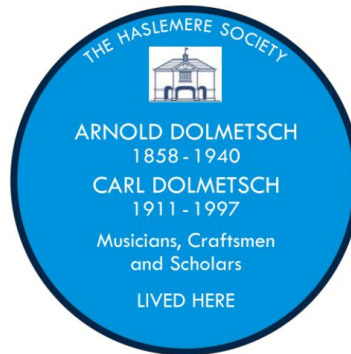




**Arnold Dolmetsch
Carl Dolmetsch**



Blue Plaque at Jesses, Grayswood Road, Haslemere

Jesses

Early 20th century house built between 1902-1906 by local architect and builder Parbury. Influence of Arts and Crafts movement shows in simplicity and good detail. Irregular entrance front of three bays. Two storeys at sides. Taller centre with attic and projecting catslide over porch. Hipped tiled roofs, dull red Sussex brick, tiled drip moulds. Leaded casements of 2, 3 and 4 lights. Pentice extension at left: half-octagonal bay on right return and right garage extension. Rear elevation tile hung above with oversailing 1st floors in gabled outer bays; and chimney tucked into the right inner angle so formed. House is listed mainly as the home from 1917 until his death in 1940 of Arnold Dolmetsch, pioneer of the early music revival and founder of the factory for making early musical instruments.
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*Jesses in the snow, 2009
Photograph by
P. L. Hallesy*

Arrival at Jesses

In September 1917, the Dolmetsch family moved from Hampstead, London, to the small Surrey village of Thursley, where they found refuge from the air raids of the First World War in a cottage loaned to them by Arnold's friend and pupil Beatrice Horne. In her book "Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch", Mabel Dolmetsch writes: "Thenceforth life flowed smoothly for us in this little village, and having decided to make this part of the world our settled home, we set about house hunting. Feeling strongly drawn to the neighbouring town of Haslemere, we made this place the prime focus of our search. Not only had Arnold, some twelve years previously, visited George Bernard Shaw in Hindhead, and been struck by the beauty of its surroundings, but also, more recently, while still living at Tanza Road, Hampstead, we had given a concert in central London for the Peasant Arts Society whose headquarters were situated in Haslemere. Prospecting therefore from the vantage point of Thursley, we eventually found the perfect house, with the name of *Jesses*. It owed its name to the fact that it stood on territory which had once formed part of a large farm where, in the Middle Ages, they reared hawks (the word 'jess' signifying a leather strap fastened to the legs of the hawk and affixed to its perch, or to the hand of its owner). In this auspicious house, Arnold, prophetic as usual, announced that he would live out the remainder of his earthly life."

The move to Jesses took place on a bitterly cold day, with the ground covered by deep snow. On December 20th, 1917, a unit of the French-Canadian army from nearby Witley Camp arrived in Thursley with their wagons and horses and transported the Dolmetsch family and all their worldly goods to Haslemere. During the autumn the family had forged a bond with the soldiers, since they shared a common language of French and on several occasions had entertained the camp with music on harpsichord, lute and viols.

Arnold Dolmetsch



Arnold Dolmetsch was born in 1858 in Le Mans, in the province of Sarthe, Western France. On both sides of his family there was a tradition of music and instrument building dating back to the 18th century, and from his earliest years Arnold received piano and violin lessons and learnt the art of organ tuning and repair from his maternal grandfather Armand Guillouard. From the age of 14 to 19 he worked in the family workshop, 'Maison Dolmetsch-Guillouard', Rue de la Préfecture, Le Mans, and learned to construct and maintain stringed and keyboard instruments

Brussels Conservatoire 1881-1883

In 1881, after a few months of private study with the virtuoso violinist Henri Vieuxtemps, he entered

the Brussels Conservatoire where he studied piano, violin and counterpoint. His two years at Brussels were to have a profound influence on him, for the students had access to the Conservatoire's collection of antique instruments and library of early music. The Principal, Francois Gevaert, taught him the importance of ornamentation in early music and at the Historical Concerts put on for the students, Arnold heard for the first time performances on viols, viola d'amore, harpsichords and recorders.

The Royal College of Music 1883-1884

After completing his course in Brussels, Arnold travelled to London and enrolled at the newly-opened Royal College of Music, where he studied violin with Henry Holmes, composition with Dr. Hubert Parry and harmony and counterpoint with Dr. Frederick Bridge, organist and choirmaster of Westminster Abbey. The Principal, Sir George Grove, encouraged his growing interest in early music and Arnold explored the College's superb library of manuscripts and printed books from the 16th-18th centuries.

Dulwich College 1885-1890

On leaving the Royal College of Music, Arnold secured a teaching post as part-time violin master at Dulwich College, in southeast London. During this period he began to attend auctions and browse in antiquarian bookshops and to assemble his own library of early music and music treatises. He taught his pupils to play the violin using 17th century methods and copied music by Purcell, Corelli and Handel for them to perform at the annual pupils' concerts.

The viola d'amore and the music for viols

In 1889 Arnold acquired a viola d'amore made by Testore in 1736 and after consulting a treatise from his library, restored it to playing order. While searching the libraries of the British Museum and Royal College of Music for authentic music to play on it, he chanced upon a treasure trove of 16th and 17th century English music for the consort of viols. This discovery proved to be a turning point and thereafter he resolved to dedicate his life to the restoration of early music and the instruments for which it was written.

Concert of Ancient Music of the 16th and 17th centuries – performed upon the original instruments for which it was written, Princes Hall, Piccadilly, April 27th 1891

By 1891 Arnold had restored a viola d'amore, a 16th century lute, a consort of viols, a 17th century spinet, an 18th century clavichord and double manual harpsichord and trained his family and a few carefully-chosen pupils to play them. On April 27th, 1891, he presented his first independent concert of early music at Princes Hall, Piccadilly. It was a sell-out and triumphant success – the Early Music Renaissance had arrived.

Lecture Recitals and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Throughout the 1890's Arnold gave his pioneering series of lecture-recitals. Of special significance were those presented at 'The Fitzroy Settlement', Bloomsbury; Barnard's Inn, Holborn and at 'Dowland', his home in West Dulwich. Amongst the audience were the artists, writers, poets, scholars and craftsmen of the Arts and Crafts Movement led by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. During this period Arnold also began to design and build his own early instruments, based on the antique models he had restored. These included several clavichords, one of which was bought by Edward Burne-Jones who decorated it for his daughter Margaret Mackail; and three 'Beethoven' pianos, the second of which was commissioned by Cecil Rhodes for his house Groote Schuur in Cape Town, South Africa. It was at the suggestion of William Morris that Arnold built the first large harpsichord of modern times for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society's Show at the New Gallery in Regent Street in 1896. It was a true Arts and Crafts instrument with decorations by Herbert Horne, Selwyn Image and Helen Coombe. In 1899 Arnold was elected a member of the Art Workers Guild, the first musical instrument maker to be admitted.

America and France

From 1905-1910 Arnold worked for the famous piano makers Chickering and Sons of Boston. An early instrument department was created for him, with assistance from experienced craftsmen and access to the best materials. Harpsichords, including an instrument for Busoni, virginals, clavichords, lutes and viols were built, and many of his finest instruments date from this period. In 1910 a trade recession forced Chickering to close their early instrument department and Arnold and his family returned to Europe, where he worked for the Gaveau piano factory near Paris from 1911-1914. In February 1914, with war looming on the horizon, the Dolmetsch family left France for London and settled in Hampstead.

Haslemere – a final haven 1917-1940

Arnold's final 23 years in Haslemere were filled with achievement. In 1919, after the loss of his antique treble recorder by Bressan on a platform at Waterloo station, he successfully produced the first recorder of modern times, after four months of patient experiments. This was followed by the recreation of descant, tenor and bass recorders, and the complete recorder consort made its début at the 1926 Haslemere Festival, performing Elizabethan music in five parts.

The Haslemere Festival first came into being in the summer of 1925. Having returned from an exhausting tour the previous autumn, Arnold one day remarked that he was tired of concert touring and that henceforth, people would have to come to him, instead of his going to them, (*Mabel Dolmetsch, Personal Recollections*). Out of this chance remark there arose 'The Haslemere Festival' of early music which ran from 1925-2001, a remarkable innings of 77 years. With funds generously donated by Marco Pallis, a friend and pupil, a workshop was built next to Jesses in 1921. This is now the studio. Instruments flowed from this creative space during the 1920's; recorders, virginals, spinets, clavichords, harpsichords and viols for an ever-growing number of customers amongst whom were George Bernard Shaw, Lord Berners, Robert Bridges, Violet Gordon Woodhouse, Sir Henry Wood, Ezra Pound, Roger Fry and Dorothy Swainson.

Arnold celebrated his 80th birthday on February 24th 1938 in the hall of the Art Workers Guild, where he was presented with the cross of the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, in recognition of his services to music and French art in particular.

Legacy

In addition to the large number of fine instruments which are prized in museums and private collections all over the world, Arnold is remembered for his ground-breaking scholastic work 'The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries', which was published by Novello in 1915.

Carl Dolmetsch



Carl Dolmetsch was born in 1911 in Fontenay-sous-Bois, France and was the youngest of Arnold and Mabel's four children. From 1917 until his marriage in 1937, Jesses was his home, and following the death of his mother in 1963, he returned to the family house, remaining there until his death in 1997.

Carl took part in the family music from the age of 4, playing the viol and then violin, and went on to study with Carl Flesch and Antonio Brosa. He made his début on the recorder during the second Haslemere Festival in 1926, when he took part in a performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 4, playing alongside his brother Rudolph (recorder) and father Arnold (solo violin). He had had to learn the technique of the recorder and master the part in only five weeks, since he was replacing at short notice, Miles Tomalin who was unable to fulfil the engagement. Not long after this exciting event (it was broadcast live from the Haslemere Hall by the BBC), Arnold handed over the entire responsibility for recorder design and production to Carl, although he was only fifteen at the time. From this moment on, Carl dedicated his life to the recorder and through his skill as a designer, craftsman and virtuoso performer he elevated the status of the instrument, so that it was once more regarded seriously by the musical world, as it had formerly been in the 18th century. Between 1939 and 1989 Carl gave forty-five concerts at Wigmore Hall, London, the highlight of which were the specially commissioned works for recorder by leading 20th century composers amongst whom were Lennox Berkeley, Edmund Rubbra, York Bowen, Arnold Cooke, William Matthias, Gordon Jacob, Hans Gál and Jean Françaix. This modern repertoire, with new technical, tonal and expressive challenges, ensured a bright future for the recorder.

For over 60 years Carl enjoyed a musical partnership with the harpsichordist and pianist Joseph Saxby. The Dolmetsch-Saxby duo toured world-wide, visiting Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South America, Canada and the USA, where they undertook no less than 20 coast-to-coast tours over the years. Following his father's death in 1940, Carl became director of the Haslemere Festival, a role he fulfilled with imagination and flair until 1996. He broadened the scope of the festival, introducing concerts for schools, which entertained and educated many generations of children.

One of Carl's most important contributions to the musical world was the design and introduction of the plastic recorder. During the Second World War the Dolmetsch workshop ceased production of musical instruments and turned instead to the manufacture of parts for aircraft guns. Over 2.5 million components were produced from vulcanite fibre and plastic materials to a high degree of accuracy. Carl realised that the same technology could be used for recorder production and in 1945 made the drawings for the first Dolmetsch plastic recorders which rolled off the production line in 1946. They shared the same dimensions as the wooden instruments, so the intonation and tone quality was of a high standard. Because of their affordability, these plastic recorders were soon introduced into schools, where they revolutionised musical education for generations of children. By the 1950's and

60's, 'recorder' had become a household word.

In 1954 Carl was appointed CBE for his work in music education and in 1960 the degree of honorary D. Litt. was conferred upon him by Exeter University. Like his father before him Carl was a member of the Art Workers Guild and in 1989 was elected Master of the Guild.

Carl's funeral took place on Thursday 17th July 1997 at St Bartholomew's Church, Haslemere, coincidentally and fittingly the day of the first concert of the 73rd Haslemere Festival. His much-loved musical colleagues, the violinist and cellist Alice and Eleanor Schoenfeld wrote this epitaph: *'To the world of music he brought beauty, joy and wisdom'*.



The Dolmetsch family outside Jesses c. 1928

Back left to right:- Leslie Ward, Carl, Rudolph, Millicent Wheaton-Dolmetsch, George Carley.

Front left to right:- Mabel, Nathalie Dolmetsch-Carley, Arnold, Cécile Dolmetsch-Ward, Christopher Ward

