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Premier Band of England



St. Hilda's
Band

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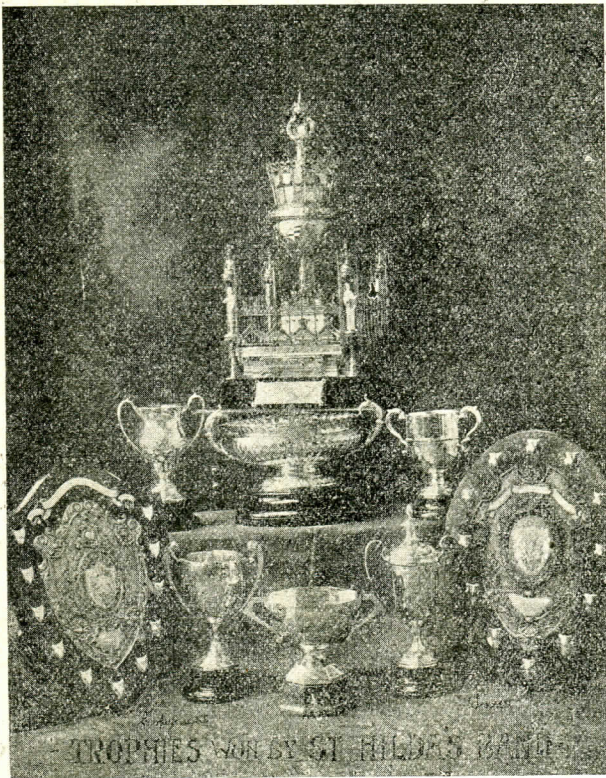
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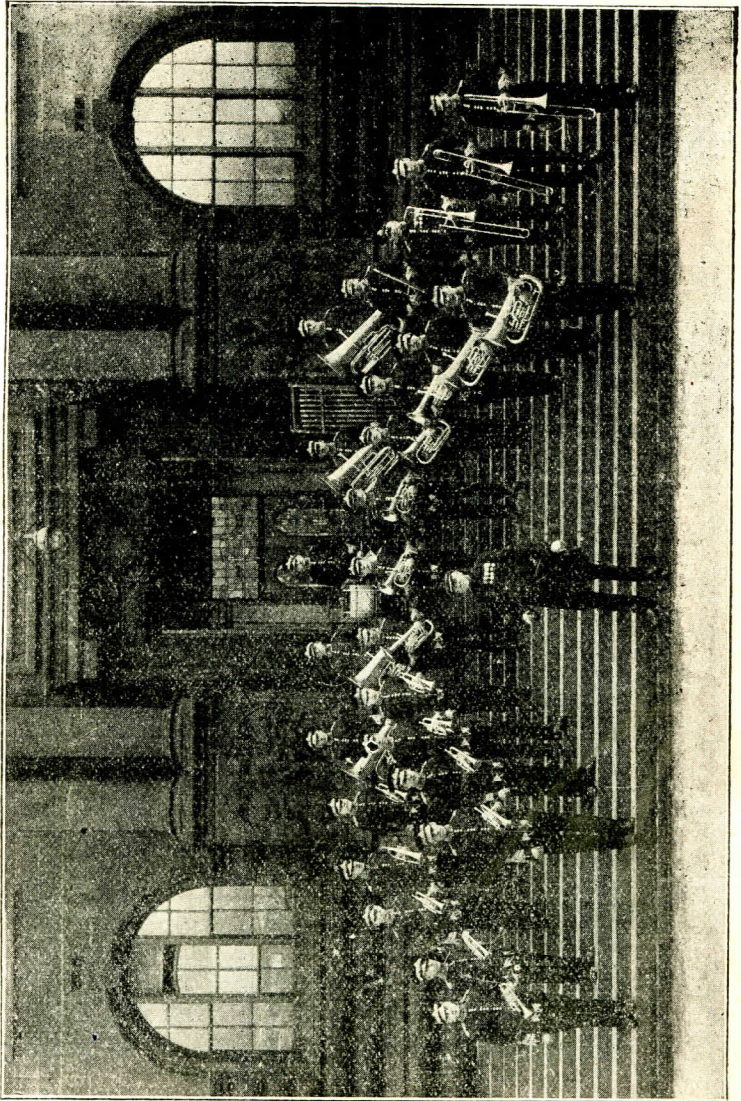
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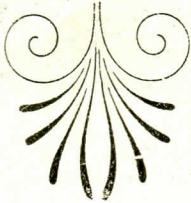
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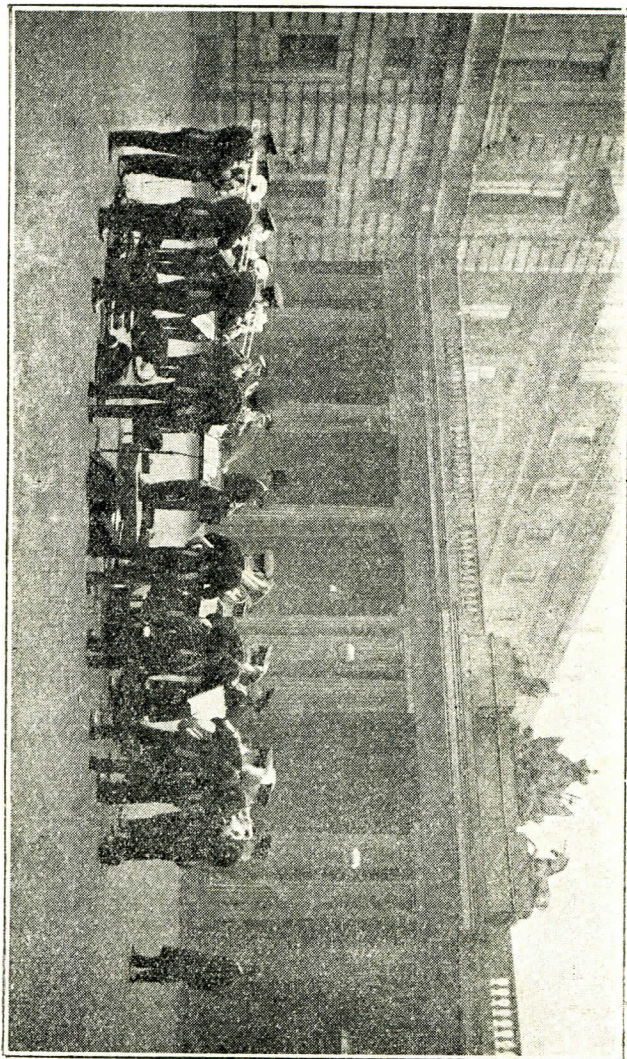
HISTORY

of

ST. HILDA'S BAND

ITS INCEPTION, EARLY STRUGGLES,
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Playing before Their Majesties KING GEORGE V, QUEEN MARY,
and Members of the Royal Family.

ST. HILDA'S

Champion Band



It has for many years been my privilege and pleasure to write and publish notices, biographies, histories, and general reports with regard to bandmasters, soloists, bandsmen and bands in various musical periodicals, but on this very special occasion I feel that an exceptional privilege has been conferred upon me when called upon to write the history of St. Hilda's Band (Champions of Great Britain and the Colonies).

It seems, perhaps, fitting that I might be entrusted with this task because I have known and resided among the bandsmen in the North of England nearly forty years ago and knew the band intimately, having at that time some 30 colliery bands under my own charge throughout both Northumberland and Durham in what may happily be termed—the good old days.

The founder of St. Hilda Band—Mr. John Dennison, his son, Robert, and, indeed, the whole of the Dennison family, were well-known to me, as were all the teachers and bandsmen of the North. Thus, I feel that I am in the right position in an endeavour to give a true account of this very remarkable combination.

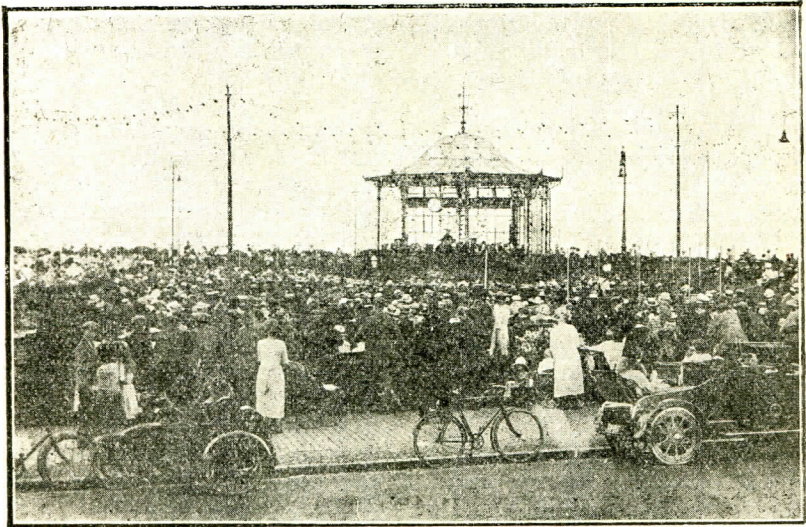
For much of the earlier history of the band, I am indebted to Mr. Robert Dennison (known only as "Bob" Dennison throughout the North), and going as strong as ever in canny South Shields at the present time, and who is a very proud old stalwart to-day as an admirer of his old band.

The band was founded in the year 1869 by Mr. John Dennison, who at that time was a member of the 3rd Durham Artillery Volunteers. This was when Mr. Dennison was working at the Jarrow Chemical Works, Temple Town, South Shields. A deputation from the colliery waited upon him with the view of forming a band, and the result was the inception of the great champions of to-day. Every member, without exception, were "Geordies" working at the colliery; not one of them knew a note of music, and some of them could neither read nor write. Mr. "Jack" Dennison was then a young man of 29, and very enthusiastic, so he soon got his "Geordies" pulled together, and so successfully was his work accomplished that the band were soon equipped with a new set of instruments. When the bandmaster's son, "Bob" was 10 years of age he became leading cornet, and the band soon began to make their presence felt against the neighbouring bands, especially that of the old Garibaldi band—one of the oldest in the district.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

The first contest attended by the band was at Windy Nook, near Felling, in 1874. This contest was the cause of a peculiar challenge, as will be seen shortly. It was a march contest and each band had to play two marches of own choice. There were 10 entries, and the judge was Mr. William Lax, of Sunderland. When the judge announced his decision it was found that St. Hilda was not mentioned at all. Not being satisfied with the decision, St. Hilda agreed to challenge the winning band—West Wylam—and

POPULARITY



St. Hilda's Band playing on the South Coast before 15,000 people.

Redoubt Bandstand, Eastbourne.

the challenge duly appeared in the "Newcastle Daily Chronicle," and was accepted. A committee of two bands arranged the match, each band to play the same two marches as played at the contest for £50 (£25 a-side, the winning band also to receive one-third of the gate receipts.) When matters were settled, and the stakes

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

deposited, the contest took place on what was considered neutral ground, at Bedlington, Northumberland. This was in October, 1874. Each band had to engage a judge at its own expense, and a referee was also engaged, whose fee was to be paid equally by both bands. St. Hilda's judge was Mr. Tom Woods, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and West Wylam's judge was Mr. Dunlop, also of Newcastle. Mr. Thomas Hogg, of Hartlepool, was engaged as Referee. It is sure to be of interest, especially to amateur bandmen, to know what class of test-marches were in general use in these long-gone-by days. The two marches chosen by St. Hilda were: "The Vacant Chair," by J. Sidney Jones (at that time bandmaster of the 5th Dragoon Guards), and "Hercules," by T. Metcalfe, of Wolverhampton (Metcalfe's "Star Brass Band Journal"). West Wylam's marches were: "The Vacant Chair" and "Pet of the Band," by Richard Smith, of Hull.

St. Hilda's practised day and night on their two marches, and on the morning of the match, which was a cold and wild one, they arrived at Bedlington full of hope for the best. A great gathering of bandmen from all parts were present, and hundreds of pitmen from all over Northumberland and Durham had gathered for the fray which had already caused excitement for miles around. The draw for places was St. Hilda 1st and 3rd and West Wylam 2nd and 4th. Each band had a great reception as it mounted the platform, and also at the conclusion of each performance. At the conclusion an enormous crowd gathered around to hear the verdict of the judges and referee, which was announced as not only won by St. Hilda, but with a good deal to spare. So with the £50 stake, and a third of the huge gate receipts, the band was well over £100 to the good. Northumberland and Durham pitmen are keen on a bet, and previous to the match the betting was 3 to 1 on West Wylam, but as soon as St. Hilda played its first of the two marches, the "Geordies" began to keep their eyes on "Welshers," and the betting quickly turned the other way round. The band had a great reception on its return to South Shields, and young Bob Dennison, who was then 14 years of age, was carried shoulder high to Temple Town where the bandmen lived. He was later presented with a silver-plated cornet in commemoration of the event.

After winning the match with West Wylam at Bedlington, the band attended two or three contests that season with varied success and failure, but at the end of the year the band seemed to have collapsed, as their founder and bandmaster, Mr. John Dennison, had taken over the bandmastership of the 6th Durham Rifle Volunteers, and in consequence had to resign from St. Hilda.

And now comes a big change in events. In 1876, when Bob Dennison, the solo cornet player, was just turned 20 years of age, he instituted a new band at the Colliery—St. Hilda's Juvenile Brass Band—all learners. The band consisted of young lads whose

The man who made

St. Hilda's Band

**Coronation
Year
1937**



JIMMY SOUTHERN, who has been exclusively connected for 26 years

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued

fathers were employed at the colliery. With a few old instruments, and others bought from Tom Woods, of Newcastle—all second-hand, the young band made fair progress. When the Juvenile Band had been formed a year they attended (1877) the great Band Festival at Morpeth.

This Festival was at that time a very important event in the history of North-Country Brass Bands, and cheap excursions were always run from all parts of Durham and Northumberland. This was indeed a red-letter day for the St. Hilda Juvenile Band, but nevertheless they were all getting too big for juveniles, and still not receiving any financial support from the Colliery, although always playing for them when required, a meeting was eventually called by the members, with the result that they decided to change their name to that of the South Shields Model Brass Band, together with the senior band, St. Hilda. (This change took place in 1877). The band still continued to play when required for the Colliery. Many good engagements came the way the newly-named "South Shields Model Brass Band." One of these big engagements was at the Waller's Bicycle Tournament at Sunderland for a fortnight. (This was in 1881.) The band was then under the bandmastership of Bob Dennison. The "Model" band certainly had a good innings for several years, and in 1885 Mr. Bob Dennison was the recipient of another silver-plated and gold-mounted cornet in recognition of his good work accomplished for the band. The secretary, Mr. J. W. Robertson, and the treasurer, Mr. John Hume, were also presented with gold rings by the members and committee for the good services they had also rendered.

We now arrive at another important period in the history of this ever-changing band and the Dennison family. In 1885, Mr. Jack Dennison—the founder of the original band—had a private band in South Shields, named "The Dennison Family Brass Band," which had been making a fair reputation in the town, and in which his son Bob was solo cornet—others of the family also being members. The South Shields "Model" Band not receiving the support they desired, they decided upon a bold plan. Father and son had a serious conversation over the future of both bands, and the plan succeeded.

A meeting of the two bands, the "Model" and "Dennison's Family Brass Band," resulted in the amalgamation of the two bands under the title, Dennison's Family Band, under the conductorship of Mr. John Dennison. This amalgamation took place at the end of the year 1885. The title of this band was almost immediately changed once again, and the new name now became the "South Shields Borough Band." In 1886 the band won Mr. R. Thornton's second Brass Band Contest at South Shields in both the March and Selection contests with "Palmer House" as the March and Swift's arrangement of "William Tell" as the selection.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

Mr. Tidswell, of Leeds, was the judge. In 1887 the band got a two week's engagement at Roker Park, Sunderland, in connection with a big scheme in aid of All Saints' Church. The band consisted of 23 members, still under the conductorship of old John Dennison. The band was supplied with a special Russian uniform from London for this special engagement. The opening day was on July 30th, 1887, and a special announcement was published to the effect: "The admission to this great Fete, if only to hear this splendid band, was worth the money alone."

The next big event was that of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Exhibition Contest, which was held on October 15th, 1887, in the Exhibition grounds. The Selection Test-piece was "Own Choice." Twenty bands had entered and 19 actually played. At the draw for places, South Shields Borough Band were drawn to play last, and although the contest began at 11-30 a.m., the Shields "boys" did not mount the bandstand till 10-30 p.m. Their Selection was Richard Smith's arrangement of "The Reminiscences of Verdi," and the conductor was Mr. John Dennison. The result of this, one of the most important contests hitherto held in the North of England, was: 1st and 2nd prizes divided between Tanfield Lea (conductor, Mr. Alex. Owen) and South Derwent (conductor, Mr. George Raine); 3rd prize and Trombone, South Shields Borough; 4th prize, Whitworth Vale (conductor, Mr. George Raine).

In 1888 the band entered for the Belle Vue contest, but were not accepted. Throughout this year the band attended to all the functions of the St. Hilda and Marsden Collieries, besides a good many engagements in and out of the Borough.

The year 1890 brought in a change in the conductor for contests, and Mr. Tom Woods, of Newcastle, was engaged. The band, still under the name of South Shields Borough, entered Haydon Bridge Contest on June 4th, 1890. Besides others of the Dennison family, Mr. John Dennison (the original founder) played in the band. The test-piece was Harry Round's new test-piece, "Weber's Works" (W.R.), and the judge was Mr. J. O. Shepherd, of Liverpool. There was a March Contest (Own Choice). There was a big entry of the best Northumberland and Durham bands, and the following was the result: March Contest: 1st prize, South Shields Borough (conductor, Mr. Tom Woods); 2nd, Acomb (conductor, Mr. Tom Henderson). Selection Contest: 1st prize, Whitworth (conductor, Mr. Fred Durham); 2nd, South Derwent (conductor, Mr. A. Snowden); 3rd, Tanfield Lea (conductor, Mr. Alex. Owen); 4th, South Shields Borough (conductor, Mr. Tom Woods); 5th, Acomb (conductor, Mr. Tom Henderson); 6th, Hartlepool Old Operatic (conductor, Mr. W. Holdsworth).

In the same month the band attended an open contest at Edinburgh on the same test-piece, with Mr. Tom Woods as conductor, but when they arrived in the "Modern Athens" they soon found

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

that they had reckoned without consideration of what this journey meant. On their arrival they found that the very "cream" of England's Champion Brass Bands had also entered this contest, and that **they had also arrived upon the scene!** Among this "mighty throng" were Besses, Black Dyke, Wyke Temperance, Oldham Rifles, Kingston Mills, Linthwaite, and others of the highest contesting reputation. South Shields Borough gained an experience of their very existence at that contest, and the lesson of a lifetime by coming out of the ordeal LAST.

On November 6th of that year the band was engaged, through their President, Mr. Dick Thornton (of Moss' Empires fame) to open the new Town Hall at Sunderland, under the conductorship of John Dennison. This was a big event in the history of the band, and at the concert in the park after the ceremony had been concluded, although a very cold November day, the audience numbered nearly 5,000 people, the band receiving a great ovation for their fine performance.

Shortly after this event the band became disorganised, and as things seemed to show no improvement by the end of the year, it was reconstituted under the title, "Dennison's Borough Band," under the conductorship of Mr. Bob Dennison. The sub-conductor was Bob's brother Alexander; the principal E flat bass player was old Jack Dennison (the conductor's father and original founder). The band now began to give a good deal of attention to the various collieries in the Harton group, and the result of this attention was a handsome set of silver-plated instruments as a present for services rendered. This was in 1901. The conductor's son, George, became secretary, and all seemed to be working well, although their contesting experiences were never of a successful nature so far. As a matter of fact, and to save "painting the lily," the band did not win a prize between the years 1895 and 1901. It was not until the latter year that Dennison's Borough Band made its first show among the contesting bands of the district. This was at Hebburn contest on May 25th, 1901. Test-piece, "Memories of Britain." Judge, Mr. J. Ord-Hume. Eighteen bands competed, and the following was the result: 1st prize, Consett Ironworks (W. Holdsworth); 2nd, Felling Colliery (J. Oliver); 3rd, Sunderland Temperance (J. Thurlow); 4th, Cleveland Steelworks (W. Holdsworth); 5th, Murton Colliery (E. R. Vest). The unsuccessful bands were: Dennison's Borough, Shields Garibaldi, South Shields Harmonic, Jarrow Borough, Sunderland East End, 2nd Northumberland Artillery, Heworth Colliery, Chester-le-Street, Tynemouth Borough, Wingate Silver Model, Shields Town Silver, Barrington Colliery and Backworth Colliery.

On June 22nd, 1901, the band attended Murton Colliery Contest on the same test-piece, and were again unsuccessful. The Judge was Mr. H. Barker, and the result was: 1st prize, Cleveland Steel

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.



Mr. W.M. HALLIWELL, Professional Conductor. The Band is indeed fortunate in having a gentleman of such outstanding ability as Mr. Halliwell; he is regarded by all as "The Expert" in all matters appertaining to Brass Bands; his advice and tuition have enabled St. Hilda's to achieve and retain their high position. We rejoice in his recent distinguished honour of being decorated by his late Gracious Majesty King George V. with the Silver Medal of the Royal Victorian Order. (Bravo!)

Works (W. Holdsworth); 2nd, Consett Ironworks (W. Holdsworth); 3rd, Hebburn Colliery (W. Heap); 4th, Felling Colliery (J. Oliver). The unsuccessful bands were: Wingate Silver Model, Dennison's Borough, Hamsterley Colliery, Seaham Bottle Works, Cornsay Institute, South Hetton, Spennymoor Temperance, and Sunderland Temperance. And now to finish up the band's bad luck at contesting right up to and including the year 1901, they attended the Lindon Travers' big contest at Tynemouth on October 5th of that year, and were again unsuccessful. Test-piece: Gounod's "Faust." Judge: J. Ord Hume. The result was: 1st prize, Hebburn Colliery (W. Heap); 2nd, Eston Miners (C. H. Kay); 3rd, Cornsay Institute; 4th, Backworth Colliery; 5th, Cockerton (W. Watson); 6th, Chester-le-Street (Tom Valentine); 7th, Jarrow Boro' (R. Binnie). The unsuccessful bands were: Dennison's Borough, Willington Silver, Birtley Temperance, Felling Colliery, Hebburn Temperance, Seaham Harbour Bottle Works and Sunderland Temperance. The band became thoroughly out of the contesting run after their many disappointments, and no contesting was done in the following years under the title of Dennison's Borough Band until 1905, when the band made two more tries, Jarrow Contest, on August 5th, 1905. Test-piece: "Memories of

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

"Donizetti." Judge: J. Walker. With the following result: 1st prize, Spencer's Steel Works (Conductor, R. Rimmer); 2nd, Backworth Institute (John Gladney); 3rd, Consett Ironworks (W. Holdsworth); and 4th, to Dennison's Borough Band (Conductor, R. Dennison). Unsuccessful bands at that contest were: Birtley League of the Cross, South Moor, Hebburn Town, Cockerton and Heworth Colliery. The next and only contest attended by the band as Dennison's was at Hebburn on November 4th, 1905, when they were again unsuccessful. The Selection, "Carmelite," was the test-piece, and the judge was Mr. J. B. Wright, of Willington, with the following result: 1st prize, Palmer's Works (Conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Hetton Colliery (W. Straughan); 3rd, Felling Colliery (J. Oliver); 4th, Hebburn Town (G. Hawkins); 5th, Brandon Colliery (W. Turnbull). Unsuccessful: Dennison's Borough, New York and District, Percy Main N.E.R., and Middlesbrough Boro'. It will be seen that for many years the only prize won by the band under the name of Dennison's Boro' was the solitary 4th prize won at Jarrow on August 5th, 1905.

The band by this time had been becoming dissatisfied in many ways, and not the least of their many troubles was the fact of their poor support from the collieries, so that at the latter end of 1905 they found it impossible to make ends meet, and they decided to approach the St. Hilda Miners' Lodge of the Durham Miners' Association with a view to taking over the band as a "going concern," and, by good fortune, this was readily agreed to at a general meeting of the Miners' Lodge. (This was in December, 1905.)

Thus, the band, through all its ups and downs and many changes of name, had reverted to its original title, "The St. Hilda Colliery Brass Band," with the welcome alteration "Silver" instead of "Brass." The conductor was Mr. Robert Dennison; sub-conductor, Mr. Alexander Dennison; and the secretary, Mr. John Geo. Dennison.

The band, under its new name, attended West Stanley Contest on June 4th, 1906, but were unsuccessful (Conductor, R. Dennison). It was now decided that a professional teacher should be called in, and the choice fell to Mr. J. A. Greenwood, at that time a most promising young gentleman who was very quickly forging his way amongst the big teachers of the day. This was the real beginning of a big change that was about to shortly take place in the fortunes of the St. Hilda Colliery Silver Band.

With only a few lessons from Mr. Greenwood, the band seemed to take a new lease of musical life, and an entirely different view of the situation, from a contesting point of view. Living, as it were, in their new "Land of Hope and Glory," they decided to try their luck at the forthcoming contest at Newcastle-on-Tyne on November 3rd, 1906. The test-piece was the Selection, "II

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

Barbieri," and the judge was Mr. Alf. Gray, of Manchester. The result of the contest was: 1st prize, Hetton Colliery (W. Straughan); 2nd, St. Hilda Colliery; (J. A. Greenwood); 3rd, Brandon Colliery; 4th, South Shields Garibaldi (W. W. Elliott); and 5th, Sunderland Temperance (J. Oliver). Unsuccessful: Birtley Town, South Pelaw, Percy Main, Dunstan Temperance, and Shotton Colliery. This was a splendid set off under the band's first professional teacher, and new energy was immediately infused into the bandsmen and their supporters.

Mr. Bob Dennison now resigned the bandmastership of the band on account of his acceptance of another appointment, and Mr. James Taylor, of South Shields, became the local bandmaster.

The band opened its contest season of 1907 at West Stanley on May 20th, under the conductorship of Mr. T. Pritchard, of South Bank, Middlesbrough, as Mr. Greenwood had already been engaged elsewhere on that date. There was a Quick Step and Selection Contest (own choice), but St. Hilda failed to appear in the prize list on that occasion.

Their next contesting venture was at Sunderland Contest on August 5th, 1907. Test-piece, "Lohengrin." Judge, Mr. J. A. Haley. The result was as follows: 1st prize, Brandon Colliery; 2nd, Sunderland East End; 3rd, Birtley Town; 4th, St. Hilda Colliery; and 5th, Percy Main, the only other competitor being Sunderland Temperance. The only remaining contest attended that year was at Tynemouth Palace, which was held on October 5th. The selection was "Own Choice," and the judge was Mr. W. A. Crosse, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. St. Hilda was under another new conductor, Mr. William Holdsworth, and although the band, out of a great number of competitors, only gained 5th prize, it can be truly said that this was the actual beginning of the greatest achievement in the career of any band in the British Empire. For this reason it is well worthy of our notice to name the bands who took part in this particular contest, and the result, which is as follows: 1st prize, Felling Colliery (conductor, Mr. James Oliver); 2nd, Backworth Institute (John Gladney); 3rd, Brandon Colliery; 4th, Benwell and District (J. Ward); 5th, St. Hilda Colliery (W. Holdsworth); and 6th, Cockerton. The unsuccessful bands competing were: South Shields Temperance, South Shields Harmonic, Barrington Colliery, Percy Main N.E.R., Chester-le-Street Town, Binchester Colliery, Hetton Town, Birtley Town, Willington and Cockfield.

Mr. John Trelease was the Secretary of the band, and he proved himself to be indefatigable in his energies on its behalf. From the day of the Tynemouth contest, which, by the way, was the last of these splendid competitions under the direction of that bandsman's friend, Mr. Linden Travers, Mr. Trelease set about

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

bringing St. Hilda's Band in the front rank, and together with so enthusiastic a president as Mr. James Kirkley, whose interests were at burning point, the work was begun in real and genuine earnest. The bandsmen also became impregnated with the "contest fever," and it was decided to put in the winter with full rehearsals and to show all the Northern "Geordies" that the full intention of St. Hilda Band was to climb to the top by sheer hard work. Mr. Greenwood was "booked" for the big job of giving regular professional lessons, and to take the band to coming contests in the New Year. Mr. President Kirkley and Mr. Secretary Trelease both made up their minds to give of their best to the cause of the band's welfare, and in this way, although it meant a "long, long pull, and a strong, strong pull" against the many well-known contesting bands of the North, the decision was—"to put both feet into it—win or lose—and go ahead."

The first contest of 1908 was at Felling on May 9th. The test-piece was "Echoes of England," and the judge was Mr. H. Ackroyd. The result was: 1st prize, Heworth Colliery (W. Heap); 2nd, Brandon Colliery (W. Rimmer); 3rd, St. Hilda Colliery (J. A. Greenwood); 4th, Birtley Town (J. Hughes). Unsuccessful: Benwell and District, Dunston Temperance, Shotton Colliery, South Pelaw, Middlesbrough Boro' and Willington Silver. This was considered a very good beginning of the band's determination to ascend the great ladder of fame, and more energy than ever was now put into their work.

The next contest was at Benwell on August 1st, 1908. Test-piece, "Echoes of England." Judge, Mr. F. Owen, of Manchester. Result: 1st prize, Birtley Town (conductor, Mr. J. Hughes); 2nd, St. Hilda (J. A. Greenwood); 3rd, Ovington (F. Hedley). Unsuccessful: Throckley, Willington and New Brancepeth. St. Hilda was 1st in the March Contest, and Birtley Town 2nd. This was another big achievement, and the band seemed to be on the right track at last. A week later the band appeared at the Newburn Contest (August 8th). Test-piece, own choice. Judge, Mr. Charles Ward. Result: 1st prize, Murton Colliery (conductor, Mr. Alex. (Mr. J. A. Greenwood)). This result was good considering the class of bands in the competition. Corbridge-on-Tyne was the next contest, attended on August 29th, the test-pieces being of various choice as well as that of the Quick-Step contest. The judge was Mr. W. Halstead, and the result was: 1st prize, St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Willington (Mr. J. B. Wright); 3rd, Hexham (Mr. Frank Hedley); 4th, Ovington (Mr. Frank Hedley); with the unsuccessful band, Ashington. Willington won the March contest, and St. Hilda was 2nd. Still climbing the ladder of fame, the band were now more determined than ever before.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

Winlaton Contest was their next venture! This was on September 12th, and the test-piece was "Will o' th' Wisp," and the judge was Mr. C. Ward. Result: 1st prize in both March and Selection contests to St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Consett Ironworks (Mr. W. Holdsworth); 3rd, Willington Silver (Mr. J. B. Wright); 4th, Felling Colliery (Mr. J. Oliver). Unsuccessful: Percy Main, Rowlands Gill, and Birtley Town.

In the meantime, the band had entered the Junior Cup Section at the Crystal Palace, and they now settled down to determined rehearsals for this big event; an event that would not have been dreamt of a year previous, but these hefty "Geordies" were intent on ultimately showing to the world where the town of Shields stood on the map, and with this intention nailed to the mast, they travelled to the Metropolis of the British Empire, and duly arrived at the Crystal Palace rehearsed to the very inch in the test-piece, "Gems of Mozart." The judge was Mr. Robert Rimmer. There were 16 competitors in the section, and the result was: 1st prize and Cup to St. Hilda. This was indeed an achievement, and the band were now surely on the road to fame if they can only stand together through so suddenly rising to fame at their first attempt. (We'll see shortly how this band rose to every occasion when called upon).

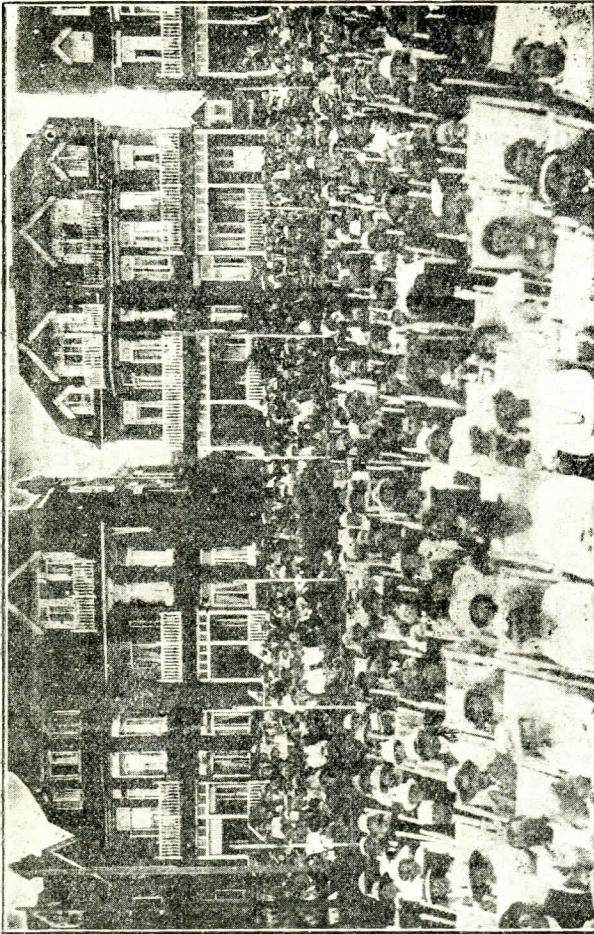
The Contest season of 1909 in the North of England opened at Felling on May 8th. The test-piece was "Echoes of the Empire," and the judge was Mr. James Oliver (Bandmaster of Felling Colliery Band). Result: 1st prize in both March and Selection to St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. G. Hawkins); 2nd prize in both March and Selection to Middlesbrough (Mr. G. Wilson); 3rd, Birtley Town (Mr. J. Hughes); 4th, Benwell Colliery (Mr. H. E. Smith). Monkwearmouth and Percy Main Bands also competed. A week later (May 15th) was Birtley Contest. Test-piece, "Old Favourites." Judge, Mr. W. Halstead. Result: 1st prize, South Moor (conductor, Mr. W. Heap); 2nd, Murton Colliery (John Gladney); 3rd, St. Hilda (Mr. George Hawkins); 4th, Cockerton (Mr. W. Watson). Unsuccessful: Felling Colliery, Heworth Colliery and Monkwearmouth.

West Stanley contest was the next to be attended on May 31st. There was a March Contest and a Selection Contest (own choice). Judge, Mr. W. Halstead. This was a big event, and the result was: 1st prize, Murton Colliery (conductor, Mr. Alex. Owen); 2nd, South Moor (Mr. W. Heap); 3rd, Heworth Colliery (Mr. W. Heap); 4th, St. Hilda (Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 5th, Chester-le-Street Mr. F. Brewis). 1st prize in the March Contest to St. Hilda; 2nd, South Moor; and 3rd to Birtley Town.

The next contest was at Brandon Colliery on July 17th, March and own choice Selection. Judge, Mr. J. Brier. Result: 1st prize, St. Hilda Colliery (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd,

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

South Derwent (Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 3rd, Brandon Colliery (Mr. W. L. Turnbull); and 4th to Redheugh Colliery. Brandon won the March Contest.



Evidence of the Drawing Power of St. Hilda's.

Benwell Contest (July 31st) was St. Hilda's next appearance. Test-piece, "Echoes of Empire." Judge, Mr. H. Smith. Result: 1st prize, Felling Colliery (conductor, Mr. J. Oliver); 2nd, St. Hilda (Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 3rd, Birtley Town (Mr. J. Hughes). The unsuccessful competitors were Ashington Silver Model, Westwood Colliery, Willington, Dunston Temperance, Percy Main and Throckley.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

Hexham was the next contest (August 2nd), and the judge was Mr. J. W. A. Eskdale. There were two Sections and a March Contest (all own choice). Result (Section 1): 1st, Spencer's Steel Works (conductor, Mr. C. Ward); 2nd, Palmer's Works (Mr. W. Holdsworth); 3rd, South Moor (Mr. W. Heap); 4th, St. Hilda (Mr. J. A. Greenwood). Hetton, Felling, and Hexham also competed, (Section 2), 1st prize, Palmer's Works; 2nd, St. Hilda; 3rd, Felling Colliery (Mr. J. Oliver); 4th, Hetton. The March contest was won by South Moor, and the 2nd was divided between St. Hilda and Spencers'.

Grangemouth Contest was the next event, and this took place on August 7th. Test-piece, "Old Favourites," together with a March Contest (own choice). The Judge was Mr. W. Halstead. Result: 1st prize in both March and Selection, St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Skinningrove Miners (Mr. George Hawkins); 3rd, Cockerton (Mr. R. H. Cooper).

We now arrive at the month of September, and as the band has entered the Crystal Palace Grand Shield Section, they are busy at the test-piece, but still have their eyes fixed on three other contests before the great day in London. Kello contest was on September 4th, and the March and Selection contests were both own choice. Judge, Mr. A. Simpson. Result: 1st prize divided between St. Hilda and Houghton-le-Spring; 3rd to Brandon Colliery. 1st in Quick March, Houghton; 2nd, St. Hilda. St. Hilda Band journeyed to the Shotton Colliery Contest on the same day, and the result of that contest was: 1st, St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Felling Colliery (Mr. J. Oliver); 3rd, Birley Town (Judge, Mr. J. Foster).

The last contest attended before their journey to the Crystal Palace was at Stanhope on September 11th. Test-piece, "Echoes of the Empire," and the judge, Mr. J. Walker, of Batley. Result: 1st prize, St. Hilda (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Cleveland Steelworks (Mr. T. Winter); 3rd, Murton Colliery (Mr. E. Vest); and 4th, Felling Colliery (Mr. J. Oliver).

The band now settled down for the great event at the Crystal Palace, and their whole energies were devoted to hard individual and sectional work in preparation for Mr. Greenwood's finishing touches to the test-piece, "Robert Devereux." The Grand Shield Section is the next step to the Championship, and nothing was left undone that was possible to achieve in working the test-piece to as near perfection as was humanly possible at the hands of the bandsmen. The fateful eve had arrived, and the bandsmen set out with great hopes of success. Arriving at the Palace, they soon found that the judges to sit in judgment upon their performances were Messrs. George Wadsworth and Albert Lawton. There

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

were 16 good class bands in this competition, and a keen struggle resulted, each band giving of its best. When the results were announced they were: 1st prize and Grand Shield to St. Hilda



JOHN R. BELL, A.R.C.M., R.M.S.M., Musical Director.
(Late M.D. Southport Municipal Orchestra.)

Colliery (conductor, Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 2nd, Raunds Temperance (Mr. W. Halliwell); 3rd, Slaithwaite (Mr. B. Lodge); 4th, Barton Cycle Works (Mr. W. Holdsworth). This was, indeed, a

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

great achievement for St. Hilda, and their reception at Shields on their return home was of an imposing nature, as the bandmen thoroughly deserved their success. Only one more contest remained to be attended in 1909, and this was at South Shields on December 11th. The test-piece was "Der Freischutz," and the judge was Mr. W. Halstead. Result: 1st in both March and Selection to Murton Colliery (conductor, Mr. W. Halliwell); 2nd in both March and Selection to St. Hilda (Mr. J. A. Greenwood); 3rd, South Shields Garibaldi (Mr. R. Binnie); and 4th to Felling Colliery (Mr. J. Oliver).

The total prizes won by St. Hilda in 1909 were 10 firsts, 6 seconds, 1 third and 2 fourths. Certainly not bad for the second year of their "big push forward," and the people were now beginning to find out that there was such a place as South Shields on the map.

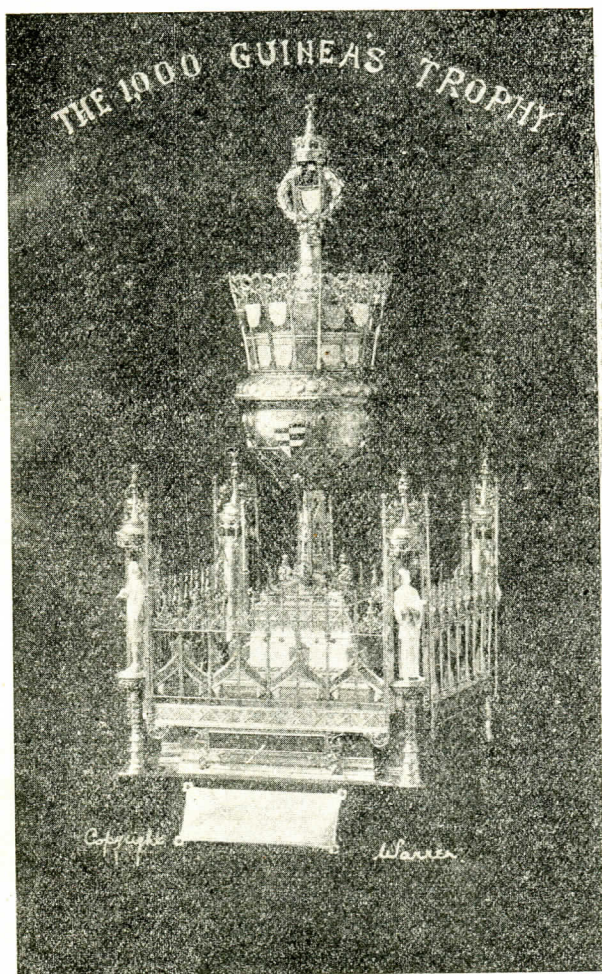
The year 1910 brought in many good engagements, and the band competed at all the local contests with conspicuous success, but as I have brought them through all their troublous times, and the beginning of their real contesting career, it is needless to devote any more time to these local events. The band were now eligible to compete for the Thousand Guinea Challenge Trophy, and—"nothing venture, nothing have"—they duly travelled to the Crystal Palace under Mr. J. A. Greenwood, but were unplaced in the prize list. Undaunted, the band returned home all the better for their experience among the "big guns" of the Brass Band World, but more determined than ever before to wrestle that trophy from the best of them at some future period. Their minds were made up on winning that Trophy, and this was their chief desire forthwith.

Now comes the greatest change in the history of this remarkable band. The year 1911 brought to them a new bandmaster, Mr. James Oliver, from the Felling Colliery Band, one of the foremost young teachers of the day, and a most successful contesting bandmaster. Another turning point in the same year was the appointment of Mr. James Southern as Solo Trombone, and the appointment of Mr. Alf Grey as professional conductor. Undoubtedly, the appointment of Mr. Oliver was the real turning point in the destinies of the band, together with that of Mr. Southern, although nothing of very great import occurred during the first year.

Among the minor events of 1911 were: 2nd prize at West Stanley; 1st in the Selection at Northallerton; 2nd in March and Selection at Waterhouses. We now arrive at the great year, 1912, which will remain in the history of St. Hilda for all time. Besides many local contests, the band appeared at the Belle Vue July

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

contest, under Mr. Alf. Grey, and won 4th prize. They also attended Northallerton Contest on August 5th against some of the best old contestors in England under Mr. Grey. Result: 1st in



Won by ST. HILDA'S BAND Five Times.

March to Wyke Temperance: 2nd, St. Hilda. 1st in Selection, Hebden Bridge; 2nd to St. Hilda.

At Choppington Contest, under Mr. James Oliver, on August 12th, St. Hilda won both the March and Selection Contests. This

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

“bucked the band up” for coming events at both the September Belle Vue and Crystal Palace contests. In the meantime, they engaged Mr. W. Halliwell, of Wigan, as their professional teacher—thanks to the efforts of Mr. Southern, whose energies as a coming manager was observed.

On September 2nd, they competed at Belle Vue under their new conductor, Mr. Halliwell, and won 2nd prize, which was a splendid path to the coming Thousand Guinea Challenge Trophy Contest at the Crystal Palace, and although time was very short, they went home and began on the big test piece with a view to travelling home from the Palace as winners of the coveted trophy.

September 26th, 1912, was the great day at the Crystal Palace, and twenty-five of the finest bands and conductors of the British Empire had entered the Championship Section. The test-piece was a difficult selection from Rossini's “William Tell,” and the judges were Lieut. Charles Godfrey, Lieut. J. Ord Hume, and Mr. G. H. Mercer. The competition was keenly contested, and each performance was listened to by a packed and silent audience who seemed to devour every note that was played by the various bands. It was estimated that there was nearly 100,000 people present at the Palace that day, and not one vacant seat could be found at the evening concert, when the result of the whole of the competitions was about to be announced. St. Hilda, however, knew their performance had given their supporters great satisfaction, and that it would be no great surprise to their most severe opponents if the Number went up in their favour. The crucial moment arrived, and the announcement was 1st prize and the Championship of Great Britain and the Colonies, together with the many other trophies, and the Thousand Guinea Challenge Trophy to St. Hilda Band from South Shields, County Durham (conductor, Mr. Wm. Halliwell). Each bandsman was also presented with the Bronze Medal of the Crystal Palace Company.

Everyone throughout the British Empire now knew that there was a place called South Shields on the map of England.

The band's reception on their return home to Shields was simply indescribable. Mayoral receptions were the order, and all went well for the great band of “Geordies” from County Durham.

Now that I have brought this famous band to its first win of the great National trophy contest at the Crystal Palace, I need but continue from what I have already written concerning their career from my book, entitled “Famous Bands of the British Empire,” which will bring their history up to the present, but before doing so, I desire to mention that the original founder, Mr. John Dennison, was born at Shields in 1840, and died there on January 14th, 1914, beloved and respected by all.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

The following—continuing the history of the famous St. Hilda Band—is from the book, "Famous Bands of the British Empire," by A. E. Zealley and J. Ord Hume. (Published by J. P. Hull, 36, Rathbone Place, London, W.1., price 6/-): The St. Hilda Colliery Band (26 performers) claims to be one of the very finest brass bands in the kingdom. Their contesting record substantiates this. They have for the last 14 years been most consistently at the head of most of the biggest band competitions open to all comers, such as the Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, and the Crystal Palace, London, where they have the proud distinction of being the only band to commence their career in the junior section, and win first prize each successive year, until they were admitted into the championship class, which they won at their third attempt in the 1912-13 event, being placed second the following year, 1913-14, the last contest held at the Crystal Palace, which was abandoned owing to the Great War.

At this point some members were mobilised, and several joined the fight for King and Country, which brought the Band to a very low ebb. The Committee now realised they must have a go-ahead Secretary and Manager, and Mr. Southern accepted the position; and after the outbreak of the Great War, the band decided to abandon competing at band concerts, and do all that they could for the various charities. They gave their services entirely free on over a hundred occasions, and were instrumental in raising, directly and indirectly, over £13,000, this in spite of the increasing difficulty of "carrying-on" during the War, as fourteen of their regular playing members served in H.M. Forces (ten overseas), but a fairly high standard of efficiency was maintained.

After the Armistice, the band were fortunate in getting back nearly all their players, and re-asserted their former supremacy by winning the 1st prize at the North of England Musical Festival, held at Leazes Park, Newcastle, 28th June, 1919—£40 in cash; the Newcastle Chronicle Gold Cup valued at 200 guineas; and specials for soloists.

The adjudicator, Mr. J. Weston Nicholl, complimented the winners on their excellent rendering of the test piece (Tschaikowsky).

Then at the Ashington open contest, on July 26th, they won two first prizes, and specials for all the soloists (test selection, "Oberon.")

At South Shields Contest, July 26th, the adjudicator, Mr. J. Ord Hume, again publicly complimented the winners (St. Hilda's) on their remarkably fine playing, which was equal to anything he had heard in his whole experience of band adjudicating.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

The season 1920 commenced with the band winning the Durham and Northumberland championship contest at Sunderland, Easter Monday.

Then followed the winning of the 1,000 guinea trophy, many special prizes and (being for the second time) silver medals for each member, at the Crystal Palace contest on 25th September, one of the most popular wins on record.

Out of 20 competitors in 1920, at Glasgow, they gained 1st prize (60-guinea shield) for best dress and deportment.

For season 1921 they succeeded in arranging a month's tour in various parts of England, with tremendous success, and again competed and won the Crystal Palace 1,000 guinea trophy and the Championship of the British Empire for the third time; 1st prize, £100 cash and special gold medals to each member—a record to be proud of. Adjudicator's remarks: Tone, tune, time, reading, technique and expression of finest culture.

1922. Continuous tours in many parts of England, with phenomenal records at every place visited. Also winners of the open competition and Newcastle Chronicle Gold Cup valued at £200 and £50 cash.

1923. Winners (for the third time) of Newcastle Chronicle Gold Cup, and continued successful tours.

1924 was St. Hilda's most successful year. Their consistent records and touring of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and Isle of Wight, again marked their popularity at every place visited. They again competed at Crystal Palace Contest.

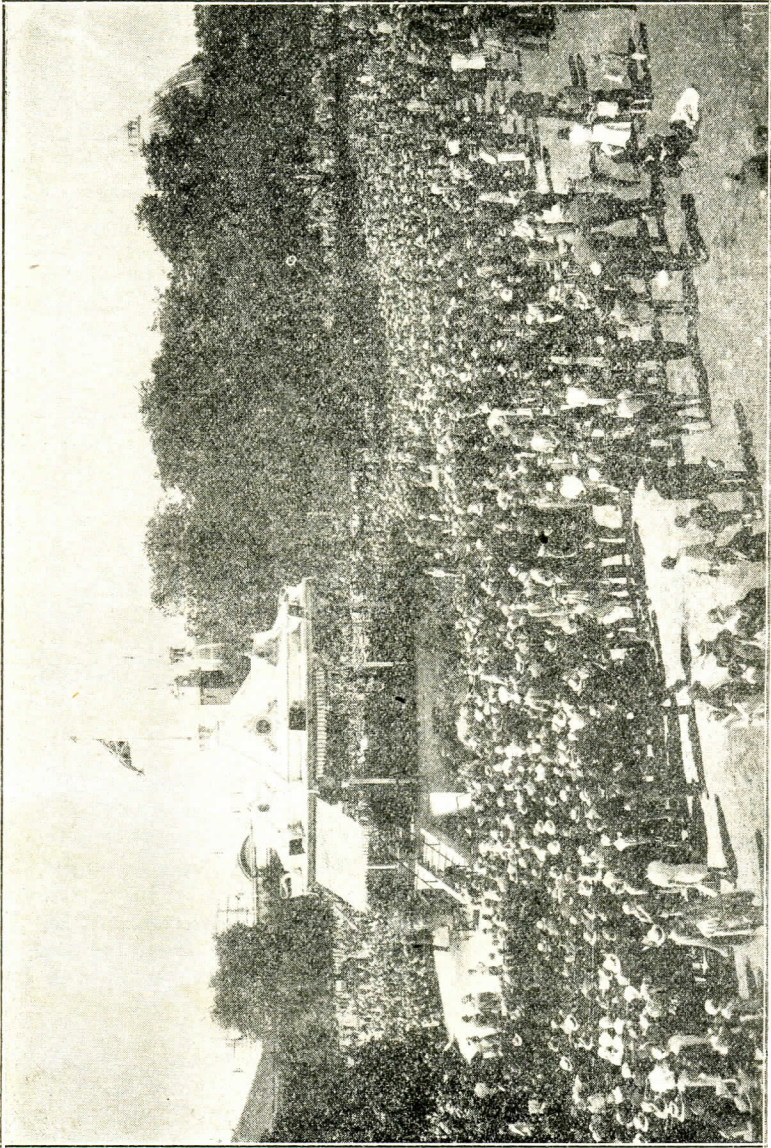
The above famous band won the Thousand Guinea Trophy for the fourth time, thereby setting up a world's record. Four wins, one second, two fourths in seven consecutive contests. This is an achievement of which St. Hilda's may well be proud.

On this occasion the Crystal Palace contest was visited with more than usual interest. Our cousins from the Overseas Dominions, Newcastle Steel Works (Australia), were among the entrants. Previous to this contest they had carried all before them. Having met and beaten all our leading contest bands, St. Hilda's, therefore, became England's only hope of retaining the ashes. How they rose to the occasion, giving one of the most inspired performances ever heard from any band, will become brass band history.

To the credit of the Australians, be it said, they admitted defeat. Their bandmaster, in a letter of congratulation to Mr. Oliver, says: "Success justly deserved."

Adjudicator's remarks: "A huge triumph in artistic playing."

Guest Band at Canadian National Exhibition, 1931.



The Super Attraction of the Age.

THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

FACTS AND FIGURES.

The band is one of the finest brass bands in the United Kingdom, and are winners of 80 first prizes, 11 challenge cups, and 150 special prizes.

The band has given five Royal Command performances.

They have raised over £13,000 for charity.

Finest toned band in the country.—*Vide Press.*

Value of prizes won, over £10,000.

Each member of the band is a gold and silver medallist.

St. Hilda has been offered a Mediterranean and world tour.

They have already taken part in Imperial Exhibitions in the Colonies with colossal success.

Mr. John R. Bell, A.R.C.M., R.M.S.M., is the conductor, whilst Mr. James Southern is the energetic secretary and sole manager, to whose untiring work a great deal of the success of the band is due.

TROPHIES WON

by the Famous St. Hilda's Band

include—

1,000 guinea trophy and championship, Crystal Palace, 1912, 1920, 1921, 1924 & 1926; Newburn Cup, 1907, 1907-8; Junior Cup, Crystal Palace (3rd section), 1908; Grand Shield, Crystal Palace (2nd section), 1909; Grangetown Cup, 1909, 1910, won outright, 1911; Hunt Shield, 1911, 1922; Association Cup, 1911, 1920; Birtley Cup, 1911, 1912, won outright 1913; Daily Telegraph, 1913, 1922; Chronicle Gold Cup (Newcastle), 1919, 1920; Durham and Northumberland Championship, 1920, 1921; Beaver 60 guinea Shield (dress and deportment), 1920.

Much of the present-day success of this famous band is due to that splendid secretary and manager—Mr. James Southern. Mr. Southern is a well-known personality, and his business capacity is thorough to a degree. Through his instrumentality the band possess a touring charabanc which is built to carry everything that will be required by the band on a two or three months' tour! The car originally cost two thousand guineas, and it was paid for, in

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 (E) NOVELTY—"WENT TO MOW A MEADOW" Windsor
 (B) INTRODUCTION AND MARCH FROM "WILLIAM TELL" Rossini
 (D) MARCH FROM "TANNHAUSER" Wagner
 (E) FOP-TROT—"GOOD NIGHT, MY DARLING" D. Pryor
 (B) VALSE—"MEMORIES OF STRAUSS" Strauss
 (A) HUMORESQUE—"LASSIES AND LADS" A. Truman
 (A) FANTASIA—"A SAILOR'S LIFE" S. Cope
 (C) VALSE—"THE GRAFENBERGER" Gungl
 (C) VALSE—"FORGET-ME-NOT" S. Cope
 (C) CORNET SOLO—"TARANTO" Windsor
 (C) DANCE SUITE—"PASTORAL SCENES" J. Durant
 (C) POT POURRI—"MERRIELAND" Myers
 (C) CORNET SOLOS | "ROMANZA" | G. Hawkins
 | "WARBLINGS AT EVE" |
 (C) WALTZ—"BLUE DANUBE" Strauss
 (C) CORNET SOLO—"THE WARRIOR" Windsor
 (C) CORNET SOLO—"ALPINE ECHOES" Windsor
 (C) FANTASIA—"A MILITARY CHURCH PARADE" Hum-
 (E) GAVOTTE—"MIGNON" Thomas
 (E) COUNTRY DANCE—"HARVESTERS" S. Cope
 (E) CORNET POLKA—"FASCINATION" G. Hawkins
 (E) DESCRIPTIVE—"THE VILLAGE SMITHY" S. Cope
 (E) ONE STEP—"WEE GRENADIER" T. Graham
 (E) ONE STEP—"PIPER'S WEDDING" K. Thyne
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THE HISTORY OF ST. HILDA'S BAND—Continued.

travelling expenses alone, in a little over twelve months! Mr. Southern practically "lives for the band," and to him there is no other band to compare with St. Hilda, and he is about right in his keen estimation of his fellow bandsmen. He is himself one of the foremost trombone players in the world of brass band and music, and is always in attendance wherever the band may be engaged.

Mr. William Halliwell is the professional teacher of this famous band. This gentleman is so well known that there need be no more said about him, only that St. Hilda **must** have the best tuition possible, and **that** is why Mr. Halliwell is the professional conductor of St. Hilda's Band: "**The Champion Brass Band of the British Empire.**"

The story of St. Hilda's Band winning the Thousand Guinea Challenge Trophy for the fifth time, on Saturday, September 25th, 1926, is well-known through the civilised world, and need not be further commented upon here, but merely to say that much of this splendid success was due to the magnificent tonal qualities of the band, a triumph of artistic talent.

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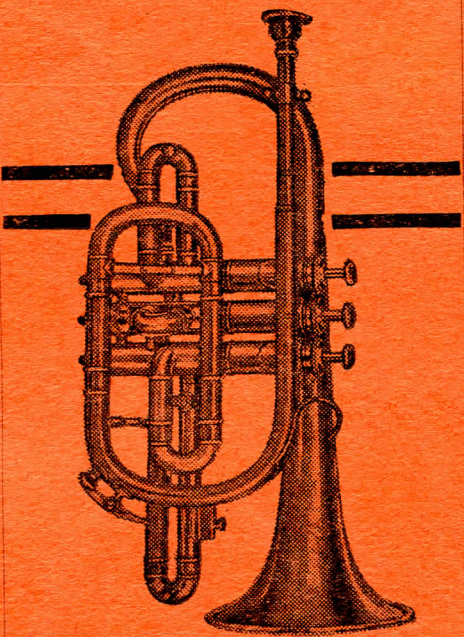
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