

Joy Finzi

Jeremy Dale Roberts

One of Joy's most remarkable capacities—innate as well as learned from her life with Gerald Finzi—was as an 'enabler'. It would be impossible to count the artists, craftsmen and musicians—amateur and professional, of all ages, even deceased—who had their work eased by her and encouraged, both practically and, more deeply, by the sense that it was valued. Whilst all of us who were in her debt bewailed the sacrifice of her own creative work—those huge, reproachful blocks of wood standing year after year on the terrace at Ashmansworth waiting vainly to be transmuted into exquisite winged shapes or fronds—Joy calmly went about her business: eliciting, organising, gently pushing. Her most famous achievement in this respect—an exploit which required all Joy's human qualities: tenacity, nerve, as well as tact—was the retrieval and securing of Ivor Gurney's manuscripts. But I am also thinking of all those bits and pieces she collected around her over the years with her marvellous eye: pictures, obviously; the work of children and students; the gorgeous crochet counterpanes made up by Olive from the village. Clearing her throat she would say, sometimes a little vaguely perhaps, but with quiet conviction and satisfaction: 'It has a quality'.

A never-to-be-forgotten scene, in the sitting room at Ashmansworth, sometime in the autumn of 1956: the tenor Wilfred Brown and Howard Ferguson unfolding the last sheaf of Finzi's songs to a group of friends. Poignant, but somehow bountiful. No-one could fail to hear Gerald's salute to his wife in his setting of Bridges' 'Since we loved'.