



Marsden Senior School Boys` Band

Founded September 30, 1931

A brief history about a very successful experiment



The Marsden Senior School—now the Junior School—has changed very little since 1931 when the Marsden Senior School Band was formed. The entrance on the left was for the boys with that for the girls being on the right. The Science Room, where band rehearsals were held in addition to the bandroom in Oliver Lane, was on the first floor, with the Woodwork Room being at ground level

During the Second World War the band took over a rehearsal room in Towngate.

The photograph was taken in 1981 when the Huddersfield Celebration Youth Band, made up of young brass players from youth bands in the Colne and Holme valleys, was formed for a short series of concerts to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the School Band



Introduction

IT IS QUITE A NUMBER OF YEARS since I first penned a brief history of the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band. The satisfaction of that exercise came when the article was published in three instalments in the Huddersfield Examiner.

Since that time I have twice updated the history having been given some later information about the band which I left in 1939 when I joined the “big band,” the then Marsden Musical Institute Band, not for further publication but simply for my own pleasure and records. This latest effort came about as the result of a phone call from Brian Boothroyd, a man who had his initial brass training with the School Band and who has been a dedicated bandsman all his life. For many years Brian was a cornetist with the Marsden M.I. Band, now the Marsden Silver (Riverhead Brewery) Band and, being the conductor of the Marsden Junior Band, for a number of years he has devoted countless hours to the teaching of young people in the art of playing a brass instrument.

Brian phoned to say he had visited an exhibition in the Marsden Junior School, an exhibition which had on display any number of interesting documents and artefacts relating to life in Marsden. Unfortunately, there was nothing on show which gave any news about the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band, and when this was mentioned in conversation with a member of the Marsden History Group, who had staged the exhibition, Brian said he knew someone who did have knowledge about the band. The result of that conversation is this brief, but I hope, informative history of the School Band. As Brian said, the history of the band must not be allowed to disappear. It was, after all, an important part of life in the village of Marsden.

As the pages reveal, the men behind this piece of musical history were Mr. Harry Collins, Headmaster of the Marsden Senior School, and Mr. Tom Eastwood, a well-known figure in the British brass band movement. There is record of other boys` brass bands being in existence in the early 1930s as records of the Crystal Palace Brass Band Championships reveal, as one of the classes was for youth or junior brass or reed bands.

The Marsden Senior School Boys` Band played an important role in its short but happy existence, particularly in the mid and late 1930s when the band enjoyed a lengthy period of some stability in its membership. True, boys were leaving school at the age of 14 and new boys were being taught by Mr. Eastwood, but overall it was a picture of endeavour and great camaraderie within the ranks of the young musicians.

Then came the Second World War with all its horrors and turmoil. This was a time when quite a number of the country`s bands either put all their instruments into storage for the duration of hostilities or, week by week, scraped a band together with the help of any number of borrowed players from bands who were in a similar situation.

Over the years, in addition to my work as a journalist on the Huddersfield Daily Examiner, I have had the pleasure of being for 25 years Press Officer for the Brass In Concert Championship and serving in the same role for 18 years with the Pontin`s Brass Band Championships. For 11 years I was Press Officer for the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain and for 29 years was responsible for producing a brass band column, Sounding Brass, in the Huddersfield Daily Examiner. For over 30 years I have been a regular contributor to the British Bandsman and for 18 years I have supplied a monthly feature to the Brass Band Switzerland magazine.

In 1989 I toured Switzerland with Brighouse and Rastrick Band and also worked with the band in Germany and Holland. There was also an 11-day tour in Spain with the Black Dyke Band. My involvement with many other bands has obviously resulted in numerous friendships within the banding movement, not only in this country but also throughout Europe, Scandinavia and Spain, and for that I will for ever be grateful to Mr. Tom Eastwood, Mr. Harry Collins and the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band.

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Tom Eastwood

THE village of Marsden owes a great deal to the talents and determination of Mr. Tom Eastwood. For almost 30 years he steered hundreds of schoolchildren in the Colne Valley into the big and beautiful world not only of making music, but the satisfaction of enjoying music in all its forms.

True, there are many young people who didn't stay the full course, but there are many others who for years enjoyed their own musical talents and those of others.

It would be interesting to know who made the first move for the setting up of a boys' brass band in the village. Was it Mr. Eastwood who had such a vision? Did he see an opportunity when he looked from his kitchen window and saw the boys and girls as they made their way to the Council School, or was it the headmaster, Mr. Harry Collins, himself a pioneer, who first had the notion? I rather suspect it was Mr. Eastwood, although we will never know.

Certainly, what the two men introduced not only to the village of Marsden but to a far wider area and also what they achieved with the band, reflects great credit, and the thanks of hundreds of young people must surely have been expressed over the years.

In his long career Mr. Eastwood conducted over 50 bands on the concert and contest stage, and he had the lasting satisfaction of knowing that he had won about 400 prizes at various band contests, and the Marsden Senior School Boys' Band was among that number.

In the beginning

THE furtherance of the British brass band movement by the formation of school or junior bands is much more commonplace today than it was in the 1930s, when the young and aspiring brass musicians received their training with an adult band and not in a separate junior organisation.

Today there is a wealth of talent within our junior bands as seen in our schools, county and national youth bands, not to mention the youth bands which come within an adult organisation such as the village bands of Marsden and Slaithwaite. Over in the village of Dobcross about 100 people are engaged in brass bands, these being in the senior band, the youth band together with a host of young people all eager to make headway in the great amateur organisation. Such has been the growth of youth bands over the years that a National Youth Band Championship for these promising and talented young musicians now sits high on the calendar of the brass band movement.

Brass band history in Marsden goes back over a century when the village band was recorded as the Holme Mills Brass Band. This combination eventually gave way to the Marsden Musical Institute Band, an organisation which, in its early days, was based in various locations in the village. This band, now the Marsden Silver (Riverhead Brewery) Band, boasts a smart headquarters in Marsden Lane where it has been based since 1931, the year which saw the launch of the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band.

The birth of the School band was brought about through the foresight and the endeavours of Mr. Tom Eastwood and Mr. Harry Collins, together with some excellent support by a firm of musical instrument manufacturers. The firm was Boosey, and they offered to supply a set of secondhand brass instruments for the princely sum of £145. Today a new bass instrument will cost about £4,000. The stipulation of the sale was that if the venture failed then all the instruments would be returned to Booseys and no questions asked.

Mr. Eastwood had enjoyed a full life in the world of brass before his involvement with the School Band and had previously held teaching posts in numerous towns and with some excellent brass bands. In all he had worked with about 50 bands and had been rewarded with about 400 prizes at numerous contests. In the field of adjudication he had little to learn, and a critical ear had earned him the honour of been selected as an adjudicator on more than one occasion at the famous Crystal Palace National Brass Band Festival.

In earlier years he had been associated with the old Holme Mills Band and later as conductor of the Marsden M.I. Band. His brother, Herbert, had also conducted Marsden M.I., particularly during the Second World War when so many men were called to the Forces. Many of the nation's bands were closed for the duration of the war, but Marsden M.I., although severely depleted of musicians, managed to keep the flag flying with borrowed players.

Mr. Harry Collins came to Marsden in 1913 after previously holding teaching posts in Birmingham, London, Skelmanthorpe and Rotherham. With his natural flair for organising (he raised the evening class attendance in Marsden to the highest and most envied in the West Riding of Yorkshire) he was the ideal partner for Mr. Eastwood. Mr. Collins was Headmaster of Marsden Council School until he retired in March, 1941.

A strict disciplinarian who never flinched from using the cane for such a minor misdemeanour as talking in class, Mr. Collins had previously pioneered the setting up of two string orchestras, one in Skelmanthorpe and the other in Marsden, but his greatest success had been in the life-saving sphere for which he was made an Honorary Associate of the Royal Life-Saving Society. In his early years in Marsden Mr. Collins was the founder of the life-saving classes in the Colne Valley.

These, then, were the two men responsible for the founding of the Marsden Senior School Boys' Band.

There must have been some exciting days in Marsden when the boys took home a note giving the news that a School Brass Band was to be formed. One can imagine youngsters asking, "Dad, can I join?" At the outset over 70 boys were tested for the 28 places available. Many, of course, would be unsuitable while others showed some semblance of the aptitude required, with the keen and experienced ear of Mr. Eastwood soon sorting out the wheat from the chaff.

Some of the boys, but only a few, had already received an insight into the reading of music as the result of piano lessons, but the majority were yet to be given their musical baptism. From this situation the magnitude of the coaching necessary if the boys were to make any progress in the world of brass bands, can be gathered. There must have been problems for Mr. Eastwood in deciding which boy should be given which instrument, who should be given a cornet or tenor horn and which of the lads would be asked to pick up a bass and have a go at blowing the biggest instrument in the band.

I don't have any specific details about where the early rehearsals were held but I suspect they were held in the school's Science Room, simply because when I was in the band just three years later, that's where we rehearsed at four o'clock on Mondays and Wednesdays, but more about that a little later.



I believe this to be the first photograph of the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band. It must have been a proud day for the founders, Mr. Harry Collins (right) and Mr. Tom Eastwood. In my years with the band I never remember Mr. Eastwood being without his bow tie!

I don` t know the names of all the lads, but on the front row (extreme left) is, I believe, Harold Braybrook, with Harry Leonard seen third from left. On cymbals is Jack "Elkie" Clark (he lived at New Delight near the Railway Station) while Leslie V. Gledhill is seen third from right. On his left is Harold Hoyle with David Williamson on the extreme right. Standing with a trombone in the second row is Stanley Gartside (left).

The enthusiasm of the boys soon became apparent under the careful nursing and coaxing of Mr. Eastwood. Indeed, despite the changes which obviously took place within the first few weeks, progress was so rapid that within 15 weeks of the delivery of the instruments a concert had been arranged to take place not in the main hall of the school, but in the Marsden Mechanics` Hall on Friday, December 18, 1931. A bold move indeed!

A report in the Colne Valley Guardian of December 11, 1931, gave the following preview to the concert:

“...The concert is the outcome of an experiment...The uniform is of blue serge with saxe-blue braid trimmings. There is no doubt that the experiment has had a beneficial effect on the boys in several ways. Not only have they become more proficient in the reading of music, but their general deportment has considerably improved and a fresh outlet for their energies has been provided, and the boys have a new interest in their school.”

Interest was high in the village as arrangements went full steam ahead for the first appearance of the band on the concert platform. The theme of these early concerts was, of course, simplicity, for it was better to play simple melodies well than to attempt a slightly more ambitious programme and mar the standard of performance.

There is no doubt that the idea of a School Band had really captured the imagination and support of not only the boys` parents, but also of the public. Equipping the boys with uniforms so soon after the formation of the band was made possible by the generosity of Mr. Philip D. Crowther of John Edward Crowther Ltd., Bank Bottom Mills, Marsden, who gave 84 yards of material, the gift of which was a great stimulus to all those associated with the venture.

The concert consisted of carols and hymn tunes by the band and items by the school choir, which was conducted by Mr. Collins. Miss Dorothy Carter (she lived in Woods Avenue), one of the scholars, and Mr. Hebbes, a member of staff, were the accompanists. According to a press report the audience thoroughly enjoyed themselves, joining in the singing with great gusto, and several encores were called for from the band.

Quoting again from the columns of the Colne Valley Guardian:

“It was evident that there are promising soloists among their number, for in several verses of the carols the only accompaniment was cleverly supplied by Harry Leonard and Leslie Gledhill (euphoniums) and Jack Hansom (Bb bass)...” In later life Leslie Gledhill became a member of Brighouse and Rastrick Band while Jack Hansom was for many years a member of the Colne Valley Male Voice Choir.

During the interval Mr. Collins spoke to the audience about the venture and sounded the opinion as to whether the instruments should be kept and efforts made to raise the money or whether the venture should be called off and the instruments returned to Booseys. The feeling of the audience was that every effort should be made to raise the £145 required to buy the old and slightly battered instruments. With a feeling of great pride and elation, further concerts were later planned to take place down the Colne Valley.

Although the idea of a boys` band had captured the imagination of the majority of the public, there was one voice raised in dissent. Under the heading “Why Two Bands in Marsden?” a letter appeared in the local press on December 24, 1931, which stated:

“I would like to ask the directors of the Marsden Senior School Band the reason why such a band was formed? I, along with others, think that it is quite uninvited... Why should we ratepayers have to pay for all these unnecessary things? It appeared in your columns the other week that the School Band would go round on Christmas Day collecting for the funds to pay for the instruments. How can we support both bands? Have we all to subscribe to the new band and let the other fade away? It should appeal to all sensible people that it is a waste of time and money for us to have another band. Let us rally round our Old Comrades who have gone out many years to give us our Christmas cheer, and to support them better this time than before.” (Signed) P.K.

The letter was not allowed to go unchallenged, for in the issue of the following week a stern response was published from Mr. Collins. This stated that the band had sought no publicity and would willingly and truthfully supply information regarding the formation of the band if those apparently interested would make a personal approach. In reply to the remark that an extra burden would be placed on the ratepayers, Mr. Collins had this to say:

“To state that the band incurs any extra expenditure in rates is an utter fallacy. No cost whatever has fallen or will fall upon either county or local rates... We are tired of refuting that canard. The boys have paid, or are paying, for their uniforms, 25s. The boys also pay for their tuition costs, 4d. each per week, and the only service we receive from the school is the use of a classroom which adds not a penny to anybody’s costs... In conclusion, our brass band is neither a novelty nor a stunt but a sound educational proposition, and we ask to be left alone to do our job. We have not failed you this last 18 years and will not now.”

Other concerts followed, but perhaps the one most worthy of note at this stage was the open-air performance given by the School Band at Slaithwaite Cricket Field on Sunday, July 10, 1932. Under a cloudless sky and on a perfect summer evening more than 2,000 people gathered on the terracing of the Cricket Field at Hill Top to join in the singing of well-known hymns, which was led by the Linthwaite Wesleyan Church Choir. At first the vast crowd hesitated in the singing until spurred on by Mr. Collins, but even so with the spectators scattered round the whole of the ground the great volume of song tended to be lost.

It was pointed out in a newspaper report of this concert that Mr. Eastwood could not bear to hear a strident tone and that one of his chief difficulties had been to curb the youthful enthusiasm and avoid anything which tended to be overblowing. One conversation on the matter of overblowing was reported as follows:

“They certainly play well,” said one interested spectator, “but they seem to be a bit short of breath”

“Don’t you believe it,” was the reply, “those lusty lads could blow such a blast as would deafen you if that gentleman in the middle gave them the reins”

With such early success now under their belts, the popularity of the band spread the whole length of the Colne Valley and far beyond, and it was not too long before the School Band made their impact on the Huddersfield people in general.

About a year after the instruments had been delivered, the first major event in the history of the band took place. In the latter part of 1932 the band attended the Manchester studios of the BBC for an audition. This move shows what great progress had been made by the young players and that there was no time for resting on the success which had been achieved. With success behind them, both Mr. Eastwood and Mr. Collins had it in their sights to take the young and developing band to further heights.

The band auditioned on a Thursday, and although the performance was not free from blemish, Studio officials were impressed with the boys’ standard of playing and said they hoped to be able to offer the band an engagement in the near future. The band didn’t have long to wait because they appeared in a teatime Children’s Hour programme in October 1932, and that’s another date which shows what remarkable progress the band had made in its first year.



The second photograph shows a few changes in the band personnel. Jack Clarke has moved from cymbals to bass drum. I believe the lad with the cymbals was called Binks, although I am not too sure about that. Third from the left on the front row, with the baritone, is Arnold Staples. Second from left on the back row is Jack Worsnip (soprano cornet), who lived in the yard to the rear of Oliver Lane. In later life Jack was tragically burned to death in a fire at his home. On Jack's left is Stanley Redfearn (principal cornet) who lived in Mount Road, while on his left is Stanley Haigh, who lived in Brougham Road near to Mr. Eastwood's home. Stanley's favourite greeting was "Hello, mi old flower!" Sixth from the left on the back row is a boy named Williams, and he lost an arm many years later in a road accident

Here must be mentioned an interesting development which took place after the BBC audition while the band was in Manchester. On finishing the audition the band was taken to the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens, no doubt for something of a treat, but as the time developed it turned into a real treat. M. Bonelli, conductor of the Belle Vue Military Band, invited Mr. Eastwood and the band to take the stand, and for almost an hour the boys entertained a vast and interested crowd and received a great deal of encouraging applause for their efforts. The boys, of course, were understandably thrilled at being given the opportunity to show their capabilities in such a venue as Belle Vue.

It must have been around this time that the band moved into their permanent headquarters in Oliver Lane, in the centre of the village. The building was formerly the British Legion Club with living accommodation on the ground floor. The bandroom was up about 20 wooden steps which I assume in the days of the British Legion tenancy was the club room. Crossley's bakehouse was tucked away in the top corner of the small yard. Later the ground level accommodation was taken over by Albert Farrand for his printing business.

Before the School Band moved into these new headquarters there was a tragic accident in the building. As I have said, the living accommodation for the British Legion club was at the rear of the premises and in one room which was heated by a coal-fired heater, Marjorie, the young daughter of the stewards, was burned to death when her nightdress caught fire. I remember that the tragic accident happened at breakfast time before I left for school.

Some scenes from the BBC's Last of the Summer Wine series are still shot in Oliver Lane, with Auntie Wainwright's secondhand shop being the premises where Albert Farrand had his business and which at one time was part of the British Legion club. If you have seen any of the programmes where the trio of rascals emerge from the right, below Auntie Wainwright's very cluttered shop, that leads to the entrance of the old bandroom. Above the rehearsal room was another floor, but that was forbidden territory for the boys.

I have since returned to Oliver Lane for a nostalgic look at the old place. Such visits after many years can be a real disappointment, and so it has been for me. The small yard now has some fencing and the bandroom has obviously been turned into residential accommodation. It makes one take stock of advancing years!

I joined the School Band in 1934 immediately after celebrating my 11th birthday in April. This was the earliest I could join in view of the fact that in the July I would be leaving the Church School, which was at Throstle Nest, but long since demolished. My school friend Douglas Leyland had also joined the band. My first instrument was the flugel horn while Dougie was on the side drum. At four o'clock each Monday and Wednesday our mothers would be waiting on Manchester Road, opposite the Gas Works, at the top of the steps which lead from Oliver Lane on to Manchester Road, with instruments at the ready. Grabbing them in haste we then ran on Manchester Road to the Council School and a one hour rehearsal in the Science Room. In addition to the rehearsals in school we had rehearsals each Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, plus Sunday mornings when we didn't have an engagement, in the bandroom.

Although the premises were acquired for the sole purpose of a bandroom, it did in fact become a type of youth club for the young musicians. Not only did we turn up for rehearsals but most of our free time, particularly on Sunday evenings in the winter, was spent playing games or table tennis, and frequently there was the opportunity to have a real good blow at a favourite march when Mr. Eastwood wasn't around. A few of the road marches in our repertoire at the time was the old standard, *Slaidburn*, then there was *Colonel Bogey*, *Sons of the Brave*, *Under the Double Eagle* and *The Cuckoo*.

The School Band generated its own funds, and although the bandroom, with its old knotted floor, was fine for band rehearsals, it didn't quite meet the desired requirements of a social venue. However, to keep the interest of the parents, "Faith Suppers" were something of a feature. These were held on evenings when there was no rehearsal, when parents packed a few sandwiches and a bit of home-made cake or the like, into a shopping basket with each set of parents later setting out the food and everyone sharing whatever was on offer. The evenings didn't raise a lot of cash for band funds, but it was a nice way in which parents could spend a couple of hours socialising and chatting about the affairs of the band.

By this time the band was firmly established and an increasing number of engagements maintained a steady flow of income. The summer months were very busy with many appearances at carnivals and park engagements. There was also the regular Friday evening busking sessions.

Having attained a high degree of popularity in the area, during the summer months the band regularly visited some of the villages on the outskirts of town, marching along as some of the fathers were shaking collecting boxes and selling postcard photographs of the band for 2d. or 3d. each.

All the money which came from engagements on the Friday busking sessions went into band funds. We were still paying 4d. each week for tuition. To give some idea of the working of the band, in one year 29 engagements were fulfilled yielding gross receipts of £162 6s. 4d. Out of that total a few items of payment record that £20 was spent of a new euphonium, £43 15s. on transport and £31 11s. 10d. on contest expenses plus, of course, the upkeep of the bandroom. On the matter of transport costs, members of the band in the years immediately before the Second World War, will recall the many journeys we had in Hanson's "old 18" red bus. It was something of an old-style banger with little comfort. It was a 36-seat bus and, with any number of fathers travelling to park and busking jobs with the band, Mr. Eastwood devised the idea of having made some pieces of wood, about 2ft. long (for those in the 21st century that's about 60 centimetres) which could be rested on seats on each side of the gangway, thereby providing another half-a-dozen or so extra seats. If you were one of the lads delegated to sit on one of these pieces of improvised seating, then you were entitled to complain!

The coach (or bus in the case of No. 18) reversed up Oliver Lane, and if one of the band lads saw a white coach standing in the street, he would dash into the bandroom and shout with immense glee, "It's a white 'un!" There was another happening which always took place while the bus was waiting for us to leave the bandroom and get on board. For a few years ice-cream manufacturers Gabrielli had a chap who regularly came into the village selling ice-cream from what appeared to be a rather heavy handcart. He was only a small chap who had the misfortune to have feet which turned inwards, and that brought him the nickname of "Twinkle Toes." It was possible to buy a halfpenny cornet, one at a penny, a shell for something like 2d or, if you had the money in your pocket, a chocolate wafer for 4d. or 6d. Those were days of real money!

There was an incident with the old No. 18 which was a little scary. It was a Sunday afternoon and we travelled to Holmfirth to play a concert in Victoria Park. To get to the park you turn off right near to the centre of Holmfirth and make your way up a rather steep road. We were chugging rather slowly up the steep hill when the bus driver, who was enclosed in his small cab, stopped the vehicle and banged on the window which separated him from us, and shouted: "Get out, quick!. I can't hold it!" I have never before or since seen a bus empty its passengers so quickly.

Changes in personnel were obviously taking place. Boys leaving school at 14 years of age were, in general, reluctant to sever their relationship with the band which meant that a few of the lads were still playing with the School Band when they had reached 16 or even 17 years of age. Some of them on leaving the School Band went on to play with one of the adult bands down the Colne Valley.

Embarking on its second year, the band was now an assured success, and concerts in 1933 took the boys to almost every village in the Huddersfield district. Perhaps those which should be mentioned are the concerts at the Plaza Picture House (Thornton Lodge), Milnsbridge Baptist Sunday School, Damfield Park (Yeadon) and the band's first floodlit concert at the New Mills Pageant Grounds (Derbyshire). The band was accompanied on these engagements by Madame Gladys Stimson (vocalist) with Mr. Rex Collins, son of Harry, being the accompanist.

Without doubt the most successful concert performance was the band's first appearance in Greenhead Park, Huddersfield, on Whit Sunday, 1933. Capt. J. H. Irons, the Huddersfield Corporation Parks Superintendent, had approached Mr. Collins and offered the band the choice of two dates to play a concert in the park, these being Whit Sunday or the Sunday of the local holiday week, which was in August. All the other dates were taken by bands in membership of the Huddersfield and District Brass Band Association.

Mr. Collins booked the Whit Sunday, and what a memorable day it was for the band and for the town of Huddersfield. The previous week had been wet, but on the Sunday the sun shone from a perfect sky and more than 15,000 people thronged the pathways and commons of the park, listening to the Marsden Senior School Boys' Band for the first time.

The collection that day amounted to over £35, a tremendous amount compared with the usual fee paid for a visiting band by the Huddersfield Town Council. The band was invited to take the lot! Imagine what the £35 of 70 years ago would be worth in today's currency! When an application was made for a booking the following year, the reply was to the effect that in order to secure a date in Greenhead Park or any other park in the Huddersfield Borough, the School Band would have to join the Huddersfield and District Brass Band Association. This step was taken and the band remained in membership for a number of years.

In 1936 plans were made for the formation of a British Empire Boys' Band which was to tour South Africa. The band was to be composed of boys from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. In the early part of the year auditions were held throughout the country, and in May the results of the auditions were made known and the village of Marsden was astir with the news that three members of the School Band had been selected. They were Ronald Ball (cornet), Jack Worsnip (cornet) and Ronald Matley (baritone). In addition Bobby Brown, the Leeds drum major, was also selected to travel on this great adventure.

The inclusion in the party of three members of the School Band was a tremendous honour for the boys of Marsden and again reflected great credit on the teachings of Mr. Eastwood. Preparations were well advanced for the tour and it was learned that the boys would assemble in London for a month of rehearsals before leaving the country. The three boys were featured in the local newspaper, pictured as they waited on Marsden Railway Station for the train which was to take them on the first part of the biggest adventure of their lives, memories of an adventure which would be with them for the rest of their lives. A reporter and photographer from a national daily newspaper visited school one evening to pick up a story, and the following day the newsagents in Marsden did a good trade as parents queued for a copy of the morning paper.

After the sad and terrible death of Jack Worsnip, one of his relatives passed to me some of the band papers which Jack's parents, Harold and Lucy, had kept, and among the treasures were letters sent out from Rhodesia House, London, by the organisers of the British Empire Boys' Band. The first was dated May 20, 1936, and the first paragraph read: "We are pleased to inform you that you have been selected as a member of the British Empire Boys' Band to make a tour to South Africa and possibly other parts of the British Isles."

It went on: "We wish to make it clear to all successful applicants that if during the period of training in London we find any boys not up to the standard of behaviour we require, we reserve the right to exclude him from the tour and return him to his home." In a later letter it was stated most emphatically that if any boy was caught smoking or consuming alcohol, there would be serious consequences.

Letters were being sent out almost every day and one, dated May 21, 1936, gave a list of what the boys would be required to take with them. With news that some parents were going to buy their offspring a new suit and overcoat, the organisers said it would be nice if all the boys could be dressed the same when not in uniform (two uniforms were to be provided). They were to obtain quotes from various firms who would supply such clothing, but to take this a little further, this is a list of what each boy had to be equipped with: 6 singlets (3 summer weight, 3 winter weight), 8 shirts with collar attached, 6 pairs black socks, 3 pairs pyjamas, 1 dozen handkerchiefs, 1 waterproof string-pull bag for toiletries, hair brush, comb and clothes brush, 2 coat hangers with rail, 2 pairs bracers, 1 rug and cushion, 1 pair khaki shorts and 1 khaki shirt, 1 pair sand shoes for onboard ship, swimming costume and 2 towels, 2 pairs black boots (not shoes), dressing-gown and a pair of slippers. That lot had to fit into a standard size suitcase measuring 24 " x 14" x 7".

The boys were to be based at Hainault Forest (Grange Hill), which was 11 miles from London. The BEBB was to sail from London on board the s.s. Gloucester Castle on July 31, arriving in Cape Town on August 23. All instruments were to be provided.

The first hint that all was not well with the mammoth operation came in a letter dated May 29. "Although we received definite advice two weeks ago that passports would be issued to our party, another query has now arisen. We are of course quite confident that the matter will be favourably decided on, nevertheless we feel we must postpone the assembly day in London one week to enable us to be quite sure." On June 4 another letter said that the assembly date would now be Monday, June 8 and not June 10. The band members were travelling from Pontycymmer, Llwydcoed, Pontypridd, Bridgend, Port Talbot, Llandudno, Wallasey, Coventry, Huddersfield, Manchester, Chichester, Skegness, Doncaster, Durham, Leicester, Belfast, Leeds, Rotherham, Nottingham, Lesmahagow and Coatbridge. The next letter, dated June 10, said all the boys had arrived safely and were entering into the spirit of the adventure. In the same letter, in the final paragraph, there was just a hint of what might just be round the corner. It stated: "Our principal worry is with the authorities regarding permission for the British Isles boys to leave England. We considered this difficulty completely overcome some time ago, but it seems there are more obstacles. We hope, however, that everything will be finally straightened out shortly and that we will have no more worry. We certainly hope so as it would be terribly disappointing to the boys if they were deprived of the tour at the last hour and after making all preparations."

The bombshell was dropped on June 13, and it was a long and detailed letter: "This is the most difficult and the most unhappy letter we have ever had to write, because it means the end of a glorious ambition to take a combined group of Empire Boys on a wonderful tour to South Africa.

"As mentioned in previous communications, we have had difficulties with respect to the Young Persons` and Children`s Act in securing permission for the boys to leave England. Before making any selections for the party and before promising any boys the tour, we were informed that approval had been granted. Then we received word that we must apply again. We did so, and the Magistrate has now ruled against boys under the age of 18 years participating. There is no appeal against the Magistrate`s ruling, and we have no alternative than to accept the position. It is a bitter disappointment to everyone concerned.

"We have already incurred a big expense with steamer fares for boys from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Rhodesia and Canada, the cost of organisation, the bringing of boys from the British Isles to London, and their accommodation and meals for the period here. But that is not our chief concern. What is most disappointing to us is the fact that your boy, together with others, has had this glorious opportunity taken from him after looking forward with such keen anticipation to a grand adventure.

"THE GLORY OF THE EMPIRE"

BRITISH EMPIRE BOYS' BAND

"TO INCULCATE IN THE YOUTH A GREATER LOVE FOR THE
BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS."

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*Letters of Commendation
received from*

Hon. H. L. Butler, M.P.,
Premier S. Australia

Hon. A. Dunstan, M.P.,
Premier of Victoria, Aust.

Hon. P. Pease, M.P.,
Deputy Premier of Queensland, Aust.

Executive Committee:

Director:

Edward Marie

Secretary:

J. S. T. McGowen

Musical Director:

B. W. Caten

Advance Director:

D. L. Benporath

Auditors:

Messrs. Blakemore, Elgar & Co.,
Chartered Accountants,
9, King's Bench Walk, E.C. 4

RHODESIA HOUSE,
429 STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2.

20th May, 1936.

Dear Friend,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been selected as a member of the British Empire Boys' Band, to make a tour to South Africa and possibly other parts of the British Isles.

We wish to make it clear to all successful applicants, that if, during the period of training in London, we find a boy not up to the standard of behavior we require, we reserve the right to exclude him from the tour, and return him to his home.

We are enclosing a form of guardianship, which your parents will need to fill in and sign before a Commissioner of Oaths or a Justice of the Peace. Enclosed also are a list of tour rules and information forms.

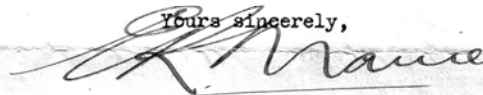
All forms should be filled in and signed by parents and returned to us immediately.

The guardianship form is particularly required to enable us to interview the authorities for passports and other details.

We will shortly send you a detailed letter with all particulars regarding assembly date, personal clothing required, details regarding journeys from home stations etc, but in the meantime please have the enclosed forms filled in and returned to us without delay.

With every good wish and congratulations on your selection.

Yours sincerely,



Director,
British Empire Boys' Band.



We travelled to Huddersfield one Sunday morning to have this photograph taken on the steps leading to the Cenotaph in Greenhead Park. Here again a few changes in personnel are to be seen, and some of the names which come to mind are Kenneth Whitehead, Stanley Garside (he also lived in Brougham Road and his father became a Councillor on Colne Valley Urban District Council), Gwyn Procter and Cyril Holmes. Cyril later played saxophone in the Melban Players dance band. My school pal, Douglas Leyland (extreme left, front row) was at this time the side drummer. Douglas, who lived at the top of Oliver Lane, was the grandson of Thomas Leyland who built and owned the Electric Theatre in Marsden, on a site where houses were built many years later. The photograph was probably taken in 1934 or 1935.

“We wish to say again that we have no alternative but to abide by the Magistrate’s ruling, and if any way could be found out of the difficulty, we would still be happy and willing to continue. But his decision is absolutely definite and there is no appeal against it. We are deeply sorry therefore to have to inform you that we will have to return your son on Tuesday next, June 16.” Finally, the latter states: “I have handed your son a cheque for £2 to reimburse you in part for expenditure you have incurred in respect to personal clothing. May we take this opportunity to thank you for the confidence you placed in us, allowing our son to come under our care.” The letter carried three signatures: J. S. T. McGowen (Secretary), B. W. Caten (Musical Director) and E. R. Marie (Director).

Jack Worsnip, Ronald Matley and Ronald Ball left Euston Station, London, at 11.50 am, arriving back home at 5.25 pm, while Bobby Brown left St. Pancras, also at 11.50 am, arriving in Leeds at 3.59 pm.

To say that the cancellation of the tour was a disappointment for the boys is something of an understatement. Not only were the boys disappointed but the people who had put so much time, effort and expense into the project must have been gutted. Would it have happened today? Most definitely not when youth and school bands now jet off to the other side of the world. For someone to give the nod to the tour and then pull the plug is unforgivable.

For a number of years there was one figure who played an important part in a number of the School Band's engagements. The story of Drum Major Bobby Brown goes back as far as the formation of the School Band. A member of the Boys' Life Brigade in Leeds, Bobby Brown had a real flair for swinging his mace. He didn't just move it from side to side as we marched, or even swing it around his back. No, up in the air it went, about 20ft high, and when it came back to earth Bobby took hold and began his demonstration with great panache. He was an extremely popular attraction.

In the beginning one of the Leeds officials, perhaps his father, had fashioned Bobby a mace from a broom handle and topped it with the knob from a bedstead, but when he went out on to the streets he had a very professional-looking mace. It was Mr. Collins who "found" Bobby Brown. Mr. Collins was holidaying in Bridlington and one Sunday morning the Boys' Brigade Band was leading a procession with the young Bobby swinging his mace at the head of the procession. So impressed was Mr. Collins with the young lad's style of showmanship that he immediately made enquiries as to the possibility of his accepting an engagement with the Marsden School Band. A poem, *The Little Drum Major*, was written by Mr. Leonard Moorhouse, of Marsden, and copies of the poem, printed on postcards together with a picture of Bobby Brown, were sold for a copper or two to thousands of spectators during the many parades in which he appeared. Bobby Brown, being an independent attraction, was the only boy connected with the School Band to receive any payment, his fee obviously being negotiated by his father who accompanied on every turnout.

One of the teachers at the Marsden Senior School was Miss Fanny Mason, who taught class 3b. We boys were always of the belief that Miss Mason and Mr. Collins had a special friendship: it was perhaps rather unkind of we boys to nurture such thoughts, but there it was. Miss Mason did quite a lot of work with the girls, but one of her ventures almost brought the end of the School Band.

It was announced to the band that when we next turned out for a parade, the troupe of dancing girls who had been trained in school by Miss Mason, would join the School Band. The idea was that as the band marched the girls, who would be in front of us, would begin their routine. It may have been all right on paper, but in reality it was a disaster. It took place during one of our regular Friday busking sessions. When we struck up with the first march the girls were off along the road dancing at a speed to match anything shown by the famous Durham Light Infantry, and before we had played the march half-way through the girls were just about out of sight.

These were busy times for the band and after the Friday fiasco we had another job on the Saturday afternoon during which time we talked about the disaster of the Friday evening. It was decided that we must do something about it: remember, there was no elected committee running the School Band, just Mr. Eastwood and Mr. Collins, therefore if our feelings were to be made known we would have to do it ourselves. The last of the engagements that weekend was a park job on

the Sunday, and at that time we didn't know how to tackle the situation: certainly I don't believe any boy wanted to be the one to draw the short straw.

However, the matter of the short straw never arose because as we were travelling home from the park, Mr. Eastwood told us that when we were back home he wanted all the boys in the bandroom and after he and Mr. Collins had spoken to us all the instruments had to be left in the bandroom. It was a bombshell and a situation we had never envisaged. In the bandroom we sat in our regular positions around the stand when we were given the news that as a result of our behaviour our instruments had to be left by our seats.

My Dad was one of the fathers who had been with us on the Sunday marshalling the collecting sheets at the entrances to the park, and as he and some of the other fathers knew about our situation, they were also in the bandroom when the bombshell was dropped. I remember my Dad, who was sitting at the rear of the room, standing and, pointing a threatening finger in my direction, saying: "You, back home now, and bring that instrument with you." For me the rebellion had collapsed. Sheepishly I picked up the euphonium and left the bandroom, and as we lived next door to our headquarters I didn't have long to dwell on my situation before we arrived home. I suspect that the other fathers took the same course of action. That was almost the end of the matter, except that at the next rehearsal, without the presence of Mr. Collins, we were given a very stern lecture by Mr. Eastwood.

By this time our repertoires had expanded considerably, and I recall that in those days one of the items being played by the top bands, in particular Fodens Motor Works Band, was the cornet solo *Alpine Echoes*. The principal cornet of Fodens was, of course, the great Harry Mortimer, who played the echo cornet in *Alpine Echoes*. The School Band obviously couldn't afford such an implement, and so Tom Eastwood gave the first part to principal cornet Stanley Redfearn while Jack Worsnip, on soprano cornet, then played the echo. Despite its shortcomings it worked very well. Also around this time the trombone solo was *The Acrobat*, with lots of glissando and, I believe, a similar piece called *The Jester*. For my part the euphonium solo was *My Old Kentucky Home* and later *Largo al Factotum*.

Earlier I mentioned that Mr. Collins had pioneered two orchestras, one at Skelmanthorpe and one at Marsden. One of the persons who received musical tuition in the orchestra at Marsden was Sydney V. Wood, who later became bandmaster of Morris Motors Works Band in Oxford. In the early 1930s Mr. Wood honoured the band by composing a march called *The Cuckoo*, which was based on the village legend of the failed attempt to wall in a cuckoo, the bird which always arrived in the village to herald the dawn of spring. The march was one of the items which the band played in the BBC broadcast which took place in the Leeds Studios on November 30, 1937.

Another little snippet about Sydney Wood. Walking down Peel Street it was necessary to pass the little sweet shop opposite the entrance to the Mechanics' Hall, where Mr. Eastwood weighed out all manner of sweets from an array of glass jars and where permanently resting on the top of the glass counter were two open boxes, one filled with a rare selection of sweet treats at a halfpenny each and another with slightly better offerings at one penny. I remember liquorice "bootlaces" at a halfpenny each, and small bags of yellow or pink sherbert in which you dipped a damp finger and then licked it clean!

One day I was walking past the shop when Mr. Eastwood was standing in the doorway, taking a breath of air while smoking his pipe. "Hello, boy," was his opening remark. "Do you fancy going to Oxford for an audition with the Morris Motors Band? Dumfounded wasn't a word in my vocabulary at that time, but I did manage to voice a few words to the effect that I didn't want



Time obviously dulls the mind, but I believe I can name most of the lads in this photograph which was taken one Saturday afternoon on the steps of The Vicarage which overlooks the old footbridge near to the Marsden Parochial Hall. Front row (from left): ----?, Eric Hoyle, Edwin Stead, Jack Clarke, Jack Midwood, Frank Redfearn (brother of Stanley), Verdi Lawton, -----? Second row: Gwyn Procter, Kenneth Hunt, Ron Massey, Stanley Redfearn, Jack Worsnip, Ronald Ball, Albert Hobson (Simpson?). Third row: -----?, Jack Woodhead, Ronald Matley, Cyril Holmes, Kenneth Whitehead. Back row: Fred Gartside, George Garside, Ralph Dolan (he turned professional and for many years played trombone in the orchestras at the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens) and David Williamson.

to leave Marsden because I had just started work (I was 15 at the time), and anyway I didn't want to leave my pals. There was a similar approach from the Boarshurst Band in Greenfield, and they offered me a job in the village paper-making mill. They also got the same reply. I remember some little time later that Mr. Eastwood asked if I wanted to be a Band Boy in the Band of the Grenadier Guards. Was he trying to get rid of me, I have since pondered?

The first success in the contest field was at the Mission and Social Institute Brass Band Contest held at Belle Vue Zoological Gardens in February 1934. This short series of February contests was instituted in 1933, and although the School Band entered that year they were unplaced. In the 1934 contest the test-piece for the selection was *Gems of Melody No. 2*, and for the hymn tune test the band chose to play *Lavinia*.

About 60 parents and supporters accompanied the band to Belle Vue, and although we were not placed in the results we did have the satisfaction of picking up one of the special prizes when Leslie V. Gledhill was awarded the medal presented by Boosey & Hawkes, instrument manufacturers, for the best euphonium player of the day. Leslie later joined Slaithwaite Band and appeared with them in the Belle Vue September Brass Band Championship (now the prestigious British Open Championship) when they won in 1938. They were conducted by Noel Thorpe, one of the banding personalities in the Huddersfield area. Some other boys had also joined Slaithwaite and they also played at the 1938 Belle Vue Championship, including Ronald Matley. Later Leslie became a bass player with the famous Brighouse & Rastrick Band.

Belle Vue Zoological Gardens on a bitterly cold February day isn't anyone's idea of a good day out (it was far too cold for the proverbial brass monkey), and so it was all those years ago, although there was a little bit of "excitement." Remember the penny slot machines when you could turn a handle and see What the Butler Saw? That was one of the ways in which we passed away the hours waiting for the contest to end, but we had a bit of a bonus, because the side of one of the machines had been removed and we developed the "art" of pulling out what to we innocent lads thought was a very racy photograph showing a charming young lady in her underwear! Such excitement!

The School Band returned to Belle Vue for the 1934 Spring Band Festival held each May, when the set test-piece was *Poetic Fancies*. Competing against 19 other bands the School Band was awarded fifth place by the adjudicator, Mr. Charles Wood, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In 1935 the band was again successful at both the February and May Belle Vue contests. At the February event 17 bands played the set test *Gems of Schumann No. 2*, and the hymn tune *Abide With Me*. The adjudicator was Mr. James Oliver, of Rhyl, a former conductor of the famous St. Hilda Colliery Band which was based in the North-East, and he said that the playing was clean and good and altogether a good performance was given, for which he awarded the band fourth prize. At the May contest the School Band gained second prize with a total of 156 marks out of a possible 200. Here the adjudicator was Mr. Charles Moore.

The greatest contest success for the School Band came in 1936 when the band entered for the selection, march and two parties for the quartet contests at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. In the selection, where the set test was *Souvenir of Shakespeare*, the band was awarded first prize with 86 marks out of 100 and then took first prize (90 marks) with the march *Albion*. In the quartet competition the first party gained first prize with *Le Prophet* (90 marks), and the second party came second with 83 marks playing *Remembrance*. A remarkable return and once again the successes reflected great credit on the tutorial skills of Mr. Eastwood and the enthusiasm and endeavours of the boys.

Interestingly, in 2006 this contest was brought back to life for me with a phone call from Mr. Walter Ainscough, of Wigan, who had been mainly responsible for the setting up of the Brass Band Archive in Wigan. Walter, a man I have known for many years, is the complete authority on the history of the British Open Championship. In his voluntary work as archivist, Walter pours through many old band papers and magazines, and in the latter part of 2006 he phoned to say he had found an item in one of the publications about the School Band which referred to the band's winning show in the Free Trade Hall contests.

"It says here," said Walter, "that the euphonium player was ill and wasn't at the contest, and that in the second quartet party, the `B` party, the solo trombonist played the euphonium part. Did you know that?" he asked. I couldn't help but smile when I told him yes, I knew, because I was the euphonium player who wasn't there!



This was just one part of the magnificent Crystal Palace in Sydenham, London, where the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band competed on Saturday, September 28, 1935, being one of 193 bands which were seeking honours in one of the seven classes. The School Band didn` t win a prize, but the experience and memories of that day lived for many years.

Without doubt the highlight of the band`s contesting career was an appearance in the Crystal Palace Championships in 1935. This Championship was a great day for the country`s brass bands and on that day, Saturday, September 28, 1935, the School Band competed, being one of 193 bands which battled for honours in the seven sections. The sections ranged from the elite Championship class, which housed the best bands in the land, through the Grand Shield, Junior Cup “A” and “B” and Junior Shield “A,” “B” and “C.”

The School Band competed in the Junior “B” class, playing No. 3, where 34 bands were in contention for honours. A few of the bands taking part in this section were Black Dyke Mills Juniors, High Wycombe Excelsior, Ilford St. John, March Railway, Sankey`s Castle Works, Staines United Temperance and the winners, Horsforth Subscription. The set test was *Die Feen (The Fairies)* by Wagner. I don`t know where the School Band was placed, but it has always been in my mind that we finished ninth. If that is correct, then the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band had a most remarkable and satisfying day. Perhaps I should point out that in those far-off days there was no special class for junior or school bands: no, we were in at the deep end with adult bands and that is why the successes of the School Band were all the more creditable.

Having such an early draw meant that the band and supporters had lots of time in which to wander around the vast and beautiful gardens which had on show many attractions. It was a very long day because with band funds not being plentiful it meant that after we had heard the results we were back on the coach and heading for Euston Station and the overnight train back to Yorkshire, arriving in Marsden at breakfast time on the Sunday, absolutely worn out but nevertheless delighted that we had been to London for the first time in our lives and acquitted ourselves fairly well in the contest.

I must point out that on the Friday evening before leaving for London, we played a full concert in the Mechanics` Hall before boarding the mail train at Marsden at 11.05 pm. With many parents travelling with us, Mr. Collins and Mr. Eastwood had reserved a coach for us, and it was one of the “posh” ones (at least in those days), having a corridor down the middle!

The train was stopped at Marsden Station by special request, and for many of the boys this was an adventure of a lifetime, an overnight train journey to the capital of England, a place not one of us had previously visited. It was a laborious journey of about seven hours before we finally stepped off the train at Euston Station, then it was out into the big city and into a greasy spoon café somewhere along Euston Road where we faced some form of breakfast. Next came the coach ride out to Sydenham where the two high towers which stood in the magnificent Crystal Palace grounds, could be seen long before we arrived at the entrance gates.

The grounds were vast and so was the main building, but being entered in the next to bottom section, our contest was located somewhere near the bottom of the colourful grounds, but we didn`t mind that because we were at the famous Crystal Palace. I remember being in the main building later in the day and seeing the huge stage set out for the massed bands concert which would be taking place in the evening. For me it was a sight never to be forgotten.

A year later, on November 30, 1936, I remember listening to the BBC evening news when reporters were giving out the news that the Crystal Palace was ablaze from end to end. Nothing could be done to save the magnificent structure as the newspaper pictures the following day showed. The place was a great black mass of tangled steel.

In 1937 two more successes were gained. At a quartet contest at Salford the party was awarded first prize, and later in the year fourth prize was gained in Greenhead Park in a contest sponsored by the Huddersfield and District Brass Band Association. Two further awards were collected from the Huddersfield Association in 1938, the second of which caused some heated arguments in Marsden. There was a second prize in an Association event with the prize coming on the day of the mammoth Huddersfield Infirmary carnival when the selection and deportment contests were held in Greenhead Park.

At this time the Marsden M.I. Band were members of the Huddersfield Association and they took part in the events of the day. While the School Band had clocked up many miles of marching, we had never been taught how to counter-march, that is turning to the right and marching through your own ranks and heading back from whence you came. We always did a full right or left wheel, and that`s what we did in Greenhead Park while other bands counter-marched when they reached the steps of the War Memorial.

The results of the deportment contest were announced that Marsden M.I. had won first prize with the School Band being in second place. However, an objection was lodged to the effect that the Marsden M.I. Band had played an unregistered man in contravention of Association rules. The



Friendships formed in the School Band lasted far longer than just a few years. The photograph above--I have no idea as to where it might have been taken—shows that despite having left school when aged 14, we were still buddies for quite a few years.

Pictured are (from left) Harold Hoyle, Jack Worsnip and Ron Massey.

The lads in the band had lots of fun, as the above picture shows. Stanley Redfearn (he was one of the older lads) is seen again in the centre on the back row, while my pal Dougie Leyland is second from left. On the front row is Verdi Lawton (centre) with Ron Massey on his right.

The bottom picture was, I believe, taken in Greenhead Park, Huddersfield

These two photographs were among the personal effects of Jack Worsnip which were passed to me after his tragic death. A copy of this short history, together with all School Band photographs now in my care, will be passed to the Brass Band Archive in Wigan for safe keeping..

objection was upheld which obviously put the School Band into the winner`s position. The M.I. Band was disqualified which didn`t help in the relationship between the two organisations.

I have previously mentioned Jack “Elkie” Clarke, but there was another lad in the band whose nickname was quite obvious. As we lads grew into our early teens, I suppose we wanted to show the rest of the world that we were men, or fast approaching that status, and one of the ways in which to do it was to start smoking. Having “graduated” from smoking herbal tobacco in a clay pipe (we hid the so-called baccy and the pipe, carefully wrapped in newspaper, in a hole in a low wall at the top of Oliver Lane), we now turned our attention to the real thing, a fourpenny packet of Woodbines.

With spending money not being too plentiful, we smoked the cigarettes to within about threequarters of an inch in length when we were then reluctant to drop the tab ends on the ground and grind them to near dust with a foot. But one of the band lads, “Docker” Woodhead, was waiting and he pounced like a tiger to pick up the small tab end and, sticking a pin through the almost miniscule cigarette, managed to get a few more drags before he, too, had to throw away the last lingering remnants of a cigarette!

There was another very important aspect of banding activity and that was slow melody contests. Such contests are still promoted but not in such numbers as was the case many years ago. Such events were regarded as an important part of learning to play a brass instrument, teaching various aspects of the art, mainly tonal quality, correct breathing and phrasing of the music. Not all the lads competed at such contests, but we did have a hard core of about six or eight of us who regularly travelled to other towns to take part in such contests.

Not very long after I joined the School Band my parents, having seen my elder brother, Leslie, make a not very successful attempt at playing an instrument, encouraged me to take private lessons with Mr. Eastwood. The downside of this exercise was the timing of my weekly visits to Mr. Eastwood`s home in Brougham Road. Each Saturday evening, while my pals were enjoying themselves in the village cinema watching some unbelievable piece of celluloid reveal yet another great mystery, I was in Mr. Eastwood`s front room playing *Bonny Mary of Argyle* until the song was (at least to me) note perfect. How I hated that particular song. I still do to this day!

I cannot recall the names of the pieces which the other lads played at such events, although I do remember that, playing the euphonium having been moved from flugel horn, to baritone and then to euphonium, Mr. Eastwood had chosen as my solo the ballad *Roll On*, which contains the words “Many brave hearts are asleep in the deep.” I still have two or three of my adjudicators` reports from those far-off days.

One of the promoters of such slow melody contests was the Huddersfield and District Brass Band Association, and I recall that for two successive years, when I was 12 and 13 years of age, I won the under 14 class (the first prize was 2s. 6d.) and then, the following year when I was hoping to compete when I might then record a hat-trick, the contest was cancelled. Such disappointment!

Unlike today when, in my view, money is now playing too big a part in the affairs of some of our leading bands, we in the School Band received not one penny. At some of the park engagements we were treated to a boiled ham tea with bread and butter and, of course, cakes, but before we sat down we sang grace to the tune of *Rimington*. We always sang our own band parts, and the tea ladies always applauded our efforts!



One of the early members of the School Band was Arnold Staples, who played baritone. Once a person has spent some time as a member of a brass band, the interest remains for many years, even a lifetime. Arnold is seen chatting with Gilbert Symes and Stephen Howes (right), then with the Brighthouse and Rastrick Band. Stephen was with B. & R. for about 30 years, including a spell as chairman of the organisation. Gilbert was born and bred in Delph and will tell you in no uncertain terms that he is a Yorkshireman. "It says on my birth certificate that I was born in Delph in the County of York." The picture was taken on a Whit Friday in the 1980s as Arnold was watching the many bands march to one of the evening march contests

There was one rather special day when, with our instruments of course, we set off for a day by the seaside. I suppose the day-long adventure had been organised as a form of thanks for our efforts during the previous year (remember, we were still paying 4d. each week for our musical tuition with no financial reward for our many appearances at concerts and park engagements.

That morning, dressed in uniform and carrying my euphonium, I called at the home of my friend Dougie Leyland before we set off to walk up Station Road where we were to board the Liverpool train and then make our way to the Pier Head and board the s.s. Tudno for the sail to Llandudno. The boat then sailed on to the Menai Straits. Later in the afternoon we obviously boarded at Llandudno and then set sail for Liverpool. We had played a few tunes on the ship as we sailed down the River Mersey and had then entertained the crowds as we marched along the promenade at Llandudno. Talk about a busman`s holiday!

Dougie, like myself, was all spruced up and ready to go when I called at his home, and as we were walking down Garfield Place, not having taken two dozen steps, his mother, Lottie, called out: "Douglas, wait a minute. You want another handkerchief in case you`re sick on the boat." To this day I have never forgotten that little incident, and it was one of the many memories which went through my mind as I sat with my friend of many years in St. Luke`s Hospital, Huddersfield, some decades later as he lay on his death bed. Sadly, he didn`t know I was with him.

Obviously I have many memories of Dougie. One takes me back to the winter of 1940 when we left Marsden one Saturday morning and headed for the Forces Recruiting Office in Leeds. Seeing some of our pals move into the Armed Forces, we wanted to do the same and so went to Leeds in a bid to beat our call-up papers, but we were disappointed, because when we were asked our age and we replied 17, we were told to go back home and wait for call-up in a few months` time. We wanted to join the Royal Air Force. In the spring of 1941 Dougie was called into the Army and I was left at home, medically unfit.

One other memory of Dougie concerns the wedding of his elder daughter Christine. Christine married Keith Martindale, a member of Slaithwaite Band at the time, and at the reception held in the Liberal Club at Marsden, I was asked to speak for my friend Dougie who was too unwell to take on the duties of the bride`s father.

The year 1938 saw the war clouds gathering, and then being aged 15 there was a feeling that, like some of the older boys, perhaps it was time to move on from the School Band and join the “big band,” as it was then known, on the other side of the village.

At the time the Marsden M.I. Band had vacancies having lost a number of men who were in the Territorial Army and who had been called to the Forces. This must have been a most difficult and disappointing time for Mr. Eastwood who had spent so much of his time building and rebuilding the ever-changing personnel of the School Band, but working with a school or youth band that is one of the disappointments which goes with the job, although one suspects that in the case of Mr. Eastwood, realising that certain feelings had existed within the M.I. organisation since the School Band emerged, seeing some of his older boys moving into the “big band” must have been a bitter pill to have to swallow. As I have said previously, I left the School Band in the spring of 1939 and a few more of the lads also joined the Marsden M.I. Band, but that, as they say, is another story.



Two former members of Marsden School Band are Sylvia Hampson (nee England) and Ronnie Sykes. Both joined the School Band in 1942, Sylvia being the first girl to join a boys` band While Ronnie was a Marsdener then attending the Senior or Modern School as it became, Sylvia, "a comer-in," lived down the valley and attended Mount Pleasant School in Lockwood. Both are still playing and, what`s more, they are now next-door neighbours in Linthwaite

The war years and after

The war years were difficult for the whole population, but many organisations struggled through until the final all-clear sirens wailed across the land, heralding the end of the bloody conflict, a conflict which took the lives, in whatever way, of millions of people from all lands.

The Marsden Senior Boys` Band, having such a youthful membership, obviously survived the carnage, and one of the lads who took up brass playing in the war years is Ronnie Sykes, who was then attending the village school. Ronnie joined the band in 1942, being first given a brass soprano cornet. "At the time I didn`t know an Eb instrument from a Bb," he said, "neither did I know the difference between a baritone and a tenor horn." He certainly does now because he is now playing each Monday evening with an ad hoc group of brass players who meet in Golcar Liberal Club. They have no conductor, just someone to beat them in and away they go, still playing for the great love of making music.

The band was at this time still rehearsing in their Oliver Lane headquarters, with a move into premises in Towngate still a little time away. Just as in the early years of the band, rehearsals were still held in the Science Room at School.

Despite the war, the School Band was still picking up a number of engagements, and Ronnie remembers the band turning out on a Whit Friday over on the other side of the Standedge, a tradition which has lasted for almost countless years. Whatever the year, Ronnie still recalls one particular Whit Friday when the band turned out and, with a never-ending downpour, all the players were given a real drenching. Other players also recalled that particular occasion, although not one could definitely say what year it was. With the passage of so many years that omission has to be excused!

At this time the band was still wearing a navy blue uniform, but the saxe blue trimming had by this time been changed to red, and so it was on the Whit Friday just mentioned, the red from the uniform trim running on to the white shirts and obviously causing immense problems. "I'll tell you from where I got my uniform," said Ronnie. "My parents bought it for 10 shillings from Jack Woodhead (remember my previous mention of Jack "Docker" Woodhead?) who lived in Gladstone Buildings. By this time Jack had joined the Royal Navy."

I pressed Ronnie for names of some of the players of that time, and he reeled off quite a list together with what instrument they played. There was himself and Rex Bamforth on soprano cornets; Bb cornets: Colin Denby, Leslie Ball, Selwyn Pogson, Dennis Holmes, Betty Kewley, Derek Noble, Sylvia England (now Hampson), Winnie Milnes; tenor horns: Philip Haywood, Lewis Woodhead, Barry Castle (he became a professional orchestral player of the French horn), Irvin Lister; baritones: Kenneth Dyson, Douglas Walton, Leslie Hurst; euphoniums: Bill Kewley, Brian Short, Keith Boothroyd, Kenneth Emms; basses: Frank Lawton, Peter Bagley, Peter Green, Eddie Yates, Derek Boothroyd, Keith Emms; trombones: Derek Haigh, Alwyn Bentley, Arthur Haigh, Alfred Yates; percussion: Frank Taylor (side drum), Donald Sykes (bass drum).

In 1948, with military conscription still in force, Ronnie received his calling-up papers to report for his two-years of compulsory military service. He served his time in the Royal Air Force and here is where he felt the benefit of having joined the School Band because he spent quite some time making music!

On his demob it was back to Civvy Street and back with his banding, but not back into the ranks of the School Band, of course, but to Slaithwaite, and the move caused something of a domestic rumpus in the family home. Said Ronnie: "At that time my Father was secretary of the Marsden M.I. Band, and so quite naturally he wanted me to join them, but Mother had a leaning towards Slaithwaite which at the time was a better band than neighbours Marsden, although just at present Marsden have quite a good band,

"Anyway, I joined Slaithwaite which led to my parents having a real argument about the matter."

Having now spent 65 years playing brass Ronnie, although not tied to any particular band, still "keeps his lip in" playing each Monday evening with an ad hoc group of brass players in Golcar Liberal Club, and he's not the only former member of the School Band to be found sitting round the stand and still enjoying making music.



Sylvia England's entry into the world of brass began in 1941 when her brother, Ted, who was a trumpet player, began to give his young sister lessons on the instrument. Such was Sylvia's enthusiasm for the instrument that she decided to take lessons from Mr. Eastwood. Obviously showing a natural talent for brass even at the age of 11 or 12, Sylvia soon became an accomplished player, winning a number of slow melody contests along the way. Incidentally, throughout her many years with brass bands Sylvia has never played cornet, always the trumpet.

Sylvia (*pictured left in 1945 with her slow melody trophies*) turned professional in a very short space of time and went on to play trumpet in various dance orchestras, the pinnacle of her dance band career being the years she spent with the Ivy Benson All-Girl Orchestra which she joined in 1947. There were other dance orchestras along the way.

One of the grey areas in this brief history of the School Band is determining the exact year when the band vacated the Oliver Lane bandroom and took over premises at the top of Towngate, next to what was then a fish and chip shop and within a few yards of the old stocks, although Sylvia does remember her parents attending social events in the Towngate bandroom.

Sylvia played trumpet in a number of dance orchestras, the pinnacle being the years spent with Ivy Benson which she joined in 1947. Today, like neighbour Ronnie Sykes, Sylvia plays with the ad hoc brass group which meets in Golcar Liberal Club each Monday evening. She is also a member of the U3A Choir which meets in Huddersfield.

It was 1942 when Sylvia was accepted into the School Band, thereby making her own little bit of history by virtue of being the first girl to join a boys' band. As we chatted over a cup of coffee Sylvia recalled her first engagement with the School Band. It was the Whit Friday referred to by Ronnie Sykes when the School Band headed a church procession from Diggle along the roads to Delph. As Ronnie said, it was raining "cats and dogs," to use a popular phrase, and by the time the procession had reached a somewhat dry haven in Delph, everyone was soaked almost to the skin. Said Sylvia: "I remember sitting in the boiler-room trying to dry our clothes." She also remembers parts of her white shirt turning red

There also another memory from Sylvia. The band had been out on an engagement where tea had been supplied for the band. "I was sitting at the same table as Mr. Eastwood," said Sylvia, "and when the sandwiches appeared there were arms stretching from all directions, and in next to no time the plates were empty." It was then that Tom Eastwood gave out another of his famous quotations: "Long arms are good for the stomach."

Joining the School Band was a move which Sylvia has never regretted because not only did it give her an insight into the world of brass, but in just a few short years she became a professional musician and began a career which was to take her to the very top in the world of entertainment

Sylvia`s musical career has seen her playing with any number of bands and dance orchestras, and in fact in 1951 she married dance band percussionist Don Hampson who was then leading the Ambassadors Dance Orchestra. In addition to playing with the Ambassadors, Sylvia also played with the Skyliners, the popular Aub Hirst`s Dance Band and The Clefs.



Sylvia`s involvement with brass bands has seen her in the ranks of Scapegoat Hill, Lockwood, Linthwaite and Vintage Brass. She has also been involved with the U3A organisation, continuing to make music, of course, and is today a member of the U3A choir.

Two or three years after Sylvia became the first girl to join the School Band, sister Dorothy (pictured left) also joined the band. Unlike Sylvia, who was at this time making a name for herself on the trumpet, Dorothy`s chosen instrument was the trombone. Like her sister, Dorothy travelled to Marsden for lessons with Tom Eastwood and also became a member of the School Band. Later, Dorothy also turned her immense musical talents to the professional stage and also became a member of the Ivy Benson All-Girl Orchestra.

Sitting back, smoking his pipe and still wearing one of his many cardigans and seeing two of his former pupils making such excellent progress as musicians on the professional stage, must have given Tom Eastwood not only great satisfaction but also immense pride. This move to the top by the England sisters was the second such move into the professional field which the dedicated Mr. Eastwood had seen over the years. Some years before, as I have reported, Ralph Dolan, a former solo trombone player with the School Band, had also developed his obvious talents and for a number of years played in the orchestras within the Blackpool Tower complex and the resort`s Winter Gardens. Later, Barry Castle became a professional French horn player.

Dorothy must have been a remarkable exponent of the trombone. Many kind words were spoken about her superb talents on the instrument, but perhaps the best of all were these few words: “She was Britain`s Tommy Dorsey.” What`s more, she was a product of Marsden Senior School Boys` Band.

When Dorothy retired from the hectic life of a professional career—playing resident band, one-night gigs plus many other appearances which professionals have to be prepared to undertake—she returned to making more music with brass bands, an interest which occupied her for some considerable time.



I feel that this photograph, shot some time in the 1940s, could have been the last to be taken of the Marsden Modern (or was it now Secondary?) School Band. At this time the band was rehearsing in Towngate, and that is something of which I had no knowledge, even some of my friends were totally unaware that the Band had left the Oliver Lane headquarters.

In the midst of writing this short history I returned to Marsden to take another look at the old Oliver Lane bandroom and also the building in Towngate which later served as a bandroom. I was years behind time! The entrance to the Oliver Lane headquarters is now impeded by fencing and so I couldn't get the photograph I wanted, while the greater part of the property in Towngate, including the former bandroom, has long since been demolished

*Supplying almost all of the names was Peter Bagley, of Marsden Lane, who is pictured.
 Front row (from left): Peter Green (in civvies), Peter Bagley, the two Kewley Sisters, Frank Taylor (it isn't known at which contest the trophy was won), Marjorie Yates, Winifred Milnes, Derek Boothroyd, Frank Lawton.
 Middle row: Brian Short, Keith Boothroyd, Mr. Dale (Headmaster), Trevor Singleton, Tom Eastwood, Arthur Haigh, Frank Boothroyd (father of Derek and Keith also Brian who was to follow into the band a little later), Fred Jones, Donald Sykes (bass drum). Back row: -----? Derek Noble, Clive Ellingworth, Philip Dolan, Harry Cotterill, Keith Emms and John Cotton.*

Collecting a few memories of the School Band again took me to Marsden, this time for a meeting with Brian Boothroyd. Brian has been with the Marsden Silver Band for many, many years, and now he is president of the organisation. We met in the bandroom in Marsden Lane, which was appropriate in view of the fact that the old bass drum of the School Band, now looking very sorry for itself, now rests in the rehearsal room of Marsden Silver.

However, that wasn't the point which really surprised me. That came during our chat when Brian showed me the photograph of the School Band (*previous page*) which was taken during the Second World War when he pointed out his two brothers, Derek and Keith, who were in the band and also his father, who was, just like fathers in the early days, one of the helpers. He named two or three more lads, none of whom I knew, until he pointed out Peter Bagley, sitting in the front row with an Eb bass.

When I was a young lad still wearing short pants and both my paternal and maternal grandparents were living at The Plains (Nos. 44 and 34, respectively), I obviously spent some of my time when in that area, playing out with other lads, and one of them was Peter Bagley. Having left the School Band in 1939 and having moved away from Marsden in 1948, it was natural that I would lose track of my school friends. It was years later, when I was attending one of the march and hymn tune contests promoted by Marsden Silver, that I again met Peter, this time standing at the front of his house watching the bands as they marched past.

Even at those brief meetings I never knew that Peter had been in the School Band, and that was the big surprise when Brian pointed him out on the photograph. "He lives just on the road," said Brian, and so we walked on, knocked on the door and from then on I began to pick up a few more snippets about the band.

At this time there was a steady influx of girls into the band, as Peter pointed out in the photograph. He even knew the married names of two of the girls but could not recall the Christian names of the Kewley sisters, but he did recount one amusing incident. At this time the band members were each paid 1s. for every engagement completed, and the band was still picking up its fair share (if not more) of park engagements and marching jobs. The fact that members were now being paid surprised me, although one has to accept that a few years had passed since I was in the band when no payments was made, and also the effect of the war years, and the immediate years after peace returned, had in many cases brought a great number of changes to our way of life.

However, when it came time for Tom Eastwood to pay out the players (whenever that was done) the bass drummer, Donald Sykes, had appeared at 20 engagements, which meant that Mr. Eastwood paid the lad £1. Then came the shock! If a player was absent for an engagement then he or she was fined 2s. 6d. Donald, it was stated, had missed eight engagements which meant that the astute Mr. Eastwood gave the young lad his well-earned £1 but then took it back to pay his fines! After all these years Peter couldn't help but laugh!

Brian Boothroyd joined the School Band in 1946, leaving school in 1953. The band was still rehearsing in the Science Room, but by this time the Oliver Lane bandroom had been vacated and rehearsals were being held in property in Towngate. "I was paying Mr. Eastwood 1s. a week for private lessons," said Brian. With a lifetime having been spent in banding, it was obviously money well spent by his parents.



Oh, the shame of it! Brian Boothroyd, who began his lifelong banding career in the School Band, is seen with the band's old bass drum which is now in the permanent possession of Marsden Silver (Riverhead Brewery) Band.

The drum had been in "storage" in Colne Valley High School for about 50 years, where someone had attempted to paint out the name of the School Band. The burst skin was not damaged as the result of normal use.

Brian recalls an outing the band had to Llandudno and, just as in the 1930s, it was a train to Liverpool, down to the city's Pier Head to board the ship for Llandudno. "We played on the deck as we sailed," said Brian. Mr. Eastwood must have had a distinct liking for this day's outing having done the same trip many years earlier with members of the School Band.

Now conducting the Marsden Junior Band, Brian also recalls guesting with Elland Silver Band when they went on an overseas trip, "...and it was all expenses paid!" he said, which must have been a great fillip for a young and enthusiastic teenager. There was another day, this time in Leeds, where the School Band was competing in the Yorkshire regional qualifying contest of the National Brass Band Championships and Brian played with three bands in the contest. Without going too deeply into the rules and regulations of the competition, if a band is short of a player due to illness or some other acceptable reason which comes within the rules, then a player can be borrowed from the band which played before the unfortunate group. Brian was playing solo cornet at the time, and such was the situation that Brian, having played with the School Band, had to remain on stage and do it all again with the next band and, as luck, or ill luck, would have it, he then had to stay on stage again and play with the third band.

Leaving school when he was aged 15, Brian remembers that Tom Eastwood was suffering ill health and also losing his eyesight. "I don't remember if it happened once or twice, but Tom Eastwood asked if I would conduct the band when they went out playing Christmas carols around Marsden. I did, and for anything I know that was the last time the School Band played together. We were badly depleted in numbers and Mr. Eastwood was unwell."

When it came time for Brian to move to an adult or senior band, living in the village of Marsden he quite naturally assumed that he would find a place on the cornet bench of Marsden Silver, but it didn't happen like that. "Tom Eastwood refused to sign my transfer form for me to join Marsden Silver, and so I went to Slaithwaite Band." There is no doubt that for the entire life of the School Band, Mr. Eastwood had no love for the "big band" on the other side of the village. It must have been like a festering sore!

It will be remembered that the Marsden Senior School Boys' Band made its first public appearance at a Christmas concert in 1931 and, it appears, the band made its final public appearance playing carols in the village also at Christmas some 25 years later.

Mr. Collins, who had played such an important role in the setting up of the School Band, had retired in March 1941, leaving Mr. Eastwood to carry on the band on his own, a task he had continued to do with his usual dedication and expertise. Perhaps it had been a mistake from the very beginning of the venture that no records (at least to my knowledge) were made, neither had a group of parents been elected to a committee to help run the band. True, parents were involved in organising the Faith Suppers, manning the collecting sheets on park engagements and shaking collecting tins when we went out on those Friday evening busking expeditions, but other than those involvements no-one had any say in how the band was run.

When Mr. Eastwood's active life was on the wane, he contacted Mr. John W. Morley, a man who was greatly respected around Huddersfield, and asked if he would take over what remained of the band, which at this time was working under the title of Modern or Secondary Modern School. Also, at this time I understand that all the equipment had made its way to the relatively new Colne Valley High School at Linthwaite some time in the early 1950s.

In my first attempt to write the history of the School Band I spoke with Mr. Morley, who was at the time conducting the Linthwaite Band, and he told me that he had been approached by Mr. Eastwood and asked if he would take on the School Band in addition to his work with the baton at Linthwaite. Mr. Morley, it seems, agreed, but when he accepted such responsibility the education authority, either within the Colne Valley High School or further up the education ladder, he was told that the band would not be allowed to accept any engagements. The only concert work, it appears, would be confined to the school. That, then, must have been the official death of the Marsden Senior School Boys' (and now Girls') Band.

How anyone all those years ago could issue a dictum to the effect that the once proud School Band, or the remnants of the band, would not be allowed to play music outside the perimeter of the Colne Valley High School, beggars belief. Thankfully, in this age of musical education such a ridiculous instruction would not be issued: if it was, then it would create one of the biggest uproars by people who have music in their hearts together with the interest of thousands of musically minded pupils.

The instruments are now long gone, and the only surviving piece of equipment is the old bass drum, but even that has suffered the ravages not only of time but of sheer vandalism. Having been found in the Colne Valley High School in 1981 when the Huddersfield Celebration Youth Band was set up for the three concerts, the drum next made an appearance in school in 2006 having been found once more in a cupboard in the school. It was handed over to the Marsden Silver (Riverhead Brewery) Band and now rests in their bandroom.

The drum has been vandalised, and even that word does not fully describe my feelings when I last saw it. Someone within Colne Valley High School took a pot of blue paint and a brush and attempted to paint out the name of Marsden Senior School Band. Whoever it was didn't fully succeed, and that is how it should be, but it was nevertheless a disgraceful act

How anyone could all those years ago issue a dictum to the effect that young people, even if those young folk were the remnants of a once proud School Band, could not entertain people outside school, is nothing short of scandalous.

After the retirement in 1941 of Mr. Collins, Mr. Eastwood carried on his dedicated work with the School Band, and it would be interesting to learn of the number of young people, boys and girls, this man of great vision and hope, had tutored in the village of Marsden. The venture had been a most successful experiment in brass.



When the final curtain came down on the Marsden Senior School Band ,the instruments were passed to the new Colne Valley High School at Linthwaite.

This Examiner photograph shows three lads with the old School Band bass drum. They are (from left) Alastair Sanderson, Peter Lonnen, who was at the time (1981) playing euphonium with Golcar Youth Band, and Trevor Peacock

In celebration

IN 1978 Mr. Joe Wood, of Linthwaite, phoned me at the Examiner Office to ask if I would attend a meeting at the Golcar Cricket Club on the following Friday evening. When I asked for what purpose, he said he wanted to talk about the possibility of setting up a youth contest in the Colne Valley. Ellery Ainley, of Golcar, who had been a bandsman all his life having played mainly with Scapegoat Hill Band and Golcar Subscription Band, together with Elvin Shaw, also of Golcar, would also be present. The meeting had nothing to do with the Cricket Club.

We had at that time around Huddersfield about eight youth bands who were progressing very well, and the idea was to bring them together on a Sunday in October to compete in a new Youth in Brass Entertainment Contest, which was to be held in the Colne Valley Leisure Centre at Slaithwaite. The fledgling organisation had no money, simply a desire to see the contest up and running, and so Ronald Gill, a uniform maker of Moldgreen, and myself offered to buy the trophies. Elvin Shaw, who knew not the first thing about music (neither did Joe Wood) also played an important part in putting the contest together by providing certain embellishments to the contest, mainly music stand banners.

Throughout my involvement with the entertainment contest, prize money was never paid to any band. A few months after the contest we always presented a concert featuring the first three bands which had made it into the prize list—those bands received the main awards with all the other bands also receiving small commemorative plaques--and the profit from that concert, together with profit from the contest, was shared equally between all the bands which had competed in the contest.

Such was the success of the first contest, when bands were called upon to play their own choice entertainment style programme, that today it is still in existence. Eight youth bands, all based around Huddersfield, competed that day which shows the then strength of the young musicians in and around our town. Today fewer bands may be competing in Youth in Brass, but at least the contest still survives.

Being so deeply involved with Youth in Brass and also penning a weekly Brass column in the Examiner, in 1981 I took the opportunity to put together the Huddersfield Celebration Youth Band in order to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Marsden Senior School Boys` Band. The Celebration Band was 35 strong and the players were drawn from youth bands then involved with Youth in Brass. They were members of Marsden M.I. Junior Band, Slaithwaite Junior Band, Golcar Youth Band, Hinchiffe Mill Junior Band, Holmfirth High School Band, Scissett Youth Band and Meltham and Meltham Mills Junior Band. Paddock Youth Band, an enthusiastic supporter of Youth in Brass, for whatever reason declined an invitation to be part of the Celebration Band.

The first rehearsal was held in Golcar Liberal Club one Sunday afternoon when the maestro cornetist Phillip McCann conducted. Three concerts had been planned, these being in Marsden Parish Church (Wednesday, September 3, 1981), Holmfirth Civic Hall and the Colne Valley Leisure Centre, and each and every one was a huge success. I accept that perhaps some people felt that the exercise had no real purpose, but I felt that having been involved with the School Band 50 years earlier, then some form of celebration should be held, and it did bring back memories for a large number of people, including former members

I feel that the Huddersfield Celebration Youth Band with those three appearances provided a few more interesting words to the very successful story of the Marsden Senior School Band. I am indeed glad that the Celebration Youth Band came together, but a quarter of a century was to pass before the final words could be written about the School Band..

Epilogue



*Mr Tom Eastwood
A pioneer in brass*

I sincerely hope that this brief history of the Marsden Senior School Band, which was certainly a pioneer in this part of the country, gives some pleasure to the people who thumb through these few pages. Brief though it may be, I feel that it does give something of an insight into the happy days which scores and scores of boys (and later girls) enjoyed under the leadership of both Mr. Harry Collins and to a far greater degree, Mr. Tom Eastwood. Writing about the School Band was made all the more difficult because so far as I can discover, neither Mr. Collins nor Mr. Eastwood kept any notes or minutes of the day to day activities of the band, which is a pity. If any such records do exist, then I have not had the privilege of seeing them.

When I first decided to write the history, I visited Mr. Collins at his home in Cowlersley Lane, where we sat in his sitting-room, a few papers spread before us, chatting about the band. It was that meeting which gave me some extra details about the band. Interestingly, the pupils who attended the school when Mr. Collins was headmaster, may well remember that when we marched into the main hall for assembly he was prone to tap on his large desk with a pen or pencil, no doubt wanting all the boys and girls to march in step.

It was when I met Mr. Collins that I learned what he had used all those years to beat out that regular tap, tap, tap. It was a silver-plated propelling pencil, and as we parted that evening, he gave me the pencil. "Something to remember me by" were his parting words. I still have it.

With almost 70 years passing between membership of the band and the writing of this history, it is necessary to offer apologies to anyone whose name I may have omitted, spelled incorrectly or even labelled with an incorrect name. I can assure all that any such omission or error was certainly not intentional. It has to be accepted that with advancing years the old grey matter doesn't work quite as efficiently as once was the case!

RON MASSEY

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