

Richard Taylor (1867-1943) – bandmaster and trainer

Gavin Holman, 27 July 2020

Notes and pictures provided by Raymond Taylor, his grandson, and other members of his family in Australia.

Richard Taylor was born on 28 August 1867, in the cotton mill town of Kirkham in Lancashire, England, situated midway between Preston and Blackpool. He had five brothers, Jack, Sam, Robert, William, and Thomas and three sisters, Isabella, Hannah and Mary all of whom were eventually employed in the mills, cotton weaving and spinning - the hours were long 6 am to 5 pm, and the wages very small.



After showing great promise at school Richard was compelled to leave school and commence work at an early age, and assist as breadwinner for the family, due to the early death of his father. His mother lived well into her nineties. He managed to play for the town football and cricket teams, at this time it was revealed he also had a natural aptitude for music.

The obvious avenue open to him to give expression to this gift, was the town band. His progress was so quick and efficient that at the age of seventeen he was appointed bandmaster. This was to lead him to a lifelong career teaching and training instrumentalists for brass bands. He was invited to go to London to train at Kneller Hall in the Royal Military College of Music at Twickenham. Unfortunately, he had just lost his father and his mother did not approve of him leaving home so young and as the breadwinner for the family he lost the opportunity to further his career in the Military Bands.



Barrington Colliery Band – Richard Taylor between the two drummers in second row, with his son, Richard on euphonium on his left

From this point onwards he held this position with various brass bands in the north and east of England. Namely Harrogate Temperance, Ashington Silver Model, Barrington Colliery for thirty two years, 7th Northumberland Fusiliers, Blyth, Newbiggin, and Dudley PM. He played before royalty and with and against some of the finest bands in England and became one of the most prominent conductors in the brass band movement.



7th Northumberland Fusiliers Band, c. 1920. Richard Taylor with cornet on the right of the bass drummer

In 1911 he was working as a coal miner (hewer), living at 17 Double Row, Barrington, with his five children and three boarders.

Apart from teaching scores of pupils he also taught his brothers to play and they also became top players of various instruments. He himself played the euphonium, tenor horn and cornet at which he excelled. The youngest brother, William, eventually graduated to be a conductor and became very prominent in the musical circles of the holiday resort of Blackpool. William held the position of Bandmaster, for thirty-six years and at the same time played in the dance orchestra of Blackpool's famous ballroom.

Richard was married to Annie Calvert (b. 1874) with whom there were five offspring, three boys Richard (Dick, b. 1899), Albert (b. 1905) and Edwin who died at childbirth and three girls Norah (b. 1896), May (b. 1898) and Hilda (b. 1901). Annie passed away giving birth to Edwin on 31 May 1907. He later remarried again to Catherine (Kate) Fornear (b. 22 September 1872) on 26 February 1913. His eldest son Richard Jnr. was also a player of note, who started at the age of nine playing the cornet then baritone and finally settled on the euphonium.

Richard also took part in other musical activities including at least one orchestra in the north-east, pictured here with his solo violinist Billy Bridges.



Following the war Richard was secretary of Barrington Band until the family departed to Australia in 1926. For many years he was the contributor of “Band Notes” and the “Brass Band News” for the North East of England under the nom de plume of “Young Contester”.

When approaching the end of his career Richard Snr. decided to emigrate to Australia principally for the benefit of the family, with the exception of Hilda, who had married and relocated to Cushendall in Northern Ireland, and later Ballymena.



The Taylor family arriving in Australia in 1926

On arrival in Australia for a short time he was bandmaster of Newcastle Steel Works Band and later Nowra brass band. His son Richard Jnr. also played in the Steel Works band for a short while before moving to Muswellbrook.

It was at the former place he decided to retire from active teaching and installed one of his pupils, Frank Simms, who was first taught by him in England when a schoolboy. Frank continued on from there and for many years was successful with the well-known Newcastle Police Boys’ Band.



Richard Taylor with the Newcastle Steelworks Band, 1927

Richard's retirement was spent at No's 46 and 11 Kitchener Parade in Mayfield and later 41 Henson Avenue where he passed away on 4 March 1943 aged seventy-six.

Richard Taylor's brass band contesting record can be found on the Brass Band Results website – see: <https://brassbandresults.co.uk/people/r-taylor/>

Here is a medal, presented to Richard Taylor on 12 January 1895, by the members of Barrington Brass Band, as a mark of respect and esteem for his work with the band.



Around 1979, Richard Jnr., at the age of eighty, welcomed his second cousin James Shepherd to Newcastle, when the famous cornet soloist was in the town with his *James Shepherd Versatile Brass* which was touring Australia.

COUSINS RIGHT IN TUNE



Britain's champion cornettist Jim Shepherd, struck a right note with his second cousin, Dick Taylor, of Muswellbrook, when they had a reunion in Newcastle yesterday.

Eighty-year-old Mr Taylor, a former member of the internationally-acclaimed Newcastle Steel Works Band and bandmaster of Muswellbrook Brass Band for many years, is one of Mr Shepherd's keenest fans.

Mr Taylor returned to Britain 12 years ago to meet Mr Shepherd and to see members of his family he had not seen since 1926.

The second cousins share the same birthplace — Newbiggin-by-the-Sea in Northern England — and a musical tradition that goes back several generations.

"My father was one of five brothers who all played in brass bands in our home country," Mr Taylor confided, "and their father was a bandman, too."

Mr Shepherd was in Newcastle as a member of the star-studded James Shepherd Versatile Brass which has been making a national concert tour of Australia.

The 12-man band, with conductor Frank Renton, played to a capacity audience in the Police Boys' Club auditorium last night.

Although rated among the cream of brass players in the world, most of the bandmen are part-time musicians rather than full-time professionals.

Mr Shepherd himself is one of three high school teachers in the group, another is an accountant, two are company directors and one is a sheet metal worker at a Northumberland factory.

Richard Taylor Jnr. was also an accomplished musician, and he received a similar medal to his father's, thirty years later in 1926.

