

## FLORENCE AYLWARD



Florence Aylward was a composer of popular songs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She was the daughter of Augustus Aylward, the Rector of Brede, and was born at the Rectory in 1862; her mother was of the Frewen family of Brede Place and of Brickwall at Northiam.

The family had considerable music antecedents, dating back at least to Richard Aylward (1626-69), composer and organist at Winchester and Norwich cathedrals; one closer relation became director of music at the Cincinnati Opera.

So perhaps it was not surprising that Florence showed an early musical talent. She played the organ at her father's services at Brede from the age of nine and some of her songs were sung at local concerts when she was only in her early teens. Her first published song – remember that in those days the way forward was to persuade a music publisher (in her case Boosey and Hawkes) to print music sheets for home and concert players – was in 1888, after she had left the Guildhall School of Music after studying composition and piano. It was called *Day Dawn*. By then, at Rye, she had married Harold Kinder, described in the 1911 census as a consulting engineer and architect; in 1911 they were living at 16 Grand Parade, St Leonards. They had one son.



It is said that there were many recordings of her works. They are not easy to trace. One can sense her style from recordings on the internet: it was somewhere between the dreamier parts of Arthur Sullivan and the more sentimental style of Ivor Novello. Her songs did not unduly challenge either pianist or soloist or indulge in the apologies for harmony that were beginning to arrive at about the time of the First World War; nor did they rely on percussion and amplification, to which most popular modern music is so strongly attached. It is hard to see them regaining popularity a century and more later.

It appears that the words were never hers. Her brother (who became Rector of Northiam) wrote at least one song and Arthur Conan Doyle another; some were well already known as poems. Her music made many recordings.

She must have made a little money out of composition because her works sold fairly well, though it is unlikely, given her circumstances, that she really needed it. Florence Kinder died at Baldslow in October 1950. True to her family, her ashes were taken to St George's at Brede.

Florence had played a strong part in the musical life of Hastings, including composing a 'Dickens Revue' *Hospital Blue* for the Gaiety at Hastings in 1919. She was also organist at a St

Leonards church until 1949 so it is a little odd that she merited no obituary in any local newspaper. So it seems odd that perhaps by 1950 she had already been forgotten.

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See Brede Place its History and Families in Collectanea section O

For examples of her work see

<https://youtu.be/-B3I1naNjQA>

<https://youtu.be/7O8kP8klOYE>

<https://youtu.be/o7XFj7BaKrA>