

Words and Music – the Oxford University Press Brass Band

Gavin Holman, 18 May 2021

The Oxford University Press (O.U.P.) is a world-famous publisher that has been an integral feature of the University's academic printed output for many centuries, and it is the home for many of the most respected standard reference books in the world. The Press was also known as the Clarendon Press, after 1713, when the printing operation moved from the Sheldonian Theatre to the Clarendon Building in Broad Street. One of the lesser-known products of the O.U.P. is its works brass band that operated in the second half of the 19th century.

The Oxford University Press Brass Band was established in later 1852 by the senior manager at the Press, Mr. Thomas Combe (1796-1872), "as a means of furnishing the men with an innocent and refining amusement." It quickly reached a good standard of playing, as it is assumed that its first annual concert took place towards the end of 1852. Other than the fact that the members were all men working in various capacities at the Press, we no little more about its formation, or how it was initially funded.



The Oxford University Press Brass Band, c. 1874, with Edward Pickard Hall seated, centre

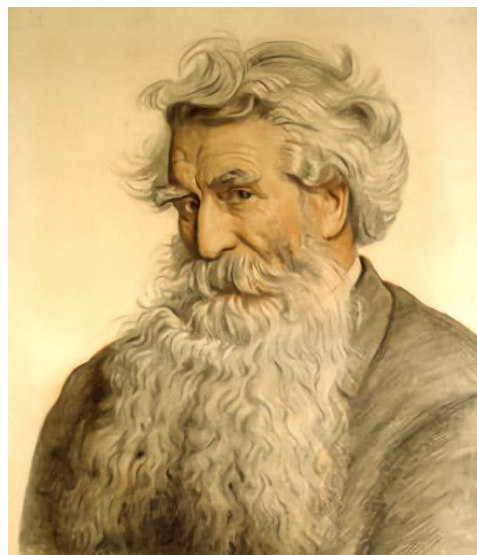
Edward Pickard Hall (1808-1886) became one of the partners of the Oxford Clarendon Press in early 1853, and in addition to supervising the discipline of the institution, he also took on the direction of the Press Brass Band, the Press Boys' Drum and Fife Band, and took charge of the Boys' Night School in the winter months. As the conductor of the Press Brass Band, he was a familiar and popular member of the senior managers at the Press.

The first known event to feature the band was its own "Third Annual Concert and Tea Party", held on Tuesday 26th December 1854, at the University School Rooms. The doors opened at

5 o'clock, with tea served at half-past, and the concert starting at 7 o'clock. Tickets were 1s. each.

On Tuesday 23 October 1855, the wedding took place of the 'amiable daughter' of James Wright, the superintendent of the Classical Side of the Press. A grand party was held in celebration at his house, at which the Press Brass Band 'discoursed sweet music', also introducing some vocal pieces expressly arranged for the event.

Boxing Day, 1855, saw the Press Brass Band taking part in a vocal and instrumental concert at Oxford Town Hall, its use granted by the Mayor, giving their services free of charge. Tickets, however, were required for admission, which could be obtained from members of the Band. The ongoing Public Lectures Series, having ceded their use of the Hall that day, it was agreed that subscribers to the Lectures would be admitted by showing their Lecture tickets. Between 900 and 1,000 people attended the concert, which started at 7 o'clock and included vocal items from the Oxford Press Singing Classes. Edward Pickard Hall wielded his conductor's baton and also accompanied the madrigal singers on the harmonium. The items performed by the Press Brass Band included the Grand March from "*St. Polycarp*" (Sir F.G. Ouseley's oratorio); a corneopan solo, by F. Johnson, from "*Lucia di Lammermoor*" (Donizetti); and "*Partant pour la Syrie*". Much was made of the fact that the establishment of these musical groups at the Press, "did not in the slightest encroach on the legitimate duties of the organisation, and that much good could be made with ordinary materials, by zeal and industry, and with judicious encouragement."



Thomas Combe

During the summer of 1856, the Press Brass Band gave a series of public Promenade concerts in the New Clarendon (University Printing Establishment) quadrangle on Tuesday evenings, starting at half past six o'clock:

"... attended by members of the University, the élite of the city families and, what is more pleasing, by many of the many respectable working classes, to whom these entertainments are a special treat, and afford at the close of a hot summer day a most pleasant evening's recreation. The programmes have included glees arranged for instruments, choruses from Handel's works, selections from the Berlin Choir Music, and favourite airs and marches. Of the latter the most popular amongst the audience was the grand march from Sir F. Ouseley's oratorio, "*Polycarp*", which was rendered with great spirit, and seems peculiarly well adapted for brass instruments. The entertainment was agreeably varied last Tuesday evening by the juveniles of the Press marching round the quadrangle with their drums and fifes, in which they have really attained remarkable proficiency. The band also manifests great progress, and displays a degree of efficiency which renders it justly popular. We cannot too highly commend the liberal spirit which has given the public the benefit of these pleasant musical evenings."

The concerts were very well received by the public and appeared to find general favour:

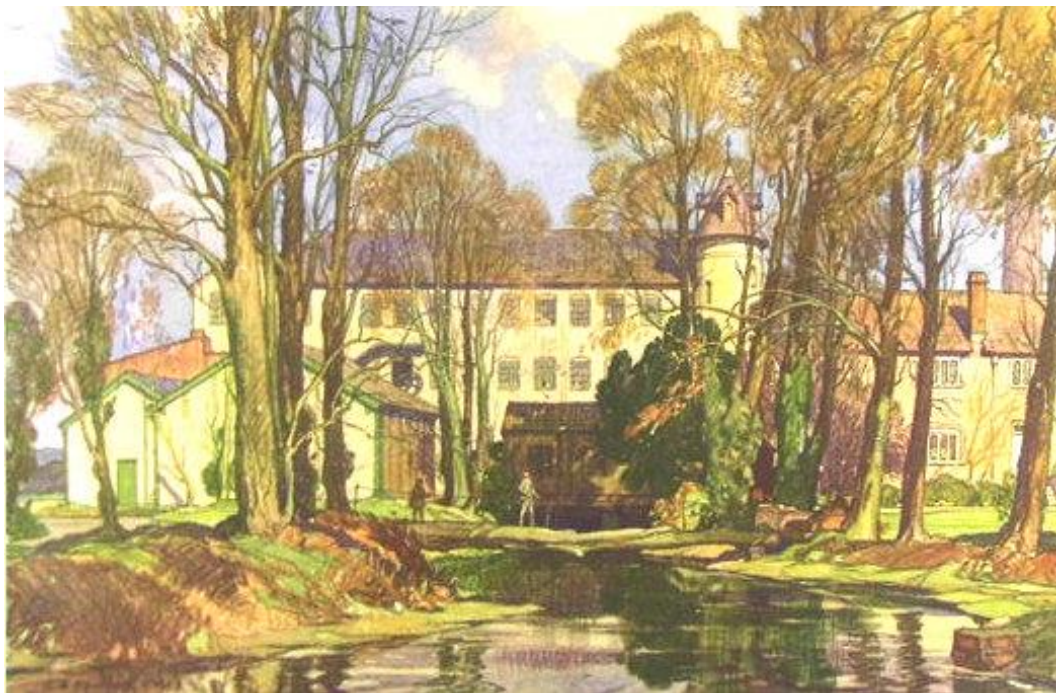
"These musical promenades appear to be carrying into effect what Dr. Acland has so eloquently recommended in his recent well-timed brochure, entitled "*Health, Work, and Play*." In one portion of that work, Dr. Acland remarks, "Public music is an educational object, well worthy of the attention of our best residents, who may co-operate in this

matter with the zealous Musical Professor, and with those who have already done so much for it. The amount of material for the purpose is enormous, and needs only bringing together and cultivated, to show what results can, by hearty combination, be brought out in one small City. The printers of the University Press have explained, by their concerts, what one body of men can accomplish.”

Contemporary with the Press Brass Band, the Oxford Saxhorn Band (or Oxford Brass Band) was also giving public concerts in various gardens in the city. This latter band was formed in 1843 and conducted by T.E. Embury in 1844.

The Press Brass Band held another concert on Boxing Day, 26 December 1856, in the Town Hall, once again with a mix of instrumental and vocal items, to an audience of around 1,000 persons.

On Thursday 29 July 1858, Thomas Combe, who was also the manager of the Wolvercote Paper Mills which supplied the Press with paper, gave a party for his employees and their families, some 150 in all. Tea and games took place and the Press Brass Band provided musical entertainment. The mill had been purchased from the Swan Brothers by the University Press in 1855, and it was located to the north of the city on the Wolvercote Mill Stream which was diverted from the River Thames.



Wolverton Paper Mill

December 1861 saw the Clarendon Press promoting two evenings of amateur theatricals by the Press Dramatic Corps, with the pieces represented being a judiciously abridged version of *“The Merchant of Venice”* and the farce *“The Thumping Legacy”*. On both evenings the Press Brass Band lent its musical aid to the evenings, performing selections during the intervals.

In February 1862 the Press Dramatic Corps repeated their stage programme of the previous year, with the addition of another farce, *“The Birthplace of Podgers”*, and again the Press Brass Band providing musical interludes, “in excellent style”, entertaining an audience of around 700 people.

During the winter of 1861/1862 a series of 'Saturday Evening Entertainments' were promoted for the working classes of Oxford. The sixth of these, on 22 March 1862, included the Press Brass Band, which performed three pieces. The following week, the audiences were entertained by Messrs. Gill and Ward's Brass Band (which was associated with the large ironmonger's business in the city).

The 'Saturday Evening' concerts continued through the year, and the Press Brass Band fulfilled another of these, on 13 December 1862, together with the Press Singing Classes providing vocal support. Once again, another brass band – that of a local lodge of the Ancient Order of Foresters, followed the Press Brass Band, and performed in the next week's concert.

A new season of the 'Saturday Evening' concerts began on 7 February 1863, with the Press Brass Band and some vocal artists performing sixteen pieces of varied types. The Band also gave another concert a fortnight later which featured Mr. F. Johnson, whose solo on the cornet was the gem of the night.

The wedding of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra, on Tuesday 10 March 1863, led to great celebrations in the city of Oxford. The start of the proceedings was to be the firing of a Royal salute from the two Russian Guns, with the Press Brass Band providing suitable inspiring music. However, the firing was delayed, and many people lost patience and went to join the general throngs in the streets. In the evening the Band led a torchlight procession through the city, before the final exuberant fireworks.



Edward Pickard Hall

The Press Brass Band was disbanded at some time after 1863, and was re-established in the autumn of 1871, making its first re-appearance at the University Press Christmas concert, in the St Barnabas School Room, conducted by Edward Pickard Hall, where it "played admirably and was repeatedly applauded".

The next documented concert by the Press Brass Band and accompanying singers, again at the St Barnabas School Room, was on Tuesday 30 January 1872. The concert consisted of *The Kingburn Quickstep* (band); song and chorus "*Freemen Rejoice*"; air "*O Bird of Eve*"; song "*Pilgrim of Love*" (Master T. Aldridge); glee "*How Sweet! How Fresh!*"; air "*Blue Bells of Scotland*" (band); song "*Nil Desperandum*" (Mr T.L. Aldridge); recitation "*The Charge of the Light Brigade*" (Mr Streaks); "*Air*" (band); song "*Should he upbraid*" (Master Aldridge); Irish air "*Last Rose of Summer*" (band); song "*Alice*" (Mr Prattley); glee "*See the Chariot at Hand*"; song "*The Flying Dutchman*" (Mr Maasz); recitation (Mr T.L. Aldridge); The Laughing Trio; "*The Clarendon March*" (band); "National Anthem". [Note: Thomas L. Aldridge was the manager of the type foundry at the Press].

The following year, the University Press held its annual 'Christmas' Entertainment on Monday 3 February 1873. On this occasion a testimonial was presented to Edward Pickard Hall, in recognition of all the good work he had done with the Band, the singing classes, classes for French and elocution, instituting lectures, concerts and many other entertainments for the benefit of the employees and the wider city at large. The testimonial was in the form of a silver epergne and an album within which all the subscribers to the

handsome gift had written. The Press Band, conducted by Mr Embury, and singers then gave a concert to continue the evening's entertainment, as follows: *"Duke of York's March"* (band); part song *"Harvest and Christmas Time"* [by Hailah]; recitation (Mr T.L. Aldridge); song *"The Minstrel Boy"* [Irish melody] (Master H. Denton); march *"Scipio and Glorious Apollo"* (band); song *"Just Touch the Harp Gently"* [Blampkin] (Master T. Aldridge); glee *"Come Fairies Trip It"* [Parry]; song and chorus *"Come in the Moonlight"* [Le Glover] (Mr Ives); duet *"When a Little Farm We Keep"* [Mazzinghi] (Master and Mr T. Aldridge); part song *"The Letter"* [Hatton]; march *"The Clarendon Quickstep"* [W. Green] (band); Polka [Embury] (band); glee *"Sweet and Low"* [Baraby]; song *"Hearts of Oak"* [Dr. Boyce] (Mr Maasz); glee *"Where Winds Breathe Soft"* [Webbe]; song *"Maid of Athens"* [Allea] (Mr T.L. Aldridge); air *"Ye Gentlemen of England"* [Old English air] (band); song *"Mignonette"* [Champion] (Master T. Aldridge); duet *"Army and Navy"* [Cooke] (Messrs. Ives and Maasz); part song *"The Chafers"* [Truhn]; chorus *"The Carnovale"* [Rossini]; finale *"God Save the Queen"*.

Some of the members of the Bible Press who had signed the album for Edward Pickard Hall, were as follows – some of these would have been members of the Band. These all had employed service with the press for many years, ranging in order as given from 52 years to 20 years. There were another 63 signed men who were not listed.

John Cox, Joseph Arnett, Francis Thomas, William Thomas Timberlake, Henry Kench, George Parr, Frederick Osborn, Edward Doe, John Thomas Badcock, Lamech Denton, Thomas Shurrock, William Thomas, Michael C. Aldridge, Joseph Castle, George Clewley, Rowland Wheeler, William Cook, William E. Walker, John Thomas, T.L. Aldridge, Thomas Langford, Isaac Wheeler, W.C. Sheppard, Edward Fitchett, John Foster, James Walker, and S. Maling.

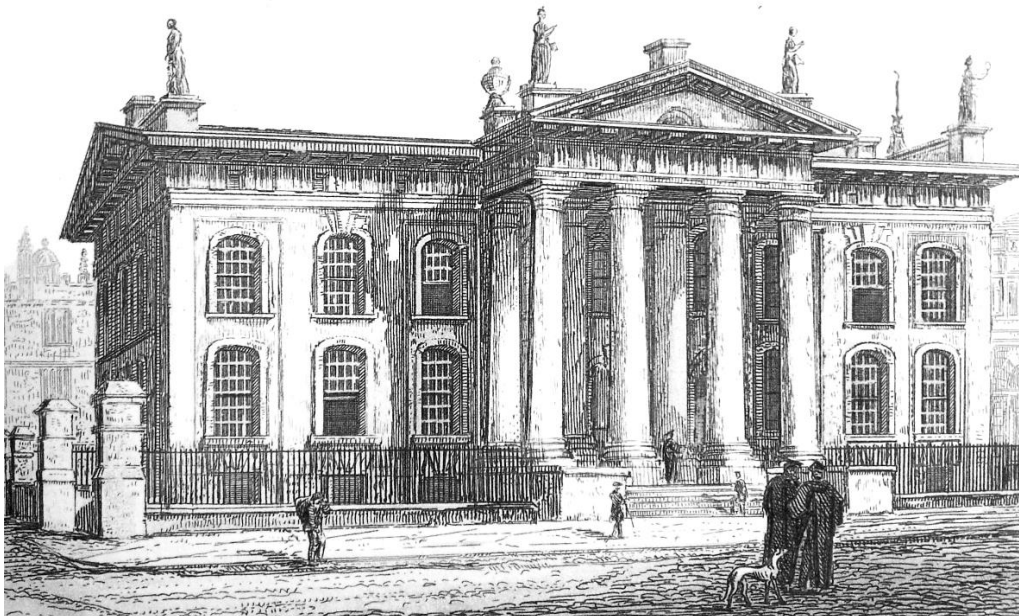


Oxford University Staff (Thomas Combe, center), c. 1870

On Saturday 4 October 1873, Edward Pickard Hall provided a tea for the Press boys who attended the Sunday School, at which the boys' drum and fife band marched them from the school to Port Meadow where various sports and games took place, before returning for the tea. In the evening a similar event took place with the Press Brass Band and its friends, with a supper provided by Mr Hall. It was noted that over the previous twenty years, under the patronage of Mr Hall, over 2,000 boys had passed through the Sunday and Night Schools, and received training and education in religion, the arts, technical matters relating to the machinery of the press, music, sports, drill, and other topics.

The Annual Concert and Tea Party of the University Press Brass Band and Singing Class took part on Monday 26 January 1874, at St Paul's Boys' School. Tickets to the concert and tea cost 9d., the concert alone, 6d.

The following year's annual concert, again at the St Paul's Boys' School, took place on Friday 22 January 1875. Edward Pickard Hall conducted the Press Band and accompanied the vocalists, where required, on the harmonium. The concert programme was: March from the "*Occasional Overture*" [Handel] (band); part song "*Kindly Glances*" [Hallah]; duet from "*Genevieve de Brabant*" - "*The Gendarmes*" [Offenbach] (Master and Mr. T.L. Aldridge); glee "*O Never Fear*" [Hullah]; song "*'Tis but a Little Faded Flower*" [Thomas] (Master H.J. Denton); air, andante from "*Fidelio*" [Beethoven] (band); part song "*Fays and Elves*" [Flotow]; song "*Twilight is Dark'ning*" [Küchen] (Mr J. Thomas); chorus "*The Carnovale*" [Rossini]; polka "*Windermere*" [Embury]; violin solo (Master W. Brooke); grand march "*Belgian National Air*" [Vaterland Lieber] (band); part song "*Onward to Battle*" [Verdi]; song "*The Lover and the Bird*" [Guglielmo] (Master T. Aldridge); serenade "*Pretty Village Maiden*" [Gounod]; air "*Where Art Thou Beam of Light?*" [Bishop] (band); humorous song "*The Country Fair*" (Mr T.L. Aldridge); schottische "*Au Revoir*" [Embury] (band); catch "*Old Women in a Churchyard*" [Old English]; glee "*Ye Spotted Snakes*" [Stevens]; finale "*God Save the Queen*".



The Clarendon Press building in Oxford

A further testimonial was given to Mr Hall by the boys of the Press in August 1875. On this occasion they presented him with a carved oak ink-stand. The younger boys had a treat provided for them at the cricket field adjoining St Edward's School, with sports and amusements, having marched there, headed by the Press Brass Band.

In September 1875 Mr Hall invited the officials of the North Oxford Working Men's Club, of which he was President, together with their families, and the families of the Press Brass Band, to an entertainment given by the Band in his garden.

The Press Brass Band's 1877 Annual Concert and Tea Party took place on Monday 8 January, at St Paul's School Room, with the band being conducted by Mr Connacher.

The Press Band provided musical entertainment at a dinner, held in June 1877, to celebrate the opening of the Oxford Café Company Rooms, in Castle Street. The objective of the Café was to supply cheap and wholesome food, and all kinds of refreshments, excepting alcoholic liquors, and to provide bright and cheerful rooms, furnished with newspapers, periodicals, chess, draughts, etc.

Another position held by Edward Pickard Hall was that of president of the Oxford Church of England Temperance Society. In August 1880, he invited the members of the society to a garden party in his grounds, at which the Press Brass Band played lively airs and the guests amused themselves and took refreshments in the grotto.

A new series of Saturday Evening Popular Entertainments was started in October 1880, with the Press Brass Band supplying music in addition to that of various vocal soloists. The programme of the first concert was: Slow march "*Defence, not Defiance*" [J. Frost] (band); glee "*Chough and Crow*" [H. Bishop]; solos by Mrs Long, Miss A. White, and Mr Gillams; ballad "*Tell Me, Mary, How to Woo Thee*" [Hodgson] (Mr Blackwell); part song "*The Hardy Norseman*" [Pearsall]; pianoforte solo "*The Harmonious Blacksmith*" [Handel] (Master E.M. Chaundy); part song "*Stars of the Summer Night*" [Hatton] (Messrs. Harris, Blackwell, Long and Gillams); polka "*Bonne Bouche*" [Waldteufel] (band); duet "*I Heard a Voice*" [Glover] (Mrs Long and Miss A. White); reading "*Phil. Blood's Leap*" (R. Bacon); part song "*O Who Will O'er the Downs*" [Pearsall]; song "*Robinson Crusoe*" (Mr Chaundy); bolero "*Attila*" [Verdi] (band); part song "*Soldier's Love*" [Küchen]; song "*I Love My Love*" [Pinsuti] (Mrs Long); glee "*Hail, Smiling Morn*" [Spofforth]; glee "*Dame Durden*" (Messrs Blackwell, Long and Chaundy); quadrille "*Songs of the Day*" [C. Coote] (band); part song "*Who Shall Win My Lady Fair?*" [Pearsall]; and "*God Save the Queen*".

The Church of England Temperance Society held a conference in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, in November 1880, when the Press Brass Band accompanied a choir, all conducted by Mr J. Chaundy, who was conductor of the C.E.T.S. Musical Society.

The next appearance of the Band is in February 1882, on the occasion of a concert, together with various vocalists, at the St Paul's Boys' School Room, in Juxon Street.

July 1883 found the Press Brass Band once again supporting the C.E.T.S. choir, with Mr Chaundy, at a concert held at the Church of England Young Men's Society Annual Gathering in the gardens of Worcester College.

Following the death of Edward Pickard Hall in November 1886, little is heard of the Press Brass Band, until 1899, when the Press Band, conducted by Mr F. Brooks, provided dance music at the Clarendon Press Institute Girls' Tea and Entertainment in January 1899, and provided interval music during the University Dramatic Society's production of "*She Stoops to Conquer*" at the Institute at the end of February 1899. These are the last known appearances of the Band.



The Clarendon Institute

The Oxford University Press Brass Band was unusual, being associated with a printing business, but it was not unique. Over the last 200 years there were at least 19 brass bands linked with publishing houses, presses, print works and paper mills. These are listed below:



A band outside a printing office – though not associated with it, as far as we know!

- **Atlas Reed and Brass Band** (Newington, Surrey) - Active in 1890, composed of employees of Crescens Robinson & Co, which was a firm of printers.
- **Baskerville Brass Band** (Birmingham, Warwickshire) - Active in the early 1890's up to WW1. Associated with James Upton's Baskerville Printing Works in central Birmingham. Conductor George Towle in 1908.
- **Beltonford Paperworks Brass Band** (West Barns, East Lothian) - Active in 1881 to 1886. Also known as West Barns Brass Band. The Beltonford Paper Mill was opened in 1865 by Alexander Allandale, and was producing 80 tons of printing paper per week by 1892. Up to 300 people were employed at the works, some 10% of the Dunbar working population. A fire closed the business in 1895.



Beltonford Paperworks Brass Band, 1881

- **Bishopfield Brass Band** (Kilmarnock, Ayrshire) - Active in 1855 to 1863. Associated with the Bishopfield (Riverbank) Print Works.
- **Bristol Britannia Temperance Brass Band** (Gloucestershire) - Active from the early 1890s to the early 1900s - for a time it was known as the 3rd Volunteer Gloucester Regiment Band. Also known as Mardon's Band - it was organised by Mardon, Son and Hall Ltd, a Bristol printing firm. Secretary Mr Wilson in 1896. Members in 1901 included: Eli Bekeney.
- **Cleethorpes Band** (Lincolnshire) - Founded in 1880 and still active today. This band was sponsored by a printing company and was known as Kingsway Printers Cleethorpes Band from 1974 to 2018.
- **Clonard Print Works Brass Band** (Belfast, County Antrim) - Active in 1859, bandmaster J.T. Ballard.
- **Gresham Press Brass Band** (Surrey) - Founded around 1902. Based in Old Woking, at the printing works of Unwin Brothers. They are known to have played at events in Send village and it is likely that some of the players lived in Send in houses built by the company.



Gresham Press Brass Band

- **Harrison's Printing Works Band** (High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire) - Formed in 1936.
- **Hazells Printing Works Band** (Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire) - Band of Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd. (printers and binders, Aylesbury and London). Made its first appearance in the town in 1887. Conductor H. Smith in 1889, B. Payne in 1894-1899, J. Ridgway in 1903, W. Smith in 1905. Also known as Aylesbury Victoria (Printing Works) Brass Band in the early years. It was active through to the 1960s.



Hazel, Watson & Viney Brass Band

- **Kilmarnock Printers' Operative Brass Band** (Ayrshire) - Active in 1856, conductor Andrew Fyfe. Still active in 1863.
- **Lillyburn Works Brass Band** (Milton of Campsie, Stirlingshire) - Founded in autumn 1895. Still active in 1902. First public appearance on Saturday 21st December 1895. Conductor Henri Fortune in 1900. Later known as Milton Brass Band. The Lillyburn Works was a paper pulp mill and print works.
- **McCorquodale's Printing Works Brass Band** (Wolverton, Buckinghamshire) - Founded in January 1893, conductor Mr Brooks. Active through the 1890's.
- **Messrs Henderson, Rait and Spalding Brass Band** (Marylebone, Middlesex) - Active in 1885. Henderson, Rait and Spalding were a type music printing company established by William Henderson, James Cossar Rait and Montague Spalding.
- **Messrs Thomas de la Rue and Co. Brass Band** (St Luke's, Middlesex) - Active in 1875. Bandmaster Thomas Bonnor in 1879. Still active in 1898. Conductor D. Stokes in 1882-1890. Thomas de la Rue were a firm of printers, known world-famous as bank-note printers. Their factory in the 1870s was in Bunhill Row.
- **Messrs Virtue and Co. Brass Band** (City of London) - Active in 1866, conductor Mr Shapcott. Virtue's were a printing and publishing house, based in City Road.
- **Newton Bank Print Works Brass Band** (Hyde, Cheshire) - Active in 1858. The print works were operated by Messrs Tinker, Wright and Unsworth.

- **Odham's Press Band** (London) - Formed in 1935 and originally conducted by George Thompson, latterly of Callenders Cable Works Band. Initial members were clerical staff from The Daily Herald, The People, and Everywoman's. It was renamed The People Band (Odham's Press) around 1957, and disbanded in 1961.



The People Band (Odham's Press), 1957

- **Oldpark Print Works Brass Band** (Belfast, County Antrim) - Active in 1871. The print works were owned by William Girdwood Esq.