

SANDYE SILVER BAND

By Gavin Holman

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The origins of the Sandye Silver band go back to 10 March 1962, when a quartet of musicians at Sandye Place School played for morning assembly under the direction of the music teacher, Peter Kneale. Within a year this grew into a School Band for Sandye Place, consisting of pupils and teachers. In 1966, when several members of the Band left school, Peter Kneale formed the Sandye Place School Band.

In October 1967 the first committee was formed to run the Band, and in July of the following year the name was changed to Sandye Silver Band. In July 1969 the Band left the further education system and became a fully independent self-supporting organisation. Also in 1969 the Band affiliated to the London and Home Counties Brass Band Association so that band contests could be entered. In 1971, after only two years of competition, the Band qualified for the finals of the National Brass Band Championship (Fourth Section), and finished in eleventh position. On two occasions, in 1968 and 1975, the Band won the Brass Band Class at the Bedfordshire Music Festival.

During the early 1970s the Band performed many engagements, both at nearby and distant venues. In 1973 the founder Peter Kneale left, and was succeeded by Duncan Wells of Dunstable, a player with the Hendon Band. The number of players declined, and with them the number of engagements, but the 1980 season proved to be the busiest to date. In the previous April the Band moved from its birthplace at Sandye Place School to the new Sandy Upper School where rehearsal facilities were more convenient. During the 1980s the Band enjoyed continued success, and was known in its later stages as Prudential Sandye Band, but following the loss of key members in 1989 the decision was made to suspend activities and put all equipment and assets into storage.

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The Band Trustees continued to meet, but at the seventh annual general meeting in March 1997 it was decided that there was no realistic chance of the Band reforming, and that the remaining assets should be sold and the Band dissolved. At the final AGM on 16 March 1998 it was reported that the sale of instruments and music had raised £3,065. At the same meeting it was decided to lodge the Band's records with the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service, and the 1967-1998 minutes, accounts and engagement books were deposited there.

The IBEW website also contains brief details of four earlier Sandy brass bands, as follows:

Sandy Brass Band (1) – This was active from the early 1860's to the late 1880's. The conductor in 1867 was Mr Green.

Sandy Mission Brass Band – This was active in 1891 and was associated with the Sandy Primitive Methodist Band of Hope.

Sandy Brass Band (2) – Founded in early 1894, with conductor Mr Jenkins, secretaries F Stacey and H A Munday, and treasurer John Smith. The Band was re-organised, after "passing through various vicissitudes" in March 1898 under the baton of W Green.

Sandy Brass Band (3) – The Band was reformed in 1899, conductor F Stacey. It was reported to have been "re-organised" in January 1902. Charles J Kempe was bandmaster in 1901-1903, W A Kempe conductor from 1904, Mr Seamer conductor in 1920, and Tom Hunt conductor in 1922. The band was disbanded in 1935.

Editor's Note – the Mr W Green referred to in relation to two of these early Sandy Brass Bands was William Green (1838-1920), headmaster of St Swithun's school from the 1860's to the 1880's, after whom Green's Close is named. He was also Secretary of the Sandy Show, Secretary of the Horticultural Society, and conductor of the Church of England Temperance Society Glee Union and Drum and Fife Band.