days in London after leaving Seer Green. Thus, there would have been a clear opportunity for him to have met Coetmore again during this period both to rehearse and to make arrangements for her visit to Kington, which took place during the first week of October 1943. Hill's testimony confirms that Moeran was visiting him again at his house in Seer Green between 23 and 28 September⁶⁰⁴ and other evidence quoted by Hill – a letter dated 10 September from Kington and a postcard dated 16 September from Llandrindod Wells – strongly suggested that Moeran remained in the Kington area until shortly before 23 September.

A more detailed examination of the letters written by Moeran to Lionel Hill during August and September 1943 is useful at this point because it puts Moeran's movements into perspective and establishes the initial frame of reference for the start of Moeran's relationship with Peers Coetmore. The first letter, dated 30 August is significant in that it mentions Moeran's meeting with Walter Legge: '... at the Gramophone place in Abbey Road'. On this occasion, it is probable that Moeran was attending a recording session of his *Symphony in G Minor* at the Abbey Road Studios. As mentioned above, Moeran was endeavouring to maintain a good relationship with Walter Legge since Legge, as Head of Music for the Entertainments National

⁶⁰³ 'Moeran's New Work', *The Times*, issue 49629 (20 August 1943), p6

⁶⁰⁴ 'Jack left us on September 28th ...' Hill (1985), 23

Services Association (ENSA) was very influential in determining what was commissioned from whom. Moeran wrote again to Hill on 10 September and in this letter he mentioned his forthcoming trip to Ireland in order to broadcast from Dublin on 15 October. He suggested that he come to Seer Green for: ‘... a short weekend’ and that they may also be able to meet Walter Legge. This is the 23 to 28 September visit mentioned above and it was during this visit that Moeran and Lionel Hill met Walter Legge at *The Cricketers* pub in Seer Green. The account of this meeting is additional evidence to support the implication that Moeran was actively seeking paid work and wanted to make some kind of contribution to the war effort. It is against this background that his subsequent sudden and complete change in priorities must be appreciated.

On Tuesday 28 September, Moeran returned from Seer Green to London where it is probable that he met Coetmore and that they travelled to Kington together by train some time during the following two or three days – probably arriving in Kington on or about Friday 30 September. In the undated letter to Coetmore, Moeran expresses sympathy that she had to travel back to London in the luggage van of the train. However, the most significant aspects of the letter are its formal and neutral tone and the first mention of Moeran’s composing for Coetmore:

I will write to you again with news from cross-channel. And, be sure, I shall not forget our possible future arrangements and my trying to write a work for you, even if it is only a Sonata (to go on with).⁶⁰⁵

Otherwise, there is no hint of anything more personal than a general concern for her welfare. The conversations between Moeran and Coetmore during the week in Kington had apparently touched on the possibility of some kind of relationship – although open discussion seems to have concerned only a professional collaboration.

⁶⁰⁵ letter to Coetmore dated Manchester, 8 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 409

Courtship

Moeran would not have been the first and certainly not the last to use the device of composing a work for the object of his affections as a mechanism to foment an interest in him and possibly to enable them to spend periods of time together. From the very beginning, Moeran exploited this and his offers became quite extravagant – suggesting the composition of numerous works, including a concerto and a sonata. While his motives may be seen retrospectively to be quite transparent, it is also probable that Coetmore provided encouragement – Moeran with his influence in the musical establishment in Britain at the time would have been a very useful networking connection for Coetmore. Anything that Moeran composed for the cello could well have been considered by Coetmore potentially to have the effect of enhancing her own professional position and reputation. Reading Moeran's awkward, hesitating and at times frankly embarrassing courtship, conducted via the medium of his letters, shows that he was besotted with Coetmore from the start. However, his awkwardness may be forgiven – as has been suggested, his experience in affairs of the heart was limited and he may have resigned himself to the fact that his chances of forming any kind of intimate personal relationship were almost nil.

Moeran's undated letter was written from the *Haunch of Venison* pub in Manchester and includes the line 'Fri: night. 10.30pm', – the implication being that he and Coetmore had left Kington on the same train earlier that day, she to return to London and he via Manchester and Holyhead to Dublin. The exact date of the letter may be deduced from the juxtaposition of the sentence 'I have to set off early in the morning for Holyhead' with his mention of 'a wonderfully peaceful & beautiful crossing yesterday' in the next letter he wrote to Coetmore, from the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin on Sunday 10 October 1943. This confirms that he sailed from Holyhead to Dublin on Saturday 9 October, decisively dating the *Haunch of Venison* letter to Friday 8 October. The 10 October letter frames perfectly Moeran's discomfort and his almost desperate attempt to convey his feelings for Peers whilst avoiding saying anything specifically intimate. He talked continually about composing for her and repeatedly sought re-

assurance that she actually wanted him to do this. He had not yet received a reply to his earlier letter and he attempted to stimulate a response from her by asking direct questions:

... my dear Peers, do let me try and show my appreciation of you by writing a really nice work for you ... Do please write and let me know whether you would consider this were I to do it ... Please write soon ... I think, Peers, that if you really agree to my piece, and that if I could have your assurance ... Now please write & tell me you would like me to write a concerto especially for you ...⁶⁰⁶

He claimed that his influence both at the BBC and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was sufficiently strong for him to insist on her being engaged to give the first few performances. The letter is perhaps the most significant of the dozen or so that Moeran wrote to Coetmore during the last three months of 1943, in that it was written after Moeran's realisation of his feelings for Coetmore but before he had any confirmation that she reciprocated these feelings. It shows very clearly that he had fallen completely under the spell perhaps artfully or possibly unconsciously woven by Coetmore. Moeran referred to the Walter Legge commission which just two weeks earlier had been his highest priority and implied that this had become more of a chore than anything else. Since Coetmore – as an employee of ENSA – was quite likely to see and talk to Legge, Moeran felt it necessary to warn her in advance:

Don't tell Legge if you see him, because I am supposed to knock up an overture for his ENSA concerts, but your cello playing seems to have got into my system to such an extent that I can only think in terms of yourself & your instrument.⁶⁰⁷

After finishing this long and rambling letter by saying that he loathed 'receiving long and rambling letters' (!), he embarked on a long and rambling postscript. However, this is significant in that he stated categorically that if Coetmore accepted his proposal to compose a concerto for her, he would not be able to work simultaneously on a sonata or a sonatina – which, from the evidence of the *Haunch of Venison* letter, had perhaps been the focus of the discussions they had had during previous week in Kington. Again the tone is imploring and distinctly pathetic: '... please write & tell me you would like me to go on with it ... only give

⁶⁰⁶ letter to Coetmore dated Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, 10 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 410

⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*

me the OK, or your blessing on the project ...'.⁶⁰⁸ Moeran was evidently trying to convey to Coetmore that in writing a concerto for her, he would be committing himself to devoting his entire creative potential solely to her for an extended period.

The broadcast for Radio Éireann, which was the principal reason for Moeran's trip to Dublin, took place on Friday 15 October and he remained in the city until the day after. He had still not heard anything from Coetmore and so he took the further step of sending her a telegram to inform her that he had begun work on the concerto: 'Have started Cello concerto. Hope you don't mind. Writing'.⁶⁰⁹ If this telegram was an attempt to prompt Coetmore into writing to him, it evidently succeeded. Moeran travelled on to Kenmare by train and on the following Tuesday received a letter from Coetmore that sent him into a fervour of excitement. The first paragraph of his next letter to Coetmore, written at Kenmare and dated 19 October 1943, revealed that something very significant had happened:

I got your exceptional letter to-day: it stirred me up to the extent of sending you a further wire. It is a little difficult to know how much you really mean in your last sentence, but if it should be what I hope & fervently think you mean i.e. that you have a personal regard for me ... it would alter my whole idea of life ...⁶¹⁰

Moeran clearly read into Coetmore's last sentence the implication that she reciprocated his feelings for her. Coetmore had apparently initiated the next stage of the relationship, and it seems that she may have been manipulating him. Although the emotional state conveyed by Moeran's previous letter was fairly transparent, he did not actually say anything that specifically declared his intent – beyond the desire to compose for her. Had any kind of romantic involvement been out of the question for Coetmore, she would have been able to reply to what Moeran wrote about the composing without encouraging the poorly concealed personal agenda.

In order to gain an objective perspective of how this exchange of a few letters affected Moeran's state of mind, some attempt must be made to determine what Coetmore was trying to achieve. Why would she have been considering a personal relationship with Moeran – posing it

⁶⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 412

⁶⁰⁹ telegram to Coetmore dated Dublin, 15 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 412

⁶¹⁰ letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 19 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 413

in such a way as to prompt Moeran to write ‘Do you mean there is the bare possibility of your linking up with me for good & all?’⁶¹¹ As suggested above, Coetmore’s motivation probably stemmed partly from the advantages to be gained from having her own composer – from the perspectives both of supplying her with new music and possibly preventing it going anywhere else. Mention has already been made of Coetmore’s contemporaries – other female cellists, at least one of whom (Raya Garbousova) either had works composed for them or had adopted a particular composer or concerto as primarily their own.⁶¹² However, Coetmore could certainly have accomplished this without the necessity of suggesting (or at least implying) that she and Moeran become life partners. Therefore, additional motives must be sought. Coetmore was in her late thirties and, as has been suggested above possibly subject to the same family pressure to settle down that was being impressed upon Moeran. Another motivation has also been implied earlier – the seeking of a father figure. Although Moeran was not as much older than Coetmore than had been her first husband, he was certainly considerably her senior and clearly had an avuncular disposition that may well have appealed to her. However, it is also likely that Moeran’s alcoholism-induced impression of vulnerability may have stirred her maternal instincts, although she would not have known the cause. While she later proved incapable of looking after Moeran in the way that his parents had hoped, this does not necessarily mean that the basic urge was not there. By providing a form of controlled encouragement to Moeran perhaps to express his feelings and intentions further, she may have been testing the water without necessarily making a definite commitment. This is evident from Moeran’s statements that it was ‘... a little difficult to know ...’ what she had meant in her last sentence.

Whatever it was Coetmore actually wrote in her letter, Moeran regarded it as encouragement and responded by pouring out his heart:

... it was just during the final Thursday on Bradnor & the next day in the several trains we had to take that this feeling changed to one of complete & absolute adoration ... for an

⁶¹¹ *ibid.*

⁶¹² Raya Garbousova was the dedicatee of Bohuslav Martinů’s first cello concerto (1931)

individual for her superb beauty as a person, and for her integrity as a human being ... But, Peers dear, I was too tongue-tied to say anything at such short notice.⁶¹³

This is typical of numerous blundering, schoolboy-crush-like phrases in the letter. Moeran continued in a similar fashion in this and his next two letters, begging and cajoling Coetmore not to go on her planned ENSA tour to the Middle East and continually seeking re-assurance that she meant what he believed her to have said. In the 19 October letter, Moeran also outlined potential difficulties that might face the progress of their relationship. He wrote:

... Now here is a snag, which really did make it awkward for me to say anything of my real feelings towards you (2 snags in fact) (a) I am middle aged, & you are young and lovely, (b) Your career & ambitions as a 'cellist.⁶¹⁴

In fact, the disparity in age between Moeran and Coetmore was not that great; at the time, he was forty-eight and she about thirty-six – but it is clear that he felt some degree of insecurity about even a relatively small age gap. More interesting is his proposal for the resolution of the second snag. Moeran suggests that they could join forces and ‘... write music together ...’.⁶¹⁵ He returned to this idea a number of times in subsequent letters and it seems to have been one of his ploys for convincing Coetmore to maintain and increase her commitment to the relationship. Regarding a possible creative collaboration, Moeran did not mean just his composing for Coetmore. Peers had taken composition in addition to her main ‘cello study during her time at the Royal Academy of Music and Moeran seems seriously to have been proposing the creation of joint works. Considered objectively and in retrospect, this idea would have been quite impractical. Moeran’s working method involved intense self-criticism which resulted in the discarding of vast amounts of material. Since he did not work to deadlines – indeed found them to be fatally inhibiting to his creativity – the result was that completion of anything usually took an inordinately long time. As part of a composing team, he would have been more or less insufferable. From this perspective alone, it may be surmised that Moeran was using the ploy as suggested above.

⁶¹³ letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 19 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 413

⁶¹⁴ *ibid.*

⁶¹⁵ *ibid.*

Having earlier stated his objection to long and rambling letters, Moeran's letter of 19 October was the first in a series of very long and rambling letters written over the next few days. On 20 October, he received a further letter from Coetmore and immediately embarked on a lengthy reply. Apparently she had confirmed her intention of going to the Middle East and Moeran set about trying to persuade her not to go. His principal argument was to suggest that her cooperation in the composition of the 'cello concerto was essential for its successful completion and eventual performance – by Coetmore. He implied that if she were unable to get over to Ireland, he could return to England and they could meet again at his parents' house in Kington to work on the concerto. In the letter, he included hints that his parents had taken '... a wonderful fancy ...' to her. However, he couldn't simply drop everything immediately:

I must stay here at least another week for two reasons (a) because my old landlord, Mr O'Donnell only comes home week-ends, & I simply must see him, (b) because, I have started thinking out themes for you, & I must go on before I leave my beloved Kerry.⁶¹⁶

In this letter, he also referred to his alcoholism and wrote the first of numerous promises that he would no longer indulge to excess:

This is now a thing of the past, so far as I am concerned. Let me blurt it out & say I mean excessive liquor. I have done too many pub crawls in past years, but with you at my side, I can definitely & finally promise that I won't any more want to step off the deep end.⁶¹⁷

Moeran's letters to Coetmore over the next seven years contain many such resolutions and, ultimately, he was unable to keep to any of them.

Moeran wrote again the following day. He brought up the composing collaboration idea again and also suggested that Coetmore might consider stopping active cello playing for a while in order for a problem with her elbow to improve. Again, this was palpably a ploy to influence her not to go on the ENSA tour. However, he eventually added a couple of postscripts to this letter in which he finally acknowledged that she must go. In view of Coetmore's impending departure, Moeran decided to curtail his stay in Ireland and to return to England as soon as

⁶¹⁶ letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 20 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 415

⁶¹⁷ *ibid.*, 416

possible. It seems that the earliest he could get a crossing from Dublin would be the middle of the following week and he had already made arrangements to visit Valentia Island where he felt that he would gain inspiration to ‘... think out something for the concerto’. In his next few letters, he mentioned a number of ideas and tunes that he had come up with for the concerto and intimated that the first movement would be in sonata form: ‘I hope you don’t mind sonata form, in spite of the dicta of our Sibelius, but I was so imbued with it for many years that I find it natural to think that way’.⁶¹⁸ In fact, most if not all of these ideas were later rejected and the composition of the concerto was abandoned for the time being.

On 31 October, Moeran wrote to Coetmore indicating that he would be travelling back to London via Dublin and Holyhead between Tuesday 2 and Thursday 4 November and he suggested that the two of them might meet for dinner during the Thursday evening. Lionel Hill confirmed in *Lonely Waters* that Moeran stayed at Seer Green between Sunday 7 and Friday 12 November and then returned to Kington for a few days, so it is possible that Moeran and Coetmore spent some time together in London between 4 and 7 November. This is also evident from the content of Moeran’s next letter to Coetmore, dated Kington, 12 November 1943, in which he mentioned working on a piece that he referred to as ‘Nimrod’. According to Rhoderick McNeill, this was the *Prelude for ‘Cello and Piano* and he explained the reference by suggesting that Coetmore had thought there was a similarity of mood between the *Prelude* and the ‘Nimrod’ movement of Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*.⁶¹⁹ While this explanation may be plausible, it is not immediately apparent how the pieces resemble each other. More importantly though, is that it strongly supports the contention that Moeran and Coetmore spent sufficient time together while he was in London for him to play his initial ideas for this piece to her. The reference may well have a different explanation but the piece must have been the *Prelude* – simply because, if it wasn’t, it would have to have been something else. Although Moeran also worked on a piece for Coetmore later in November called the *Irish Lament*, it is unlikely that ‘Nimrod’ is the *Irish Lament*, since the dates of the letters in which Moeran mentioned it are

⁶¹⁸ letter to Coetmore dated O’Connell’s Hotel, Cahirciveen, 26 October 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 421

⁶¹⁹ McNeill (1983), 426

later than the reference and there is no evidence that Moeran was composing anything for Coetmore other than the *Prelude* and the *Irish Lament*. Possibly ‘Nimrod’ refers to something more personal to Moeran and Coetmore. From a comparison of the letters written by Moeran immediately before and after the period 4 to 7 November, it is clear that something significant happened that established Moeran and Coetmore as a couple – at least from Moeran’s perspective. The tone of the letter he wrote to Coetmore on 12 November is substantially different from that of the several letters he wrote during October. Clearly they had spent enough time together to discuss the nature of their relationship and effectively to become ‘an item’. The letter indicates a heightened intimacy in the relationship simply by the ease with which Moeran was able to converse. Although it is unsaid, it is as if a particular stage had been transcended and the form of communication between them had changed to reflect this. The conversational nature of the letter is in sharp contrast to the besottedness characteristic of the October letters and the almost manic seeking of reassurance about Coetmore’s commitment to the relationship is entirely absent. It is evident that Moeran had gained confidence that Coetmore was as committed to the relationship – both professionally and personally – as Moeran believed himself to be, and he seems to have felt comfortable about discussing general things in the manner of an established relationship. In particular, Moeran talked about Coetmore’s mother, the resolution of his short-term financial difficulties, his own parents’ regard for Coetmore and he mentioned ‘the Prof’. This last is a reference to Arthur Willner who took up residence in the gardener’s hut of the Moerans’ house in Kington shortly after his escape from persecution in Nazi Germany in 1938. Willner had been an eminent musician, and a significant composer and teacher in his own right in Germany and Austria during the 1920s and 1930s, and he occasionally acted as assistant to Moeran.⁶²⁰

⁶²⁰ Arthur Willner is mentioned in several of Moeran’s letters and the Moeran archive at the Arts Centre Melbourne contains a number of manuscripts of music for ‘cello and piano that were composed by Willner for Coetmore and Moeran. In particular, Willner wrote a *Sonata for Cello and Piano* as a wedding present. Along with a large body of other music composed by Willner in England during the 1940, this work remains unpublished and, as far as this researcher is aware, unperformed. The Arthur Willner archive contains many of these manuscript compositions together with a large number of other documents, including diaries, journals, concert programmes and notes. Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York, United States of America, AR 10707 / MF 911, *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960*

Moeran's next letter to Coetmore from Kington was written a couple of days later on 14 November and he talked about being 'frantically busy at work'. Although Moeran didn't provide any further details, it is likely that he was completing the *Prelude*. He also mentioned the work that became the *Irish Lament*: 'I am finding time, I hope, to arrange for you to take away if you want it, an Irish folk song for cello & piano'. Moeran wrote again two days later on 16 November and provided more details of the Irish folk song arrangement. He said: 'I am most colossally hard at work: at the moment I am on a somewhat elaborate and exceedingly free arrangement for cello & piano of the Irish Tune *Johnny Asthore*'⁶²¹ and he scribbled the first few bars of the tune in manuscript:



Ex. 49 *Irish Lament* – Irish folksong *Johnny Asthore*

Moeran went to say that it should be ready when he saw Coetmore the following Thursday.⁶²² However, the claim that he was 'most colossally hard at work' on another brand new piece for Coetmore must be regarded more as a further attempt to impress her with his dedication than a statement of fact. Moeran had already composed a work based on the quoted melody, the piano piece *Irish Love Song* of 1926. Rhoderick McNeill suggested that the cello and piano version was a 're-working' of the earlier piano solo⁶²³ but the only references Moeran himself made to this work imply that he was presenting it as a new composition. However, the evidence does not support Moeran's claim. The piano accompaniment of the *Irish Lament* is virtually the same as the *Irish Love Song* and both works are fifty-seven bars long with identical formal structures. While Moeran's memory in later life was questionable, it is inconceivable to suggest that he had forgotten *Irish Love Song* to the extent that he could compose almost exactly the

⁶²¹ *Johnny Asthore* is an Irish folksong otherwise known as *Jimmy Mó Mhíle Stór* ('Jimmy, my thousand times beloved')

⁶²² letter to Coetmore dated Kington, 16 November 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 428

⁶²³ McNeill (1983), 428

same music from scratch. In reality, all he needed to do was extract the tune which is presented in the piano piece bass line as the cello part and copy out what remained as the accompaniment.

Moeran had given the impression in his earlier letter of 14 November that he was reluctant to travel to London again so soon but he contradicted this in the 16 November letter by saying how much he was looking forward to spending more time with Coetmore during the two or three weeks before she embarked for the Middle East. In this letter he also expressed his frustration at having to think about the ENSA commission, despite having earlier made strenuous efforts to be awarded it. Moeran seemed to have thought that this was now distracting him from his top priority – i.e. any work on music for Coetmore. What he actually said was:

Blast Legge, his overture must wait till I have had a session with you & your cello this week ... I am making the most of the few quiet days down here with my piano, so as to have something concrete to show you in 2 days time.⁶²⁴

Since Moeran referred separately to everything he is known to have been working on, it can only be surmised that the ‘something concrete’ was the proposed cello concerto that he said he had started in his brief telegram on 15 October.

Engagement

Moeran travelled to London during the morning of Thursday 18 November and remained there for the next few weeks until Coetmore’s departure for the ENSA Tour. He took lodgings close to Coetmore’s flat in Belsize Lane so he would have had plenty of opportunity to spend time with her, and he evidently did so.⁶²⁵ Although Moeran had repeatedly pleaded with Coetmore not to go on the tour, eventually he had accepted that it was inevitable and had decided that his attitude was selfish. He had to content himself with her reassurance that she would not forget him. As if to cement the relationship, they became engaged. According to a letter Moeran wrote to Lionel Hill on 20 December 1943, they had decided to get married shortly after

⁶²⁴ letter to Coetmore dated Kenmare, 16 November 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 428

⁶²⁵ On Sunday 28 November 1943, Moeran wrote to Arthur Bliss from 55, Belsize Lane about the death of Arthur Catterall. The content of the letter strongly implies that it was written either late in the day or during the evening.

Coetmore's planned return to the UK in June 1944.⁶²⁶ Both the *Prelude* and the *Irish Love Song* were completed and Coetmore took them with her with the intention of performing them at some of her Middle East engagements. However, things were not boding well for Moeran. On Saturday 27 November, he visited his friend and dedicatee of his violin concerto Arthur Catterall at a nursing home in Stanmore, having not been aware previously that Catterall was ill.⁶²⁷ Catterall's state of health was a considerable shock to Moeran and this was immediately compounded by his death the following day. Moeran also received the news that his elderly father was ill.⁶²⁸ Moeran was torn between wanting to remain in London and spend as much time as he could with Coetmore before she left and feeling compelled to return to Kington to support his mother. He justified his eventual decision to stay in London with the thought that his developing relationship with Coetmore was actually bringing some comfort to his father and the fact that his brother was on hand nearer home if his mother needed immediate help.

Coetmore embarked for the Middle East on 11 December 1943. From the tone of the letters Moeran wrote during December, he was desolated by the suddenness and extent of the separation. On Monday 20 December, he received two short letters from Coetmore written aboard ship and presumably posted at ports where they docked en route. However, he became increasingly worried as the subsequent days passed without hearing about her safe arrival at the M.E.F.⁶²⁹ as he called it, even though he knew it would be several weeks before there was any chance of receiving a communication of any kind. The dangers of sea voyages during wartime were very real and the chances of attack by submarine were high. Moeran tried to content and distract himself with pottering about for a few days doing various errands in connection with the sub-letting of Coetmore's flat before returning to Kington on 14 December. He also spent some time with Coetmore's mother, to whom he referred in the letters as 'Mummy'. Moeran also continued to postpone working on the ENSA commission, and the blows to his fragile nervous

⁶²⁶ '... [Coetmore] went away last Saturday week for her six months tour of the Middle East, and we propose being married very soon after her return.'; quoted in Hill (1985), 25

⁶²⁷ letter to Lionel Hill dated Kington, 20 December 1943, transcribed in Hill (1985), 25

⁶²⁸ *ibid.*

⁶²⁹ Middle East Front. The accommodation address to which Moeran wrote was in Cairo

state continued. Shortly after Coetmore's departure, his father's illness worsened considerably. Suddenly, Moeran had two major worries in addition to obligations he had taken on at the BBC and the pressing need to complete the ENSA commission. The pressure must have seemed almost overwhelming and this is reflected in Moeran's letters. Not long after Coetmore left, he wrote, with perhaps a degree of under-statement: 'Please forgive me for this bleak epistle, but it would be dishonest if I were not to admit to you that since we separated I have been feeling very down in the dumps'.⁶³⁰

Prelude for Violoncello and Piano

At the time Moeran's involvement with Peers Coetmore began, he had established a creative method based primarily on the principal of composing what he pleased whenever he chose and interruptions that enforced a deviation from this were unwelcome. Moreover, he had developed what might now be regarded as a minor form of obsessive-compulsive disorder in as much as his ability to compose was powerfully linked to location. He needed to be in a particular place in order to think out his themes and to find the appropriate ambiance for creativity. Works emerged from Moeran's pen infrequently but generally received repeated and enthusiastic performances. As was shown in the first part of this chapter, during the previous ten years, Moeran's creative priority had shifted towards large-scale, orchestral works – punctuated by the occasional song composition – and the composition of chamber and instrumental music was more or less abandoned. The evidence for Moeran's composing activities during 1942 and his plans for 1943 comes primarily from a letter he wrote to Anne Crowley on 14 December 1942 in which he mentioned ideas for his second symphony, '... another new work ...'⁶³¹ – which turned out to be the *Rhapsody in F sharp for Piano and Orchestra* that he was composing for Harriet Cohen to perform at the 1943 Promenade Concert season – and '... writing music for films ...',⁶³² and secondly from various letters written to and from the BBC. It is interesting

⁶³⁰ letter to Coetmore dated Kington, 16 December 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 431

⁶³¹ letter to Anne Crowley dated Kington, 14 December 1942, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 403-4

⁶³² *ibid.*

that he did not mention the *Sinfonietta* in the Anne Crowley letter as it had occupied a great deal of his time during the previous three or four months. It is probable that a request for a work for the Promenade Concert supplanted the BBC Section “C” work as his highest priority. The short score of the piano rhapsody occupied Moeran until early March 1943 and he then worked on the full score, expecting to have it completed by the middle of April.⁶³³ After that, there is no evidence that he resumed work on the *Sinfonietta* or composed or began working on anything else until the commissions that he received later in the year, firstly from Walter Legge – for the invigorating and morale-boosting orchestral work mentioned above that eventually materialised as the *Overture to a Masque*, and secondly from the BBC – a *Fanfare for Red Army Day*, to be performed at the Royal Albert Hall in February 1944. This is all major-scale, orchestral composition and Moeran hadn’t published anything in any other genre since the *Four Shakespeare Songs* of 1940. The significance of more or less dropping everything to concentrate on writing small instrumental works for the cello is considerable.

It may be reasonably supposed that Moeran had not considered composing anything specifically for the cello until he met Coetmore and none of Moeran’s letters to Coetmore written from Ireland during October 1943 makes any mention of composing a short work for cello and piano – concertos and sonatas are all he talks about – so it is not possible to determine when and where the concept originated for the *Prelude*. The first mention of the piece comes in the 12 November Kington letter where Moeran says ‘I am going to get down to *Nimrod* this evening’. Lionel Hill provided the following account of Moeran’s visit to Seer Green:

On November 7th Jack arrived unexpectedly for two nights, he said, but stayed five! The time was spent in going for walks and listening to records, with bouts at the piano. During his stay we went up to London to see Boosey & Hawkes about the publication of one of his scores. Then we went to a concert, and Cecil Gray, the author and composer joined us, Jack came back with me for the night and left the next day.⁶³⁴

⁶³³ ‘I have sent a copy of the new Rhapsody for piano & orchestra to Harriet Cohen. I am now making the full score: this won’t take me long & it should be ready in a fair copy by the middle of April.’ Letter to Julian Herbage dated 9 March 1943, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 405

⁶³⁴ Hill (1985), 23-24

There is no suggestion that on this occasion Moeran discussed with Hill his embryonic relationship with Coetmore or even mentioned her at all, but he may well have worked on the *Prelude* during this visit – the reference to ‘bouts at the piano’ suggests that possibility. As has been shown, Moeran was able to compose in his head and thus would not necessarily have required a piano in order to work. However, as will become apparent in the examination of the piece below, Moeran used a number of ideas from earlier works so, while this may not have been entirely conscious or deliberate, the compositional process was relatively straightforward. It is probable that Moeran had composed at least the basics or perhaps the theme of the *Prelude* during the few days he spent in London at the beginning of November before travelling to Seer Green. This is the only way in which Coetmore could have been familiar with the work and a nickname of *Nimrod* established.

The evidence suggests that the *Prelude* must have been essentially complete by 14 November when he says that, while he is busy with other things – presumably the *Overture* – he is finding time to work on the *Irish Lament*. There are few subsequent references to the piece in Moeran’s letters and they are dated after Coetmore’s departure for the Middle East. Such as they are, they strongly attest to the work’s personal nature:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 7 January 1944 | ‘The proofs have just arrived from Novello’s of our prelude’ ⁶³⁵ |
| 12 January 1944 | ‘I have had you more than ever in my thoughts ... correcting the proofs of your prelude ... My darling, how that piece, very small as it is, makes me think of you. There has been a pleasant feeling of nostalgia for Belsize Lane & you playing it there’ ⁶³⁶ |
| 10 August 1944 | ‘By the way, do you ever play our little prelude? If you have given an "official" 1st performance of it when there is a printed programme I think Novello & Co. would like to know, as they always splash these events in their advertisement columns in the Musical Times & elsewhere, & it would be a good bit of little publicity for you. I should have told you this before, but it only occurred to me when I recently saw an advertisement ... So if you can do the same with the <i>Prelude</i> at Cairo Theatre or elsewhere, we ought to send them the programme; they always like information of this kind about their contemporary publications. Moreover, I hear they hope to bring it out very soon’ ⁶³⁷ |

⁶³⁵ letter to Coetmore dated Kingston, 7 January 1944, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 441

⁶³⁶ letter to Coetmore dated Kingston, 12 January 1944, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 443

⁶³⁷ letter to Coetmore dated Kingston, 10 August 1944, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 480

13 January 1945 'I met a man from the Middle East who formed a very high opinion of your playing. He did not actually meet you, but he heard you in the Cairo Opera House: he says you gave a most inspired performance of my little piece ...'⁶³⁸

When a piece of music is born from an intense emotional experience it is possible that this emotion may be found encoded in some way within the structure or form of the music. The fifty-six bars of the *Prelude* constitute a miniature formal gem that encapsulates Moeran's formidable compositional technique and experience in perhaps the smallest scale possible. Every note is significant and each contributes to the effect of an intensely concentrated emotional outpouring that belies its creative ingenuity. Classical sonata form is used to create a tight and compelling structure that urges the listener forward to a climax that, when it finally happens, seems effortlessly inevitable. The standard form of Exposition: First subject – Second Subject; Development; Bridge; Recapitulation: First Subject; Coda is maintained without significant modification – albeit in miniature. If, as has been suggested, the *Prelude* was composed over a period of a few days in early November 1943, the use of a strict structural control must have been essential in enabling Moeran to be satisfied with a piece produced over such a short period of time – even taking into account his re-use of earlier ideas.

The theme is an original ballad-type melody with features that recall folksong, of the kind Moeran had already used numerous times. In this tune, the folksong stylistic component is more structural than melodic or rhythmic and the melody itself can be readily imagined as a vocal setting. As it stands, what this analysis defines as subject group I forms a 12.12.12.12 metre – which emphasises the vocal nature of the melody. Essentially, this is not instrumental music – the fact that it was written for the cello notwithstanding. Whether Moeran had a particular poem or text in mind when he created his tune is speculation but his innate sense of word-setting, refined through the practice of composing dozens of songs, seems to have led him to an unmistakable 'song without words'. The resemblance of the tune to others that Moeran had previously created clearly suggests that its invention was not problematic.

⁶³⁸ letter to Coetmore dated The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, 13 January 1945, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 489

Thus, with a ready-made formal template and a tune already in his head, Moeran was able to indulge the harmonic complexity that is the principal element providing the piece with its individuality of style. Structurally, the tasks of the solo and accompanying parts are clearly delineated throughout the piece. With the exception of two bars, the solo line carries the entire melodic burden and the piano provides the harmonic rhythm. Thus, the form is primarily distinguishable in the ‘cello part. The following table presents the structure bar by bar:

Table 4 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – formal structure

Subject I	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
Subject II	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Development	23	24	25	26	27	28							
	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
Bridge	40	41	42										
Recapitulation	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52			
Coda	52	53	54	55	56								

As has been shown, in his youth Moeran had been a violinist and pianist of considerable ability and would have been familiar with the characteristics of both instruments. It is apparent that the application of this knowledge to the cello was guided by Coetmore – there are numerous references in Moeran’s letters to him asking Coetmore for technical help. That this was successful in the case of the *Prelude*, was discerned by the *Musical Times* reviewer, who remarked that the work: ‘... exploits ably the genius of the solo instrument’.⁶³⁹ Moeran was very precise in his directions to the player and it is clear that considerable thought went into the overall effect that he wished to achieve. The notational precision and its consequent tonal effect is clearly a fundamental component of the work and is a further indication of an extremely close cooperation between composer and dedicatee.


Subject group I is a ten-bar structure comprising the first two-bar phrase (Ia), followed by a three-bar extended variation (Ib) and a five-bar further extension (Ic) which contains a

⁶³⁹ ‘New Music’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 86, No. 1227 (1 May 1945), 150

modulation to the dominant key of B major. It will be noticed that the first few notes of the tune also bear a resemblance to such folk and traditional melodies as *O Waly, Waly* and a *Londonderry Air* with which Moeran would have been very familiar:

Adagio ma non troppo ♩ = 56

Ex. 50 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group I

It contains a characteristic melodic Moeran fingerprint  that is very similar to motifs in songs such as *Cherry Ripe*, *Rosaline* and *When Daisies Pied*. It would later also appear in the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*.

The thematic material of the entire piece is a development of subject group I with the individual elements of the phrase being repeated, extended and modified. The leading rising 3-quaver anacrusic unit precedes the principal thematic groups and punctuates the formal structure. Its function is to modify with intermediate notes a rising interval leap, the scope of which increases with each statement of the principal thematic material. In bars 1-2, the leap is a major sixth; in bars 3-4, this increases to an octave; in bars 6-7, the leap is an octave and a perfect fourth. A derived thematic component – a descending three-quaver unit beginning either on the second or sixth quaver of the bar – is found throughout the piece, occurring fourteen times. In fact, this device is used in one or other of its forms in nearly half the total bars – twenty-six out of a total of fifty-six.

Although the melody sounds as if could be a folksong, an extensive search of folksong thematic catalogues has failed to locate a traditional melody with exactly these notes. Thus, it may be assumed that the tune is Moeran's invention – while being clearly influenced by the folk-music genre with which he was intimately familiar. A closer examination of the first

subject reveals an ingenious solution to the problem faced by Moeran in rendering a folksong melody as art music. The opening 2-bar phrase, together with the 4/4 time signature, itself heavily emphasised by the pulsing piano accompaniment, implies a continuation to eight bars to form a conventional 12.10.12.10 metre, common to a wide range of traditional songs, including the *Londonderry Air* mentioned above. The form is a dual ‘call/response’ construction that is found throughout folk music. This is the opening ‘call’:



Ex. 51 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group Ia

to which it would be reasonable to expect a ‘response’ as follows:



Ex. 52 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group Ib (theoretical)

In fact, Moeran created a ‘response’ element of three bars by extending the duration and thus further emphasising the significance of the strong beats at points A and B in Ex. 52 above. The result is this:



Ex. 53 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group Ib (actual)

Together with the opening two-bar phrase, these comprise thematic group Ia/b – a five-bar melodic statement that retains a folk-song feel but offers structural originality. Thematic group Ic is a five-bar phrase that further extends Ia by the insertion of additional repetitions and developments of elements from it. The first subject is therefore compiled as a two+three+five bar theme:

Adagio ma non troppo $\text{♩} = 56$

Ex. 54 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group I

Moeran's use of numerical relationships in his compositions has been suggested earlier in this thesis, and it is again demonstrated that Moeran is coincidentally using the primary *Fibonacci Series* as the source for his structural ideas. Although the juxtaposition of the *Fibonacci Series* numbers 2, 3 and 5 is readily apparent, there is no evidence to show that Moeran intentionally made use of these numbers for his formal design. However, the number five recurs throughout Moeran's oeuvre in various ways – five-bar melodies and five-line verses abound – and his evident comfort with the slightly 'off-balance' quality that such structures endow suggests that he regarded it as a natural form. As also mentioned earlier, Moeran's immersion in the folksong of Norfolk provides a possible explanation for this. Firstly, many of the songs actually do have five lines. Moreover, in the unaccompanied singing of these songs, the addition of beats to certain bars within the melody – extending the underlying beat-count to five or occasionally seven – is a natural form of punctuation or emphasis. This is a technique that Moeran would have absorbed as he heard repeated renderings of many songs, to the point where it would naturally find expression in his own music. Bearing this in mind, group Ib, as a three bar extended response to group Ia, seems entirely natural.

The dominant key of B Major having been established at the end of the first subject, Subject Group II immediately modulates to its own dominant minor (F# minor) and, transitioning via the next dominant minor (C# minor), re-establishes the original dominant key of B major for the conclusion of the 23-bar exposition. Group II also extends the use of the *Fibonacci Series* as it comprises a five-bar IIa, followed by an eight-bar IIb. As with Ic, the thematic material derives primarily from Ia, Moeran again showing economy of resources while providing variety of

sound. The first few terms of the primary *Fibonacci Series* – 2, 3, 5, 8 and 13 may be seen to be the basis of the construction of the exposition:

Ex. 55 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Subject Group II

The miniature eighteen-bar development section begins in bar 23 and is divided into a five-bar first section and a thirteen-bar second section. Melodically, this section is very similar to the exposition and it repeats and reorganises thematic material used earlier. It is in the harmonic piano accompaniment that the main variations and modifications are to be found. Having limited his accompaniment to gently pulsating chords, Moeran uses harmony in conjunction with the cello melody in order to provide increasing levels of tension. Throughout the development, the continually shifting tonal base ventures further and further from the work's home key of E major. Initially, the path of keys followed is the same as in the exposition – moving up a fifth with each transition. Tension is further raised by the dissonances created between the cello solo line and the increasingly remote keys through which the piano accompaniment progresses. Moeran was demonstrating mastery of the understanding of the combined effects of the partials present in the notes played by the two instruments. The following example, from the development section, illustrates this:

The image shows a musical score for a cello and piano. The top staff is the cello line, and the bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The cello line starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G#, A) in the first bar, followed by a melodic line with a fermata. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in both hands, with some chromatic movement in the bass line.

Ex. 56 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Development – bars 25-28

The collision of E natural in the solo line and E sharp at the lower point of the piano part in bar one of Ex. 56 results in a major/minor seventh chord that, while fleeting in its duration, is instantly noticeable in its effect. Although the spelling of the chord initially suggests an F sharp minor triad with both major and minor sevenths, a consideration of the surrounding chords shows that it is in fact a transition between the F sharp minor triad of the previous beat and the C sharp seventh of the subsequent beat – the first beat of the following bar.

The development section reaches a climax at bar 39 – almost exactly two thirds of the way through the piece. The coincidence of the cello line reaching its highest point and the sudden re-establishment of the tonic key in the piano accompaniment is remarkably effective in its simplicity and uncontrived elegance:

Ex. 57 *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* – Development – bars 37-44

The cello line plays unaccompanied for two bars as the piano part rests from its own climactic moment. There is a short link passage where the piano re-states a shortened version of the first subject. With so little space within which to work, Moeran's transitions and other linking passages are compressed into a few notes. This contributes to a formal tightness that emphasises the underlying structural rigour. The remainder of the piece is a truncated recapitulation of the entire first subject with a continual diminuendo ensuring that the three-bar coda ends the piece gently.

The *Prelude* has been dismissed as inconsequential by other commentators. It is a short piece – the duration is less than five minutes – but it contains within it the intense emotional outpouring of a man who was awkwardly but sincerely in love. Moeran had extreme difficulty in communicating his feelings for Peers directly to her – whether in conversation or in letter. The evidence for this is plain in the language and construction used in the letters that have survived. He was also fearful that his feelings for Peers may not be reciprocated or that, when she got to know him better, such feelings as she had for him would disappear. In composing the

Prelude, Moeran seems to have been able to express pure love without the discomfort and embarrassment resulting from having to put it into words.

Significance

When Moeran composed the *Prelude*, he believed that he was deeply and passionately in love with Coetmore. The first days of their relationship in November 1943 may have been amongst the happiest and most fulfilled days of his life and it is possible that he crammed every nuance of his feelings for her into this short piece. A similar symbolism may also be present in both the *Concerto in B minor for Violoncello and Orchestra* and the *Sonata for Violoncello and Pianoforte* but probably emanates in these cases from different emotional perspectives. The reality of his more developed relationship with Coetmore must have become apparent to Moeran by the time he was completing the cello concerto. By 1947, when the sonata was completed, the relationship had degenerated into an effective separation that seems never to have been spoken about or planned – it just happened. Thus, the emotional symbolism may be more one of longing or regret.

Along with the landscape of County Kerry, Coetmore's influence remained Moeran's strongest inspiration for the remainder of his life. The letters he wrote to her provide a fascinating chronicle of the creation of the music, and it is possible to trace the gestation, the development, the abortive attempts and finally the completion of two of his most outstanding works, the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* and the *Sonata for Violoncello and Pianoforte*. These works and the circumstances of the composition of each are of sufficient interest and significance in the context of Moeran's final years to warrant a full and dedicated examination. It is hoped that a subsequent research project will be able to achieve this.

That these two works were eventually completed, despite the difficulties besetting both the relationship and Moeran's composing ability, is perhaps remarkable, but it is abundantly clear that Moeran maintained his love for Coetmore, in some form at least, until a few months before

his death. However, it is also apparent that this love gradually ceased to be reciprocated during the years after the marriage. It is, perhaps, possible to wonder at the continued faith that is revealed by Moeran's letters as the reality of the failed marriage must eventually have dawned on him. The two large-scale works were predicated on creating appropriate master-level music that would enable Coetmore to display her talent for playing the cello. However, as has already been hinted at, the seemingly innocuous *Prelude for Violoncello and Piano* may be the most significant of the cello works, simply through its immensely powerful symbolism.

Aftermath

Moeran lived for another seven years; years that would see his marriage to Coetmore, the triumph of the cello concerto, the composition of more songs and folksong arrangements, the resurrection of the *Farrago Suite* as the *Serenade in G*, the creation of (perhaps) his masterpiece, the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*, and, tragically, the failure of his efforts to crown his achievements with a second symphony. However, most significantly, these years saw the disintegration both of his relationship with Coetmore and of Moeran himself, as a composer and as a man.

The fateful course, originally set in train by his meeting with Philip Heseltine, reached its terrible destination at the Kenmare River, one stormy late afternoon in December 1950. The final chapter of this thesis will attempt to re-assess the composer E. J. Moeran on the basis of the evidence presented and analysed in Chapters 2 to 6, but one must find an appropriate final word to say on the life of a composer that, while he might have been one of Britain's greatest – had events transpired otherwise – nevertheless left a body of music that continues to delight, charm and challenge. There can surely be no better words than those of the man himself, as he wrote his final letter to Coetmore, for a short while somehow overcoming the black desolation that by then must have almost overwhelmed him. When he wrote this last letter on 20 March 1950, in Coolagad in Ireland, Moeran had not seen his wife for more than a year – and he would not see her again. He wrote:

I just had to write you a few lines before post. After the wet week end, everything is bursting out; lovely green shoots in the hedges, the purple heather on the mountain side, & to the East the perfect blue of the sea. Darling, this makes me think the more of you & how you would love it. And here I am in this peaceful cottage in the thick of composition & finding things come easy to me. There has been nothing like it for writing purposes since our happy time in Sussex.

Everything is perfect except that you are not here. I find that now I am working again amid the kind of country that is most dear to me, & living with kind people, Sea, heather & Mountains, that you, Peers, always seem to be not very far away. Actually, I feel you with me when I am walking the hills. I love to think, & I believe &, in fact, know that you are with me spiritually, though so many miles separate us ...

Goodbye, my own darling.

With this lovely spring, the birds singing, & everything day-by-day coming out (& I hope my music) you are always in my thoughts & I long to be with you again & no more partings.

J.⁶⁴⁰

⁶⁴⁰ letter to Coetmore dated Coolagad, 20 March 1950, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 674

Chapter 7

“... a composer reconstructed”

The final chapter examines how the findings contained in this thesis affect how Moeran's life and work may be viewed. The composer's life as now understood is presented in overview, the importance of this new understanding to the perception and reception of Moeran's music is considered, and his significance in twentieth-century British and Irish music is deliberated. The implications of this study are evaluated, and areas for further research are suggested.

Moeran's place in British and Irish music has, up to now, been predicated on his moderately small surviving corpus of works representing, amongst other things, a life-long struggle – ultimately lost – against apparently unassailable adversity. His relatively minor status has inevitably ensured that any apparent similarity in his music with the work of other composers

has been explained as his absorbing of their influence. However, this thesis has presented evidence that casts severe doubt on both these perspectives, and therefore Moeran and his music must now be considered in a different way.

Having deconstructed Moeran, as he has been appreciated hitherto, it is evident that a replacement should be provided. The removal of key factors that have, up to now, determined the context of his music, has demolished the framework within which that music has been perceived and received. The construction of a new Moeran perspective must be based on evidenced and verifiable biography, rather than, as has been prevalent, the perception of the man being based primarily on assumptions formed from appreciation of the music. Until now, there has been a tendency to regard Moeran sympathetically, and this tendency, while deriving ultimately from the war wound account, has been reinforced by the assessment of the music itself as the product of a victim of the First World War. Such circular reasoning has resulted in the creation of a stoutly-defended edifice of belief that has strongly resisted any evidence-based assault, and the possible causes of this require some consideration. The ‘scandalously-neglected composer’ phenomenon was mentioned in Chapter 1, as was the propensity to conflate beauty as perceived in an artistic creation, with a beauty assumed for the creator. It was predominantly the writing of Lionel Hill that nurtured these in Moeran’s case, and, given the dearth of much else written about the composer, Hill’s account has been taken as authoritative – after all, he actually knew Moeran, so how could it be otherwise? Moreover, Moeran’s assumed minor status has ensured relatively little rigorous scholarly examination, so previously-accepted assumptions based on unsupported assertion have not been subjected to effective challenge. As has been explained, in the case of Moeran, there exists an unusually limited amount of direct documentary evidence, especially relating to his childhood and youth. The circumstances of his upbringing and experiences as a young adult seem to have conspired to ensure that any family records that may have been were lost. It has thus been necessary to subject each rare fragment of evidence that has survived to scrupulous examination, not only for what it validates, but also for what it may render as either plausible or implausible. In previous writings on Moeran, such

examination has not necessarily been as assiduous as it might and hence the perpetuation of the misconceptions set out in Chapter 1 as *The Moeran Myth*.

The Composer Reconstructed

Moeran's life exhibits a number of critical aspects that are central to a full understanding of the man and the music that he composed. Born towards the end of the nineteenth century, his early life was spent in the sheltered environment of a late-Victorian and Edwardian middle-class household that was, itself, the product of intellectual and financial privilege – although frequent family relocations may have led to an unsettled childhood. Moeran's primary education was conducted at home by his mother and a governess and he had little, if any, opportunity to associate with children of his own age, but he benefitted from an artistic, creative and intellectual legacy from members of both sides of his family. He was exposed to music-making probably in the form of his mother playing and singing and his own music lessons began very early. At the age of ten, he was sent as a weekly boarder to preparatory school where his formal music tuition began. Four years later, he proceeded to Uppingham School where he received both a public school education and an extensive exposure to music that provided the basis for the life as a musician that he eventually chose. He involved himself in music-making in many forms, participating in chamber music ensembles and the school orchestra.

Moeran was highly intelligent and may well have proceeded to Cambridge – following in the footsteps of his father and elder brother – had not the lure of continuing his musical studies at the Royal College of Music been so strong. Eventually coming under the tutelage and influence of Sir Charles Stanford, Moeran had instilled in him the importance of form which, together with the legacy of an extensive classical repertoire he had built during his years at Uppingham School, later enabled him to devise inventive but convincing structures for his own compositions. Suspending his studies on the outbreak of the First World War, Moeran enlisted and served as a motorcycle despatch rider. Although he spent the first two years of the war on light duty in East Anglia and was able to continue to compose and participate in musical

activities in London, his unit was eventually deployed to France early in 1917. There is no evidence that Moeran spent much time near the front line, but he was unfortunate enough to be wounded while carrying out his despatch-rider duties. However, the injury was not serious and he was immediately repatriated for medical treatment. A few months later, Moeran was sent to Ireland with his regiment, where he remained for the rest of the war. While there, he developed the beginnings of a love for the country that would ultimately lead to his spending most of his time there.

On his full recovery and discharge from the army in 1919, it is probable that Moeran's mother established him with a private income to enable him to devote his life to composition. It is likely that she also provided the financial resources that enabled him to promote his music more intensively than could many of his contemporaries, and as a result of both this and the networking opportunities afforded by his membership of the prestigious *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* – within the opulent rooms of which he made the acquaintance of some of the most important members of the British Establishment – Moeran rose rapidly to prominence as a composer in the musical London of the 1920s. This culminated in the commissioning by Sir Hamilton Harty of a symphony for the Hallé orchestra. In mid-decade, Moeran developed a friendship with Philip Heseltine, the two eventually setting up house together and beginning the process that led to a descent into creative barrenness, his failure to complete the symphony, and his developing an alcohol dependency.

The death of Heseltine was a release for Moeran, although he mourned his friend. He gradually recaptured his ability to compose, although he never recovered the facility and productivity that characterised his achievements of the early 1920s, but he did finally complete his first, large-scale work – the *Symphony in G minor*. However, from 1930 onwards, Moeran's life was circumscribed by his alcohol-dependency, which seems to have led to many accidents, periods spent in nursing homes, and a number of encounters with the police. Musical London in the mid-1930s was different from that experienced by Moeran a decade or so earlier and the importance of the BBC to a composer was much greater. Moeran was able to make use of his

connections from the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* to re-establish himself back in the centre of musical life, although he was no longer a member of the Club. While Moeran was never in any sense wealthy, neither was he ever really short of funds and he had a wide circle of acquaintances – many of whom were his drinking companions – that were willing to accommodate his peripatetic lifestyle and he regularly returned to his parental home. In the mid-1930s, Moeran visited Ireland again and re-discovered the country that eventually became his second and in some ways, his real home.

By mid-1943, and despite frequent periods of ill-health, Moeran had again achieved a level of eminence, recognition and success. He had several large-scale works receiving repeat concert and broadcast performances and he was composing as part of the war effort. His time was mostly his own and, within the restrictions of wartime Britain, he was able to travel and visit as he pleased. In June 1943, at a CEMA-organised recital in Leominster given by his friend the pianist Michael Mullinar, he was introduced to the soloist, the cellist Peers Coetmore. Possibly in desperation over his continued and worsening alcoholic over-indulgences, Moeran's brother and parents seem to have engineered a situation where he and Coetmore were thrown together for a while and the most unlikely of relationships began.

As it had been with Philip Heseltine, the impact of the relationship with Coetmore on Moeran's life was extensive. Yet again, the comfortable existence and the freedom to compose what he liked when he liked, was fatally and this time permanently compromised. Unlike 1926, however, Coetmore's influence did not lead to Moeran ceasing to compose – rather her presence in his life compelled him to want to compose only for her. Other work that he had shortly before found congenial became a nuisance or a chore, and the desire to buttress the relationship by the creation of numerous works for Coetmore inhibited his previously improving productivity. While the Moeran/Coetmore relationship ultimately failed, most probably due to their incompatible needs – both working and personal, and the likelihood that neither was able to match the other as a suitable life-partner, Moeran was, for a time, sufficiently inspired by his muse to compose music that has been suggested to be some of his finest. However, as the

relationship gradually disintegrated, so Moeran's capacity to compose diminished. During the final three years of his life, with Coetmore on an extended tour of South Africa and Australasia (which eventually became a permanent emigration), he completed just three recognisable works, and he struggled and ultimately failed to complete a second symphony. Twenty years of alcohol over-consumption, together with increasing depression led to deteriorating health, and eventually Moeran's early death at the age of fifty-six.

It is evident from the above biography that Moeran did indeed struggle against adversity, but it was a different adversity from that previously believed. There can be no doubt that the final twenty years of the composer's life were delineated by a debilitating condition – as serious or perhaps even more so than the assumed war wound – and that this debility had a defining impact on the type and quantity of music that Moeran produced during those years. However, the possibility that his problems were ultimately self-inflicted has a major impact on the perception and reception of the music. While it is possible to remain sympathetic to his plight, Moeran can no longer be regarded primarily as a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. His life up to 1926 demonstrates a determination to succeed as a composer and musician entirely unaffected by wartime-induced trauma or stress. Almost fifty percent of Moeran's extant compositions were completed between 1920 and 1926, and the final twenty years of his life – two thirds of his productive life as a composer – account for just over one third of his music. These statistics testify strikingly to the contrast between these two phases of Moeran's career. That he succumbed to the temptations provided during his years in the Eynsford cottage is beyond doubt, and no amount of recourse to the supposed effect of his wartime experiences provides sufficient justification to regard such temptations as beyond his capability to have resisted.

The Composer Reconsidered

Before presenting a concluding re-assessment of Moeran as a composer, it is helpful to examine the general debate on the importance of biography in the understanding of a composer's work.

As shown earlier in this thesis, those that have written about Moeran have varied in the degree of emphasis placed on the composer's life and experiences when considering the music. Rhoderick McNeill presented the life and the music essentially in parallel, binding each to the other as mutually dependent. Bruce Polay, conversely, examined only the music of the works he analysed, without any consideration for the circumstances of the composer or the composition of those works. Finally, Lionel Hill wrote only about the man – such music as he mentioned was done so as part of the narrative. Generally speaking, this variation in emphasis is surely the case in writings about most composers, indeed most creative artists. But can separating the creation from the creator be justified, or can a work of art only be fully appreciated if the details of the life of the creator and circumstances of its creation are known? For example, does the discovery that an artist has failed in some way as a morally-praiseworthy person degrade or devalue that artist's work, or should a work of art, once brought into being, lead an existence entirely isolated from its creator? According to Kurenkova and Kurenkova:

Heuristics of art begins with an understanding of the creative work of an artist. It is the artist who is the beginning and the source of art. His personality is the centre of the creative process. He is a subject of creativity and a creative course as well. The subjective factor is very important in art. An artist should interpret his or her life and make this the artist's model, and also come to art as a rich and original individuality. A human aspect is important in science, pedagogy, and medicine. In art a personality is a both substantial and resultant element of a work of art. You cannot separate an artwork from the artist. It was only Tolstoy who could create *War and Peace* and it was only Prokofiev who could compose a namesake opera and it was only Bondarchuk who could make the film of the same name ... The personality of an artist is never outside a work of art; on the contrary it infuses all its subject-matter and structure. But you should distinguish a real everyday personality of an artist and his poetic personality, which Pushkin called the soul of a poet.⁶⁴¹

Whether one agrees with this or not, it is the above-mentioned and undoubted tendency to perceive innate beauty in the creator of beauty that possibly explains the sometimes indignant outrage that accompanies the discovery that the creator of a work of art was in some way morally reprehensible or otherwise failed to achieve the pinnacle of virtue the lovers of their creation imposed. However, it is also probably the case that most people that appreciate art in

⁶⁴¹ R. A. Kurenkova & N. E. Kurenkova, 'Creative Process as a Factor and Condition of the Phenomenology of Life' in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (ed.), *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 83, (2004), 87-8

any of its forms have little detailed knowledge of the artists' lives, and thus it may be supposed that, outside of philosophical debate, the answer is not relevant – the creation (generally) exists and endures unchanging in itself, regardless of what may be discovered about its creator.

Musical biography and the determination of its importance as an adjunct to the complete study of the work of a composer has been the subject of much debate since Guido Adler suggested in 1885 that it was '... low in the hierarchy of the proper subjects for musical study'.⁶⁴² As suggested above in the quotation from *Analecta Husserliana*, the personality of the creator of a work of art is an inherent part of its structure, and thus it may be thought that the identification and understanding of as many as possible of the constituents of that personality is required for a fuller understanding of the creation. There is much debate about whether or not this is the case, and what part biography, or the mapping of a composer's life, contributes to the understanding of the composer's music.⁶⁴³ According to Jolanta T. Pekacz in the introduction to *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*: '... in the case of artistic lives [biography] is supposed to provide a framework within which the creative output can somehow be related to the artist's life'.⁶⁴⁴ In the case of Moeran, what has been presented in this thesis is a reconstruction of much of his biography, and thus, if Pekacz's assertion is correct, the '... framework within which ...' his creative output has been related to his life has necessarily changed.

As asserted at the outset of this thesis, regardless of whatever has been learned about Moeran during the course of this research project and presented in this thesis, not a single note of the music has changed, and so its intrinsic aesthetic properties are unaffected by any changed perception of the composer. However, what has been changed is the knowledge of the circumstances under which the music was composed, and when that knowledge is presented, the reception of the music must surely change. Knowing that Moeran did not have a metal plate in

⁶⁴² Hans Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars: Studies in Musical Biography*, (OPA, Amsterdam, 1988), 1

⁶⁴³ A detailed examination of the debate is beyond the scope of this thesis. Two useful references are: Hans Lenneberg, *Witnesses and Scholars: Studies in Musical Biography*, (OPA, Amsterdam, 1988) and Jolanta T. Pekacz (ed.), *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*, (Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2006) – contains a comprehensive bibliography.

⁶⁴⁴ Pekacz (2006), 1

his skull, that he did not spend years in the First World War trenches, that he did develop an alcohol-dependency due to his uncontrolled drinking, should each affect radically the reception of music that has previously been presented as the product of a different character.

Significance and Further Study

The most significant results of the study presented in this thesis have been:

- the establishing beyond any doubt that much of the conventional wisdom about Moeran assembled over the past ninety years has been the result of misconceptions; most significantly, this has included the discrediting of the previously-accepted war wound story
- the determining that Moeran's health and other problems during the latter twenty years of his life were primarily due to the alcohol-dependency that he developed during the years he spent in the Eynsford cottage
- the establishing of the fact that Moeran became a prominent member of London musical circles and a prolific and successful composer during the early 1920s; this discovery has been facilitated by the revealing of his eighteen-year membership of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club*

The studies of Moeran and his music that were undertaken between 1966 and 2010 and which were summarised in Chapter 1 were all based to some extent upon the misconceptions revealed by this research project. It therefore follows that many of the conclusions they reached may now be regarded as unsafe, and that consequently a complete re-examination of Moeran's entire life and work, extending the scope of this thesis, is required. Although the research for this thesis has been as exhaustive as time and the availability of resources have allowed, other evidence almost certainly remains to be found, and a future full biographical study may unearth additional material – especially relating to Moeran's childhood and early life.

The assessment of Moeran as derivative has also been challenged, and consequently the influence that he may have had on other composers – particular Peter Warlock and John Ireland – should now be the subject of further research. Indeed, the establishment of Moeran as a major influence in English music of the 1920s must now be considered. Thought should also be given

to constructing a definitive, chronological opus list, including the works that have not survived but for which reliable evidence exists.

In answering the questions posed at the outset, further questions have been raised and it is also hoped that future research will go some way towards answering these. In particular, Moeran's few months in Ireland in 1918-19 are insufficiently documented, and it may be possible to locate additional evidence that sheds further light on the activities that are hinted at by such testimony as his later claiming of friends and acquaintances who were members of the IRA. Moeran's friendship with Herbert Hughes may also date from this period, and Hughes' interest in the Gaelic revival in Ulster and his part in recording the airs and folksong of the Antrim Glens would have resonated with Moeran's own interest in collecting folksong.⁶⁴⁵

Moeran's role in music in Ireland from the mid-1930s after his return in 1936 has been found to have possibly been more significant than previously thought, and this should be the subject of further investigation. The apparent ease with which he became part of the musical life of the country and its evident rapidity, suggests that there may have been associations dating from 1918-1919 which he was able to revive, and his seemingly effortless acceptance into local communities – most notably related by Sir Arnold Bax in the appreciation of Moeran he wrote for *Music & Letters* in 1915: 'If there was ever a move to elect a mayor of [Kenmare] Jack Moeran would be everyone's first choice'⁶⁴⁶ – provides additional circumstantial evidence.

Time and space constraints have led to Moeran's last few years being summarised in this thesis in a few paragraphs, but his voluminous correspondence during these years represents a major resource that may be used in a much more detailed and comprehensive examination of this final period of his life and work – in particular the composition of the cello concerto, the cello sonata and the *Sinfonietta*. While Coetmore's letters were destroyed, there are references in Moeran's correspondence that enable a reconstruction of the essence of what she wrote, and

⁶⁴⁵ Although as shown earlier in the thesis, no direct evidence for Moeran having any involvement in Irish Nationalism has been found, apart from his claiming of IRA acquaintances and friends, the facts of his friendship with Herbert Hughes and Hughes' association with Roger Casement and other members of the *Gaelic League* who subsequently joined *Sinn Féin* provide coincidences which at the very least merit further research.

⁶⁴⁶ Arnold Bax, 'E. J. Moeran: 1894-1950', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 32, No.2 (April 1951), 127

an analysis of their relationship and the impact it had on Moeran's creativity could be formulated.

The discovery of the archives of the *Oxford & Cambridge Musical Club* has revealed the substantial influence of this body on the musical life of pre-Second World War London. The research in the archives for this project has been preliminary and a full examination is likely to uncover an immense amount of information about the activities of many musicians and composers and others that either were or later became eminent. Evidence for previously unknown associations and friendships, records of earlier first performances and unsuspected musical accomplishments can be found.

Finally, the importance of Moeran's friend Arthur Willner in early to mid-twentieth century music in Germany, Austria and latterly England was hinted at, but again time and space constraints and relevance considerations have prevented any detailed excursus. However, the extensive archive of Willner's writings, notes, diaries and manuscripts is held at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, and it is evident even from the cursory study performed during the course of this research project that this is a collection of historically significant material.⁶⁴⁷

The Importance of Being Ernest John

This thesis has focussed on three key events in Moeran's life that can now be seen to have determined both directly and indirectly the music that he composed. Equivalent events can doubtless be found in the lives of most, if not all, composers, but there are certain aspects of Moeran's life and career that can justifiably identify him as unique. At the beginning of the thesis, it was stated that the course of a person's life is the product of countless events, decisions and the caprices of fate, few of which are ever under the control of the individual. But even those that are, such as Moeran's decision to join Heseltine in his artistic commune, are irrevocable, in that it is impossible to compare what happened with what would (or might) have

⁶⁴⁷ Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York, United States of America, AR 10707 / MF 911, *Arthur Willner Collection 1849-1960*

happened. If Moeran had not moved into the cottage, his career might eventually have eclipsed those of all his contemporaries. Alternatively, he might have been run over by a bus the following morning. Such speculation, ultimately, has little point.

As with Mr Jack Worthing and his *alter ego* Ernest, it is now apparent that Moeran has been two people, the one characterised and identified by the *Moeran Myth*, and the other by the newly discovered reality. Although Moeran did not invent an alternative personality for himself, one was invented for him. The invented Moeran was not real, but has effectively supplanted the reality. However, and quite paradoxically, this character does resemble the man this thesis has shown him to have been, before the Eynsford cottage hiatus. In later life, Moeran was never more than a shadow of the confident young composer of the mid-1920s, whose life and achievements seemed to be going from strength to strength. His ability to recover to the extent that he did, and to produce the music that he did during the last twenty years of his life is a testament to a residual force of the character that never, or at least not until his last few months, entirely deserted him.

Moeran's significant contribution to art music in Britain cannot be doubted and the body of one hundred or so individual works endures as a cultural product of its time. Whether or not it was the product of genius may be debated, but in its melodic invention, its harmonic innovation and its formal ingenuity, it stands as the work of a remarkable and fascinating man.

As in the previous chapter, one is left wondering how best to conclude this assessment, and again, perhaps letting the man speak for himself is most appropriate. Moeran, above all, was a writer of tunes, and so the last word goes to the composer, in the form of three of his most memorable themes.

'Perhaps I am not a composer at all. I had my suspicion of that some time ago, but I veered round & on the strength of finding myself in certain surroundings I wrote a couple of big works which have got me into the position of being "reckoned" as being a writer of something worth-while. But I have been so badly stuck fast lately that I wonder whether it may not be a myth.'⁶⁴⁸

Lento, ma non troppo ♩ = 54

Ex. 58 *Serenade in G - Air*

Ex. 59 *Diaphenia*

Adagio

Ex. 60 *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra - second movement*

⁶⁴⁸ letter to Coetmore dated The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, 26 January 1945, transcribed in McNeill (1983), 492

Appendix

The singular coincidence between the first names of E. J. Moeran and the names eventually revealed to be those of the central character of Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* cannot fail to strike anybody familiar with both composer and play. If there were no evidence linking Moeran and the play, then this could safely be left as a coincidence. However, the unusual nature of Moeran's names and a comparison of the date of his birth and that of the play's creation suggest that further investigation is warranted.

As was shown in the main text, Moeran was christened Ernest John Smeed Moeran in February 1895, having been born on the last day of 1894 – the 'Smeed' component of his name deriving from his mother's grandfather – George Smeed. However, the 'Ernest John' part is a bit more difficult to explain. It was usual at the time for children – especially boys – to be named after relatives, generally grandfathers or great-grandfathers. Despite the construction of extensive Moeran, Smeed and Whall family trees, no male relative named Ernest has been found and the only John is the middle name of Ada Esther's father, Benjamin John Whall. Moeran's elder brother, William Graham, was clearly named after Ada's uncle – the Reverend William Graham – who with his wife Sarah Ann (Ada Esther mother's sister) took over the task of looking after Ada when George Smeed died. William was also one of Moeran's father's names. When it came to the second son, it would clearly have been more usual to name him after a male grandparent – the most likely possibilities being Thomas, Benjamin, George or Edward.

The fact that Moeran's first forename is one that appears to be unknown in the family therefore requires some explanation. Perhaps the Moerans attended a performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, were struck by the names 'Ernest John' and thus decided to name their child after the character. This would be a possible explanation but for the fact that the

naming of Moeran took place some several weeks before the play had its first performance in February 1895 and long before it was published.

Could the Moerans have known about the play and its plot before the first performance or even rehearsals for the performance? And if they did, why might they name their son after the character? In order to provide a convincing answer these questions, the circumstances surrounding the writing of the play must be investigated. Sifting through the evidence does indeed lead to the possibility that the Moerans knew Oscar Wilde.

After Ada Esther Smeed Whall's grandfather, George Smeed, died, she went to live with her aunt and uncle in the vicarage of St. Paul's Church, Upper Norwood. It was related in the main text that this part of London had attracted artists and writers from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Constance Lloyd, who would eventually become Mrs Oscar Wilde, had an aunt in Norwood with whom she stayed regularly and it was at services in St Paul's Church that Ada Esther and Constance met. Ada Esther's cousin Christopher Whitworth Whall and his daughter Veronica also knew Constance Lloyd. The evidence for this comes both from what is known about Ada Esther's family on the Whall side and from information published in various biographies of Constance Wilde. The two young women had much in common and shared some important characteristics that could well have drawn them together into a closer friendship. In particular, they each had independent means after having been orphaned and had spent their childhoods under the care of their grandfathers, and both became closely involved in the Women's Movement that began to gather pace during the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century. It is possible that Constance became something of an elder sister to the doubly-orphaned Ada Esther.

While no direct evidence has been found to support the conjecture, it is possible that Ada Esther maintained her friendship with Constance after she married Wilde, and it is this that raises the intriguing possibility that Ada Esther and her husband actually knew Oscar Wilde. It is here that the significance of the relevant dates becomes apparent. Since Moeran was born and

was baptised before February 1895, if Joseph and Ada Moeran had been influenced by the plot of the play when choosing a name for their second son, they must have known about it before it was either performed or published.

Recent biographies of Constance Lloyd have revealed her to have been a more independent and resourceful person with a wider range of interests and talents than had previously been thought – consideration of her life having been overshadowed by that of her husband. As is now well-known, the Wilde-Lloyd marriage was at best rocky from quite early on and by mid-1894 was in serious trouble. Wilde's dalliances put immense strain on Lloyd's patience and emotions. In September 1894, the Wilde family travelled to Worthing for an extended holiday and it was during the following two months that Wilde wrote *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It may be speculated that Constance turned to Ada Esther and her husband for support and there is evidence of a brief and temporary reconciliation between Wilde and his wife having taken place around that time. There was, therefore, an opportunity for Ada Esther to have become aware of the play and the names of its characters before it was presented to the public.

Since there is no direct evidence that shows incontrovertibly that Moeran's names were given as a result of these coincidences, the best that can be said is that this is a reasonable assertion – on the basis of considerable circumstantial evidence and plausible interpretation.

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