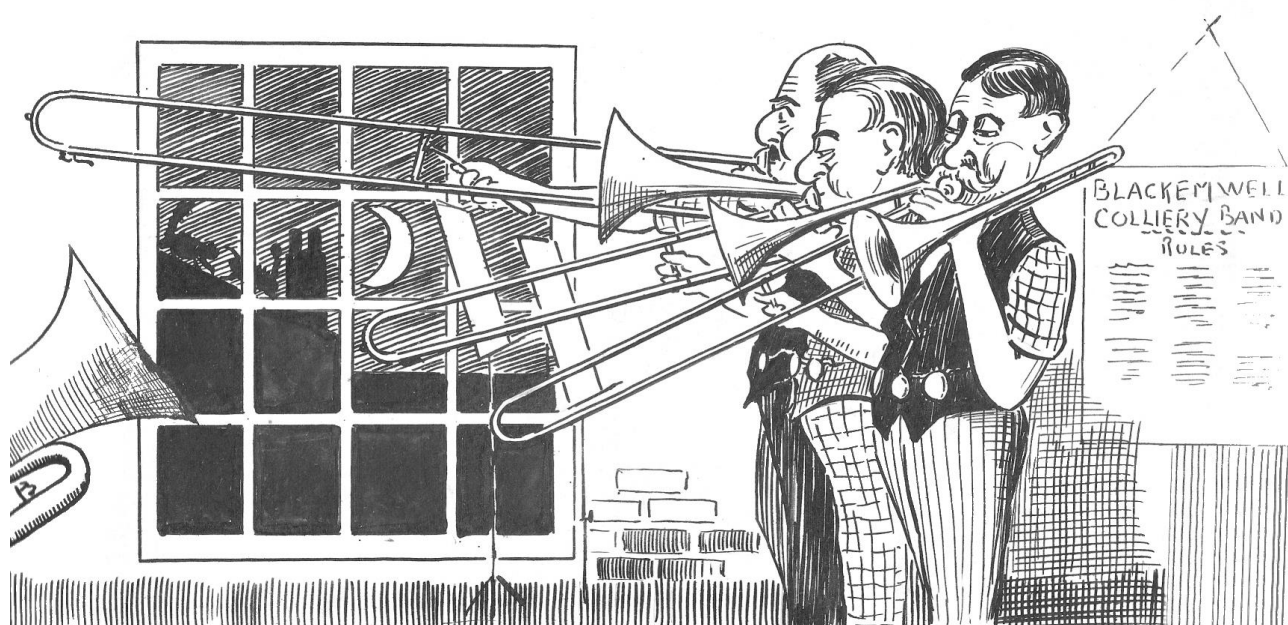


The poetry of brass bands

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28 September 2017 (National Poetry Day) - updated February 2024

Over the years several brass bands have been immortalised in poetry. From those lauding their heroes to the ones which are critical or even insulting. From the earliest days, poets have found something in the music of the bands and the people who play in them to inspire their muse. I think it is fair to say that most of the writers would not have made a career out of their works - some are certainly more William McGonagall than William Wordsworth – but nonetheless they are priceless views of the bands and bandsmen. 163 examples of odes to the bands of the past are collected here for your enjoyment.



Rehearsing for the band contest – the trombone section

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RISHWORTH AND RYBURN VALLEY BRASS BAND

Sam Mellor, Ripponden - An example of praise celebrating their contest win in 1906

Winning the "Daily Graphic" Challenge Cup and other Prizes, at the Crystal Palace, Saturday, Sept. 29th, 1906

Up to the great, big Hall of glass,
That stands o'er the hills of Kent;
Beyond the roar of the city
Well, the Ryburn bandsmen went.

They left their homes in the village,
Two hundred miles of a ride,
To try for a cup, worth winning,
With a touch of fame beside.

They play'd, and they play'd superbly,
They play'd, and they play'd their best,
To try to carry the trophy
From the hands of all the rest.

At night, they wired the village,
"Tell, the Ryburn Band has won,"
And the lads they all felt bigger,
And the men all said "well done."

Returning, a stranger met them,
His voice, just over the din,
"These are not men, but lads!" said he,
But they're men enough to win.

CAMELON BRASS BAND

In the Falkirk Mail of 16th November 1907 a poem appeared entitled "*Auld Camelon Band*", of which the first verse is:

There's Auld Camelon Band they're aye tae the fore;
They started wi' flutes in the year '34,
If you had only heard them their music you'd adore,
For always their number was less than a score,
Their auld flutes ha'e been turned into brass
Three cheers tae the friends that gave them the cash,
For we've all joined together to gi'e them a hand,
and try and make good members tae the auld Camelon Band

SLAIDBURN BAND

The band's tour of the outlying farms and hamlets above the village around Christmas 1903 is documented in the poem "*Success To The Slaidburn Band*", by Ellen Cowking. It tells in 34 verses which places were visited and the names of the residents.

FRECKLETON BAND

Kate Hall lived in Freckleton at the turn of the 20th century and wrote poems on a wide range of topics. After her death, a book of her poems was unearthed which included several about the Freckleton Brass Band. The first few verses of her poem "*The Cup Winners*" is shown here. For the rest of the poem, and others about the band, see: Kate Hall's Freckleton Band poetry at <https://freckletonband.co.uk/the-early-twentieth-century-poems-of-kate-hall/>

Here's Good Luck to Freckleton Band
Who won the cup again;
And took some extra prizes
All honour to their name.

For they well assume their laurels
And the prizes they have won;
What other band in the Fylde can boast
Of the great things they have done.

What though some other band may sneer
And jealously snide;
They must not fear, for still they stand
The Champions of the Fylde.

They win by their own efforts
No subterfuge have they
No violating contest rules
But good straightforward play.

ROTHWELL TEMPERANCE BAND

Under the heading '*The Temperance Band*' in the Rothwell Times of May 5th, 1882, a poem of nine verses was printed, of which the following are two examples:

Last Christmas as you all well know,
We had the one Brass Band,
Now you see we have got two,
And one 'tis said won't stand

They say that water cannot
Blow a note so clear
But that is false!
I know a man
That's proved it many a year

THOSE CORNETS! (Barrow upon Humber Band)

(Dedicated to Barrow upon Humber Brass Band - 1897)

The basses, soft and mellow, never shrill,
With proper modulations, swell and fall,
And seldom ape the creaking of a mill,
Or the Tommy-cat's nocturnal caterwaul.

But the cornet player blows
A very different sort of tone -
Discord every bit his own -
Could you listen and restrain
Language warm, or feel no pain,
Well - you're constitution's made of sterner stuff than I suppose.

Those cornets, O those cornets, how they scream
As seagulls on the startled air of night;
I hear them now, I hear them when I dream,
And I wish they were in Hull out of my sight,

O cruel cornet-blower,
Blow sweeter, gentler, lower,
Or away with your false harmony;
'Tis like that "made in Jarmany"
I'd heard so oft before.
If you really can't play better,
And I must die thus, I'll get a
German band to kill me, though it cost a copper more.

HARROGATE BAND SONG

Cumberland Clark - 1926

Did you ever hear the Harrogate Band?
Although it's so awful they think it grand,
You can hear it as the day is dawning,
When you take your waters in the morning.

There once was a man, I understand,
Who said that he liked the Harrogate Band;
I thought him the strangest man on earth,
'Till I found out that he'd been deaf from birth.

The instruments all creak and wheeze,
They wander off into various keys,
It may suit some, but it's not my taste,
For it gives me pains below the waist.

Did you ever hear that awful Band?
There's nothing like it in all the land,
Its' strains of music are so sad,
It makes all good people feel quite bad.

Did you ever hear that curious band?
The Band and the Cure go hand in hand,
As the music is not at all too pure,
No wonder the visitors need a cure.

They played last night for a good half-hour,
'Till I turned pale, and the milk turned sour,
The lights burned dim and the air went blue,
Then the gas went out, and the cat went too.

And when they're marching through the town,
The noise that they make really wears you down,
The dogs join in, with all just cause,
And citizens wane behind locked doors.

To stand that Band you need great nerve,
If the members got what they deserve,
They'd be taken out to a quiet spot,
Where the visitors could shoot the lot.

This was set to music by Donald Avison, and recorded by the Harrogate Band on their CD "Made in Harrogate", with soprano vocalist Laura Jackson, as part of the "Harrogate Songbook"

WHAT A DAY (Ecclesfield Silver Band)

Ecclesfield Silver Band – New Brighton Contest 1971

We left Stocks Hill abaht heaf past seven
In a coach at least ninety foot long
Mooast'at Band were haef asleep
An back wheel didn't sound very strong

However we landed at Ormskirk all reight
And everyone seemed quite keen
First chap we saw w'er Jimmy Gee
An' he said, "Whee'rs yaw monkeys been?"

We piled aht a coach an' into Guides Hut
An quickly fixed up for a blow
In't meantime our ladies wer starting t o mash
And sooin' ad meat pies on't go

Off once again and through t'Mersey Tunne1
At yon' end we should a turned right
But coming from t' village we turned left a' course
And nearly reached. Isle O' Wight

New Brighton at last so we piled in for t'draw
An theer all us troubles begun
Desmond came running an' shouted out loud
"LOOK sharp lads we've drawn number wun"

"Oh god" we all cried "We've done it ageean"
An fished 'aht us copies at' Queen
Then marched on't stage all knocking at knees
Wi some of our faces quite green

After eight weeks a practice this wer it
As we waited for t' whistle to blow
Every man Jack in that band of ours
Determined to give a good show

Often in't past when folks heeard us play
They'd run far away from t' bandstand
Nah' we played well an even so
Poor Alex reached Switzerland

He must 'a stopped thear while t'rest on 'em played
Although we didn't play werst
Not having heard the other bands play
He wer forced to put Ecclesfield first !

But whether or not this wer case
First prize wer still quite a big un
An no doubt we'll all go contesting again
It might be next week at Wigan!

CARNWATH BRASS BAND

Carnwarth Brass Band, Carnwath Brass Band
I never saw a band like Carnwath Brass Band;
Frae Orkney to Gretna, seek thro' all the land,
Au' ye'll no fin' a band like Carnwath Brass Band.

Carnwath Brass Band, a' are strapping young men,
Some are six feet six, some are five feet ten;
Little Johnnie is the crate, and Jamie wants a band,
Yet, ye'll never fin' a band like Carnwath Brass Band;

When our band gaed to Biggar, a' the lasses were surprised
To see a band o' men o' such wondrous size
In uniform so fine, and in stature so grand,
O, they never saw a Band like Carnwath Brass Band!

Their music loud and strong, re-echoed to the skies,
The very hares and foxes were filled wi' surprise;
Some little hills might dance, but auld Tintoc made a stand,
Astonished with the strains o' Carnwath Brass Band!

At Biggar and Carluke, they behaved unco weel,
Did their duty and cam' hame, without servin' the diel,
And when they were at Linton, astonished a' the land,
Wi the nimble footed powers o' Carnwath Brass Band.

But O! the last St John's day, they got an unco fa',
Altho' it was winter, it was neither frost nor snaw,
Yet they got their sells so drunk, that some could scarcely stand,
And wasna that a shame to Carnwath Brass Band.

The laddie wi' the red cap, that thumps the muckle drum,
Was so very fat, he could hardly gar't play dum;
And Johnnie roared the 'Ewie' when be wasna fit to stand,
And wasna that a shame to Carnwath Brass Band.

Our Jock's, seen often ill, but never was seen worse,
Be was so doiled and swabble that he couldna clean his horse;
But lay as he'd been shot at Sebastopol so grand,
And wasna that a shame to Carnwath Brass Band.

Lazy, lien, genty Tim, got himself so clatty fou;
He was carried thir'd the way, like a newly stickey cow,
In the smiddy lay in state, like a Satan's firebrand,
And wasna that a shame to Carnwath Brass Band

Young men o' the band, tak ye my advice,
Beware o' whisky drinkin' if ye wad be wise;
Carry on as ye've begun, and a bairn may understand
Ye'll no very lang be Carnwath Brass Band

DUNNIKIER BRASS BAND

1909

Hurrah! Hurrah! It's come at last,
I really do declare;
Ye'll see them marching doon the street,
Playing the Scottish airs.
The auld folk prance, the young ane's dance,
And at each ither speer-
Oh, tell me where the band comes frae?
We'll, it comes frae Dunnikier - Aye.

It's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
It's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
As they go marching doon the street,
They're sae tidy, trim, and neat – and
That's the Dunnikier Brass Band

Come on noo boys, jist rally roond,
And aye support, yer baund;
It'll no' be very long before
It's heard on contest staund.
You've got the best men roond about,
Of that there is nae doot.
And when your baund begins to play
You'll hear the people shout – that

It's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
It's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
When you hear the public say
That's the best we heard today,
You'll feel proud o' the Dunnikier Brass Band

Enthusiastic men you've got
Tae take ye by the haund;
Stand by them - they'll staund by you
And then you'll understaund;
That when ye “pool” thegither, weel,
The battle is half won.
And when ye lift the prizes – then
The public say "Well done!"

That's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
That's the Dunnikier Brass Band,
When you hear the the miners cry -
“Good for Reid and C Mackay!”
They've revived the Dunnikier Brass Band

THE CONTEST - A TRIBUTE TO THORNLEY BAND

They sit around in horse-shoe style
Instruments ready all the while
They watch the man in uniformed hat
With baton raised, no silly chat.
The work's all done, rehearsal gone,
It's now that they have practised for.
The bandmaster keenly scans the score,
Down comes the baton they've been waiting for.
They play their hearts out
Because they know the other bands are formidable foes.
"Beethoven's works" - the test piece played,
Opening butterflies soon allayed.
Unison, then a great solo
A cadenza, to make the performance grow.
Loud applause at the end
Greet them wildly like 'Amen'
Of course, they won
With points in hand
No others could touch the Thornley
Our silver prize band!

THE BLANCHARDSTOWN SOUND

by Tommy Bracken, 1971

They blow and they pound
The Blanchardstown sound
The beat is something grand,
And for many a year
There's always been a cheer
For the sound of the Blanchardstown Band

The Merseyside beat
Would bow in defeat
Joe Loss would be struck to the ground
The Garda Band at the races
Would have awe struck their faces
If they heard the Blanchardstown sound

The bands of the Army
Would in envy turn "barmy"
Or even retreat underground,
No need in denying
And no use in trying
To compare with the Blanchardstown sound

All of the bands
O'er the world ever played
There's still yet one to be found,
Like our village brass band
The pride of our land
Long live the Blanchardstown sound

THE BRASS BAND CONTEST OR BLIND JACKSON FOR EVER

O come all ye fine Norfolk Dumplings and Joeys who live in this city,
And I'll try just to tickle your fancy by reciting my sorrowful ditty.
On Monday the place was alive, and folks to the Market did stray.
And what did they go there to see, that wonderful thing a fine day.
High and low, great and small were assembled, and round at each other did stare,
To see the sun shining so bright, and wonder'd howe'er it got there.
Fine weather this summer is scarce and rain comes almost every day.
So when there's a chance of sunshire, they on with their duds and away.

“To-wit to-wo” says the Owl, I'll scheme a fine sight, yet be thrifty;
For by laying out forty-five pounds, I can manage to double my fifty.
So a contest of brass was soon plan'd to take place on the new Cricket ground,
And the Norwichers glad of a change, rushed off at the very first sound.
The schoolmaster shut up his school and sent all his boys out to play,
But he took care to have them all come, till he pocketed all the week's pay.
Tom French Horn has given up his shaving and intends just to live at his case,
Because when his shop was kept open he couldn't go to such jolly sprees.

There's Dogdard who says he's a printer, who is not to be done by a trifle,
March'd up to the ground in his plumes, but he had not to borrow a rifle.
There was a Cockey, who wears a moustache to make him look fierce like a man,
Was seen smoking his pipe on the ground and eying an half-gallon can.
In the Market the bands met together, the Ipswich in light grey and red,
The blue Cambridge chaps were all stunners; the Railway band with their head
The Peterboroughs were no duffers. The Norwich band with their grey sacks on,
They all of them played very well, but they had no chance with Blind Jackson.

His chaps blew so well, I heard say they did not lose a puff of their wind,
And for fear that the wind should fize out, they were well stuffed with cotton behind.
Well the cup and the cornet they won, and everyone thought it quite fair,
'Xept the band which had got a thick head, and, oh! lor, how those railway chaps
swear.
They made sure o' winning, you see, of self-conceit they have a full share,
If they could not afford to lose, what business had they to come here.
They said the judges were partial, I am sure I don't know if they were;
But if they'd asked Jenny Marshall, she'd suited em all to a hair.

Well the day was a fine treat be sure, with such squeezing and treading on corns,
While the girls were all highly delighted to see how they handled their horns.
George Coe made a smell and smoke with fireworks just after dark,
And this was the point of the joke, that each maiden might pick up a spark,
And go billing and cooing along, and what else I'm too modest to say,
But make yourself scarce Master James, or you'll soon have the Beadle to pay.
There's gentleman Awl he says nothing, the Alderman's forced to fight shy,
But Rifleman Awl, with his ramrod was seen aiming at a Bull's eye.

Then success to the old Owlets' nest, where the shiners are laid up in store,
May he ne'er turn his noughts into nines, then the money will faster in pour!
Then success to each kind-hearted maiden, may none of them turn out forlorn,
Who taught our brave Rifleman how they can blow the short notes on their horn!
Success to each musical hero, who musical honour still seeks,
May he ne'er prove the truth of the poet, and "Blow wind and so crack his cheeks"!
Then success to friend Jackson, tho' blind, that misfortune we all of us pity,
May he long keep thus sound in this wind, for the honour of old Norwich city.

THE BRASS BAND CONTEST - THE NORWICHER'S GRAND SPREE

20th August 1860

You may say what you like, but I think you must own,
Of all the grand sprees there ever was known,
There never was one it must be confest,
That ever exceeded the Brass Band Contest.

Why the thoughts on't alone turned the Norwichers mad,
Though many a wild goose chase they have had;
By hundreds they thronged, at home they couldn't rest,
Their heads were so full of the Brass Band Contest.

For most of them expected as they very well might,
They should certainly have seen a most splendid sight,
For Bills were put out and by them express't,
The grand doings there'd be at this famous Contest.

The Bands were invited from all parts of the nation,
To come down to Norwich on this grand occasion,
On purpose to try each other for to best,
For a Fifteen Pound Prize at the Brass Band Contest.

And the Twentieth of August, it being the day,
That these Sons of Apollo their skill should display;
On the New Cricket Ground like talented boys,
And try who was able to make the most noise.

One o'clock being the time that the Band were to meet,
From every hole and corner, lane, alley and street,
Away ran the Norwichers just as though they were crazy,
Both the old and the young, the lame and the lazy.

And not only Norwichers, but also their country cousins,
That the cheap trains had brought to the City by dozens,
Till the Market place was so crowded with women and men
But a more disappointed party there never was seen.

Why some of them got into a terrible passion,
They thought to have seen a most splendid procession,
But instead of the Bands starting off all together,
Some of them went one way and some went another.

When they got to the ground a rare fist on't they made,
Some blew till their eyes were fit to start from their head;
Some blew their lips down till they couldn't make a sound,
Their minds were so fix't on the sweet fifteen pound.

And one Cornet blower amongst the poor wretches,
Blew so hard that he actually dirtied his breeches;
So anxious was he the Silver Cornet to gain,
But he found to his cost all his blowing was in vain.

For 'twas very well known before the Contest begun,
Billy Jaxon was the chap that was fix't upon;
The Silver Cornet to win, his lungs being the strongest,
He was able to blow both the loudest and strongest.

As for the Norwich Cornet Blowers, each conceited fellow,
Found young Billy Jaxon can beat them quite hollow;
They may bounce and may swagger, and blow all they like,
They've no more chance with Jaxon than poor old Bob Dike.

But the worst job of all I really do think,
Is the extortionate charge that was made for the drink;
For when in the Booth for truth I am told,
At a shilling a bottle Mild Porter was sold.

And after the Contest came the grand Rural Sport,
Such as Bow and Arrow shooting, and things of that sort;
Hurdle jumping, Rope Dancing, which must be confess'd,
Was the best part of the Spree at this Brass Band Contest.

And to finish the Sports and wind up the day,
Of Fireworks there was a most Brilliant Display;
Get up by George Coe, in both Red, Blue and Green,
Such Fireworks before there never was seen.

When the sports were all ended and ten o'clock come,
They thought it was time to return to their home,
And retire into bed, but they could take no rest,
They were dreaming all night of the Brass Band Contest.

THE RIGGS OF A BAND CONTEST

At the Vickey Gardens, Great Yarmouth, 21st August 1861
(some words are missing from the original)

At the Vickey Gardens a short time ago,
A Band Contest took place of which you all know,
And great numbers of people thither did stray,
To hear the sweet music that each Band did play.

The grounds were well filled with Apollo's selection,
And eagerly waiting in every direction,
The battle of musical talent to hear,
Which after turned out decidedly queer.

Bill Ullay was first on the stage with his Band,
Which certainly made a
.....the beer was on board,
And the spectators said that he was sure to be floored.

Then came the Sawston of Cambridgeshire fame,
Who dashed to contest like true Briton's game,
But were doomed by the judges to take the last place,
Although they deserved to be fourth in the race.

Next came the Militia Artillery to test,
Who played very well and no doubt did it their best,
We were told e'en we came they could lick the Life Guards,
That no other Band dare to approach them by yards.

There was Kegnick a dancing about like a showman,
And for a man in his place it looked very uncommon,
But like all other Germans he's full of trickery,
And being placed third made him look very shickery.

The came Jackson's Band who appeared on the stage,
And performed Handel's works which stands first on the page,
With precision and taste the Hallelujah was played,
When finished the Band were loudly hurrah'd.

Next was the Cambridge in their Jackets of Blue,
Who intended that day to die or to do,
The Lessee was Cambridge, the Judges likewise,
So there is no wonder they got the first prize.

Now my dear readers comes on the best fun,
From the Vickey Bar out flew the great gun,
With a magnificent cup of inferior tin,
For the best cornet player who had talent to win.

Says Vickey to Kegnick, "Up and do Battle,"
And for the Rich Goblet give a good rattle,
For winning my boy is out of question with you,
You know I have told you it "should be a due".

All at once Vickey shouts "it is a walk over,"
"Oh! no," says T. Cosgrove, not so my brave rover,
Jackson's brave band for your Tin P.....
And if fairly judged they can win.

Then Vic in a rage, cried aloud for the Bobbies!
And soon he intended to push Tom through the lobbies,
But Cos. who was leary, to the people appealed,
And Vickey's Secret he to them revealed.

Poor Vickey was done, and cleverly foiled,
He sneaked into the bar alarmingly roiled,
He looked like a ghost so white in the face,
No doubt for the future he'll keep his own place.

There's his friend Correspondence! a regular duffer,
And "Foul Play" his pal, is a shiney old buffer;
But Cosgrove's a match for all the false crew,
If they meddle with him, they will soon cry a go.

T' BRAMLA BAND (Bramley Band)

Who hesn't heerd o't' Bramla Band
That's famous far an' near?
An wins sich honor for aar taan,
Wi' ivvery cummin year.

At Gala, Feast, an' flaar strew,
At Chris'mas, an' May-Day,
At contests tew, aar Band is suar
To carry t'prize away.

Wi' bran new clothes an instruments,
All shining bright an' clear.
An' lads an' lasses craadin' raand.
The big drum int' rear.

The men all marching breast to breast -
Wi martial stride an' pomp -
Who can withstand thur stirrin' strains.
As daan't taan they tromp!

Naah wether t'Band chaps played too mich
(For trumpets didn't rust)
I cannot say, but suar enif
They blew em till they bust.

T'poor chaps wor almost fit to roar.
For all thur brass wor spent.
But t' Taan clubbed up an bout each man
A bran' new instrument.

Sum wor silver, an' sum wor brass.
An' nicely curled i't' middle.
An' sum they went - Trom! Trom! Born! Born!
An' sum did now't but twiddle.

An' sum hed keys, an' hoils an' lids.
An' won, a queer consarn
Wor two yards long, or theer abaat.
An' slotted up an' daan.

But when they played 'em all at wunce
An' mixed 'em weel together
An' when the chap unpon T'big drum
Thum! 'Mum! began ta leather

T'effect wor rayther startlin'
And a Captain from the Wars
Enlisted 'em as soudgers,
In the "Prince of Wales Huzzars".

Nay, sum hed nivver ridden a hoss
Except at Bramla Tide
An them wor'on't willy-gigs.
They'ed a haupn'ny ride:

So when thur Regimentals com'
An' they began ta don,
They cuddn't tell what t'spurs wor for
Unless ta hod 'em on.

They thowt if they wor fastened right
Ta t'horse they'd somehow stick,
An' then they cuddn't be thrawn off,
If it began to kick.

So off they went full trot ta York.
Though nearly tosst ta jelly -
They stuck ta t'pummils, an' kep'thur spurs
Weel under t'horse's belly.

An' when they gat ta t'city walls
They poolld up in a raw.
An' "See the conquering hero comes"
They all began ta blaw.

An' varry weel they played it tew
When t'horses did't prance.
But when they heerd a lively bit
They seemed abaat ta dance.

At last that chap wi't'slotting thing
Wi' cheeks puff'd fit ta crack
He thrust it aat sa varry far
He cuddn't pull it back.

An' t'horse bein' rayther freeten'd tew
An' feelin summat prickin'
It started off a raumin' up
An' then began a kickin'.

First t'instrument flew onto t'graand
An jingled fit-ta-breck.
Then we wor fotched all on a lump
Reight on ta t'horses neck.

But t'warst of all, a spur cam off
At t'chap being' aat a plumb
T'horse sent him flying like a shot
Heard first into t'big drum.

They poolld him aat bi his coit-tail
An' sum began to chaff.
But t'chap wor suar,
He'd ne'er been thrawn

If t'spur hed nut cum off
So, reader, nivver use a thing
Ye dunnett understand
An' if yer tempted so to dew
Remember t'Bramla' Band.

A TRIBUTE TO BRAMLEY BAND

Mabel Birley

The lilting tunes of Bramley Band
No longer fill the air
Their fame was here for all to see
And known both far and near

Their exploits and their exhibits
Were always in demand
They traversed far, and countrywide
To corners of the land.

The many tales that they could tell
If they were only here
But, oh, alas, their unsung songs
We now will never hear.

'Poet and Peasant' 'Hail smiling Morn'
Are just to name but two
Of many favourite pieces played
These talented men could do.

As we think back of days gone by
Of this our Bramley Band
Our minds will conjure up for us
A Spectacle, oh so grand

At Whitsuntide and Carnivals
On Sunday afternoons
With every grand occasion
We see these men anew

Who blew their horns, banged their drums
Their cymbals rang to greet
These men most famed in uniforms
With happy marching feet.

And so we now this tribute pay
As after five decades
To the memory of the Bramley Band
And hope it never fades.

But then who knows what we may see
Some day in the near future
Another Bramley Band may start
And fill us full of rapture

ST. ANDREW'S JUNIOR BAND, HULL

Hail to St Andrew's Junior Band!
Which side by older players takes a stand;
'Tis wonderful that boys so young as these
Should play so well, as e'en to critics please.

Diligence and good tuition tell
The reason why they succeed so well;
For each lad tries to do what he is told –
The Band thus helps the character to mold.

'Twas in November, nineteen-fourteen,
In West Hull, that its humble birth was seen,
But, like the acorn by the wayside sown,
It now has to a healthy sapling grown.

Large sums for charities their help has raised,
For which they have been well and duly praised;
The widows and the orphans' hearts are full
Of thanks towards these little boys of Hull.

No sect or section has the slightest claim,
Except the good of mankind be the aim –
For each and all the Band has freely played;
No charge, except expenses, has been made.

If of assistance you should be of need,
At times when you're engaged in noble deed,
And helpfully you find the band could use;
Invite them. They're not likely to refuse.

THE BANDSMAN'S PRAYER

Written by Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield, for *Songs of Praise*, BBC TV, June 1996

Heavenly Father, we thank you for instruments of brass and silver and for the lungs and lips that blow them.

Bless all who play in our bands and the communities they represent - especially the former mill and mining communities of these areas.

May their music inspire us to live in deep harmony with one another - and in rhythm with the abiding presence of Christ.

AMEN.

THE MOSSLEY BAND

Aw know aw havna bin i' th world as lung
As th' owder foaks,
But aw've travelled fare to middlin un
Awve met mi share o' sorts.
Theers sum chaps good tin sum chaps mean
Un sum aw conna stand,
But awve never met a grandelier set
As th' lads i' th' Mossley Band.

Thi might'nt be o angels theer, nay that
Aw wudna say,
But thi wouldna du thi deauwn like sum
Un send thi on thi way.
Theers allus a cheery "Ow art lad" un a
Friendly shake ut th' and,
Yu'll travel far afoor yu meets
Lads like i' th' Mossley Band.

Yu con keep yur lot o' fancy foaks
Them as thinks thi are su fine,
Gi me a chap as is a friend
He'll do me ony time.
Fer he's u' th' sort who'll stond by thee
When things aren't allus grand,
Un he's the sort o' lad yu'll meet
If yu plays in' th' Mossley Band.

BAND NIGHT

by Walter Hard

“It was band concert night.
Around the village green there were cars
Parked in double line.
In the center of the green, under bright lights,

The band, the pride of the village, sat.
Strings of colored lights stretched from the stand
To the trees at the three corners.
On the far side the Ladies’ Aid served ice cream

And Cy Henderson dispensed pop-corn.
In and out among the crowd small boys
Chased each other, yelling as they ran.
When the band finished a piece

There was a long applauding blast
From the automobile horns.
The small boys were silenced for a moment”

THE BRASS BAND CONTEST

W.A Barrett – Bacup, March 21st, 1877

[Published in Huddersfield College Magazine, No. 8, Vol. 5, May 1878, pp.201-204]

Come, listen to me, and a story I'll sing
About a Band Contest which took place last spring,
And the fun and the frolic the adventure did bring,
A twelvemonth ago now come Easter.
The folks in the neighbouring town sent a bill,
With a note, "If your band wish to play, then please fill
Up the spaces in blank, just to say what you will
Concerning this contest at Cleaster."

Now Cleaster's a city some ten miles away,
A junction for Durham, Leeds, Bridlington Bay,
Through which some four hundred trains pass ev'ry day,
Of all sorts - goods, cattle, expresses.
They cultivate music of every kind,
They sing and play pieces, both coarse and refined;
In short, they're a people in no way behind
The age, as perhaps each now guesses.

Ev'ry year they give prizes of various sums,
Silver cups, plated cornets, gilt batons, and drums,
To the finest Brass Band, from wherever it comes,
Provided the playing is decent.
'We had often desired to be down on their list,
But somehow or other the chance we had missed;
They passed us, as if we did never exist,
Though we'd gained some good laurels but recent.

At last we'd received the long looked-for invite;
We filled up the form, and despatched it all right,
And at once began practising that very night,
So eager we were for the prizes.
We sent to De Lacy for all the best tunes:
We bought a new tenor sax, two bombardoons,
A slide alto trombone, that shined like full moons,
In the clear winter's sky, as each rises.

So soon as the factory bell told us to cease,
And we'd washed ourselves clear from the slubber and grease,
We met at the sign of "The Fox and the Geese",
And sat in a ring round the table.
When Bumbly-foot Harry gave word for to start,
We blew hard at Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart,
Until ev'ry man knew the lot off by heart,
And to play without music was able.

Not to weary you all with a troublesome tale,
Know, we met for improvement each night without fail;
After practice each man took his one gill of ale,
And straightway went home without staying.
The winter flew past, and the buds 'gan to burst,
And the throstle sang blithely by coppice and hurst,
And still we ground on as we had done at first,
To make sure of a good place in playing.

At last the long looked-for day opened up bright,
We'd scarce slept a wink through the whole of the night,
So eager we were to show Cleaster our might,
And to come back all loaded with laurel.
We hired a waggon, with two pair of greys,
Each one took his instrument lapped in red baize;
Our coats had red trimmings, our caps were red glaze,
Like sealing-wax melted, or coral.

We start. As our neighbours collected to cheer,
And to wish us good luck, Johnny Smart from the rear
Threw a slipper, which hit Humbly-foot on the ear,
And caused him to fly in a passion.
He soon calmed himself, and we clattered away,
With confidence singing, so happy and gay;
Ne'er doubting a bit but we should win the day,
We entered the town in good fashion.

We got to the place where the tents were set out,
And when we had time just to look round about,
Sure ne'er in your life did you see such a rout,
Or hear such a comical shindy.
There were brass bands from all the towns twenty miles round,
All blowing at once as they came on the ground,
Each trying the best who could make the most sound,
All the time full discordant and windy.

At last the bell rung, and the judge took his seat,
And the bands were set out in good order complete,
And the humming of voices alone the ears greet,
As each waited the call of the numbers.
The judge knew the bands by the figures they held,
And not by their titles or place where they dwelled;
As the tickets were drawn from the hat; then soon quell'd
All the talkers as if sent to slumbers.

Our ticket was "six", we were drawn to play first,
And we set ourselves out in the plan we'd rehearsed,
And till told to begin our impatience we nursed,
With our instruments ready for blowing.
A thundering cheer made us all feel elate,
And angered the other bands who had to wait,
And to guess by our playing what would be their fate,
If they worse than us should be showing.

We first played a Chorus from Handel's Messiah,
And then a strange piece at the judge's desire,
After that the bombardon performed "Obadiah",
And other new music-hall ditties.
Upon which our first horn made a few observations,
Which the cornet replied to with frantic gyrations,
And the piccolo whistled a few variations,
Like frolicsome gambols of kitties.

How the other bands got on I can't tell you now;
Enough that the day ended up in a row,
For the pride of the lot had that day low to bow
We had won the first prize in a canter.
Our foes said our playing was nothing but fudge;
A mistake had been made, and that they wouldn't budge
Until the award was reversed by the judge,
Whom they made an endeavour to banter.

But a truce was patched up, and the bands stood apart,
To play altogether a piece off by heart,
All waited in silence the signal to start,
As was usually done at conclusion.
But the anger long smothered broke out in a flame;
And while some bands were silent at loss of their fame,
Some played "Hallelujah", some played "Same old game",
And all marched away in confusion.

At length to the station with fury they hie,
And each tried his neighbour in noise to outvie,
And from blows came to words, and in words did deny
The right of a triumph to other.
Soon words grew to deeds, and then cornets did clash
Against arms, breasts, and shoulders; and now with a dash
A mighty bass tuba comes down with a smash
On the head of the drummer's big brother.

The fray was now fierce, and the shout and the cry
Was mixed with wild blasts from defeated ally,
And the blowing off steam from the engine hard by,
And the shriek of the whistle for starting.
Cornet bells were pulled off, curly saxhorns stretched straight,
Drum heads were all burst, and cracked many a pate,
When the voice of Joe Jolly cried: "Make for the gate
And I'll set the foemen a-smarting".

Joe's coat was ripped up, and his red cap was gone,
His shirt and his waistcoat to ribbons were torn,
His eyes swoll'n and blacken'd, yet darted forth scorn
At our rivals, through whom he was rushing.
"Make the gate, make the gate!" still he cried in his rage
And leave me alone with the foe to engage!"
No words we could say did his fury assuage,
As we fell back, each other near crushing.

How nobly he stood, and how nobly he fought,
I cannot now tell but must leave it to thought,
Suffice it, in safety our waggon we caught,
As the enemy fled from him howling.
The slide of his trombone he lost in the fray;
He had bought a few pints of gray peas on his way,
Through the mouthpiece these missiles he'd scattered like spray
And they stung like small shots used in fowling.

Thus ended the day, and thus opened our fame,
Though 'twas won at the cost of some bruised and some lame.
All our instruments spoilt, all our clothes torn to shame,
On that memorable Monday last Easter.
The first prize we gained, and that was our pride,
And a salve for our wounds, and a solace beside.
So now you know all that to us did betide
At our first brass band contest at Cleaster.

BRAVO, SPRINGS! BRAVO! (Irwell Springs Band)

By "Shepster" (W. Hargreaves, Bacup).

[on becoming National Champions in 1913]

BRAVO! Well done Springs! England's champion band!
On Fame's high pedestal now you take your stand;
Won fair and square, you're foremost in the race,
Merit alone has put you in that place.

Three times you've done it, thrice this trophy won,
No other band this honour boasts, not one;
To this high point all others cast their eyes,
And own you winners of this premier prize.

Accept our greetings, all throughout this vale,
From lofty hills, o'er which the clouds oft sail;
Down its deep valleys, rolling right along,
Is heard this gladsome, welcome, greeting song.

All greet you, the aged with hoary hair,
Mingle their welcomes with the young and fair;
Schoolboys and girls know what great things you've done,
And prattling infants lisp - "Our band has won."

"Labour and Love" - so was this music named,
That brought together bands renowned and famed;
You've worked and won, and now you stand above,
You had the Labour first- now take the Love.

Of have we read upon our history's page,
Of conquests won by war's fierce lust and rage;
But this is nobler, better far are these
Grand triumphs in this victory of peace.

Music, most sacred of all Heavenly gifts,
Angels know well thy art, their voices lift
In praises to that Being throned afar,
Who called a chorus from the morning stars.

Often when lofty eloquence has failed,
With strong and weighty words the foe assailed:
Thundering around, and filling men with fear,
It is thee - Music - that can draw the tear.

Once more then greeting, strangers may have shown
Their wealth of welcome, and you may have grown
Used to their praises, as you journeyed through,
But here's a welcome, honest, homely, true.

Your welcome here is best; raised is each voice,
In loud hurrahs! both friend and foe rejoice;
From every corner of this hill-bound land,
We proudly greet you - England's Premier Band.

ASTON CONTEST – 1860

Aston Park – Musical Prize Fight: To be sung to the tune: " Will you come unto the Bower"

In Aston Park, next Monday, a Band Contest there's to be,
When Wednesbury and Oldbury, and Matlock Bands you'll see,
And Great Bridge, Wolverhampton, also Tipton, I've been told,
Will fight against the Yorkshire Bands, and carry off the gold.

CHORUS

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, and champions of the field,
Who will play up for Old England, and cause the rest to yield.

For Wednesbury and. Metcalfe, and Mattock Bath you'll see,
Will play off for the first places, as certain as can be;
For in all that's good and tasty, the Toy-shop of the World,
Our well-earn'd district banner, has for ages been unfurled.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

And Distin's Cornet must be won by Alexander Will,
Who at Holder's goodly Concert Hall, has nightly trained his trill;
For Birmingham it can't be beat, if her man. stands firm and true,
And keeps from tricks at Liverpool which caused him to fall through.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

And Ryland's patent metal, the Cup of gorgeous gold,
Ought Metcalfe, the midland teacher, his merit to uphold,
For teaching the black country the humanizing art,
Of each blowing his right instrument, and playing off his part.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

Our Gracious Queen has sent us, that day to please us all,
Her gallant Highland soldiers, who made the Russians bawl
At Alma, with poor Lord Clyde, they thrashed our northern foe
And will again, if wanted, e'en if' to Poland they've to go.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

And the Princess Alexandra, it must not be forgot
Has sent her Piper, Henderson, forget it we must not
For his skill it is so wondrous, in Scotia's music own
That it alone, unaided, aught to entirely draw the town.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

Our gallant Corps of Volunteers. Rifle and Artillery,
Must go and take a lesson from Professor Gregory,
Who will show them all the art, to hit, cut, thrust, and slash,
His "Assault at Arms" is sure to be full of fire and dash.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

A day's rational recreation is provided then for all,
A sensible sensation to please both great and small;
And Gen'ral Jackson shows his tact, the money is all right,
For Sixpence it admits you up to any time of night.

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

And dancing, and good humor, and English Sports so old
Will be enjoyed by thousands of whom untruths are told
And prove unto all England that it is but a sham,
That is said about the pleasures of the folks of Birmingham

Then success to the Brass Band Contest, &tc.

THE BRASS BAND CONTEST

Mary Thompson - (for the Renfrew Burgh Band)

With a tug of the jackets and shuffling of chairs
and adjustments to stands that are perfectly placed,
the baton is raised with a stretch and a flick and
like greyhounds in traps they are off up and running,
for the prize of perfection, for them, just this once!

Pony-tailed blondes and greybeards with paunches,
lawyers and labourers, clerks and accountants,
mothers and carers, workers and students,
all shapes and sizes, when braided and cuffed
they're only the sound they make with their band.

Muted trombones wail like trains on the prairies,
feverish cornets, warm flügel and horns rise
above huge silver basses booming like liners.
They whisper like mist when it says pianissimo,
blast triple sforzando for storming finales!

The applause is for how they arrived here today
from scout huts and band halls on nights after work.
With stars as a backdrop on stage in the town hall
the glint and the shine of colourful stage lights make
dazzling reflections on their moment of fame.

When it's over they judge – so how did they all do?
The shame of split notes and poor entries forgotten
they head to the bar where they all let their hair down.
Not caring for prizes and medals or cups, just
that their own brilliant band will march on for ever.

THE TUGGSVILLE BAND CONTEST

"Dryblower" Murphy - The Sun (Kalgoorlie), 1st January 1905

The tracks were bare and hot, and withered was the scrub,
The townsfolk loitered in the shade beneath O'Ryan's pub,
And often did they sleep within the mulga near,
A cheerful smile upon their face - the consequence of beer.
Fact! and backed
By all, who at Ryan's pub, their passing thirst have slacked.

Now days were long and hot, and willies in the bush
Were tiresome things o Jackson, and the beery Tugsville push.
So on the ground they lay, the Sabbath day all through,
And played at bridge or poker, or maybe played at loo.
Sin? Well, tin
By those who had was freely spent beneath O'Ryan's inn.

Now one day- just at noon, when all were full of ale,
A stranger rode from out the scrub, his form was small and frail;
He stopped before the pub and sauntered in the bar,
And soon was shouting all around from whisky to three star.
Pale! and frail.
'Just an easy lamb to rook,' thought each Tuggsvilllian male.

Amidst the endless talk, just near to close of day,
The Tugsville band awoke to life and started forth to play;
Then argument grew hot about that cherished band,
The stranger swore that Doodlekine could lick them with one hand.
Bet! Don't fret!
The men of wealth about that place planked all that they could get.

A Tugsville Jew named Mose got up and laid the tin
That Doodlekine would lose the match and Tugsville easy win;
He also held the stake, just twenty pound aside,
Excitement rose so high, that the women laughed and cried.
Cheers, and beers,
Were plentiful, and soon the town was helpless and in tears.

Now o'er in Doodlekine two days before the match,
That frail young man went getting all the bummers he could catch;
He hired a four in hand, and sent them them spick and span
To Tugsville - who winked their eyes and engineered a plan:
Wine? 'Twas fine.
To see all Tugsville pouring beer in that band from Doodlekine!

Jim Jackson with delight did dance an Irish fling,
'Me God, and faith alive,' said - he 'we Tuggsvilles know a thing.'
He glanced? where in the shade the bandsmen lay,
'They're sure to sleep a week,' he said, 'on what they've put away.'
Drunk? Head munk!
Through the band supposed from Doodlekine the town of Tugsville stunk.
The day at last arrived, the hour was drawing near,
The Doodlekiners slept beneath their heavy load of beer.
The Tugsville band marched proudly by, triumphant and all right;
Marched all the morning round about, playing quick steps bright.
Hot? A lot!
And Tugsville smiled contented at the lovely thing they'd got.

But, singing in the pub, a cloud of dust was seen,
And Tuggsville stopped and wondered what that cloud of dust could mean.
For naught did they suspect - the hour had all but come,
Till they heard the banging wild of a big and booming drum.
Say? Well, yea,
They did, as they looked where twenty forms, in the pub verandah lay.

They also cursed a lot at thought of all the beer
They'd pressed upon 'those thirsty frauds, to get them on their ear.
And blissful and unconscious the happy bummers lay,
Beneath the pub verandah all the burning day.
Glare! and stare!
As the band from Doodlekine climbed out they started off to swear.

The band from Doodlekine, they looked quite fresh and nice,
And played so sweet and stead, just as calm and cool as ice;
There was no doubt at all, they easy won the day,
But when they went to look for Mose they saw him far away.
Mag?. Tongues wag?
Yes. For Mose had skipped with all the boodle in a bag.

KINGSTON MILLS BAND - 1855

From *North Cheshire Herald*, 23 December, 1886

Come all you lads of music now,
And listen unto me,
While I unfold a verse or two,
Which you shall understand,
It's of the love and harmony
That dwells in Kingston Band.

Chorus:

So now my lads your glasses fill,
And join in the toast with me,
Prosperity to the Kingston Band
Wherever it may be.

In October, eighteen fifty live,
Upon the twentieth day,
J. Higham's band it did arrive,
And music sweet did play;
Their strains so loud waded in the air
As they rode through Nudger Land,
And people all came out to shout
Hurrah, they're bringing Kingston Band.

The Kingston lads then viewed their horns,
And wished that they could play,
When cornet player to th' tro bone player said
"Ne'er mind; we hope to see the day."
Preparations then were made with speed,
And stands were fixed upright,
Books were bought and music wrote,
And all went in delight.

At Whitsuntide in '56
They stood a test that ne'er was done before,
Just six months old they led themselves,
And, played eight hours or more;
They played so nobly through Hyde fair
The horses could not stand,
While folks came from far and near
To hear the Kingston Band.

Then down Church-street and Hyde-lane
To the Market-place they came,
With a banner waving oe'r their heads
St. George's known by name.
Their leader cried "Strike up, brave boys,
See how the people stand;
We'll show them that there's hearts of oak
In the merry Kingston Band.

In September, eighteen fifty eight,
Upon the twentieth day,
The Kingston lads to Stockport went
Their figures to display;
To lead the jolly gardeners
Of that procession grand,
At the opening of the Vernon Park,
Along with twelve more bands.

Now my song is at an end,
And I can sing no more,
Here's forty years to Kingston Band,
And may it reigh five score.
If ever across the sea I roam,
Unto some foreign land,
I'll ever bless the happy days
I spent with Kingston Band.

HAWORTH BAND

Mark R. Peacock, c. 1910

'Now kindly pay attention
To what I have to say
About the band at Haworth
How well each man can play

It needs no introduction
Each man knows well his part
The sweetness of the music
Makes soft the hardest heart

They fill the air with music
How lovely is it's breeze
From those that round them
gather
Subscriptions come with ease

Then shout 'hurrah for Haworth'
From them we get a treat
The lads then from Worth Valley
They'll find are hard to beat

When giving sacred concerts
Where crowds together meet
So great is their attraction
They use both hands and feet

In the sheets some throw silver
Which that is right to do
For in copper there is danger
It might keep falling through

Don't think that I am dreaming
For what I say I'll stand
They'll find the task not easy
That beats the Haworth Band'

WILLIAM RIMMER

Appeared in the local press in 1909 - a sonnet eulogising the bandmaster (William Rimmer) and appreciating the high standard of the band (Irwell Springs)

SAY, should we praise a man, or pass him by
Uncheered by word or smile, when day is won?
Though some it spoils to praise, he is not one;
His modest mein again would soar on high,

Inspired to greater things; his noble soul -
Of Music's realm, portrayed in Music's guise, -
Must lead; while Verdi lives, nor Weber dies,
Or Wagner's plumes raised at his fervent call.

Pillar of Rimmer's Art, whose temple brings
Perfection's far horizon close to view,
And, mounting up their rough-hewn path is "Springs,"
His cherished care: their tutor, constant, true,

Whose magic wand, in harmony impels
The sounds of charm that in the mem'ry dwells.

DENBY DALE PRIZE BAND

Walter Smith

At Denby Dale there is a band,
About the best in all the land,
And they all do their very best
When they're in a good contest.

The first we hear is Harry Booth,
With tones so soft, so sweet and smooth,
His father says it is a treat
To hear him play so soft and sweet.

The next we hear is Beaumont Wood,
His friends all say he is very good,
And without him the band would fair,
No cups would come to Denby Dale.

In comes Fred Hudson with the bass,
And says the band would be a disgrace
If he did not join with those two,
And that is what he ought to do.

We now will turn to Charley Pell
Who tries to do so very well,
But sometimes Charley makes mistakes,
And then his heart it nearly breaks.

Harry Lockwood comes in next,
Looking so stern, and feeling vexed,
He says it nearly makes him yell
To hear the noise of Frederick Pell.

We now will listen to Vic. Brown,
Who makes some laugh and others frown.
He is the best at giving tone,
Playing on his old trombone.

Now on the scene comes George Gray,
He turns up always bright and gay,
It is the flugel horn you see,
And he can reach the topmost C.

Raymond Cunningham then comes up
And says "We're going to win the cup".
As with the euphonium in his hand
He goes to the big band stand.

In comes Dyson, followed by Cook,
Handing him a music book,
Says he, "Now do your best today
And the cup is ours without delay."

We now will turn to their committee
Who always says it is a pity
When they return without a prize
They make such nasty shocking cries.

I think that's all I've got to say
About the band that is so gay,
So now I think I will shut up,
And let them win another cup.

SLAIDBURN SILVER BAND

In their musical production 'AIR
Anon, 1977

This Band always carries its own wind about,
Fresh air caught high on the moor,
Tons of it, stored in their 'airy chest,
Halitosed, breathalysed, pure!

And it takes a lot of mountain air
When your blasting fortissimo,
'Cos a soaring crescendo dies out innuendo
When the pound, per square inch gets low!

THE BAND

C.J. Dennis, 1921

Hey, there! Listen awhile! Listen awhile, and come.
Down in the street there are marching feet, and I hear the beat of a drum.
Bim! Boom!! Out of the room! Pick up your hat and fly!
Isn't it grand? The band! The band! The band is marching by!

Oh, the clarinet is the finest yet, and the uniforms are gay.
Tah, rah! We don't go home. Oom, pah! We won't go home.
Oh, we shan't go home, and we can't go home when the band begins to play.
Oh, see them swinging along, swinging along the street!
Left, right! buttons so bright, jackets and caps so neat.

Ho, the Fire Brigade, or a dress parade of the Soldier-men is grand;
But everyone, for regular fun, wants a Big-Brass-Band.
The slide-trombone is a joy alone, and the drummer! He's a treat!
So, Rackety-rumph! We don't go home. Boom, Bumph! We won't go home.
Oh, we shan't go home, and we can't go home while the band is in the street.
Tooral-ooral, Oom-pah! The band is in the street!

MELISSA

John Baverstock, 2018

She was the stand out girl,
In't Steel City brass band,
There with her Trumpet,
And sheet music on't stand,
Twenty two year old Melissa,
With her rebellious sense of dress,
Her half buttoned up blouse,
Almost revealing her ample size breast,
This daughter of the local butcher,
Whose intentions were more than shocking?
Wearing brown monkey boots,
And black fishnet stockings,
Ready to blow that trumpet girl,
Said Band conductor Sid,
By eck blow it,
She bloody well did.

THE TROMBONE

Pete Clarke

Come on lad, get up for work, wash thee face and hands,
Tomorrow it's Whit Friday, and we're gonna hear yon bands.
I know tha hates it down at mill, wi' all that cotton dust and noise,
But I can tell thee how tha can change theeself and be like Tommy Oldroyd's boys.

They're not working down at mill, they wear fancy shoes, not clogs.
Tha'll see 'em playing in bands tomorrow, wearing uniforms and jogs.
Tha's what you wanna do, me lad, keep playing that trombone
Until tha's stood in front of band, playing solos on thee own.

Aye, the day will come when bands march past, and thee'll make thee father proud.
I'll hear that trombone playing and cheering yon crowd.
I worked me guts off down that mill, breathing cotton all me life.
Your mother died and left us, a good mother and a good wife.

I know one day I'll leave thee, lad, and tha be on thee own,
That's why I worked job overtime, to buy thee that trombone.
Tha gonna be a good un, tha coming on alright,
One day tha'll play for Grimethorpe, and maybe for Black Dyke.

Aye, the breakfast's on t'table, tha's work to do today.
Get thee sen down mill, and earn that bit of pay.
Remember lad, when t'hooter blows and t'engine starts to turn,
When tha's finished work and tha gets home, tha's getting that trombone to learn.

TWIXT DOWN AND SEA (Littlehampton Town Band)

Littlehampton Town Band Signature Tune
Katherine Bearn (words), A. Pullinger (tune)

There are many towns in Sussex, but one the best of all
Is Littlehampton by the sea, be sure you make a call,
There are calm seas and rough seas, and meadows drenched with dew,
So just come and visit us awhile, it's grand the whole year through.

So let's sing a song of Sussex, the county that I love,
Of pleasant upland and downland and clear skies above,
For it's nearer and dearer than riches are to me,
Is this sunny little seaside town, set shoulder to the sea.

Twixt downland and sea, our hometown lies,
By river and lea, neath azure skies,
Littlehampton, Littlehampton, Littlehampton,
Twixt downland and sea

THE ENLIVENED HOUR, OR THE VILLAGE SERENADE

Dedicated to the Green Springs Cornet Band, Ohio
Mrs G.G. Reiniger, October 1870

Not in a moonlight's witching hour,
Were we aroused by music's power,
But in the busy hours of day.
The "Cornet Band" began to play.

Brilliant the gladning strains arose,
Hushing all care to sweet repose,
While parties near came out to see,
And listen to the music free.

Glad little children stepped the time,
Rejoicing at the notes' sublime,
Running to hear from streets around,
So quickly they had caught the sound.

Enlivened hour! Made sweetly grand,
Like blessing from a "better land",
Or like soft dew upon the flowers,
Descending in refreshing showers.

BACK TO SOUTH STREET

Just let me go back to South Street
For a week with the famous bands,
And take with me others who would compete
In Australia's Golden City of renown.

Just let me alight at the station
With cornet, trombone and drum,
And meet bandsmen from all over the Nation,
To whom South Street once more have come.

Just let me line up in the station yard
And play through Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus,"
Or "The Heavens Are Telling" by Haydn - just as hard,
As hands played in the days before us.

Just let me march along Sturt Street
With gay crowds lining the way,
With step by step and beat by beat,
Is South Street just the same today ?

Just let me see who is judging again,
Is it Stead or Bentley with ears for tune?
Short, Beswick, Sutton or Morgan - men of fame,
Or King of them all - J. Ord Hume.

Just let me go through the Inspection
As we did when we dressed with much care;
With the gayest uniform in our section,
That made all our rivals stare.

Just let me compete in the solos again
From the grand old Coliseum stage.
With "Adelaide" or "Gipsy's Warning" - or "Pretty Jane,"
"Zelda" and "Miranda" of a later age.

Just let me mount the platform
And play through "Beethoven's Works."
Or any Alexander Owen's selections
That South Street bands would not shirk.

Just let me play through the Test piece,
Be it "Mercandante," "Mozart" or "Liszt,"
"Wagner," "Chopin" or "Meyerbeer,"
The tests that were tests on our lips.

Just let me march in the Quickstep
With Ord Hume's "B.B. and C.F."
"The Challenge," "Cossack" or "Ravenswood,"
Or was the "Twentieth Century" the best?

Just let me see the others swing past,
Code's, Prout's, Rozelle and Boulder.
Wanganui, Newcastle and Bathurst Brass,
Great names that come dear to the older.

Just let me see those fine Geelong bands,
St. Augustine's, Municipal and Harbour Trust.
Also Collingwood, Malvern, Richmond, Prahran,
Perth City - all a great power among us.

Just let me see Geelong Town again
With Sharpe Brearley at the head of affairs.
They ranked with Prout's in quickstep fame,
First in marching honours was often theirs.

Just let me see the giants of the baton,
Riley, Code, Bulch and Prout,
McMahon, Barkel, Jones and Hoffman.
Many, alas, have since gone out.

Just let me see others again,
Partington, Shugg, Johnston, Bowden.
Men who kept time in South Street's fame;
Wade and Baile must be among them.

Just let me think if I missed any.
Yes, there was Davison, Liven, Lewins - any more!
Hopkins, Ryder, Billy May among many,
Not forgetting Frank Wright and J. Booth Gore.

Just let me see the best of officials
And critics like Davey, Gartrell and Hellings,
Humphreys and Boyce - Kings of staff and whistle,
May march us again - well, there's no telling.

So to-day just let me go back to South Street,
Most famous contest in the land,
Where many old timers I will heartily greet,
And yarn over years that were so grand.

TIM

Blart Brother

Tim's a cardboard cutout
you may have once sat near him
always turns up faithfully
but you never ever hear him.

Tim's a cardboard cutout,
his instrument's his own,
he tells you it's the best there is,
though it's hardly ever blown.

Tim's a cardboard cutout,
he's dropped off by his mother,
and all advice goes in one ear
and swiftly out the other.

Tim's a cardboard cutout
dim and unaware
he really thinks he's done his bit
just by being there.

Tim's a cardboard cutout
and when the contest ends,
he's keen to show his uniform
to lower section friends.

Tim's a cardboard cutout
he flits from band to band
But all he does is fill a space
behind a music stand.

CARGO FLEET STEEL WORKS SILVER BAND

Lindsey Priest

I was looking at the census
For a relative of mine
A task I thought would be easy
Just trip down the family line.

It was Charlie I was looking for
An uncle I am told,
Who worked in the Middlesboro shipyard
Before he got too old.

He had a very special job
Was famed throughout the land
As secretary to the Cargo Fleet
Steel Works Silver Band.

I am not sure what this entailed
It sounds so very grand
Being in charge of the Cargo Fleet
Steel Works Silver Band.

Perhaps he played the trumpet
Or a cornet he did blow
And together with the other chaps
Put on an marvellous show.

By day he was a stevedore,
Ships cargo he would load
He walked there every morning,
It was only down the road.

But when the piercing whistle went
To mark the end of day
He ran home at the double
So ready then to play.

Every evening he would practise
Cornet held in his hand
Cos he was in charge of Cargo Fleet
Steel Works Silver Band.

I believe he was a grumpy man
A smile never touched his lips
But to organise a concert
He was full of useful tips!

I never found poor Charlie
Tho' I looked on every street
He was off performing with
The Silver Band of Cargo Fleet

FOR THE WEEKEND (Friary Guildford Band)

Matthew Tallamy

To Friary Guildford Brass Band,
You're sure to make us proud.
Tenor Trombones will play with great finesse
And Adam WILL NOT play too loud.

On Saturday you'll take a trip
Destination: The Albert Hall!
The cornets will be at their best,
Rich Marley to play bugger all.

"Of Distant Memories" you will perform
With horn advice from Frank.
Supporters seeing history made,
Everyone else at the Armatage Shank.

Shed builders, they will not get lost;
For once maintaining the groove.
They lugged their instruments all of this way,
Some music was left on the tube.

Chris King will tell a really bad joke
To make the nerves disappear.
The Bases, they will be cucumber cool,
They've already started the beer.

Fine double-tonging Euphoniums,
And Bari's, to a lesser extent.
Perhaps not bringing any silverware home,
But definitely beating Regent!

To all my friends in Guildford Band,
I hope this weekend is magic.
Next week it's back to Christmas Carols,
'till then, please make sure you 'Av' it!

SHAKE A STICK

Paul Wareing

You can shake a stick at a Brass Band,
Though they'll never go away,
But they'll follow your every movement,
For they simply play that way.

THE ADJUDICATOR

WhatSharp

He sat in the box his ears at the ready
a pen in his hand all held nice and steady
He was listening out for the opening chord
the one that would tell if they'd got an award
His mind was sharp with a razor like whit
he'd write something patronising just for that bit
then something good about the entry at G
and a bit about overall tuning at C
he'd finish it up with a thank you as well
that's when he began to notice the smell
alas when they pulled out the corpse they could tell
farting in boxes is a judges farewell.....

MUTE

Jo Bell

The Walkden and Farnworth Band strike up
and yes, they are fat and balding, with beer-wet lips
and skin grown pale in club backrooms.
They're straight-backed in their uniforms
because their wings are furled
and then they play.

This is strong music: music turned on lathes
by men who don't lament,
who speak by fighting.
This is working music; our call to prayer,
our call to sing our ordinary story
in a fierce unasked-for jubilation.

Music made in sheds or beaten into cymbals
at the shift-end. *Jerusalem* and *Danny Boy*;
they're borrowed songs but spoken in our tongue.
A ringing out, a clocking on, a moan
of disappointment sure as klezmer;
pit music, factory music, punching out precisely
This is us, this is. Still here.

The spotty prophets raise their clarions.
The North is clearing its throat.

GOING DOWN T' BAND

Gareth G. Proctor

You're going down t' band tonight, was what I heard dad say,
You're almost 8 years old now lad; it's time tha' learnt to play;
So off I went, all nervous like, not knowing what to do,
I'd like to play the tenor horn, but the cornet's awreet too.

It doesn't matter what you choose, just see how well ya play,
Ya might end up on't big bass drum; if conductor lets ya stay;
I tried trombone but that we'r hard, my arms weren't long enough,
And as for't bass, well that didn't work; I just don't have the puff!

I'm playing on't cornet just now, sittin next to a chap called Jim,
He's really old, about 35, but I've learnt a lot from him;
It's the area contest pretty soon; and I know I'll try my best,
But the piece is really really hard, and it's my first contest.

Up early and off t' contest and a practice before we start,
Then here we go, we're all on stage, I can hear my beating heart;
We won 3rd prize in Section 4, so we're off to London now,
I'm really enjoying this bandin lark, and ya get to take a bow.

Whit Friday is the best day yet, the crowds are everywhere,
Jump off the coach, and play a March, back on, no time to spare;
We're aiming to do seven, but we've only managed two,
The traffic today is really bad and there's still loads more to do.

I've moved on to Soprano now and it's really pretty good,
My dad thought I should try it, and I guess he knew I would;
At times it can be scary, cause you're up there pretty high,
But when it's good, it's brilliant, you feel like you can fly.

Good friends, great times, great music and a pint or two as well,
Just speak to any bandsman; they'll have a tale to tell;
Memories of those great days out, of contests won and lost,
Friends no longer with us, they're the things we talk of most;

I'm glad I went t' bandroom, years ago when I were eight,
Cause being in a good brass band, is something really great;
Of all the things I've ever done, of this I have no doubt,
That being called "A bandsman" is what it's all about.

PLYMOUTH SAXHORN BAND (INDIANA, USA)

"It's good to go back in memory to the days of yore,
Considerin' it's been fifty year an' more
Since then! Oh dear! I see a wonderful change;
And many things have happened that's new and strange;
Especially at evening when yer new band fellers meet,
In fancy uniforms and all and play cut on the street.
What's come of old Dave Vinnedge and the sax horn fellers – say
I want to hear the Old Band play.

"What's come of Alex Thompson, an' Mert Brown, an' where's Bert Capron at
And Platt and John McDonald, Charley Reeve, Gene Hutchinson an' that
Air Doe Brown who played the drum twict as big as Jim ;
An' William Henry Salisbury-say, what's become o' him
I make no doubt yer new band now's a compenter band
An' plays their music more by note than what they play by hand,
An' stylisher and grander tunes; but somehow-any way ,-
I want to hear the Old Band play.

"Such tunes as ' John Brown's Body' and ' Sweet Alice, don't you know,
And ' The Camels is A -comin ' ; and ' John Anderson,. My Joe, ,
And a dozen others of 'em-' Number Nine' and ' Number 'Leven ,
Was favorites that fairly made a feller dream o' heaven.
And when the boys 'u'd Eerenade I've laid so still in bed
I've even heerd the locus-blossoms droppin' on the shed
When 'Lilly Dale,' or 'Hazel Dell' had sobbed and died away-
I want to hear the Old Band play.

"Your new band ma'by beats it, but the old band's what I said-
It allus 'peared to kind o' chord with sumpin' in my head ;
An' whilse I'm no musicianer, when my blame eye is jes ,
Nigh drowned out, an' memory squares her jaws an' sort o' says
She won't an' never will forgit, I want to jes' turn in
An' take the light right out o' here and git back West a'gin
And stay there, when I git there, where I never ha'f to say-
I want to hear the Old Band play."

THE OLD BANDSTAND (BY HARDRAW FALLS)

In Wensleydale for many years,
by Hardraw Falls I understand
brass music has set the Dale ablaze
like sunrise bursting through a haze

*There is no greater sound heard
there is no greater sound heard
In the land as that what comes
from t'awd famous bandstand*

In Wensleydale both rich and poor,
by Hardraw Falls I understand
do hear trombones and big tubas roar
and golden cornets, horns galore.

In Wensleydale as you pass by,
by Hardraw Falls I understand,
the cornets play all their notes so high
like little larks up in the sky

WILLIE'S GERMAN BAND

Oh tell us have you seen or heard a wondrous German Band,
'Twas promised us by "Willie" that it certainly should land.
We've been waiting by the shore for some weeks, and even more,
But never have we heard, or seen a vestige, of that Band.

We wonder, dearest Willie, what has happened to your Band,
Why don't you take the "joy-ride" you so carefully had planned?
And should the way prove weary, try good old "Tipperary",
'Twould be such a splendid Tonic to the spirits of your Band.

Oh, Willie! have we missed you, have we missed your German Band,
Shall we never hear its brazen strains upon our silver strand?
We longed so much to greet you, we sent right out to meet you,
It must have been a "Fairy Tale" marked with your German brand.

And so, dear peaceful Willie, as we've missed your music grand,
We are calling round to seek it in your happy Fatherland;
Tho' it may be months or more, we are coming, slow, but sure,
And then right soon, we'll put in tune, your highly cultured Band.

ANOTHER GREAT CONCERT – “MUSIC HATH CHARMS” (?)

Timaru Herald, New Zealand, 3 July 1867, Page 3

[Our reporter, not being supplied with a ticket of mission, was compelled to get one of the audience to supply a criticism. — Ed.]

Such a treat, we've had a concert, by the great Temuka band ;
Goodness gracious, how splendacious, sure 'twas wonderful, 'twas grand.
Tom the drummer, best of fellows, beat till he was almost white,
While the others — bless their bellows — blew themselves near out of sight.

All the town was bent on singing, 'twas enough to make you roar ;
Each meant going in and winning, though he'd never sung before.
Such a crowd came volunteering, just to show what they could do,
That the stamping and the cheering, might be heard in Oamaru.

First the band struck up, and though they each one played a different air,
'Twas the more, sure, for the money, which was all they wanted there.
But friend Young got so excited, you'd have thought his cheeks would crack —
Got so far before the others, that they had to hold him back.

Up rose K____t and told them all how, "England 'spected every man
Then would do his putty," but he broke down ere he'd well began ;
F____e then killed "Lord Ullin's daughter," like some savage Highland chief,
But the people wouldn't have it, so he quickly came to grief.

Then an auctioneer so pleasant, said he'd show them how to sing,
In a voice that charm'd all present, gave them, " I'm the Gipsy King."
H____n, the learned baker, "Master of the Rolls," 'tis said,
Spouted forth — like yeast a-working, — "Tell me where is fancy bread."

S____f and W____n sang together, lines of "Hearts and heads," in praise,
With "Flow on thou shining liver," and "The lights of other days ;"
Others, young and thoughtless butchers, mock'd, and thought to have a spree,
Till the gentle Sergeant Buckley, warbled, " Love, come dwell with me."

Then a young and gallant fellow sang — a regular knowing elf —
"Let me kiss her for her mother, let me kiss her for myself."
G____n "the cabbage green," kept trying, but it proved most awful work,
Young Watch J____bs managed better when he gave "the cask of pork."

Hoo____r said he was no singer — wasn't such a jolly muff —
But he'd dance upon the tight rope, if they'd find one strong enough.
One____a tradesman — then recited lines he'd wrote to Glasgow town,
But they didn't seem to like it, for they rose and hiss'd him down.

Sal____n essayed a hornpipe, but he made a quick retreat,
For the stage would not allow him proper room to more his feet.
Another forward came and sang — but what you could not hear,
For they put him in the cupboard, thinking he'd had too much beer.

Mor____n then gave "The Pilot," S____t "The Friar of orders grey,"
Wea____r gave them "Billy Tailor," Hutton gave the "Poor dog Tray."
"Down among the dead men," T____r tried, but soon away was led,
For his wife came in and took him home, and past him into bed.

An____n, the jolly brewer, started forward out of breath,
First he gave them "Drops of brandy," and then, " Ale, all ale, Macbeth."
R____t R____d then tried a ditty, praising water from the creek,
But the subject didn't suit him — wanted spirit — 'twas too weak.

Twenty then all rose together, — for the time was flying now,
So each struck up independent, making such a horrid row,
That "The Force," who, in the kitchen, had been feasting on the sly,
Flew to arms and drop'd their mutton, thinking Hau-haus must be nigh.

What they sang or when they finished, few can tell, though lots have tried,
For the band, with wise discretion, went and finished off outside.
If they raise another concert, let them advertise the day,
Giving good and timely notice, that we all may — stay away.

RAYMERTOWN CADET BAND 1888-1894

By Sam Irving Reed

John Burthelson of some renown,
a Rayer blacksmith came to town.
A musical man was John
worked all day at his forge and sung.
His anvil played the music bright
crickets took up the theme at night.
John's blacksmith shop was a meeting place.
For all the boys around the place.

The Van Wert boys, Art and Ed,
Vrome Barry and Fred Witchell, led
A little bunch of village lads
to the blacksmith shop where John had planned
to organize a village band.
John Burthelseon, a city man
was made director of the band.

We met and planned to buy our horns.
sent away for uniforms.
The sleepy village of Raymertown
when the eventful night came 'round
for us to meet, about twenty four,
in the black-smith's shop to learn the score.
And when at last the horns had come
all the neighbors set up some.

And heard strange noises the blacksmith shop close at hand,
the first headquarters of the band.
A little later on, when our uniforms had come
Even Solomon was not arrayed
in such epaulets and braid.
Every single mother's son was dolled up
like a Mexican general in blue and grey.

Barry took his team and drove,
put on side seats enough to hold
all the horns and uniforms the whole grand
Raymertown Silver Cornet Band.
This first engagement I must say
was the Grange first annual picnic day.
We formed in line out in the road,
just before we reached the grove.

As I recall, 'twas Charley Wagar
took the part of first drum major,
and marched ahead, so proud and loyal,
to the strains of old "Prince Royal"
And now that, we had won renown
and everyone 'round the town,
was talking about us one and all.
Calvin Dater built a hall,
a testimonial to the band.

T'would be incomplete to tell
the story of its rise and fall,
without something of its personnel.
As I have said, the Van Wert boys,
Art and Ed, Vrome Barry, Witchell
and Burthleson mentioned as we came along,
the Ford boys, Frank and Joe with their big
trombones to blow, Ab Dick was a little man.

But blew the great big tuba grand,
Johnny Wagar drove the stage,
and doubled on the brass alto.
The clarinets were kept in line
by Carpenter and Will Dearystine.
This completed all the reeds (yet)
there was Irve in his cornet
as well, Rodgers, Hydorn,
Cushman, Brownell, Dana Snyder played baritone.

Didn't have no saxophone no
syncopated music in the score
of our ample repertoire.
The piccolo is a lively part
but held in check by Eli Carr.
Dave Hawver played the upright bass

and puffed his cheeks with downright grace
and everything went dum dum dum
with young Ross Robbins at the drum.

A few brief years, and one by one,
the boys dropped out, their race was run.
Vrome Barry and Ben Brownell led.
Then ...Van Wert boys, Art, and Ed,
a little later followed on.
the same green pathway they had gone'
the stars at night their Vigil keep,
o'er the village Church yard where they sleep.

The other boys are old men now
with hoary locks upon their brow.
And scattered far throughout the land,
the living remnants of the band.
Through the mist of years looks down
on their loved home in Raymertown.

On being asked to describe a brass band in 30 words, these poems were written:

BAND PRACTICE

Duana

Power, strength and might
the brass band gives off its golden light.
Stirring, rousing, it's melody disperses
filling the room with its musical verses,
becoming polished the more it rehearses.

WHERE THERE'S MUCK THERE'S BRASS

John Curtis

Ebonised men, escaping
Bondage in the dark;
Armed with a dragon's hoard of wrought brass,
Create deep harmony and bring to pass
The liquid grace notes of the dulcet lark.

SERENADE

Bad Bill

The air vibrates as trumpets,
trombones and tubas turn
the grey morning into
a cornucopia of golden notes.
The brass band, bringing a smile
to the face of the day.

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

Mlou

Not to be crass
but sounding brass
shatter the crania,
bring about mania.
Alack and alas,
my innocent eardrums,
battered old heardrums,
gotta be frayed ...
'cause I love a parade!

BRASS BAND MUSIC OOP NORTH LIKE

Edna Sweetlove

Badly played hymn tunes
from hungover unemployed miners
echoing down the slum streets
barely audible
over the sounds of Coronation Street
on't telly
and the neighbours uninhibited belching
post coitally

CHRISTMAS CAROLLING

Paul Wareing, 2019

We went off to the Coop, in Kings Heath, when I was five,
They had a Santa's Grotto, I was so glad I was alive,
I got some plastic from him, a small deposit for the day,
I sat on his lap quite speechless, with not a thing this boy could say.

With the Sally Army playing, Silent Night just down the street,
I knew God was in His Heaven, soon another year was complete.

I was the youngest soldier, in scarlet tunic, YP band,
But then carrying the lantern, for Carol playing had been planned,
That Winter was a cold one, with players valves freezing hard,
My big brothers both were playing, it was like a Christmas Card.

With the Sally Army playing, 'Away with the Major', so they said,
I knew God was in His Heaven, but His son came down here instead.

I was a Bandsman Soldier, twenty years old, Euphonium played,
A small band of faithful comrades, Star in the East just made the grade,
By Christmas Day note perfect, no more need to use the book,
So bored with itchy feet then, to a bigger World to take a look.

With the Sally Army playing, Jingle Bells just everywhere,
I fell out and of step when marching, I moved on and didn't care.

I am ex Salvation Army, a Grandfather getting old,
I don't Carol all December, I don't miss the frost and cold,
But the memories just linger, I find I hum those tunes,
About Jesus in the manger, with those angels in platoons.

I love the Sally Army playing, Hark the Herald Angels sing,
And I like the Magi now wander, to find again that humble king.

MOUSEHOLE TEMPERANCE BAND

One time, when the band were on their way to Ludgvan, they met Billy Foss, the Cornish Poet, who stopped them and, on the spot, composed a piece of poetry which started:

"Who are these, with medals bright, Banners gleaming in the light, All of them are devils quite - Teetotallers!"

YORKSHIRE MILITARY BAND

2019

We posted here the other week
A tuba player we did seek
The poem told the tale you know
A Vacancy on the back row

Many people liked the ad
The poem worked, it wasn't bad
You shared and tried to help us out
Hurray we thought, we're in with a shout

But three weeks on we've had no luck
No pedal notes to run amuck
An empty chair still sits in place
No umpah, pumpah eflat bass

We'll ask again please hear our plight
Or more new poems I will write
A Bassoon player is more than willing
But Tuba Smarties is less than thrilling

Don't let the woodwind win the day
With reeds and ligatures they play
Come along for the brass players sake
The DoM will even bring some cake

I'm closing now as that's enough
To be without a tuba is really tough
Email info@ybrbl
In Barnsley the band doth dwell

Monday is coming, see you there?
For a tuba player we kneel in prayer
Eflat or bflat id doesn't matter
Call me, we'll have a natter

THOWD CHAP SAT INT CORNER

Gordon Higginbottom

See yon chap int corner, sat deawn sippin beer?
Ah offen wunder who e is - a seeim every year.
Eez theer at evry contest, n allus by isen.
Thonly time eez missin - s'wen eez gonto lissen.

Ee neer listens mony,
just thod band er two.
Allus seems to time it reight,
n allus yars same few.
Uz if e aziz favourites, an follers em abaht.
E allus seems to manage n e sems to sortem aht.

One day ah thowt ad chat wi im, n' axim who e wur.
A slowly wanderd up toim and geet misen a chur.
A axed im if e wur a fan or just liked bands en bloc.
Iz answer left mi gobsmacked, it gimme quite a shock.

Turns out e wurra legend, ad played wi ah t'op bands.
Ees laked in mony famous alls, n in many diffrent lands.
Az ee towd me of iz tale, mi mind wur full of awe.
Tharowd chap int corner, wur no longer warra saw.

Insted ah seed an icon, some one to imitate.
He neer thowt to criticise, ur slag er ever hate.
Ee allus semt so gracious, e allus showd respect.
Ah do confess e changed mi, the last thing ahd expect.

A really got tknow im, that legend of the past.
Ee towt mi mony lesns, n all of em to last.
But 'tbest ee err towt mi, wur neer to think the worst.
Yon owd man int corner, in rank, ee wer the first.

Yars av passed, n' things av changed but contest still goes on.
Folk still go and sup at t'bar, aw but minus one.
Av missed t'howd chap int corner, sat deawn, sippin beer.
Bib missin ferra few year nah, ees gon, ah dont know weer.

The corner seats now empty, even't tables bare.
Thatmospheres a lackin, neh thowd chaps no longer there.
Ah ope eez up in heaven, along wi aw is mates.
Ee earned is place among em, them eavnly all time Greats.

CARNDONAGH BRASS

Ben Carn

Gathered the folk in the Diamond there
anticipation in the Irish air!
A distant sound, distinct and clear
turned all heads, raised a cheer!

The pulsating beat of a marching band
reverberating o'er the land,
as it makes its way on the narrow road,
majestic in its style and mode.

A chronicler of time and place,
truly an asset to the human race!
The drum keeps time. The bass and the snare,
the euphonium beyond compare.

The trombone sound the trumpet too!
The sax, the cornets one and two!
The horn, the bass, the baritone.
All at their best, out on their own!

To warm applause from the crowd en masse.
They have arrived..... CARNDONAGH BRASS!!

BASS DOUBLE B

Elizabeth Eshelman

It was many and many a weekend past
At a store in northern Indy
I found an instrument and fell in love fast
With this beautiful bass double B

For one purpose alone was this brass tuba cast
To be played and adored by me.
A coiled shape both slender and wide
Was my beautiful bass double B

And the valves, oh! how smoothly did they glide
Pressed so gently by me
The high notes rang and the low notes sighed
Filling the store in Indy.

I knew it was mine after only a short test
Played on this bass double B
It would whisper and bellow nothing but the best
As long as was played by me

The melodious music that was Heaven blessed
Flowed from my bass double B.
Angels envied so the music that I made
While playing my bass double B

That they sent through teachers heaps of homework each day
To take all my time from me
Thus I sacrifice my practice for a paper and a grade
And miss my bass double B

For this tuba must stay in its case where it's laid
Far removed from me.
The moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of my beautiful bass double B

The stars continue to rise but there the tuba lies
Sadly neglected by me
I never get time, try as I might
To play my bass double B
But one homework-free night will surely reunite
I and my bass double B
My beautiful brass double B.

HACKETSTOWN BAND

(Eire)

The Hacketstown Band
Has got so grand
They wouldn't come out to play;
They sold their brass
To buy a Jackass
To draw Aould O'Connor away.

BESSES O' TH' BARN BAND

Snippet from the Hampson Biography of Besses o' th' Barn Band covering the years 1818-1892

Shall contests come, and contests go.
And the prizes forever leave us!
"No, no" we cry, it shall not be so.
Our honour is roused, believe us.
No contest more shall come and go,
Without we have a try,
Or twice ten thousand Bandsmen,
Shall know the reason why".

A WELCOME

“Bannerman”, 1918

[about Cornetist and Conductor William Ryder]

Here’s a hearty welcome “Billy”,
To our pleasant country town,
And may Fortune every lead you,
And misfortune never frown.
We are pleased to have you with us,
And we hope you long may stay
To encourage local talent
In the latest style and way.

When you played the “solo cornet”
With the finest in the land,
You were classed as England’s champion
In the famous “Besses Band.”
And here in fair Australia
You can show us all the way
As the Champion of the Champions
From the South to old Wide Bay.

“Because” we all remember
When you played it at New Year,
When the silvery notes were finished
How the crowd did clap and cheer.
May our town and climate suit you,
May your notes prove ever true.
Here’s good-luck to wife and kiddies,
And long life and health to you.

DUNGOG BRASS BAND

Mad Mick, 1954

I’ve heard it said that Old King Cole was happy, gay and free,
And he liked music sweet and low, played by his fiddlers three,
But in Dungog we’re luckier than King Cole in his day,
We have a band of 25 with band-master, Bob Gray;

And of this band we all feel proud, a mighty job they do,
They play in aid of charities, and spastic kiddies too.
Some Saturdays they entertain at each and every pub,
They finish off the evening playing at the Bowling Club.

Now I would like to tell you all the names of those who play,
And how old Bob the baton waves, and gets them on their way;
Soprano cornet heads the list and that’s I. Kennedy.
That solo cornet it is played by little Johnny Lee;

Keith Kennedy is downstairs for he is baritone,
And forwards, backwards, goes Stan Leayr upon the old trombone;
Now solo tenor horn Barry Schofield plays alone,
Toot! Toot! Toot! Toot! Don Redman goes upon his saxophone.

First tenor horn's Wal Arnold, third cornet Mick Neilson,
Johnny Schofield's second cornet, Hector Robson the side drum;
Ken Wade with his euphonium, gets down to bottom D,
While second solo tenor horn is little Barry Lee;

Then there's E bass Freddy Schofield and Ted Mathews is the same,
And there's one more solo cornet, Artie Redman is his name;
The secretary is Jack Kerr, he's also big bass drum,
While tenor horn number three is played by "Butch" Neilson.

There's only six more instruments and players for to pen,
For to conclude the roll call of Bob and his merry men;
And Bob calls them "some-timers," they don't attend a lot,
Sometimes they're there for practice and sometimes they are not.

There's the E bass and the B bass, and repiano cornet too,
And they're played by Tommy Ferris and Keith Lean and Shelton, Blue,
Well now I've two trombonists whose attendances are poor
And they are "Sambo" Neilson and offsider Dennis Moore.

Well, those are all the players who go to make this band,
But there are two more people who lend a helping hand;
First of them the Drum Major, he makes them look so fine,
And that of course is Perry, Bill, he sees they march in line.

Then last of all is Paddy with collection box in hand,
You'll always find him snooping round somewhere behind the band,
He sticks his box beneath your nose and thinks he's doing right.
No wonder folks have christened him the "great Australian bite!"

P.S. – Sorry folks I missed one out, it's Ray Monaghan I'm sure,
He plays quite well, but still in all, attendances are poor.

LE MIRLITON

Y en a qui ont des trompinettes
Et des bugles
Et des serpents
Y en a qui ont des clarinettes
Et des ophicléides géants
Y en a qui ont des gros tambours
Bourre bourre bourre
Et Ran plan plan
Mais moi j'ai qu'un mirliton

Et je mirlitonne
Du soir au matin
Moi je n'ai qu'un mirliton
Mais ça m'est égal si j'en joue bien.
oui mais voilà, est-ce que j'en joue bien?

THE OPHICLEIDE

Professor Cabbage

The Ophicleide, like mortal sin
Was fostered by the serpent.
Its pitch was vague, its tone was din;
Its timbre rude and burpant.

Composers, in a secret vote,
Declared its sound non grata;
And that's why Wagner never wrote
An Ophicleide Sonata.

Thus spurned, it soon became defunct,
To gross neglect succumbing;
A few were pawned, but most were junked
Or used for indoor plumbing.

An so this ill wind, badly blown,
Has now completely vanished:
I nominated the saxophone
To be the next one banished.

Farewell, offensive Ophicleide,
Your epitaph is chiseled:
"I died of ophicleidicide:
I tried, alas, but fizzled!"

ONLY A SECOND TROMBONE

Patrick Barrington, 1934

I'm only a Second Trombone,
But whatever the world may say,
I'm bent upon playing a trombone's part
In a kind and courageous way.

What matters it if my tone is weak
And some of my notes are flat?
Though I'm only a Second Trombone, girls,
I'm not any the worse for that.

I'm only a Second Trombone,
And nobody seems to care
If half of the time it is pointed out
That I'm playing the oboe's air;

But I'm more of a man than a million men
Whom frivolous girls admire;
My face is the face of a trombone, girls,
But my heart is a heart of fire.

I'm only a Second Trombone,
But one of these days you'll find
Some hint of the passionate human thoughts
That burn in a trombone's mind.

They're thoughts that would stultify a bassoon
And stagger a clarinet;
But they're only a Second Trombone's, girls,
And nobody knows them yet.

CAMBORNE TOWN BAND

E.O.H., 1927

How sweet the name of music sounds
In a musician's ear.
Our band's a credit to the town
And worth your while to hear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
It puts our heart to rest;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
Because they were the best.

Two years ago they won those cups
At Bugle, so to speak,
And once again their name is up,
In making it complete.

Take Mr Parker, first of all,
Who trains the four-and-twenty;
Although he isn't very tall,
As good – we haven't many.

There's Fred, the cornet soloist,
He takes a lot of beating;
It's very rare he makes a miss,
He never gets the feeling.

With Jimmy Thomas on the slide
The trombone is his hobby
He showed St Dennis how to hide
Away from Bugle Bobby.

The rain kept falling all the day,
Till five there was no ceasing;
We knew our band was on its way,
Those notes of music squeezing.

The judge made reference to the hymn,
How beautiful they played it;
When every man used all his vim,
Their tone and splendour stayed it.

To see the people stand erect
When, in their test selection,
They must have played it quite correct
They gave such good attention.

And then the masses all arose,
They all then started cheering;
'twas quite five minutes, I suppose,
Before there was a hearing.

Our bandsmen too, I'd like to say,
Are men of various sizes;
They are the only band today,
That bring home all the prizes.

From Hocking's drum to double B
Their tone is simply splendid;
And those at Bugle don't you see,
Were sorry when 'twas ended.

The evening came, as time went on
The people were returning;
We had no news to harp upon,
Which kept us all a yearning.

Just after nine good news arrived;
Our band is crowned with glory;
The people then were all alive,
'twas quite another story.

The news soon flashed, the people thronged,
To glance upon the prizes;
While some chewed on banana long,
And some Moncini's ices,

“Praise ye the Lord” by Holman's Clock
Was sung in simple fashion;
A cry went up, they had to stop,
The band is here in action.

No one can say but what we stayed,
And gave a good reception;
The cups they won, for which they played;
Are such a good collection.

They gave us music through the street,
And all that was desired;
And to accomplish such a feat,
Our men were very tired.

Then Sunday on the sporting pitch,
Again some music rendered;
They went right through without a hitch,
Five thousand people tendered.

Some people take it as a joke.
Give medals too for playing!
But Mr Collins when he spoke,
He knew what he was saying.

Yes! Medals we can give of gold,
Encourage to be steady,
Some people here in town I'm told,
Are always ever ready.

Congratulations to the Band,
For all their past successes;
May they through fame be there to stand,
Upright against the Besses.

YAR BAND (Scapegoat Hill Band)

S.W.

A 'undred yer sin' we are towld, some chaps at lived on t'Hill,
Discussin' w'at wor t'best to do ther leisure toime to fill ;
At last decided at they'd form a Brass Band o' ther own,
An' thus bring pleasure all ara'and wheeriver they wor known.

The started in wi' rey't goodwill, an practiced neet an day,
Who'll t'wimmin fooak made scoores o'teeas, ta 'elp 'em on ther way ;
An sooa, thra strength ta strength they grew, wh'oll t'critics scoffed an
sneered,
Predictin such a sticky end whenever they appeared.

Engagements started commin' in, w'ich dewly wor fulfilled,
Wh'oll, even up i' Lancasher, ther name wor bein' billed ;
An then they started contestin', wi' da'ans, as well as ups,
An in one seseason, at ther best, they went an won Four Cups.

Away i' t'past, on t'rooad, they 'ave a repewtation gained,
Fer playin' up, as well as da'an, a custom still maintained ;
Its been a tale all throo' the years, o' pullin' all one way,
o' Loyalty, an jonned 'Ard Wark, throo monny a stormy day.

Wi' Whitsun' Demonstrations, aye ,an playin da'an t'Park,
Or gooin' ra'and o' Christmas Eve, it means a lot o' Wark ;
But it gives pleasure, we believe, an cheers fooak on ther way,
Sooa lets make sewer at yar Band '11 rey'n fer monny a day.

An sooa, this yer, we celebrate manner gay an grand,
A 'undred yers t'history o' Top o' t'Hill Brass Band ;
Thats why, ta 'elp us forrud then, we ask fer yore suppoort,
'Twill be the best encouragement ta them at's 'oldie' t' Fooart.

ST DENNIS BAND AT BUGLE

W.T. Hawkry, 1920

'Twas Contest Day at Bugle -
The greatest day of the year -
And people came from everywhere,
Their favourite bands to hear.

The weather was unfavourable,
And somewhat marred the day;
But thousands stood around the stand
To hear the bandsmen play.

And oh! what music, to be sure
'Twas pleasure to be there
To hear such glorious harmony
Resounding through the air.

My friends, I'm no musician,
But I like to hear a band,
And the premier bands of Cornwall
Played there upon the stand.

The winners of the Trophy
Played splendidly and free,
Their own choice was a hymn-tune,
Its name "Abide with Me."

And now I'll try to tell you
Just what Judge Mercer said
'Twas printed in the "Guardian,"
And this is how it read.

The contest it was over,
The last band had come down;
And oh, my! what a stampede!
As the people gathered 'round.

The people were around the stand,
Like flies 'round meat in May;
With bated breath they listened
To what the Judge did say.

He opened up his statement
By thanking that great crowd
For their applause and cheering,
Which was hearty, long and loud.

He then spoke of the contest,
And said that he was sure
The music was of higher class
Than when he was here before.

He then went on with his remarks
About St. Dennis Band;
And by what he said about them,
They must be simply grand.

He first spoke of the hymn-tune
Which they did jolly fine,
If only the soprano had
Released his notes in time.

But later he did better,
As my remarks will show
For to be a super excellent man
You must know how to blow.

He next spoke of the contest piece
(Its name I have forgot),
But still there may be some of you,
My readers, who have not.

They made a good and even start,
But the trebles were not clear;
The cause may have been "shivers,"
I'm sure it was not fear.

And what a sound the basses made
I'm sure it shook the ground
You will not find a better lot
'Twixt here and London town.

The trombone man's a marvel,
His mem'ry's like a cook's –
He's never troubled on the march
By many music books

The solo cornet is a man
Who does his best always
He puts a lot of feeling
In everything he plays.

He plays up high, he plays down low,
He plays while on his feet;
The only thing he cannot do
Is make the cornet speak.

The other soloist of note
Is the euphonium chap,
And for his superb rendering
He well deserves a clap.

Filled with dramatic feeling,
In time and with good tone,
His solo was magnificent,
The glory - all his own.

A word or two of praise is due
To the non-solo men
For they, too, are essential
In the making of a band.

'Tis they who make it possible
For the soloist to shine,
'Tis they who carry the melody
That keeps the thing in time.

So here's to you the middle men,
Here's to the solo man;
And here's to trainer Valentine –
Who trained St Dennis Band.

But now I'll change the scene,
But not the subject, see?
And tell you what the people said,
When the news came, after tea.

They said: "Well done St. Dennis Band,
We're proud to own you here;
We knew you'd win your laurels-
Of that we had no fear."

You've had a hard and trying time,
But now you've made your way,
And proudly you may claim to be
Cornwall's best band today.

A word of praise is due to him
Who trained you for the test;
Three cheers for trainer Valentine!
He gave you of his best.

And now I'll close my little rhyme
With thanks to one and all;
Especially St Dennis Band –
The Champions of Cornwall.

THE LITTLE GREEN DOOR ON THE HILL (Black Dyke Band)

Frank Dean, 1990

'Tis sometime now since I first went
To the place that is part of folk lore;
I remember so well, at the side of the road
You went through that little green door.

At first I was shocked for no palace I found
But an old, damp and cold passage way;
And a scruffy old loo, just off to the left
With its walls in a state of decay.

At the end of the passage, a few timbered steps,
Then a sharp turn right led you through
To a small entrance area with a brass snecked door
Such a feeling of exuberance then grew

For behind that door, the musicians rehearsed
By jove! it was powerful, so grand!
And there I witnessed a sight to behold—
There was the great Black Dyke Band.

I could hardly believe that here was the home
Of this world famous combination:
No marble walls or palacial decor
Yet stunning, quite a thrilling sensation.

The raftered ceiling looked weary with years,
The arched windows too were well spent;
But the message conveyed, simply said that tradition
No passage of time would dare dent.

The old music stands on their round solid base
Were truly a sight to behold;
Timber built, with initials carved on
Should they speak, what tales they'd have told.

Two large old cupboards and a set of drawers
Like the walls, all painted in green;
Copies of music, crammed in so tight
'Twas truly a historians dream.

Several trophies stood gathering dust,
What battles for them had been fought?
Successes had been common happenings,
They evoked quite nostalgic thought.

The walls were endowed with certificates,
Of the competitions they had won;
And the pictures of many old bandsmen
Now resting, their Dyke labours done!

It was eerie, they seemed to be watching,
And checking on how the band played;
It seemed, they looked down to make certain
That the ghosts of the past be not laid.

And the band blew out with its music
And those rafters trembled with sound,
For the glorious Black Dyke playing
Stirred the thought, I was on hallowed ground.

And those deep, stone walls were a solace
To the chords that pierced through the air;
As they soaked up the treble fortes
And the soft notes they cushioned with care.

Though the passage of time may have altered
The external features and limbs,
The heart of that room in the centre;
Is unchanged, its light never dims.

Though the faces of those playing music
May one day hang on that wall,
Like the others, they'll look down in spirit
And ensure the Dyke flag will not fall.

And the spirits that nurse the old bandroom
With mystery, inspire and uplift;
For surely, of all the Dyke treasures
That bandroom is God's special gift.

How I love that unique Black Dyke bandroom,
And I shall 'till the last breath I draw;
But I secretly miss that old entrance
With that dear little roadside green door!

ODE OF A BANDSMAN

Ken Berg, 1995

He was there again last Saturday when the band played down the street,
The little boy in scruffy clothes and bare and dirty feet.

A rugged little rascal and as boisterous as can be,
With his footy tucked up in his arms and perpetual bleeding knee.

But when the band starts playing this boy just turns to stone,
And he listens right throughout the day 'till we pack up and go home.

I've seen him there when all his mates try to drag him off to play,
But he staunchly refuses to budge an inch and sends them on their way.

One week he stood beside me and when I chanced to look,
His gaze was fixed upon my music 'thought he could read it like a book'!

And he stood there throughout the number, he must have gone through hell,
But I believe he was trying to match my music with the noise blurring from my bell.

But on Saturday he brought his parents, which alone was no mean feat,
For when he saw the band was playing he dragged them down the street.

So I had a quick word with them said 'your lad seems keen to learn'
Now he will be there next rehearsal night eager to have his turn.

And I'm glad I helped this boy along, not just because my time is free,
But more because, not so long ago, that little boy was me.

NOT BORED BANDSMAN

Leonard Main, Perth, Western Australia, April 2020

I had not played my instrument for quite some time
I was dispirited being well past my prime
So, I packed my cornet, mutes and lyre
and finally decided I would retire

But after a while I thought, what have I done
Life without music is not much fun
I could pick up a baton and beat 3/4 and 2/2
And then tell others what they should do

Now with COVID 19 there are no longer bands
And no bandmasters frantically waving their hands
So, I decided I'd start to blow once again
Upsetting the wife and driving neighbours insane

I practice scales, exercises too
Hopefully soon my lip will feel new
So that when this virus has left this land
I will once again take my place back in the band

I want to thank those that played on this site
What you are doing is certainly right
It has certainly struck with me the right chord
And bandsmen still blowing are certainly not BORED

THE OLD DRUMMER

Adjutant A. Wiggins

Tho' I'm nearly eighty-three, lads, I feel like a boy of ten
When the strains of the Army music come wafting across the glen,
Come wafting across the glen.
I stand by the cottage door, lads, a-trembling in ev'ry limb,
My soul is stirr'd by the drumming, and my poor old eyes grow dim.

The Big Bass Drum!
It sets my heart a-tingling
To hear the drums a-mingling
With the music sweet.

The Big Bass Drum!
I love to hear the sound, you know,
For I was once a drummer in the days of long ago.

When I first took out the drum, lads, things weren't as they are today,
There was no such charming music, and folks had a lot to say,
Yes, folks had a lot to say.
Undaunted we stood our ground, lads, for sinners would oftimes come
And cry unto God for pardon by the side of my old drum.

I'm as happy as a king, lads, no happier could I be!
For a free and full Salvation has meant such a lot to me,
Has meant such a lot to me.
My journey is nearly o'er, lads, but never a doubt have I
They'll send for me to be a drummer in the angels' band on high!

SAVED BY THE DRUM

Adjutant Rattray

The Army Band was marching, and the crowds were rushing by,
Not many seemed to follow, nor heed the warning cry;
With fiction or with pleasure the folks were more at home,
Yet to the ears of one the warning came, 'twas carried by the drum.

From beer and rum the drum said "Come!" And from the taproom near
Came an old and feeble drink-bound slave, and tried a course to steer
To the spot whence came the drumming that had lured him from the rum,
And the old man reached the Army Hall, by following the drum.

The old man far had wandered, in the mire was sinking fast,
His pals and he were drinking when by the door there passed
The Army Soldiers singing, and, marching up the slum;
So the old man reached the Army Hall by following the drum

When safe within the meeting on a seat up near the front,
His heart, so hard, was melted, and soon his knee was bent;
The Saviour made him welcome and raised him from the slum.
And the old man found the drunkard's God by following the drum.

METHIL BAND

"Bobs", 8 May 1900

I hear thee speak of Methil Band,
Whose martial strains enhanced the land;
Mother, oh where is the musical corps,
Shall we not seek it and weep no more?
Is it where the Cairns of rubies grow,
Or down by the dock where the boaties row?
Not there, not there, my child!

Is it far away with some legion bold,
Off to the front in that land of gold,
Where Orange blossoms around Bloemfontein,
And the sapper blows up the secret mine,
And Rhodes marks time on a Chartered stand –
Is it there, sweet mother, the Methil Band?
Not there, not there, my child!

I haven't seen it for a year, my boy,
Ear hasn't heard its sweet tones of joy;
The dreamers in marble halls so fair
Think they are off on a trip with Lothair –
The Band has left you and me in the gloom,
And they've joined the cow that jumped o'er the moon –
It is there, it is there, my child!

METHIL BRASS BAND

"Aunty Jean", 17 May 1900

Go, spread the news both far and near,
There's a poet among's, ot would appear,
Who writes our drooping hearts to cheer -
Am gled that am his aunty, O!

He's struck perfection's note at last,
And Hemans in the shade has cast -
Go, send the news both far and fast -
Am prood that am his aunty, O!

I ken oor poet's bound to shine,
The logic he can chop sae fine,
Am sure there's sense in every line -
At least, so thinks his aunty, O!

He wonders whaur the Band has been,
And hints a place ca'ed Bloemfontein;
But I didna think he was sae green
As try and gull his aunty, O!

He says a cow to the muse has gone,
Wi' Methil Band close in its train,
But when we'll see it back again,
It mystifies his aunty, O!

Now the evidence is very clear,
This is just the season o' the year
When poets a' turn kind o' queer,
And gang and see their aunty, O!

Some poets sing o' flowers and plants,
Some of beetles, bugs, and ants,
But of Methil Band oor poet chants -
That's what they tell his aunty, O!

As he wanders by the sparkling waves,
Of Methil Band he rants and raves,
But I hope he decently behaves
When he gangs far frae his aunty, O!

The members o' the band s' swear
If they get him they'll make him sair -
They say they have accounts to square -
They should square them wi' his aunty, O!

Some wad croon him wi' a corn beef can
Some throw him 'neath a loaded van;
But they're better ne' to kill the man
Before they see his aunty, O!

My advice to members o' the Band
Is never for this to lift their hand
For a blow the poet could never stand -
He'd run and tell his aunty, O!

For a' his failings, faults, and flaws,
I must support out poet's cause -
The reason of it is just because
I've signed myself his aunty, O!

A BRAZEN APPRECIATION

“Cypher” (a Scottish admirer of brass bands), 1938

I often think it must be grand
To be in an Instrumental Band!
All doubts, all hesitations flee
Its glorious masculinity.

As, one spell-bound by hypnotist,
I watch each instrumentalist,
Marking the lips that late were slack
Grow tense awaiting the attack.

With eye half on the music-sheet
And half on the conductor's beat
They wait that awful moment when
The downward baton brings them in.

Silver or brass the instrument,
With either I could be content,
Nor be fastidious in choice.
Hark to the cornet's golden voice

Climb the cadenza's dizzy height
What time his brethren, silent quite,
Enraptured, watch him downward come,
And fondly murmur " Welcome home!"

How should my poor encomium
Suffice for thee, euphonium?
Gentle yet strong, to peace inclined,
Thou canst, if so thou hast a mind,

Uplift the counter-melody
In soul-ennobling march, *e.g.*
In Alford's "Colonel," whose great name
Recalls the Royal and Ancient game.

Thy tone, inspiring tenor horn,
"On Fontarabian echoes borne "
Once summoned Roland's chivalry
(Though his was French most probably).

For nobler purpose thou wast meant
Than after-beat accompaniment,
Which task too oft is all thy share,
A mockery of thy days that were.

The rest use pistons ; thou alone,
Valve-less yet valiant slide trombone,
Measures the interval by lunges
Given as the pugilist his punches.

What though thy tone should sometimes rasp?
Virility is in thy grasp.
Ye lesser brazen belles, give place!
Behold the mighty B flat bass,

The biggest of his brethren he,
Tremendous in profundity!
Mighty his arm and strong his grasp
Who they circumference dare enclasp,

No weakling he of slender lips
Who at thy tankard-mouthpiece sips.
Fiddles and flutes for fools were meant—
This is a he-man's instrument!

And what of him whose magic wand
Evokes the music from the band?
As Charon's word ruled Cerberus,
Of triple-tonguers quite the first,

So triple-tonguers still are sat on
Who venture to defy the baton.
Long in our midst may men be found
Who worship at the shrine of Round—

Or should his lustrous orb grow dimmer
Long may they sound the praise of Rimmer.
Myself - if kindlier fate had planned it—
I'd been an instrumental bandit.

TH' BELLE VUE "SEPTEMBER"

Eric Johnson, 1965

Of all o' th' band contests aw know
Theers nun thad cun compare
Wi th' owdest wun o'th lot, thads held
Ut Belle Vue every year.

When th' "Test Piece" 's eawt th' bands buckle to
Until thi know each dot,
Fer th' best o' th' countries bands enter
Un o play fer th' top spot.

Un then ut last when th' big day cums
Th' bands travel tu Belle Vue,
Thi foind theersels u loikley pub
Wheer thi cun 'ave u do

Ut givin' th' piece its last run thro',
Un gettin in theer lips,
Fer when ther playin in th' King's Hall
Theer munna bi nu slips.

On thad big day Belle Vue's u seet
Tu gladden ony een,
Fer everweer yu leawk abeawt
Theers colour tu bi seen.

Moor nur u scoor o' bands er theer
I' different rig-eawts bowd,
Un th' gardens gleaw i' autumn flewer,
Wi th' trees just tinged wi gowd.

Theers plenty t' du fer everywun
Whatever age thi be,
Wi roides tu 'ave on th' reawd-abeawts,
Unth' animals tu see.

Whoile th' faythers sit insoide th' King's Hall
Un listen ev'ry band,
Theer isna better playin t'yer
In th' length un th' breadth o' th' land.

When th' contests oer un proizes gan
Un th' new champions er known,
Thi run th' piece thro' fer th' BBC
Tu shew how weel thiv bleawn.

Su if yer u' bandchap un yu want
Tu spend u reet gud day,
Just visit th' Belle Vue "September"
Un hearken th' best bands play.

TH' BELLE VUE "SEPTEMBER" (translation)

Eric Johnson, 1965 - A translation for Southern readers

Of all the band contests I know
There's none than can compare
With the oldest one of all,
that's held at Belle Vue every year.

The piece is out, bands practise hard
until they know each dot.
For Britain's finest bands enter
and all play for "Top Spot."

And then at last the big day comes.
Bands travel to Belle Vue.
They find themselves a likely pub
Where they can try and do

Their best to "polish up" the piece
And settle in each lip,
For when they're playing on the stand
They can't afford one slip.

On that big day Belle Vue's a sight
To gladden any eye
For everywhere one looks about
There's colour to espy.

More than a score of bands are there
In different rig-outs bold.
And gardens glow in autumn flower
With the trees just tinged with gold.

There's plenty there for everyone,
Whatever age they be.
With rides to have on round-about
And animals to see.

While fathers sit inside Kings Hall
And listen to each band,
There isn't better playing heard
In any other land.

The contest's o'er, the prize's given,
The new champions are known
And heard again on BBC
To show how well they've blown.

So if you're a bandsman and you want
To spend a right good day,
Just visit Belle Vue "September"
And hear the best bands play.

PORTSMOUTH CITY BAND

N. Wragg, 1965

[On Friday, October 1, 1965, Portsmouth City Fire Brigade Band was re-named Portsmouth City Band]

"West Region" of the B.B.C.,
"South Today" and I.T.V.,
"Day by day" have had their litle jokes
For often in their news they spoke
About the Fire Brigade to hand
That had no Firemen in their Band!

That this was true, there was no doubt,
But at long last, the remedy is out!
In order to ensure that all is clear
That ANYONE may join the Band that's here,
And "Welcome" will be on the mat for you
If play an Instrument is what you do.

The "Fire Brigade" now in the name,
From October First will lose its claim.
So may all your pleasant jibes and "cracks,"
At "PORTSMOUTH CITY BAND" be now relaxed.
"We thank you for publicity, and views
Expressed when giving out the news.

And long may you continue doing same
After PORTSMOUTH CITY BAND establish their new name.

And if you ever know of one - or some –
Who play Brass Instruments - or Drum –
Send them along to where we're seen
Before Home Matches, on the green
Of Fratton Park, the Football Ground,
Where all can hear the "Portsmouth Sound."
That "Welcome" Sound, it is a Chime,
Which signifies for all a "real good time."

TH' GRADLIEST DAY O' TH' YEAR

Eric Johnson, 1966 [A bandsman's impression of Whit Friday]

Wi meet in th' bandreawm early on
Feelin' i' reet gud cheer,
Wi've o' bin waitin' fer this day
Sin Whitsuntoide last year.
When th' marchcards us bin given eawt
Wi form eawer ranks in th' street,
Un then wi march up th' road tu th' church
Fer th' procession wi mun meet.
When wi march in thro' th' skooyard gate
O' th' childer jump i' glee,
Ther o' loined up awaitin' us,
As bonney as can be.
Then th' banners up un off wi goo
Tu th' drum's relentless beat,
As grond a seet yu'll see tудay
On ony Lenky street.

Thro' th' Brook wi swell eawer chests wi proide
As tho' wi owned o' th' street,
Un th' foak thad stond creawds tu watch
o' say wi seawnd oreet.
We're allus th' best on th' "Mossley Brew"
Fer th' creawds er thicker theer.
It mecks thi want tu du thi best
When foak turn eawt tu cheer.

Un then wi goo up Stamford Road,
Thro' th' brook un back tu th' skool
Wi finish wi a gradely thirst
Un 'ave u "jar" er two.
Wi 'ave sum feawd then set up shop
Tu gi' th' church foak a toon,
Wi play in th' yard ut front o' th' skoo
Fer th' rest o' th' a'terneun.

Reet after tae wi beawerd a bus,
Thad tacks us on a teawer
Of ev'ry local band contest
(Aw wish thad thi held meawer)
Wi play ut Lees un Uppermill,
Ut Grenfild un in th' Delph,
Aw durum bother win er leawse
Ah fair enjoy miself.

Wi finish up in eawer whoam teawn
Un when o' th' sheawtin's dun,
Wi foind a pub tu 'ave a "pint"
Un wait to see who's won.
Am allus sad when th' teawn gooes quiet
Un awll th' creawds dissapear,
Fer theers' nu day a bandsman luvs
Loike "The Gradliest day o' the Year."

TRIBUTE TO DYKE (Black Dyke Band)

Frank Dean, 1967

The Black Dyke Band, a household name
Deserving of their world wide fame
In glorious tradition their banner flies
With their noted tone that never dies.

Unique personalities inside each tunic
And magic in their brand of music
Player and instrument both combine
To produce those thrilling sounds sublime.

Light music, classic, solo or hymn
The co-ordination of mind and limb
Excites the hearer, with that organ-like tone
That puts them in a class of their own.

The traditions of this combination
Arouse one's interest and elation
The magic of that name, "T'Dyke",
Stirs one, whether or not a "Tyke".

Albert Hall or park, just take your pick
The atmosphere is 'electric'
A visit by "Dyke" is a special occasion
Their glorious sound brings jubilation.

Other bands have considerable fear
And also respect for this "Band of the year",
Contests bring considerable concern
When it comes to the Queensbury men's turn.

There's a slickness and snap in the playing of Dyke
That all band lovers just have to like
There's something about them that's theirs alone
Hard to define, yet very well known.

Their principal soloists form a team
That stirs the ears, they are supreme
Jim Shepherd, Frank Berry and John Clough
One cannot praise these men enough.

Ask anyone which band they like
The dominating answer is, "Black Dyke!"
Even those with little appreciation
Have added "Dyke" to their education.

All possible compliments have been paid
To this glorious band that will never fade
Emotions have stirred, and praise been given
For more pleasing words, the listeners have striven.

What is the secret behind their success?
'Tis difficult to find one must confess
But I think each man, whatever position
Takes pride in "Dyke" and their great tradition.

To play for "Dyke" is the ultimate aim
Of bandsmen seeking musical fame
One could still go on, so much has been written,
Three cheers for the Champion Band of Great Britain!

THE BLACK DYKE ALPHABET

Frank Dean, 1980

- A for audition, the very first move
in joining the Dyke with something to prove.
- B is for best, for that's what they are,
acknowledged by thousands near and far.
- C is for contests where titles are won,
a serious business, occasionally fun.
- D must be Dyke, what else dare one say,
that magical sound when they start to play.
- E is for excellence, one of the few
adjectives used, accurate and true.

F is for fame for who enjoys more?
 world renowned, almost folk lore.
 G is for God who gave the skills
 combined to provide music that thrills.
 H is for hat-trick, something unique
 achieved by the Dyke with nonchalant cheek.
 I for involvement, a continuous thing
 for sustaining reward and glory to bring.
 J is for joy the brass sound brings
 once experienced continually clings.
 K is for key, the key to success,
 qualities rare that always impress.
 L is for laughter, and mingled with fuss
 this abounds on the band bus.
 M is for magic, for music, for mirth,
 Dyke have all three, the salt of the earth.
 N is for national, a title oft won,
 deservedly is the cheer, "Well-done!"
 O is for onward the future to cast,
 fortune cares not for glories past.
 P is for Pearce, traditionally revered
 conductor whose discipline many feared,
 Q is for Queensbury, Dyke's home base,
 though travelling around from place to place.
 R for rehearsals, hard and intense,
 yet dedication brings recompense.
 S for the stag, emblem in gold,
 mark of greatness, proud and bold.
 T for tradition and also tone
 very special, their's alone.
 U for uniform, those stripes down the back
 at contests inspire and signal attack.
 V is for victory, a lengthy list,
 and some the Dyke have closely missed.
 W Whit Friday, a few surprises
 but Dyke collect their share of the prizes.
 X for X-citing, the strings of the heart,
 music well played is a living part.
 Y is for youth on whom Dyke depend,
 matched with experience the ultimate blend.
 Z we ignore for it comes last of all,
 a fate that will surely never befall.

SUGDEN'S FLOUR MILL FIRE (Brighouse & Rastrick Band)

An anonymous poet recalling a disastrous fire at Sugden's Flour Mill in 1963

Theer's a town on the Calder called Briggus,
Wi' Rastrick, that's oop in the 'ill,
An' the tale that I 'ave to relate now
Is the burning of Sugden's gurt mill.

'Twere a t' dinner time Wednesday it started,
In a wheat store of 'undreds o' tons;
A local confectioner saw it,
An' put up the price of 'is buns.

They sent fire engines from Briggus,
From 'Uddersfield an 'Alifax too,
From Mirfield, Cleckheaton and Batley,
An' West Riding tenders and crew.

The fire chief went oop the ladder
An' gazed at the blazing 'ell;
Said: "Lads, we mun saddle the 'osses
An' get Bradford's engines as well.

The mill was a blazing inferno
Which threatened to get out of 'and,
Until someone in sheer desperation,
Summoned Briggus and Rastrick Brass Band.

The bandsmen stood in amazement
An' heard the chief bandsman explain;
Then they filled all their tubas wi' watter
An squirted it on to the grain.

They sucked canal watter to quench it
Wi' trombone, an' trumpet, and 'orn,
An' after a terrible battle
They extinguished all t'flaming corn.

The fire chief said to t'Bandmaster,
"By gum! but it's useful tha's been."
The bandmaster said: "It wor nowt lad,
But Ah wish t'Black Dyke could ha' seen.

THE GREAT BRASS BAND CONTEST (Hade Edge Band)

Len Carter

I'll tell you a tale that is certain to please
Of a great Brass Band Contest at Blowem-on-Squeeze,
Where all the best blowers parade in a field.
For the first there's a cup, for the second a shield.

This marvelous event had drawn young and old,
The betting was evens on Hepworth I'm told.
Hinchliffe Mill, Slaithwaite, Honley were sure of a place,
But Meltham and Holme weren't to be in disgrace!

The contest commences - on the board No. 1.
The crowd are all silent - it's Honley that's on!
The first part is marvelous, no slip and no waver,
But oh! that trombone - he's dropped more than a quaver!

Baritone's good, but the basses seem drowsy,
Now here comes Andante "Cor Blimey it's lousy!"
Next Hinchliffe Mill, full of hope - full of glee,
But I fear by their playing they're all full of tea!

List' to the cornets, those basses, those 'trams'
Like pneumatic drills - then like battering rams!
Here come the lads - just hark to that welcome!
You don't need no telling these lads come from Meltham!

Plenty blow, plenty confidence - oodles of pluck,
But plenty mistakes and they're out for a duck!
Next we have Holme, but I'm sorry to say
They may win tomorrow, but no luck today!

I fear they should never have paid us a call,
But played Hail Smiling Morn to that pig on the wall!
They're here - yes it's Slaithwaite just hark to that noise!
Will they win? I fear not, but I'll just ask the boys.

Oh! hark to those basses - too quick and too soon!
You're here for a win, not a rake at the moon!
The programme continues - Lockwood ne'er had a chance,
And Lindley played like they were all in a trance!

Then next on the platform stepped Hepworth - three cheers!
I'm told if they win then it's Hepworth free beers!
List' that euphonium - sweeter than honey,
This is the band that I'm sure wins the money!

But stop! - list' awhile - do no drive home the wedge,
There still is one band, and that band is Hade Edge.
Number 9 on the programme (but not doctor's orders),
These are the lads who're from over the borders!

No help from no one - no borrowed men,
Just list' to Allegro - a peach! - nay a GEM!
Here's the result then - Hade Edge 99,
98 goes to Hepworth (that's cutting it fine).

And so once again we all wait for next year,
When all of these bands once again we shall hear.
Some good, some indifferent, some lousy, some BAD,
Some full of glee and the others all sad!

But take it from me, there's a place on a ledge
Where all of the cups finish up at HADE EDGE!!!

HONLEY BAND

Yuv yerd a lot of swanking
I utther parts of t' land,
But lets us do a little bit
Abaat yar Honley Band;

Ther just a lot of working lads,
Ther's twisters and ther's dyers
But wheear yo go yul nivver fornd
A better lot o' triers

Yerl always fornd um ready
To help i' owt they can,
An if yo give um torme enough
Thel be theear to a man.

They getten a reight conductor,
Always good an' patient seems,
But when his stick it slaps that rail
They all know what it means.

Yo want to cum sum practice neet
Un watch um, air they tror;
They blow wol sweat runs daan ther cheeks
Wol um sure ther all fai dror.

Did yo yen um Feeast Sunday
Wi th'erly morning sing;
Air they played them good old hymn tunes
Un fairly made Honley ring?

Thers one in naa ut gave it up,
He thowt he wer dun an worn;
But he's fun air fit an well he is
When he's blowing his fugal horn.

They a real good lad as secretary,
Bill Hartley is his name,
He'll do just what yo ask him to
Unkeep smiling just the same.

Ud od lorke to mention Ronnie,
He's has some real had luck,
Om sure that weer all glad to see
That lad is bucking up.

An or think yeti all admit it
Yer can travel t'country throo,
He'a better player wi one leg
Ner moast folk is wi' two.

Ye want tae see ther instruments
Air Norse un cleean they look;
An yer carn't see smarter uniforms
In any picture book.

An doant yo think they make a lot
Becos ther allus willing;
For when ther shared all aat this yer,
It didn't run each a shilling.

Then ther's Arthur Lockwood,
He used to play i't band,
Naar yer see he's playing wi' best
Orchestra in the land.

An doan't forget Fred Berry,
He's takken bands on tour;
Yer can tell he's an Honley bred un,
He lived up Honley Moor.

Or think by now Ov said enough
As torme is nearly up,
But ther's one thing Ov fergeten,
Abaat um winning cup.

That capt um all in Honley
When they yert that Honley's won
Now let's go raand and shake ther hands
An tell the lads, "Well done"!

Or wop they go on playing,
Its best village in the land,
An Or wop as long as ther's Honley
Ther'll be an HONLEY BAND

HAPPY BIRTHDAY DUNGANNON SILVER BAND

Philip & Elaine Williamson, 2002

Oh happy birthday to Dungannon Silver Band
A hundred years of playing through the land
Miles and miles we've marched
And we've kept playing on
So happy birthday to Dungannon Silver Band

Here the town tin come
We hear the people say
Colonel Bogey, Round the Town, we play
Proudly we march on
In our navy and our plum
With our instruments a gleaming in the sun

So let us hear it for the boys
And let us hear it for the girls
Who have come and played so well
In our great wee Silver Band
We all love our band
Yes Dungannon Silver Band
So give three cheers for a hundred years
Hoy! Hoy! Hoy!
That we'll keep playing on.

LLANDUDNO TOWN BAND (1)

Albert Shaw, 1970

Now, here at Llandudno, they have a Town Band
Who play on the Prom every evening - they're grand.
All stalwart musicians, they blow good and hard,
Conducted by Robin - a bit of a card!

They've been here for years, giving pleasure to all,
Outliving theatre, concert parties and all;
They do a grand job seven evenings a week,
Conducted by Robin - that lad's full of cheek!

On Sundays the crowd do their hymn-singing best;
We go through the hymn-sheet, we're put to the test.
Calon Lan's a winner with all the Welsh folk,
Conducted by Robin - but not as a joke.

During the week, competition's the thing;
You can conduct the Band, tell a joke, even sing;
It's all in good spirit and loads of good fun,
Conducted by Robin - that lad takes the bun!

Your holiday's over, you have to leave Wales;
You're laughing at photos, remembering tales
That you heard in Llandudno; your time there was grand.
Our thanks to Robin and Llandudno Town Band!

LLANDUDNO TOWN BAND (2)

David Constantine, 2004

High water behind them the town band
Give us a tune while the sun goes down
Which it does too soon
Leaving us cold in the lee of the big headland

The old and the very old in stripy deckchairs
Recumbent under wraps like a year ago
And some drawn up alongside in flash new wheelchairs
The same old crowd, minus the passed away,

Huddling together on the big prom
Under the vast sky here we are again:
Sacred on Sundays and the profane
Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays, always at 8 p.m.

Against the surf, under the cackling gulls
What a brave noise they make, it cheers me up no end:
Fatty the Tuba with the very thick spectacles
Ballooning fast, and his lady friend

(I call her his lady friend) blowing him kisses
The length of her brassy trombone
And two very pretty things, sex unknown,
Winking over their cornets in white blouses.

The gulls jeer and a shrewd wind blows
And but for the plastic clothes pegs in nine bright colours
Away would go the tunes from the shows
Like all the other litter of our yesteryears.

To finish, Dave the conductor promises a solo
But doesn't say it's Sally on the flugelhorn
Or Bob on sax and the regulars know
It's him himself and he'll suddenly turn

And it won't be the twiddling stick he'll hold
But the trumpet and there he'll swell
Facing us, full frontal
And such a sound will come forth, pure gold

Out of his silver, and not the Last Post
Nor the Last Trump either though I grant you an angel
Recording on the Orme would think it must
Be Jehoshaphat down here - no, our Dave'll

Close his eyes and deliver what he can hear
In his head or his heart or up there in the sky
And give it us neat, give it us proof and pure
On and on, in and in, till every body

And in every body the huddled soul
Shy as an embryo
Hearkens. Then that's it for now,
That's it till Sunday and *Abide With Me* and all

Not stiff for ever get to their feet
And the wheelchair-riders sit up straight
And the team in purple sound and tinkle the tune
For us to hum *Land of My Fathers* and sing *God Save the Queen*

And we do our best but it's not much cop
Against the whole of the Irish Sea
Come very close. The band pack up,
It's cold, the wheelchairs speed away.

REVIVAL (Cockermouth Mechanics Band)

J.B. Richardson

The Cockermouth Mechanic's Band is starting once again
And very soon we'll hear its fine melodious refrain.
With Jackson Little, President, he'll soon be instrumental
In giving us those pieces which are known as inci "dental".

Jack Beattie takes his place again as master of the band,
With Jack in charge our progress will undoubtedly be grand
And then to help him David Skillen comes along as well,
When David plays he captivates as by a magic spell.

And Reuben Stephenson is here, a stalwart old “mechanic”
His efforts for our famous band may well be termed titanic,
There's Saucy Holmes and Ernie Bell with wondrous melody,
And Cockermouth will shortly hear a feast of harmony

We've lots of lads all very keen to give you of their best,
So, Cockermouth, it's up to you to put them to the test.
Our band belongs to Cockermouth, we represent the town,
Our clever instrumentalists will never let you down.

And Cockermouth, like every other town throughout the land
Should view with ever growing pride its own fine local band.
But instruments are needed, and our funds are very small,
We hope that you will rally round in answer to the call.

Please send us your subscriptions, send them now without delay
And then with easy conscience you can come and hear us play

WHIT FRIDAY WALKS, 28th MAY 1999 (Backworth Colliery Band)

Doreen Smith, 2002

One of a collection of her brass band poems – see “Further Reading” below

The Whit Friday Walks on Saddleworth Moors
An ancient ritual for Brass Band tours.
A day for Bands of every class, from
Children's groups to Men of Brass
To meet in friendly competition
And build a mighty reputation.

The mission was researched, well planned
We all received an action plan
Of times and routes and where to play
So nothing could go wrong that day.
Maybe the gods were playing games
Our plans and dreams went up in flames.

Have you ever had one of those days
When you should have stayed in bed?
This was one of them!
The driver seemed such a canny chap.
He arrived early with the bus and was
Really helpful.

Everything went well until we reached
Burnley Football Club. Maybe that was it.
Perhaps he was a Toon Army Fan
And seeing a Soccer ground brought it
All back to him, how Newcastle were
Pasted in the Cup Final, again!

We were lost.
How can you get lost on a main road?
He didn't have any maps on the bus!
Colin was busy on his mobile
Trying to find out the way to Todmorden.
I said "Follow the b****y sign posts."

The trouble began at Todmorden.
We were looking for the road
Leading up to Mankinholes Youth Hostel,
Our designated resting place
After a busy evening of competition.
To off-load the gear, change and then compete.

We drove around the town and couldn't find the road
So we drove around again and again.
Then the fun really began.
We turned right to go up a country lane
And saw a little bridge on a narrow bend
Suitable only for ducks and horses.

The driver went for it.
Can you believe it? He thought he could
Drive an Executive coach with on-board toilet
And video, over a footbridge.
Pensioners with Zimmerframes
And village children came out to stare in disbelief!

His reversing skills were magnificent!
To and fro, to and fro, we were stuck.
"Right said Fred, have to take the bridge down"
Was sung by a chorus from the back of the bus.
The pensioners were shaking their heads
The kids were laughing and waving.

A cheer erupted from the crowd
As we finally reversed onto the main road
And drove around Todmorden
Again and again and again.
"It must be this one here" said Colin
So the driver turned right off the main road.

We drove up a narrow country lane
And saw a little bridge on a narrow bend
Suitable only for ducks and horses.
Ancient renovated buildings were dotted around
With new businesses plying their trade
And workmen peacefully toiling, in the sunshine.

The driver went for it.
Can you believe it? He thought he could
Drive an Executive coach with on-board toilet
And video, over a footbridge.
Kids on mountain bikes and workmen
Stared in amazement at the sight!

His reversing skills were magnificent!
To and fro, to and fro, we were stuck.
"Right said Fred, have to fetch a crane up"
Was sung by the chorus at the back of the bus.
The workmen were shaking their heads
The kids were laughing and jeering.

A cheer erupted from the crowd
As we finally reversed onto the main road
And drove around Todmorden
Again and again and again.
"It must be this one here" said Colin
So the driver turned right off the main road.

We drove up a narrow country lane
Which got narrower and narrower.
The cows and sheep came down from the fells
To see the strange vehicle stuck in front of them.
Even the lambs stopped gambolling and frolicking
To gaze at the strange sight!

His reversing skills were magnificent!
The cows mooed,
The sheep bleated
And the ducks quacked in harmony
As we reversed all the way back to the main road
And never hit a thing!

We drove round Todmorden again.
The locals were so used to seeing us
They started a book, £50 prize for
The one who predicted the number of circuits
Before we ran out of fuel
And where we would finally stop!

There was consternation up at the Youth Hostel.
People who had driven themselves up
Were wondering where on earth we were.
Urgent phone calls were made on mobiles,
Communication was established,
Finally we knew the way.

We drove up a narrow country lane
Which got narrower and narrower.
Colin was demented and made frantic
Calls to Gavin, who guided us up the route.
We saw the Hostel and Colin ran forward
To guide the driver in safely.

The Hostel stood in the middle of nowhere.
Inaccessible to all but walkers and cyclists.
That's why they are cheap and cheerful.
Designed with youth in mind,
To test their metal against nature;
To develop character and endurance.

"You'll have to turn here," said Colin.
We all knew it couldn't be done,
There wasn't enough room!
"It'll take forever grumbled the driver"
We all knew we'd have to reverse
All the way back to Todmorden!

The driver went for it.
Can you believe it? He thought he could
Reverse an Executive coach with on-board toilet
And video, out of a tiny yard
And up a narrow lane
Flanked by high buildings and stone walls!

His reversing skills were magnificent!
To and fro, to and fro,
He never hit a thing!
"Right said Fred, have to take the wall down"
Was sung by the chorus at the back of the bus.
But, finally he made it!

The turn around and band practice
Was quickly completed and we were
Back on the bus expecting to reach
Denshaw by six-thirty for our first contest. Guess what?
The driver took the wrong turning and we had to
Drive around Todmorden again!

Back on the right road, off into the country we drove
Only to reach a farm where the cows
Were crossing the road after milking.
It was like a great Texan cattle drive.
There seemed to be thousands of them.
Hysterical laughter swept the coach.

Eventually we reached Denshaw and played
Our first contest by a quarter to eight.
Next stop Dobcross. Not a chance
With a driver navigating by the seat of his pants!
We saw the bands at Delph, competed,
A quarter of our plan completed!

We tried to go to Uppermill
The driver had no maps, no skill
At reading signposts, looking round
To see where bands and crowds were found.
We happened into Scouthead, played
Perhaps that's where we should have stayed!

Our plan was wrecked, our route forgotten
We thought we'd go to Lees, then Grotton,
Lydgate, Friezland Greenfield too,
Then back to base to have a few.
Our driver couldn't get it right
He turned off left instead of right.

He tried and tried to make amends.
He spun the coach on hairpin bends.
Drove in reverse round country lanes
The frogs and toads jumped down the drains.
The final error occurred that night
When the `B**R' turned left instead of right.

The Band set off across the moors
A most unwanted mystery tour.
No hope of turning anywhere
Poor Colin nearly lost his hair.
For twenty miles they drove that night
Across bleak moorland out of sight!

By the time a turning point appeared
The Walks were over for the year.
The Band returned to Mankinholes
Reversing up that narrow road.
We claim the record, played three contests
Drove ten hours, who'd want to best it?

What a party! What a bloke!
We laughed hysterically at the joke.
The gods had played their trump and won.
We'd lost the plot, but had great fun.
Our driver went off in the huff
And sulked alone in his big bus!

The moral of the this tale is clear
Parents listen, lend an ear.
When little Johnny wants to be
A Driver, take it seriously.
He must be taught to read and write
But most of all learn Left from Right.

Take him down to be tattooed
No painted snakes or daggers crude
A simple **L** and **R** is needed
On the back of his hands, where he can read it.
Then turning his bus will be a joy
He won't have to think, the lucky boy!

ODE TO THE CITY OF TRURO BAND

Shelley Davis, 1988

The band of Truro City,
Was coming on quite well,
The instruments were paid for,
And the funds began to swell.

But a major problem did arise,
They knew not where they could,
Rehearse in peace with no complaints,
from all the neighbourhood.

Because, you see, this wondrous band,
Had no set place to play.
They moved around from hall to hall,
Much to their dismay,

Until, at last, the chairman rose,
And said, "Listen to me,
The best place we could practice,
Is the local cemetery!"

Mutters of approval,
Were heard throughout the band,
So they trooped off to St Clements Church,
Instruments in hand.

"Aha", said Mr Little,
"The perfect place to be,
Twice a week we'll practice
In this little cemetery."

St Clements church, now twice a week,
Is filled with harmonious tones,
Of 'Amazing Grace', 'God Save the Queen',
And 'You'll never Walk Alone'.

So if, one cold and windy night,
You pass our cemetery,
And hear a strange and eerie sound,
Whistle through the trees,

Do not imagine ghosts or ghouls,
Treading this sacred land,
It's only Mr Rex Little,
With our up and coming band!

WHEN THE BAND GOES CAROL PLAYING (Wellington Silver Band)

Anon, 1973

Are we to feel unwanted,
Must we be treated so?
When the Band goes carol playing
They don't know where to go.

Unwanted North Street Residents
No carols do we hear
But can you spare a copper
To help the Christmas cheer?

Well, I could spare a copper,
I think it could be more,
But to hear no Christmas music
I think it's bloomin' poor.

A Band supporter that I am
I believe in Christmas cheer.
The spirit of Christmas never stops,
It always passes here.

DARLEY BAND

Frank L. Dean, 1951

Now Darley Band has been on t'go
For fifty years or even more,
And tunes they play are more than tripe,
And some can play while they smoke their pipe.

But just think it's now on fifty year
Sin' Darley first played, and played by ear.
But things have altered here tonight
And now we play by mouth and sight.

But Darley's done well to keep on t'go
For fifty years or even more,
But then the chaps don't do so bad,
To entertain both lass and lad.

Now t'membership was fatter then
And now they'd play with nobbut four men
But them four men are t'best in t'Dale
When they start to play they never fail.

Now Trombone Houseman's one of them,
And Fawcett'll play if there's nobbut issen.
But John Robert and Clarence are t'best in't pick
They can play Schubert's march in fiddlestick.

But t'rest of t'band they never seem
To play t'introduction or even t'theme.
All they can play; well take your pick,
Either Strauss's waltz or t'bears picnic.

Now bass is not an easy task
And Syd is just about to ask
Bill Abbott for a bit of grease,
His valves they stick he gets no peace.

And there's Herbert, just about
Worn out, and jiggered inside out.
Afore he could come 'ere tonight,
He'd sheep to round up and put out of sight.

Now what a din there's coming from t'back,
Cause Fawcett's instrument's trying to mak'
As much din as though he blowed through a sack.
But John Robert blows F to answer him back.

And then George Arthur's waving stick
What shall we play now take your pick.
Cause "Laddy" here has t'bus to catch.
Is "3-4" time a bit o'er quick?

So now they start to play a tune
If they can't blow quiet I'm going soon,
But wait a bit there's Thomas dash it.
He's gone and come'd without his cornet.

Nay nivver mind says George Arthur there,
Just all blow "C" then start to play
Good gracious down, Oh, what a din.
Eh' Syd's bottom note's just o'er thin.

Now all is right and off they Play,
When Darley start they play for t'day,
They are playing a waltz from out of t'book,
Throw open wide your window; look!

It sounds like Mozart's "Tiger Cage".
I think Will Houseman's on t'wrong page,
But George is beating double time
And sweet soft notes come out o' mine.

Now once again I'll tell you all,
Think yersels lucky there's a band at all.
Cause talent now has left it's peak,
And we nobbut practice once a week.

Now once a place were going to try,
Afford some brass and then to hire
Black Dyke or Brighthouse, then they find,
A Band called Darley and change their mind.

But anyhow that's quite enough,
And everyone is out of puff.
So I will have to think a bit,
To write last verse, and then that's it.

So thank you all for coming in,
This lovely Hall to hear our din.
In fifty years from now I trust,
Your bairns will take the place of us.

THE STAND AND THE BAND (Bedford Town Band)

Anon, 1926

In 1926 a new bandstand was built on the south bank of the River Great Ouse in St. Mary's Gardens, Bedford. Bedford had three bands at the time, so to avoid any accusations of favouritism the Mayor decided to invite the Luton Red Cross Band (from the other side of Bedfordshire) to perform at the opening ceremony. Unfortunately, the music reverberated heavily off the buildings on the opposite side of the river, creating a rather disconcerting effect! (The bandstand was later relocated eastward to Mill Meadow, where the acoustics were more acceptable.) The choice of a non-Bedford band to open the bandstand created some understandable resentment on the part of the three Bedford bands, and someone from the Bedford Town Band penned this little poem.

St. Mary's had a little land,
Enough to build a stand on;
And on that land was built a stand
Just fit to take a band on.

But Mayor'e couldn't stand the band;
And so, like any Teuton,
He promptly went and banned the stand
To any band but Luton.

So now the stand's a-band-on'd, and
In this result we're landed;
That local bands are contraband,
If not in fact disbanded!

FARNWORTH OLD BAND

Alice Hart, 1910

(on the presentation of a new drum to William Hoult of Farnworth Old Band)

Yo'ar a gradely sort of fellow, Mr Hoult;
And we're very fain to ha' yo' in the band.
Yo' con rattle on the sheep-skin, without doubt.
As well as any drummer in the land.

So we're gietin' yo' a drum to rattle on,
We hope yo'll find it worthy o' yore skill;
It's as good as any yo'n e'er known,
And we're sure yo'll play it for us wi' a will.

And we've painted "little dick" as yo' con see.
Just so he'll put some heart into his wark;
It's as good as ony new 'un e'er could be,
And new yo' both con swagger in th' Park.

SEINDORF ARIAN ROYAL OAKELEY

Iwan Morgan, 1989

Hen wefr sy'n ein co' ni o hyd - rhyw wefr
Ddaeth yn rhan o'n bywyd
Yn niweirdeb ein mebyd,
A'n co' yn gyffro i gyd.

Roedd aceniad, curiad cân
Inni fel pe'n ail-anian
A'r seindorf yn gresendo - o gynnwrf,
Neu'n gân ddwbwl piano,
Cordiau di-rif yn llifo
Drwy nwyfiant cornant y co'.

Dôl alaw unol o Dalywaenydd
O'r incleiniau, y ponciau a'r pencydd,
Y mae olion ei chart ar y moelydd,
Ym mawn rhostir, ym meini'r tomennydd,
Dôl nodau a rhythmau'n rhydd - i'n tadau
Yn y Blaenau, gerddorion ysblennydd.

Y mae band a sain trombôn
Yn eli i bob calon;
Daw rhyw wefr o daro drwm,
O hoenus gri iwffoniwm.

Fel ceriwb can y tiwba
A'r bariton a'i don da;
Y cawr o blith y cewri
Yn y bâs yw'r dwbwl 'Bi'.

Repiano, soprano rydd
Inni nodau ysblennydd;
Ceir tenor horn a chornet
A'u sain yn cyflawni set
O raenus offerynnau -
Eu cord sy'n ein bywiocâu.

Canrif a chwarter! Mae'r hen ffanfferau
Hynny a lanwodd strydoedd y Blaenau
Yn nydd y 'Gwaenydd' yn dal i gynnu,
Mae swyn o hyd i'r byrlymus nodau;
Yno, parhaed eu seiniau - a'u hurddas
A rydd yr ias sy'n gwefreiddio'r oesau.

THE CORY BAND 1979-1980

A foreign music lover

Deep in the Rhondda there's a band named Cory,
Who over recent years, have been covered in glory.
Founded last century, now mature to the full,
their standard of playing ensures them a "Bull".

Rich with friendship and quality of sound,
their music makes the world go round.
Feet are a tapping after the very first beat,
by every listener in their concert seat.

Denzil Stephens is the man with the stick,
as composer, arranger he misses no trick.
His ear for music keeps the Band on their toes,
and he is respected and liked wherever he goes.

Glenys Stephens is the Bands number one fan,
Travels to see them whenever she can.
No matter what distance be it near or far,
She'll always be seen traveling in Denzil's car.

Jim Davies, Principal Cornet, takes the very first seat,
a musician you'd willingly go a long way to meet.
His triple tonguing is a joy to each ear,
and his melodies could cause many to shed a tear.

John Neathey, the man with the very fair hair,
Tall, good looking and plays with flair.
First started on cornet when just half a score,
And will play for the next thirty years or more.

Richard Dix, third down, he's also quite tall,
Loves making music says, "He's having a ball".
A subtle comedian, he keeps a stern face,
Enjoys his contesting, helps win the race.

Mr. Hedditch, or to all his friends Paul,
Being front row, he certainly walks tall.
At triple piano he plays such a sweet note,
that one day the onus of principal he'll tote.

Gwyn Thomas, back row, instruments the "Sop",
Recognised by many as being the top.
In "Candide" his playing causes many a flutter,
and demi semi runs go with nary a stutter.

There's many a Jones but this Jones is Howard,
when playing Rep. he's far from a coward.
No matter how many black notes there are to a bar,
He'll play the lot and not be driven too far.

Ian Jones, the joker, of a very large pack,
Full of fun and of jokes he don't lack.
He's the third generation of the Trotman kin,
And as pleased as "Punch" with the National win.

A relative new face, that is Gary Price,
Who smiles on Dame Fortunes' roll of the dice.
"A Cory player" it's a dream come true,
Playing grand music, it's like starting anew.

Ralph Morgan's another who is tallish and fair,
Seated with honour along the back tare.
As important a member as he who plays solo,
His music sheet reads that he must play low.

Another Jones and this one's named Greg,
A back row position that many would beg.
Modest and quiet until cornet is in hand,
He then plays his part in a very great Band.

Just one more Thomas and this one is Jeff,
Who goes with a flugal, as with Rugby with Ref.,
His solos come forth with so much feeling,
That the audiences think it's with Pan they're dealing.

Top man on horns was christened Wayne Cook,
His cadenzas earn him many an admiring look.
Gifted with the ability to produce a good sound,
there's few in his class for miles around.

Robin Davies is a civil servant by trade,
yet as a musician his future is made.
The Tenor Horn, she's the lady of brass,
Rob treats her so, as if she were glass.

Jeff Sheppard's the third of the trio of horns,
would sooner play music than mow any lawns.
Blonde haired and smiling, the Horns leading joker,
who after a prank has face straight as a poker.

Chairman Don Tanner, a great solo Trom.,
Never worries who the next score is from.
Be it classic or "Pop", he'll make it sound rich,
Like Tommy Dorsey, he has the sound and the pitch.

Terry Lambert, another who "Stretches his arm",
and produces notes that a snake would charm.
His favourite bar would include a Gliss,
and plenty of these, to him, is sheer bliss.

John Jones, an ex member of the Royal Marine Band,
Who sits in front of a Cory sheet stand.
Oscillates his slide both correctly and sure,
And in his element playing "Troms to the fore".

Gareth Keys delights with "The Pink Panther" theme,
Just one of the pieces of this winning team.
Whatever he plays the rendering is great,
A musician that all would be proud to call "Mate".

Roy Roberts, he plays the Brass Band's Cello,
His harmonising is both rich sounding and mellow.
When it comes to a solo much feeling is there,
And those runs on his Euph leave him gasping for air.

Brian Davies another person. who revels in runs,
In the "Ninth of January", he's going great guns.
Like all those around him, he pulls his weight,
and is ever eager for the next contest date.

Third of the Euphs, is Watkins, Huw,
His timing is perfect comes in dead on cue,
A very quiet lad who is quite unassuming,
But the sound from his Bell is certainly blooming.

Stuart Lewis, you'll see him with his pipe,
Quiet serious looking, but the very best type.
Nimble fingers floating over the valve tops,
A hard working Bandsman, would play till he drops.

The other Bard. is hailed Phillip Wicks,
Enjoys his playing, gets up to no tricks.
Nice personality, a very pleasant Chappy,
A contest win makes him very happy.

Huw Williams plays Tuba, now there is a treat,
No more confident player will e'er take a seat.
Plays his 'Eb' as though twas a cornet,
And his sting in the tail is that of a hornet.

Selwyn Lewis, civil servant, who's worthy of note,
There's a good pun, so it must surely be wrote.
A versatile player who once played Bass Trom,
Now it's the Tuba that his notes come from.

John Trotman; yes he is dear Tom's son,
The Bands longest player, he still finds it fun.
Another pipe smoker and he does have pipe dreams,
To win Belle Vue Open and hear yells and screams.

The Bandmaster, he's known as Graham Sheppard,
Good on the Bass, could play the spots off a leopard.
You'll never miss him, he's the one with the beard,
A terrific character who was musically reared.

Clayton McCann, now he plays the drums,
Keeps the pace marked for all of his chums.
Be it a roll, or triplets, it's all very neat,
Its drumming perfection down to the last beat.

Alan O'Leary, ex cornet, now makes the Timps hum,
A quaver or crescendo strikes the audience dumb.
He makes percussion his own personal delight,
And that "Beam" on his face is a wonderful sight.

The Secretary's a grafter by the name of Ron Pryce,
Forever writing letters and giving advice.
A great asset to Cory, though he doesn't play,
And each Band win really makes his day.

Brian Privet, well he's assistant Sec.,
His help saves Ron being a nervous wreck.
Serving his apprenticeship and getting better,
For when the time comes he writes every letter.

Clifford Rees he tends the "Bees and Honey",
This being cockney rhyming slang for money.
Treasurer would be the very formal term,
And Cliff will keep those purse strings firm.

Harold Hearne lovingly nicknamed Uncle Fester,
In his time was the Bands number one jester.
The oldest living ex member of bygone Cory,
If its an anecdote you want, he'll tell you a story.

Tom Trotman to all was the Band's very first Dad,
His zest to play starting when he was a lad.
His recent death was a great loss to the Band,
But his name will be remembered throughout the land.

Gwyn Dackins, too, was a great character of note,
Who's popularity, bandwise, would win many a vote,
Alas, like, Tom Trotman, he has passed away
But his presence is felt each time the Band play.

We mustn't forget the men's girlfriends and wives,
Those marvelous women, alone best part of their lives.
Musical widows who let out one big scream,
As the adjudicator announces that Cory were CREAM:
(n-b. Cream is always at the top.)

So here we have just some of the Band story
National Champs, seven four, is part of their glory.
Who's to pay what the next contest will bring,
If it's the Belle Vue Open - THEY'LL BLOODY WELL SING

Finally, what is music?, there's food for thought,
Can it really be notes put together, as taught?
To go into detail could be quite a long time,
But to hear pure music - GO: LISTEN TO CORY.

GALASHIELS BRASS BAND

Anon, 1902

Arrah. Listen while I sing of the strangest, quarest thing
That has happened in the town that I belong to.
Well, you must understand they've gone mad about their band,
An' the feelin' for that same is mighty strong too.

First, a little man called Moore, as a leader they'd secure,
An' he tuk in hand thim band chaps so unruly;
An' wid his little stick, faith! he brought them on so quick,
That they charmed each mother's son in Galahooly.

Whillilo-hoo-hoo! I'll tell yez what to do,
If yez want to hear good music played most truly,
Just open wide yer ears when the Champion Banda appears
A-playin' through the streets o' Galahooly!

AN OLD BANDSMAN PASSES

Eric Ball

These he had loved:
The sweet shrillness of cornets,
velvet-toned horns, organ-depth of the basses
song of euphoniums, trombones resplendent;
full-throated sound in rich, colourful masses.

Men he had loved,
rough and boisterous in manner
(toil-worn their hands, lined with care their faces),
who were as gods when in music expressing
joy of the lover, who beauty embraces.

Music for men;
and such men were true comrades,
bound in close friendship by service and beauty,
quarreling, laughing and sorrowing together,
giving, receiving, beyond their mere duty.

These he had loved;
but now rhythmically ebbing,
all his life's music must shortly be ended.
Memories gleam and are gone in a moment;
weary, he dies, by deep silence befriended.

Suddenly, Light!
and the golden-toned trumpets
sounding for him!
(he had scarcely believed such beauty possible).
Selflessly raptured,
he who had given, now himself is received.

TO THE BESSES O' TH' BARN

T.A.C. [Waikato, New Zealand, 1907]

Hail! to our brothers from over the sea,
A right hearty welcome we tend unto thee!
The "Red Rose" and "Fern" together entwine,
In friendship, and unity, each shall combine.

Though oceans divide us, our hearts beat as one,
The Besses', our kinsmen, with glory hath shone;
We sing to their praises, though the Besses' be few,
They be Lancashire lads, good fellows, and true.

As sons of the Empire, we join in refrain,
And sing to "The Lads", Hurrah yet again!
The Rose in the land of the Fern doth excel,
Yet in amity greet, 'twere a brother's farewell!

Chorus:

Fill your glasses and drink, lift the goblet on high,
"Success to the Besses – God speed" be our cry!
Hand in hand do we join, our ties to renew,
"Southern Cross" shall entwine with "Red, Yellow and Blue."

THERE'S A BAND THAT BEARS A WORLD-KNOWN NAME

(Besses o' th' Barn Band, 1895)

There's a band that bears a world-known name,
Which hails from a little spot;
'Tis the first on the blazing scroll of Fame,
And who shall aver it is not;

If the deathless names that shine and live,
In the bandsman's glorious song;
The brightest the whole wide-world can give
To the Besses-o-th'-Barn belong.

'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and glory of the Lancashire man.
'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and the glory of the Lancashire man.

There's a band ever ready to face the test,
No matter when or where;
And to treat that band as ought but the best,
Is more than the strongest dare

For the lion spirits that tread the stage
Have carried the palm of the brave;
And their foes may plot and impotent rage,
But fair-play is all they crave.

'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and glory of the Lancashire man.
'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and glory of the Lancashire man.

The Besses may travel from pole to zone,
And boldly claim their right;
For "Victory" has blessed them as sons of her
In every fair-fought fight.

Let their envious rivals seek to know
The secret of their fame;
And Besses will speak in accents true,
Their noble leader's name.

'Tis a noble name, where'er it's told,
A glorious name - "Alexander, the bold."
'Tis a noble name, where'er it's told,
A glorious name - "Alexander, the bold."

With a tone that charmeth every ear,
And a style as chaste as snow,
She meets her foes without a fear,
And always lays them low.

For one and all, both great and small,
Are artistes unto the heart's core :
And noble deeds come from noble men
For ever the wide world o'er.

'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and glory of the Lancashire man.
'Tis the best band on earth, deny it who can,
The pride and glory of the Lancashire man.

TWAS THE EVE OF THE CONTEST

(adapted from "A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore by Paulette Morton, 2017)

Twass the Eve of The Contest and all round the house
Nothing was stirring, not even a mouse.
Uniforms hung on the hangers with care
And shoes highly polished were laid on the chair.

The players were nestled all snug in their beds
While visions of trophies danced in their heads
And MD's in Pj's, with the score in their lap
Had just settled down for a pre contest nap –

When up woke the dawn, the birds all a-chatter
The sound of alarms, the night's sleep did shatter.
Away to the shower the players dashed
Hair washed and teeth cleaned all in a flash

Their uniforms donned, trousers, jackets and ties
And off to the band room, spirits high.
Then what, through their wandering thoughts should appear
But a luxury coach; its boot full of beer

Along came the MD, so lively and quick
So full of the joys with his little white stick.
In dribs and drabs the sections they came
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name –

"Now Cornets, Now Basses, Now Bari's and Horns"
"On Kit and Percussion, On Euph's and Trombones".
To the contest they drove, to the stage in the hall
Now play away, play away, play away all!

As the notes of the horns and the cornets rose high
So the BOOM from the basses and timps did fly
And the music from all danced and leapt loud and true
To the end of the piece; the excitement grew...

And then in a twinkling it came to an end
With hearts full of passion and hope once again.
A drink in the bar and "cheers!" and "well played!"
Could be heard all around - Then the judgment was made...

Best player, Best section, Best MD, Best band,
A cheer, and a trophy; qualification in hand.
"Congrat's!" and "Well done!" through the ranks could be heard,
A thought or two spared for those who'd come third.

So close to the finals, so close! - But then
Look forward to next year! We'll be back again!
Then onto the coaches, the gear safely stowed,
A call "all aboard? Then, let's hit the road".

And so, as the dust on the day did settle,
Bands talked of the way they'd proved their mettle.
And, at the end of the day, the results good or bad,
A jolly good time by all bandsmen was had.

UPON THE DOUBLE B

Anon (seen in Glossop Old Band Room)

He sits behind a row of horns
With bass upon his knee
Pouring out his troubles
Upon the double B

No triple tonguing comes his way
No solo parts gets he
For he's the chap who oompahs
Upon the double B

But when the band is on parade
There in the front is he
Loaded to the plimsolls
With the double B

And as he treads with marching steps
His heart is full of glee
As he beefs it out like Bashum's Bull
Upon the double B

But when he rips it off in parts
He lets the whole world see
That bands would be quite puny things
Without the double B

But when his marching days are o'er
No golden harp wants he
For he's going to join the flying corps
Upon his double B

THE OLD TOWN BAND

A.A. James (Sydney, Australia, 1929)

The band was the life of the old town,
The zest of its great events
When the great Pooh-Bah himself came down.
Or the prize merinos brought renown,
Or the circus raised its tents.

There was music in the trombone,
A martial note in the drum,
And the boom of the bass was on its own
In the days before the gramophone,
Ere the wireless craze had come.

But it's hard to think of the old days,
Of the old days as they were,
Before we had learnt new-fangled ways,
Or known the lure of the movie plays,
And outback life was bare.

Then, forty miles was a long day's run
And letters came once a week,
The work of the settler was never done,
He went to bed with the setting sun,
And was up with the dawn's first streak.

Those were the days when the township band
Filled a place in pioneer life;
Cheered the struggle with virgin land
And gave the old battlers a helping hand
When droughts or plagues were rife.

To-day the baton is laid aside
And the bandsmen rest in their graves;
They played their way o'er the great divide,
And are bandsmen now on the other side
In paradisiacal naves.

And o'er the earth in tones forlorn
The saxophone raises its call,
The engines start their shrieks at dawn,
The gramophone laughs the band to scorn,
And the wireless mocks them all;

Their jazz and screechings everywhere
Meet us at every turn.
Their row and racket fill the air,
And the year is ushered in by the blare.
Of the raucous motor horn

BRASS BAND FAMILY

Gareth G Proctor, November 2020

I have another family, it's very different to my other,
We're not related through blood and genes, like a sister or a brother
We're more like kindred spirits, with music at our core,
all tasked with making music, from a manuscript or score.

I have nine cornet cousins and they're constantly too loud,
But then again, if there's nine of you, it's hard to stand out in a crowd,
And then there's me, I'm squeaky, I put the cream on top,
The shy little egomaniac that just LOVES TO PLAY THE SOP!

And then we have the tenor horns, two sister and a brother,
Two sisters but it might be three, he swings one way, then the other.
The fourth man in this quartet glued some valves onto his bugle,
And now he tries to kid us all that he can play the flugel!

The twins are quite inseparable and their names are Bari and Tone,
They can't decide if they're Euphoniums, Tenor horns or Bass trombone.
They've loads of friends and play along and help out all the rest,
But they sit next to two "Divas" who think they are the best.

In truth they're just Euphonii, and they seem the best of friends
But when it comes to solos, that's where the friendship ends;
Cause she thinks that she's better than him and can't wait for him to leave,
But he's not going nowhere, he'll have something up his sleeve.

Now there's always those in every house, who just joke and mess about,
Our trombones are no exception, three clowns without a doubt;
And getting them to play in tune is a rare as Tartan Paint,
So, don't go looking for a miracle, cause Three Wise Men they ain't!

Then there they sit, across the back, like four big ugly brothers,
They're solid and dependable, but just slower than the others;
But they're not really ugly, it's just life etched on their faces,
We couldn't do without them, they're the lads known as the basses.

Lets not forget the drum crew with their cymbals and timpani,
They run around, way at the back, like some demented army,
But they make such a difference and they stand out from the crowd,
There's just one thing I'd like to know, that's "Why so bloody loud?"

Now every family has one, the black sheep of the bunch,
We're not sure if he's related, he just turned up after lunch;
At times he can be scary and he'll poke you with his stick,
But that's just when it's going wrong and you're playing like a "clot".

Of course, there's plenty more of us, in this big family,
From the guy who sorts the library, to the girls that make the tea;
Like families, we can all fall out, but we always end up friends,
It's generally about the music, or the size of our bell ends.

It really is the music, that is in our DNA,
and hopefully we'll be playing soon, now won't that be a day,
Till then, head down and practice, cause I know it won't be long,
Before we're back rehearsing, be good, keep safe, stay strong.

THE TUBA

The tuba is a monstrous beast,
It must weigh half a ton at least,
Could carrying such things as these
Cause physical deficiencies?

To have to lug such weight, in fact,
Just might explain the way they act,
So, if you wondered, now you know
Why tuba players stoop so low.

THE VILLAGE CORNET BAND

James Manning Bronson, 1894

Among the recollections of those life-enchanted days
When Santa Claus was real to me, and bogie-man and fays,
The thing I best remember as then seeming super-grand
Was the music and the marching of the village cornet band.

As the first reverberation of the brasses' martial blare,
Like an echo faint and fading, floated to us on the air.
All the youngsters helter-skelter rushed away with flying feet,
For that thing of joy, the cornet band, was coming down the street.

The boys forgot their marbles, yea, and even bats and ball,
And our very little sister her decapitated doll;
For what were life's bereavements, or its ordinary joys,
When the celebrated cornet band was making martial noise?

The band's perambulation being viewed without expense,
The excitement in the village was accordingly intense;
All business came to sudden stop, for who could coldly trade
When our beatific cornet band was out for a parade?

The whole village was in tumult, so at least it seemed to me,
With everybody rushing for a place to hear and see,
And even ancient citizens of seventy or more,
As excited as their grandsons, came a-hobbling to the door.

What a vision 'twas of glory as the band came sweeping past,
And what looks of admiration were upon the heroes cast!
How magnificent their uniforms of yellow, green and red!
How very splendidly they played, and what a kingly tread!

And the major! Ah! the major, most majestically high!
How he pranced along, curvetting, and what hauteur in his eye!
How I envied his pre-eminence, agility and skill,
As he boldly tossed his sceptre up and spun it round at will.

Since that magic day of childhood I have travelled far and wide,
And have heard the world's maestros in their majesty and pride;
But I've never heard a symphony that sounded half so grand
As the tune of "Yankee Doodle" by that village cornet band.

Those magic, halo days, alas, were fleeting and were few;
Too quickly, far too quickly, all the dear illusions flew;
Yet even now, when memories come surging o'er my soul,
I can see that band a-marching and can hear the music roll!

GWAUN-CAE-GURWEN BAND

Anon, c. 1938

*Dan Lloyd yw y conductor,
Yn Edrych mae yn gay;
Oblegid iddo ddyfod,
Yn first yn Colwyn Bay.*

*Dan Lloyd is the conductor,
He has a cheerful look;
Because he won
The 'first' at Colwyn Bay.*

*Ac wedi hynny ffrindiau,
Engagement orau fu;
Oedd chwaere lan yn Llundain,
Fel guests yr N.C.B.*

*And after that friends,
The finest engagement ever;
To play up in London,
As the guests of the N.C.B.*

*Y Double B a'r cornets,
Pob un yn pwno'r black;
Ac hefyd yr euphoniums,
A'r 'come to me and back'.*

*The Double B and cornets,
All hitting the black (notes);
And also the euphoniums,
And come to me and back (trombones).*

*Fe gawsom amser campus,
Bob un yn byw fel gent;
Wel diolch i'r committee,
Mae nhw to ol i'r scene.*

*We all had an excellent time,
Everyone living like a Lord;
Thanks to the committee,
They are behind the scenes.*

*Pob lwc yn awr ddywedwn,
Ewch yn eich blaen fel un;
O prin yn awr yw'r curw,
Dim son am ddiod fain.
Mae'n werth ni fyw drwy'r cwbl,
I glywed Bandy Waun.*

*Good luck we now do wish,
Go forward as one;
For scarce now is the beer,
No cry for even a small one.
It's worth living through everything,
To listen to Band-y-Waun.*

BAND ENWOG Y WAUN

Hen Law (John Rees) c.1920

Y mae Band y Waun wedi cael offeryman newyddion godidog yn ddiweddar, ae ar yr achlysur nodedig yma, y mae "Hen Law" wedi mynd ati i ganu can o glpd i'r Band a phawb a phobpeth yn gysylltiedig ag ef. Wele'r gan.

*I Fand y Waun mae hanes
Band y Waun, Band y Waun,
Drwy Gymru heb un rhodres,
Band y Waun,
Mae wedi ymenwogi
Drwy chwareu nes gorchfygu
Holl fands Deheudir Cymru,
Mae hyny'n profi gallu*

Band y Waun, Band y Waun.
Y cyntaf haedda'n clodydd
Yw Tom Rees – T.J. Rees,
Yr athro a'r arweinydd
Yw Tom Rees.
A ph'le ceid dawn rymusach
Na gwir athrylith loywach
Nae ysbryd mwynach, llonach,
Na chalon lawnach, harddach
Na Tom Rees?

A rhaid I'm hefyd enwi
Gyda'r Band, gyda'r Band,
Y ffyddlon Evan Mari,
Gyda'r Band;
Efe sy'n cadw'n drefnus
Y copies yn ofalus,
A'r stands i gyd yn raenus,
A dynn fel mae'n hapus
Gyda'r Band, gyda'r Band.

Dan Lloyd yn awr gaf enwi,
Un o'r Band, un o'r Band,
Y Bottom Bass mae's chwythu,
Yn y Band;
Y Second Bass mae Eben
Yn chwythu wrth ei elfen,
Gan syllu ar y garden,
Byw iddo fe'n ddiddiben
Heb y Band, heb y Band.

Y ddau Drombone a chwythir
Yn y Band, yn y Band.
Cras seiniau rhain a glywir
Yn y Band;
Dai Morris sydd yn swine
A chan y corn sy'n slido
Will, yntau, mor ddidaro
Sy'n gwyneyd i'r Band i gordo
Dyma'r Band, dyma'r Band.

Amrywiol iawn yw'r enwau
Sy'n y Band, sy'n y Band;
Morrisiaid gyda'r gorln,
Sy'n y Band;
Tal Morris, fachgeu dawnus
A'I nodau cywir melus,
Cwyd hwn y claf o'i orphwys
A'I chwareu gogoneddus,
Yn y Band, yn y Band.

Fe glywir lleisiau lawer
Yn y Band, yn y Band;
Mae'n rhaid cael llawer offer
I wneyd Band.

Phil Cannon a Dai Sander,
John Sami, Ike y Drwmer,
Wil Godwin, Jack a Sheper,
Mock Bwthyn sydd yn glyfer,
Yn y Band, yn y Band.

Mae Giff y Cornet Player,
Yn y Band, yn y Band;
John Abel 'nol ei arfer,
Yn y Band.
Tom Morris, hefyd, welir
A'i Faritone a glywir,
Dai Williams sydd yn brysur,
Hwn geidw'r Band yn ddyfyr,
Band y Waun, Band y Waun.

Mae'r Bugle Horn a'i nodan
Yn y Band, yn y Band,
Peraidd iawn yw yntau,
Yn y Band;
Llywelyns yw'r ddau berson
A chwythan hwy yn gyson,
A'u nodau melys mwynion
Sydd londer i bob calon
Yn y Band, yn y Band.

Euphonium mawr a glywir
Yn y Band, yn y Band;
Mae seinian hwn yn eglur
Yn y Band!
Tom Evans yw'r chwareuydd,
Pen campwr fel perorydd,
A chlywir drwy y broydd
Ei felodi gyfarwydd
Yn y Band, yn y Band.

Mae enw Band Cae-Gurwen,
Ar y Shield, ar y Shield,
Fel arwr y gerdd unben
Ar y Shield;
A'r Cwpan Arian, yntau,
Sy'n eiddo'r Band am chwareu
Ag arian yn y balance
Gael eyrn o'r arian goreu,
Dyma'r Band, dyma'r Band.

Ac wedi cael set Newydd,
Bydd y Band, bydd y Band.
Mewn hwyl eystadlu beunydd
A phob Band.
Anf fyny i Fanceinion,
Cystadlu wnant a'r Saeson,
A chwythant hwy yr yfflon,
Bydd hyny'n glod i'r Brython,
Dyma'r Band, dyma'r Band.

Mae'r Cetl-drwm yn rampan
Yn y Band, yn y Band;
Eynon sydd yn mhobman
Gyda'r Band.
Mae Eynon 'ngallu ratlan
Y Cetl-drwm ei hunan,
Mae'n ysbrydoli'r cyfan
Heb golli dim o'i amean,
Gyda'r Band, gyda'r Band.

Rhaid enfio fod Committee
Gan y Band, gan y Band,
Mae'n gweithio a'i holl egni
Gyda'r Band;
Mock Jenkins gallaf enwi,
Charles Williams wedi hyny,
A Bassett sy'n pryderu
Am dalu biliau Boosey,
Dros y Band, dros y Band.

Mae genym organizer,
Yn y Band, yn y Band,
O'r enw Alexander,
Yn y Band;
Mae'n ysgrifenydd ffyddlon,
Yn dod ag arian cyson
I dalu holl ddyledion
A chadw holl gyfrifon
Band y Waun, Band y Waun.

Mae'n gystal dyn, mi wranta,
Unrhyw ddydd, unrhyw ddydd.
A gwron Groeg o Sparta
Unrhyw ddydd;
I Rhys r'ym yn ddyledus
Am weithio mor llwyddianus
I gael yr offer campus,
Rhow'n iddo fanllef rymus
Dros y Band, dros y Band.

Wel 'nawr mae'n rhaid terfynu
Hyn o gan, hyn o gan;
Rhaid peidio gorseboni
Mewn un gan;
Ond diolch i'r gwyr mawrion
A'r hychain am eu rhoddion,
Mae'r llwydd yn fel I gallon
Y rhai fu mewn pryderon
Am y Band, am y Band.

KNARESBOROUGH SILVER BAND TRIP TO BLACKPOOL, C. 1958

Geoff Howard, c. 2018

The Band said we should have a trip, they'd had one long ago,
So it went before t'committee where they bounced it to and fro.
And after deliberation, points of order and then a vote
They settled then on Blackpool and booked Dez Smith's big coach.
We thought a date in August would be warm and full of sun
We'd not the slightest inkling of the deluge yet to come.
Set off from the Bandroom at eight – or was it nine?
When all was warm and balmy and the sun set fair to shine.
We got as far as Skipton and the first of many stops,
The rain came down in torrents as we crawled across the tops.
Three hours we drove, or maybe four when the tower came into sight,
We got off in a downpour – 'twas the same 'til late at night.
Maurice, Nigel, Stan and me wandered round all day,
Had fish and chips and found a hall with fruit machines to play.
Young Albert was right, the place was dead, “no wrecks nor anyone drowned”.
Soaked to the skin and feet so sore with all the streets we'd pounded.
We set off home just after six, we'd crates of ale on't bus,
But nature called after a mile or two - by gum we had to rush.
Must have stopped a dozen times and got home after nine,
But we hoped to get a better day if we “tripped” another time.

VERSES ON THE ALLOA BAND CONTEST

William McIntosh, 1886

'Twas on the twenty-ninth of May,
When everything was looking gay,
Took place on that eventful day
Our Brass Band Competition,

They came from north, south, east, and west,
Eleven of these the very best,
To put their musical skill to test
At the Alloa Competition.

The people came in thousands three,
Paid for admission frank and free,
And happy they were to hear and see
The National Competition.

The grounds and gardens were open too,
For all the people to review,
And were examined by not a few,
That day at the Competition.

But the glories of the day were o'er,
For shortly after the hour of four,
In torrents down the rain did pour
And spoilt the Competition.

Many were dressed in gay attire,
For faithful lovers to admire,
But had to leave midst rain and mire
The unlucky Competition.

At the start a piece was played,
Wheat great ability was displayed,
A treat which for a time delayed
The expected Competition.

When the open contest was begun,
The Southern nobly led the van,
Followed by bands which never ran,
But faced all Competition.

At seven, when the result was known,
The first and second were clearly shown
Across the Border to have flown
From the Alloa Competition.

The contests of the bands confined,
Raged with the elements combined,
But all were more or less inclined
To leave the Competition.

And when it was declared at last,
The gloom of night was gathering fast,
Many will remember the contest past
Of the Brass Band Competition.

KINGSTON FOR EVER

Anon (On receipt of the news at Hyde that Kingston had again won first prize at Belle Vue, September 5th, 1887)

Bravo! Bravissimo! Kingston for ever!
Honour and glory is yours this day;
Once more you have been in the heat of the battle,
And vanquished the foe in bloodless affray.

All honour to Kingston lads, all round the ring,
For the way in which they have beaten the foe;
With Gladney to lead them, we cry out "God speed them,"
And hope they will conquer wherever they go.

And how a gold medal will shine on each breast,
In commemoration of what they have done
Three years in succession they have, at Belle Vue,
The victory bravely and nobly won.

Besses, Black Dyke, and others have struggled
To keep them from winning the coveted prize;
But with Gladney to lead them they've beaten all comers,
And so we will laud them right up to the skies.

Loud and prolonged are the cheers that greet them;
Thousands are waiting to see them arrive;
Congratulations are showered upon them
In fact, the whole town with the news is alive.

All honour to Gladney - long may he live
To look on the many bright laurels he's won;
He will long be remembered by Kingston Mills Band,
When he from their midst forever be gone.

And what shall I say of the "champion" now,
That title to me hath a musical charm.
Because it belongs to the Kingston Mills Band
And not to the Besses o' th' Barn.

Then, hurrah for John Gladney, the bold and the fearless!
Victory hath crowned his efforts once more;
As a teacher of brass bands e'en yet he is peerless,
And Kingston Lads ever his name will adore.

KINGSTON FOR NEVER (1)

Anon, 1887 (written on receipt of the news that Kingston Mills dare not compete at Liverpool)

Bravo, bravissimo - Kingston for never,
You've done an old trick of yours this very day;
Once more you have shirked, and evaded the battle,
And played the mean coward, when called to the fray.

All dishonour to Kingston lads, all round the ring
For the way in which they have run from the foe,
With the *peerless* to lead them, in retreat none outspeed them,
'Tis an old trick of theirs, as we very well know.

But what shall I say of the Champion now,
That title to me, still, bears its old charm,
Monkey-like it was aped, by the *Kingston Mills Band*,
But the real owner yet is, Besses o' th' Barn.

KINGSTON FOR NEVER (2)

Anon, 1887 (written on reading an account of the Liverpool Contest)

Oh, pity the poet, for he can't help but do it,
Though you make him to rue it, e'en then he must rhyme,
I rely on your pity, to accept this sad ditty,
For though it's not witty, to be silly's no crime.

I read "Kingston's for Ever," and wasn't it clever?
Such heroes, oh, never, will turn tail and flee!
They challenge the nation! Can lick all creation!
They make no evasion, *when it's right*, do you see?

But the *bold and the fearless*. stay at home sad and cheerless,
While the *gem* and the *peerless*, goes to bed to keep warm.
Liverpool and "straight Groenings" meant exposure and moanings,
And a year of atonings, for such very bad form.

Now behold them in meeting, sadly each other greeting,
And the question in treating, is their Liverpool chance;
While the boys and the old men, list quiet to the old *gem*!
Who says it's no time then for a Belle-Vue war-dance.

"Oh, why should we go there? To be beaten we don't care,
"And how people would all stare, when our medals we hide,
"There's Besses, and Black Dyke, Oldham Rifles, and brave Wyke,
"Wouldn't Owen and Swift like to humble our pride."

“Now I make this profession, and I counsel discretion,
“Let us now close the session, with the little we've done,
“Our medals we've now got, by what means we all wot;
"Now go there I will not, for at us they'll poke fun.”

THE CORNETIST

Anon, 1887 (dedicated to G.F. Birkenshaw, Esq.)

Whene'er I please, just note the ease
With which I rouse your pleasure.
I stand alone the king of tone,
Play any composition known;
The silvery laugh, the brazen groan,
I compass with my measure.

I fill the air with boisterous blare
To plaintive minors dwindle;
The trebles dance in resonance,
In waltz retreat, in jigs advance;
Till dewy beauty's ardent glance
With melody I kindle.

The mad huzzas of wild applause
I take with air complacent;
I roundly dwell on ringing swell
Of notes without their parallel;
While echo duplicates the spell
From every nook adjacent.

OUR BAND

Mike Williams, 2018

They play so fast and they sound so slick,
Will I ever be able to play that quick?
With my fingers slow and my vision blurred,
The crochets staccato and the quavers slurred.

All in time and all in tune,
Sixteen bars are gone too soon,
As the basses boom and the cornets soar,
When the MD says, “Right, after four!”

Did I play B flat? Or was that a D?
Was that note sharp, or is it just me?
Blind as a bat, deaf as a post.
Don't know which metaphor suits me most.

But perfection's illusive there is no doubt
And perfection's not what it's all about.
If the music is lifting those who hear,
Whether they've come from far or near.

To play with the band's a mysterious thrill
And you might think I'm over the hill,
But to play in this band lad – ee by eck!
It makes t' air stand up on t' back o' yer neck.

THE BAND

Clarence Michael James Stanislaus Dennis, 2004

Hey, there! Listen awhile! Listen awhile, and come.
Down in the street there are marching feet, and I hear the beat of a drum.
Bim! Boom!! Out of the room! Pick up your hat and fly!
Isn't it grand? The band! The band! The band is marching by!

Oh, the clarinet is the finest yet, and the uniforms are gay.
Tah, rah! We don't go home -
Oom, pah! We won't go home -
Oh, we shan't go home, and we can't go home when the band begins to play.

Oh, see them swinging along, swinging along the street!
Left, right! buttons so bright, jackets and caps so neat.
Ho, the Fire Brigade, or a dress parade of the Soldier-men is grand;
But everyone, for regular fun, wants a Big-Brass-Band.

The slide-trombone is a joy alone, and the drummer! He's a treat!
So, Rackety-rumph! We don't go home -
Boom, Bumph! We won't go home -
Oh, we shan't go home, and we can't go home while the band is in the street.
Tooral-ooral, Oom-pah!
The band is in the street!

BRASS BAND MYTHOLOGY

Nordette Adams, 2009

Oh, these streets! Trumpets
be gods, tubas goddesses,
parting their wide brass lips
wailing wildness into worshippers'
feet by the drums, Alpha and Omega,
bidding the faithful bop praise!

Oh, how these priests and priestesses
jig, the first line strutting
for the second line's pleasure
clubbing out spells
luring watchers from the side line.
Come!

Add to our liturgical jazz dance.
Come, you freshly converted second liners,
revel in this spectacle's bursting bright
orange, yellow, black, purple, white, green,
the pulsating feathered fans
of born again dreamers,
born again conjurers.

From the gut the people strut up
all things forgotten, missed,
hungered for, invoke
freedom's sabbath,
lust for righteous joy.

Come, you second liners.
Come!

SONG OF THE SACKBUTS

Paul Taylor, 2001

In a backstreet workshop three trombonists toil,
forging fresh sonorities, concerted song-lines.

The whitewashed walls resound to the shouts
of this most venerable of brass instruments.

Yellowing folders of folk music are ransacked for rhythm,
cobwebbed counterpoint is wafted to the rafters.

With horticultural care a forest
of reminiscences and re-orderings is fine-tuned and fanfared.

Conjured up by implication: a jazz rhythm section;
then the aural mirage of a Lancashire brass band.

Multiple recitations and resuscitations
of the lost art of classical improvising.

Minuets and mambos consort with the blues.
Ska shuffles alongside Balkan laments.

Equali rub elbows with Echoes of Harlem,
Harry Lime meets Maria Rosa on Blueberry Hill.

That terrific roar, that sizzle and glow.
That clarion caress, that world-beating blare.

I WANT TO HEAR THE OLD BAND PLAY

Anon, c. 1880 (relating to the Plymouth Saxhorn Band, Indiana, USA)

It's good to go back in memory to the days of yore,
Considerin' it's been fifty year an' more
Since then! Oh dear! I see a wonderful change;
And many things have happened that's new and strange;
Especially at evening when yer new band fellers meet,
In fancy uniforms and all and play cut on the street.
What's come of old Dave Vinnedge and the sax horn fellers – say
I want to hear the Old Band play.

What's come of Alex Thompson, an' Mert Brown, an' where's Bert Capron at
And Platt and John McDonald, Charley Reeve, Gene Hutchinson an' that
Air Doe Brown who played the drum twict as big as Jim ;
An' William Henry Salisbury - say, what's become o' him
I make no doubt yer new band now's a compenter band
An' plays their music more by note than what they play by hand,
An' stylisher and grander tunes; but somehow-any way,
I want to hear the Old Band play.

Such tunes as 'John Brown's Body' and 'Sweet Alice, don't you know',
And 'The Camels is A-comin'; and 'John Anderson, My Joe',
And a dozen others of 'em - 'Number Nine' and 'Number 'Leven',
Was favorites that fairly made a feller dream o' heaven.
And when the boys 'u'd Eerenade I've laid so still in bed
I've even heerd the locus-blossoms droppin' on the shed
When 'Lilly Dale,' or 'Hazel Dell' had sobbed and died away-
I want to hear the Old Band play.

Your new band ma'by beats it, but the old band's what I said-
It allus 'peared to kind o' chord with sumpin' in my head;
An' whilse I'm no musicianer, when my blame eye is jes,
Nigh drowned out, an' memory squares her jaws an' sort o' says
She won't an' never will forgit, I want to jes' turn in
An' take the light right out o' here and git back West a'gin
And stay there, when I git there, where I never ha'f to say-
I want to hear the Old Band play."

WIV GEET A MARCHIN' JOB!

Gordon Higginbottom

"Ahv bin n gorra marchin job", set MD tuther neet.
"Theh WAT?" set secretary, a jumpin to is feet.
"Tha mun be aht thi tiny mind, tekkin a job like that
Worrever wur theht thinkin, yer stupid little pratt.

Thell afta ringem reight away, n tellum its norron,
A caunt believe thess dun it, yer gormless daft Moron.
Ah dearnt care wor excuse theh giz, wi dinna givva stuff,
Thee get gonn, un ring um, ah thnk wiv sed enuff

Weel gerron wit practiss, whilst theh sorts it aht.
Lets gerraht thar ovvertoor, Mornin noon 'n naht."
Librarian gin awt parts aht, ant rehearsal started
Wi stopt agen sum 12 barsin wen one ut Bases farted.

Wid neer yard out like it, Mind you, it neer smelt
eawr secretary gorroff is churr, n gee im such a belt,
then er MD walked back in an set "t'sorereet - its off
"Ah towd em band wurr awe away, an they sed reight - sod off"

Wi neeer geet that job agen, ah really dont know why
Thiv never lerrus doit since, nuh matter ow we try.
Sin then our MDs left us, ee wennan tuk is ook,
Wiv gorranuther better, at least so in mah book.

BACUP BRASS BAND

R. Astin, Accrington, June 14th 1870

Hurrah, boys, hurrah! For the Bacup Brass Band,
For they are a terror to all in the land,
And with bottles of "sham" and pitchers of beer
The Bacup Brass Band we'll toast with a cheer.
The Darwen of Ellis and Goodall may vaunt,
The Burnley and Co. of its champion "Daunt",
But hurrah for the talented boys of our town,
The Bacup Brass Band that has won such renown.

At Accrington contest how Burnley did shine
With opera music so flashy and fine,
They took the first prize with a rattling cheer,
But our boys from the back of the hill were not there,
And that was the reason they carried away
So snug and so easy the prize of the day;
But had Bacup been there to have taken its stand,
'Twould have been all UP with the Burnley Brass Band.

For when the two cracks at Mirfield did meet,
Oh didn't the Burnley "nobs" fancy it sweet,
And at seven to four were betting their tin
That first of the prizes would Burnley Band win;
But lo! How they grinn'd when the contest was o'er,
And went marching home with the prize No. 4,
While prize No. 1 in a style all so grand
March'd home with the boys of the Bacup Brass Band.

The Matlock and Dewsbury once on a day
Could floor all the talent that came in their way,
But cannot now cope with the musical skill
Of our plucky boys from the back of the hill;
Nor Colne or Black Dyke, or the band of Saltaire
Can put down the echo that sounds everywhere,
Proclaiming the star and the pride of the land,
Is the metal and skill of the Bacup Brass Band.

Then shout boys hurrah for the Bacup Brass Band,
And long may they firm in good unity stand,
With never a blight on their glorious name,
With never a cloud o'er their brilliant fame,
While the people of Bacup shall send forth the song
Of the thousand bright guineas in prizes they've won,
And history down to the future will hand
The glorious triumphs of Bacup Brass Band.

TROTTER AT BELLE VUE

Brass Band News, October 1892

When Besses came marching home again, hurrah!, hurrah!
When Besses came marching home again, hurrah!, hurrah!
The girls did sing, the lads did shout,
And old and young did all turn out,
And we all felt gay when Besses came marching home.

When _____ went crawling home again, doodah!, doodah!
When _____ went crawling home again, doodah!, doodah!
There was nary a sing and nary a shout,
And didn't they wish the lights were out,
For they all felt glum when _____ went crawling home.

[the blanks referred to Black Dyke band, who were not in the prizes when Besses won the British Open in September 1892]

BLACK DIKE IS YORKSHIRE'S GLORY

1893 - tune – "The Sea is England's Glory"

Black Dike is Yorkshire's Glory,
The contest stage her throne;
Through long years bright in story,
The first place is her own,
Always the first, the fearless,
Her banner leads the brave;
Her noble strains are peerless –
Long may her banners wave.

Chorus

*Long may her banners wave,
Long may her banners wave,
Her noble strains are peerless,
Long may her banners wave.*

Black Dike is Yorkshire's Splendour,
Her's is the mighty strain;
She is no mere pretender,
But can her boast sustain,
From many a gallant tourney,
With famous bands and brave,
Victorious from the journey,
We saw her banners wave.

Chorus

*We saw her banners wave,
We saw her banners wave,
Victorious from the journey,
We saw her banners wave.*

Her tone of loveliest beauty,
Her style above all praise;
Each man will do his duty,
Her glorious name to raise,
John Gladney aye shall lead them,
Where fame is to be won;
Our foes, why need we fear them,
When brave John leads Dike on.

Chorus

*When brave John leads Dike on,
When brave John leads Dike on,
Our foes, why need we fear them,
When brave John leads Dike on.*

And never shall she perish,
While loyal hearts and true,
On Queensbury's heights do flourish,
For deeds of derring-do.
We ever shall defend her,
And her bright honour save;
May all success attend her,
Long may her banners wave.

Chorus

*Long may her banners wave,
Long may her banners wave,
May all success attend her,
Long may her banners wave.*

THA WANTS WOT?

Gordon Higginbottom

Err topman as flipped is lid, Ah think eez off iz ed
E wants t' packup playin, n'conduct tband isted
ahwur gobsmacked wen e towdmi, a dint no wot say
Eez best thurris f'miles areawnd , ah luv to yar im play

Ah started then t'panic, wid av to change iz mind
Topmen dont grow on trees thanows , thur bloominard tu find,
Eez thinkin of issel ah gess ...eez inna thinkin furr
wi av err own conductor , wiv one awreddy thur

Wi ad ter try n stoppin, but none of us knew ow
theez things can get reel nasty , 'n wi dont wanna row
Sumdi cawd a meetin , burrit didnt du much gud
Wi ad to gerrum em both face on , n'then do wot wi cud

Wi mulled it oer fer ours n'ours , wi still didnt av a clue
Thent MD got to izfeet , Ahl tell thi wot meight do
He towd us ee wur gerrin owd ,an cum up wi a plan
"A really need a Bandmaster , n' I think eez the man"

Well, Clout uz we a fether, Wid never thowter that
Wi awe lukd reand aw sheepish like , I felt a real prat
Meetin wur abandoned, wi awe wen home reight glad
Wi said fust thing it mornin , wid ava word wit lad

Fust thing next marnin , wi cawd n spoke tut lad
sed wi dint want lose im , cos that'b really bad
Wi towd im wot conductor sed n; waited forrimt speak
He thowt a while , un wi a smile, sed "s'pose ammat mi peak"

It awe seands gud t'me e sed , a thinks ad reather play
But lissen well, un burr i mind , ahm gooint wag wunday
Meantime weel work t'gether , tharrul do the trick
An wen MD's retirin , ahl tek oer wit stick

Wi that wur raw well suited , cos 'tproblems gon away
Conductor stays it middle , n't topman stays to play
Bands futures luckin rosy neaw , unt' spirits up reight high
Met even win sum contests cos , wi damwell know weel try

A WORD TO THE YOUNG

Gordon Higginbottom

You never know who's sitting there
With walking stick and silver hair
A glass of ale and a vacant look
Belies knowledge that could fill a book

You just think he's a hanger on
When compared with what you've done
In that respect, he's nowt to say
Someone you just brush away

The time will come when you're past your best
You've put your horn away to rest
It could be you who's sitting there
With walking stick and silver hair

The memories you would like to share
You cannot as the young don't care
It doesn't matter what you've done
Your heady days have been and gone

It's not too late for things to change
Although at first you'll feel it strange
Just take the lead and have a go,
Simply smile, and say hello

It isn't much, but means a lot
Even if it's all you've got
Doesn't matter what you say
Rest assured you've made his day.

A STUCK VALVE

Gordon Higginbottom

A wur tekkin t'larners practice an yard a weird noise.
It cum fru sumweere deawnt back row, likely wonnut boys.
Who wur that? I axed em. Cos thah deserves the sack.
"Av bin an broke me cornet", sed a little lad ut back.

"Geiteer, lets ah a luke", an worra mess it wur,
"Wor astdun tu brekkit, its badly brock fersure."
"Ah wur tryint clenit - un wonnat valves wur stuck
Mi Dad sed tharreed fixit an thats wen it got broke."

He sed it mun be faulty ee cudnt poo it out,
E even gorris ammer, n gee it such a clout .
When I seed it close up, I ah cunna elp but shout,
"It wanna brock afore thah knows, al tell thi that for nowt."

Ahv yard this tale a million times, n sinnit aw afoor,
Thiv no idea eawt do it, mayswell chuckit ont floor,
When they avva problem thiv noidea wott do,
Cept send it back tut bandoil, un geeit back tu you.

So awe you kids a'lissen ... n'lissen ard n' long,
Ah'l tell thi wot theeas t'do, next time thi orn guz rong,
Theh moanna start a messin, jus levvit well alone,
Theh ant geet the nohow, tu fix it onthi own.

So put thi orn back innits case, n levit well abee,
Fotch it deawn tut banroom, n'then theh gizzit me,
Ahl fix it gud n'proper ... tharris wor ahl do,
N' wennav med it reight agen, Ahl geeit back to you.

THE LEARNER AND HIS EMBOUCHURE

Gordon Higginbottom

I ant bin playin fer su long, un apparently a wur doin it wrong
th'MD sed ee wur reight sure, ah needit gerran embouchure.
Awott ? a thowt -an embouchure? ad neer yard u one afore,
A dawdled ome, a thinkin - wot wurran embouchure?

So off I went to find one, ah look'd i shops galore
But themm us met tav adum, dintavum onnymore
Ah thowt ad try at t'garridge, cos thay seem t'av most things
thid spanners, jacks n tyres n stuff ... an evn gasket rings

Embouchures? neer yard of em, ee slowly shuck iz ed
Ah felt me opes r findin one, were very near dead.
Ah even tried ut chemists, as a kinda last resort
thid no idea eether so ah decidid to abort.

Ad start agen at' bandroom n axe our cornet guy
In case ee ad a spur un that mebbe ah cud buy.
Burree sed e only ad one, that worked ferrim alone
Ee sed yer cudnt buy one, yer afta build yer own,

Teks yars n yars to doit, wi lots er practiss time.
Ah lukkd atim in orror, like practice worra crime
ee sedit wud be worth it . cos results ud cum
burra sedad rather jackit in - an went un tukkup t'drum

BANDIN AGEN?

Gordon Higginbottom

(It cud app'n tu thee)

Eawr loacle bands at theend ut street
Theh practice theer on Frydi neet
I us't to lake mesen uno,
so thowt adgo anavablow.

Azah geet close, an yard the din
a cudnah bring mesen' tgo in
A mun confess It wuh pure fear
Ah addnt laked for mony ayear

Burra pluck'd up curridge'n oppen't durr
an even then ah wurnt reight sure
A dallied abbit, then went streight in
Determin't blow worrever't din!

They aw luk'd reawnd 'n gawped at me
Then one owd bloke sez Ah no thee
Dust want ablow or just abide?
"Allav a blow, neh ahm inside"

"Willav abreak'n sort thee eawt" sed t'wagger wia smile
Eh long izzit sin theh laked? Ah answered - quite a while.
Sumdi browt a cornet eawt .an sed " gi tharra blast"
Tek yon chur deawnt 'back row theer, reight at thend the very last

A took mi place, and t 'band struck up, it shud abbin a treat
Burr aw went wrong, it wor a mess, Ah coudnt foller't beat
It mebbe wurr me, er mebbe im Ah S'pose al ne'er know
Burra learnt mi lesson on that neet, cos its last time Ahl er'r blow!

MAE'R CYRN YN MYGU

[Pwllheli Eisteddfod, September 1895]

Dowch i 'Steddfod Fawr Pwllheli
Loiau Lleyrn a geifr Eryri,
Y mae corgwn trefi Dinbych
Gyda Southmen yn dod iddi;
Bydd y Saeson wedi synnu
Wrth weld llwyddiant gwŷr y Cymry;
Wel, hip hip hwre!
Dowch i gyd i'r dre.

Tri ar ddeg o seindyrf enwog
Roddant bwys ar "gyrn" a "gyddfau"
Yn eu gŵydd fe ddawnsia 'r gallon
A bydd holltau yn y creigiau:
Corris, Nantlle, Llan a'r Blaenau
Sy'n breuddwydio am y gwobrau
Wel, hip hip hwre!
Dowch i gyd i'r dre.

Y mae pobol Aberdaron
Wedi starchio bacsiau'n barod;
Ac mae "cerrig" Llanaelhaiarn
Yn dyheu am drip i'r 'Steddfod;
Penwaig Nefyn, cychod Enlli,
Tua'r Pwll sy'n dod yn rhesi
Wel, hip hip hwre!
Dowch i gyd i'r dre.

MY FIRST ...AND LAST CONTEST (CONTEST MUSIC)

Gordon Higginbottom

Hey Bill , mi dads towd mi, weer gooin aewt next Sat
Weer Gooiin to a band contest wot dust think er that .?
Een better still , ees towd mi ..a can teck a mate er two
Seein as yer my bezzy, wilt cum weeus too

A shuck me yed afore axin , will it be any good ?
Ee said its British Oppen , an answer clear as mud
Awt best bands i Britten er cummin up to play
They play agen each other to see whose best ont day

Is it like a soccer match ? I axd Ah addnt gorra clue
Just stick wimme e anserd , ahll explain it all ter you
A sed, allreet al cumthen Ahl put mi trust i thee
Si off wiwent ont satdi , A wondrin worrad see

Wi got theer bright n early , n med er way tert seats
Bars wur full awreddy, them band folk gorrus beat
Wi everyone a gabbin it really wura din
But awe went quiet when someone yelled Draws now cummin In

Well tha shudda sin um scramble , just like a rugby scrum
Phones wur flashin , folk were dashin , one fell oer a drum
My mate sed dont worry , thur off to tell their Band
just how long thiv gotten left afore they take the stand

Duz that mean thur startin ? ave told yer donna fret
Wiv time tu gerra programme, thus another hour yet
Ah think ad started noddin off un then a band cumon
My mates dad sed Thobvious This is number one

A drummer started playin n everyon stood up
Band playt National anthem n everyon shurrup
They finished n I axed mi mate... tharral weer gonna get?
He sed be quiet you silly sod, they avent started yet !

Then they started up agen, playing wot ahl never know
Sounded like thur horns wur broke n wouldnt proper blow
The racket was unbearable , mi ears wur gerrin sore
As soon as they wur finished ,a wur up an off thru tdoor

Mi mate cum runnin up behind, n axd , wots up wi thee
av you taken badly , or did you want a pee
Ah thowt ad tell im gently cos eed axd mi if ad cum
a, sed if thats wot you caw contestin you can shuv it up yer bum

E axd mi go tut next un be better , you will see
A towd im a wursorry but contestings not me
Perhapswun day al change mi mind ... if music changes too
It made my day wen e smiled n sed I agree with you

MASSED BANDS?

Gordon Higginbottom

Grandad , dust think errband uldo, a proper Massed Bands gig?
av yard thur reight fantastic un thaudiences reight big..
A bet its rieght excitin like an lots an lots u fun
Thell change thi mind am thinkin lad, wen av towd thi worrav dun

Er band uset go tut tharea but neer wantet win
Cos winners allus copped it , to us it wer a sin
Lad sed , dint wont winnit .? Nay, lad not at all
cos Punishment fer winnin wuMassed bands at Thalbert All

See, Massed bands aft get theer eerly they rehearse ont Friday neet
Which meant wicuddntt gerrapint int Mews , err annual treat
If that wurnt baddinuff t bear , it scotched err final practiss
Isted we at' rehearse at dawn , annerr brekfust gee a miss

Wid snatch a bacon butty, anl load awt stuff ot bus
Wid climb aboard set off totuth Hall , well almost all of us
Secretary, he ad gon afore ...ee ad terdo fot draw
An us ont bus wur opin wid play t last band of awe

Streight after t'contest finished, thur wur a massed band slot ,
geet judges time t' add tpoints up and see wot bands got.wot
whent results were given wid aft dash off reandt back
putth Instruments it dressing room, thent canteen fer a snak

Two undert players a scramblin fer a butty anna brew
lucky ones thell get sum and t'others .hat mek do
Grab thinstruments,.get back ontstage for concert Number one .
Thursno relaxin after that another concert fore wiv done

Bit time wivawe a finished and packed err stuff away
awt pubs ave ginoer servin . worra lousy, soddin day.
So when yu mention Massed bands remember wor av said
whoever wants terdoum they must bi off thur ed

SAM'S SOLO

Gordon Higginbottom

"Nethen Sam" ,said er MD Ah want thi onthi feet
Thez bin onth end chure 2yur neh , n allus dunawreet
Its time theh played a solo , n'show em what yer got "
Sam lu'k attim in orror ...n'ssed Ahd rather not

Am appy worram doin, anna durnna wanna change
A cudnt do a solo , ah avent got the range
MD wudne avvit , yer talkin like a pratt
Start wi summat easy like , thell be awreet wi that

A ant gorrany solos , so lets ferget it all
"shut thi gob, gerron wi it, thall find tha av a ball"
Thaudience ud luv it worr ere it is theh plays
Burrameight get scurd n nervous wi mi head aw in a daze

Wor appens if a cock it up n mek a ness ut thing
thell at put thi cornt dawn, n lerrum yer thi sing !
At that wi started laffin , it semd to us aw wrong
WE sed yud better practiss lad, so gius awe a a song

MD wur gerrin angry , n'towd us pack it in
so we awe started singin , my god it wurra din.
Sam ad ad enuff bi naw ,n jumped up to is feet
OK al soddin play one. so shut thi traps, alreet ?

Al play a flamin solo , at that club job next week
wi went reight quiet ,Sam luk'd around, then began to speak
Ahl sort misen a solo aht, burra dont know worrittle be
Dont ask me, just let it drop , youll av to wait n see

The Club job cum, wi went ont stage, n still wid no idea
Sam looked very pasty like , to me it looked like fear ,
MD introduced him and really set the scene
A lukd at Sam agen , ah swear, he wur gooin green

Sam stood up to take is place ashakin like a leaf
and when ee started playing, we stared in disbelief
Wi cud scarce believe it . wi looked at MDs face
Wor that our Sammy playin, or an Angel in his place ?

The sound woz straight from evn, so pure, and blemish free ,
The melody so moving , it really got to me
Weel never yar the like agen , We were really blessed
Sam played out of is skin that neet , as if he were possessed

Wen e stoppd , thur want a sound , a complete hush it room
Then it awe i rrupted just like a sonic boom
Clappin, shoutin , cheerin , n'sum folk wurrin tears
thid never yard out like it , ner in a 1000 years

MD wurra skrykin Band wur on thur feet
weel ner ferget the memry u that marvellous , wondrous, neet
If theh ever doubts thissen Just think a baht er Sam
Gerron thi feet an show us all , This is who I am !

THE BARRACK FIELD

Anon – Kentish Independent, August 1887

“Again on the parade we stand
To hear the Sunday evening band.”
“Do I remember? Yes, I do,
Mackenzie, Smith, and Collins too,
And Harry Lawson, Bill Devine,
While lesser stars around them shine.
Tall Chew, Ben Suffrien, Billy Aitken,
Soul moving, stirring, spirit waking,
With many others if I’d time
I’d celebrate in rugged rhyme.
Some grand descendants now adorn
The laurels won and ably worn,
And spread the fame throughout the land
The ancient worthies of the band.”

[note: this poem describes the Royal Artillery Band - the named players in the verse were, respectively – the bandmaster, band corporal & solo horn, band sergeant & solo Eb clarinet; solo cornet; flute; bass trombone; solo flute; and piccolo.]

THE ROYAL ARTILLERY BAND

C.J., Rectory Grove, Woolwich, 1884

Hark! borne on the wings of the soft summer breeze,
That like sweet fairy kisses, stir softly the trees,
Comes a full wave of melody, thrilling and glad,
Such as never the wild harp of Orpheus had;
And you can't help but stay on your journey to hear
The sweet sound as it rises so lovingly near,
Till your soul feels a witchery, solemn and grand,
Woke to life by the noble Artillery Band.

See under the trees where, like beautiful blooms,
Fair woman with brightness the shadow illumines,
There Woolwich pours out in its beauty and pride
When the sun lights the hills from the western side;
There Smyth waves his baton as magi of old
Would, when charming base metal to silver and gold,
Till so gently, well up, 'neath his masterly hand,
Floods of melody from the Artillery Band.

Hear Carpenter's cornet burst out with a sound,
Making silvery all the full echoes around,
Or Gritton or Chapman repeat the full strain
Till the very hills tremble with gladness again;

Or Buckland's loud horn, like the thunder of war,
Bid the heroes around think of past fields afar,
With him Naylor the singer, and young Gordon stand
In thy ranks, O soul-winning Artillery Band.

Hear Pattison's bass like the thunder of Jove,
With him bright Barney Keard, rather given to rove,
Or Montara's bassoon that trembles the air,
Or Browne's soft, sweet flute pours its melody rare;
There's Julian's clarionette, the oboe of Jones,
Swell out with famed Farlie the overture's tones,
Oh, say, thou goddess of music, what land
Hath such minstrels as thine own Artillery Band.

And many there are, too, full worthy of fame
That to me are unknown, but the grand deathless name
That has wreathed them for years, shall forever remain.
E'en though Godfrey's Guards try their laurels to gain,
E'en though France sends her Guides, and proud Austria boast
Of the bandsmen that lead on her white-crested host,
Their fame is but footprints along the ocean's sand,
But the proud rocks are thine, O Artillery Band.'

When in peace through the town, o'er the heath, through the lanes,
Come the echoing sounds of thy silvery strains;
Sturdy labour and age, maid and matron and child,
Throng, out of their cares for a moment beguiled.
But when war calls the soldier to battle and death,
Then like fire to his heart comes thy soul-stirring breath,
And he cheers as the ship leaves his dear native land
To thy grand thrilling music, Artillery Band.

OUR VILLAGE BAND [HEATHFIELD]

Len Thorne, ca. 1938/39

No doubt you will agree with me this is the very night,
That one and all should praise the Band that plays so very bright.
It does not matter when or where you ask our Band to play,
They just take up their instruments and blow your blues away.

Now a word of thanks to the bandmaster whose name is Mr Wise,
Who now and then will tap his stick and take them by surprise,
He will scratch his head and murmur in a soft quiet undertone,
"Now George and Arthur let them hear you blow your old trombones."

The other night to Band practice an invitation I received,
To see the Band in action, it filled me with great glee,
For Jeff, Old Sam and Gordon they were playing on the bass,
The way they heaved and puffed and blew, I thought they'd bust their face.

Then the bandmaster tapped up and said: "I'll take the cornets please,"
Now Jack and Sid and Francis they fairly hit the breeze.
The notes came from their cornets, quite clear and very strong,
It sounded like the nightingale, just bursting into song.

The next of these bold Bandsmen on their instruments to perform,
Were Charlie, Ern and another lad, upon their tenor horns.
The way those notes came from those horns filled the bandmaster with glee,
It even brought tears to my eyes when they played Tennessee.

The next to show their paces were the euphonium and baritone,
Trix, Ted and young George Mcpham, a splendid trio by gum,
They blew their notes so awful they all seemed out of tone,
That the whole Band started crying, and murmured: "Let's go home."

Now in this little poem the drums must have a place,
It is the beat and roll of these that makes the Band keep pace.
Now Cyril Leeves he beats the drum an old one I believe,
They say this drum it first saw light in 1863.

And now to end this poem about our Village Band,
There's one more thing I'd like to say, I think it's really grand.
When anyone wants music, at concerts, or at shows,
Just give the local Band a chance for they know how to blow.

THE BAND SOCIAL DINNER

Bob Lee [Heathfield Silver Band]

My very dear friends, on behalf of the Band,
A welcome I give to you all.
At this dinner of ours, an occasion so grand,
May friendliness spread through this hall.
You could tell it was Bandsmen who sat down to eat
It's surprising how low they can stoop!
They started the dinner with a prelude to meat,
By making a tune eating soup!

[Chorus]

Bless 'em all! Bless 'em all!
The long, the short and the tall.
Bless the dear people in Alexandra Road
(The poor souls have got the patience of Job!)
Twice a week there's a racket they hear
For fifty-two weeks in the year.
And at Christmas of course, with a bit of a sauce,
We go round with the box for good cheer!

The year has gone by, and events have moved fast.
We've had lots of fun on the quiet.
We entered two contests, and almost came last,
The result almost causing a riot!

The horns blamed the basses; the basses went mad;
They said they'd been playing "so mellow."
But we soon found the reason - the tuning was bad –
Dear old Jack had been playing his Cello!

[Chorus]

Bless him all! Bless him all!
He's not such a bad lad after all.
His musical knowledge and playing is swell,
But the boys in the Band seem to make his life - well!
But last week he scored one right in the middle
In the fine Pantomime, Hey Diddle Diddle.
He got a big hand, with his own little Band,
Playing cornet and dear old bass fiddle!

They say there's a good bunch of lads in the Band
"A good-looking lot," we've heard say.
At a concert a girl took a look on the stand,
Then jumped in the air shouting "-ray!"
She went starry-eyed, as her eyes came to rest –
She had fallen for what she did see.
She rushed on the stage like a woman possessed,
And swooned flat over handsome Ted Lee!

[Chorus]

Bless 'em all! Bless 'em all!
The baritones, basses and all.
Bless all the tenors, the cornets as well,
(I won't bless the drummer; I'll send him to - well!)
I think that their playing is grand
But there's one thing you must understand;
It's a fact that's well-known, that without those trombones
It just wouldn't sound much like a Band!

We give a good concert, (so we have been told),
Large selections of tunes we can play.
We start with an overture brassy and bold,
And carry on with a waltz, come what may
We play by request - people ask for a tune;
We try to please every good soul,
But we had to give up, just as some crazy buffoon
Shouted out - "*Fox and Hounds*," "*Rock and Roll!*"

[Chorus]

Bless 'em all! Bless 'em all!
As into the bandroom they fall.
Some need a haircut, and some need a shave;
Some look as though they just left a cave!
There's Geoff with a fag in his ear,
Brian Leeves with a big lipstick smear,
Not forgetting young Roy, his mum's pride and joy,
With his hair hanging down past each ear!

It's a wonder old Bert doesn't go round the bend,
After two days a week with this shower.
He stands in the middle - arms stretched, knees bent,
Facing 24 goons for two hours.
He's just racking his brain, for he just can't explain
Why *Finlandia* sounds out of tune.
As he stops once again, poor Roy gets the blame
He had been playing *I See the Moon!*

[Chorus]

Bless 'em all! Bless 'em all!
As home from this dinner they crawl.
It's been a good evening, you all must agree;
A real get together; a jolly good spree.
Here's a toast, one and all, to make here,
That we hold this affair once a year.
It's a darned good excuse to get out on the loose
And fill yourself right up with beer!

THE BANDSMAN

Bob Lee [Heathfield Silver Band]

I am a true-bred bandsman, boys,
Me father comes from Fareham.
Me mother ain't got no more like I
'Cause she wouldn't know how to rear 'em.
I ran play a comb, or a slide Trombone -
I can beat the drums as well,
And when I'm practicing hard at home,
It really sounds like - well!

Like all good bandsmen, I believe
To keep my Trombone clean.
And so to work with string and rag,
I really make it gleam.
But, alas, one day (it's sad to say,)
My cleaning, it did end
The string, it broke, as I tugged away,
And the rag got stuck round the bend!

With my Trombone going once more again,
To practice I did go.
I sat on a chair, with my head in the air
Intent on a jolly good blow
We opened with *Finlandia*,
I thought "It's in the bag."
But when I hit the first note, It came through the air,
Like tearing a bit of old rag!

Way down Lewes I did go,
Upon a bonfire night,
Me and my Trombone right up the front,
We looked a lovely sight.
The drummer, he set a steady pace,
Up the High Street we did wend.
Then my music flew all over the place,
And me slide dropped off the end!

One day in May, on a Saturday,
To a contest we did go.
We had practised hard, and did intend
To put up a really good show.
I sat on the stage, feeling just about swell –
(I was playing 'lead Trombone'.)
Then I 'mucked up' my solo, I'm sorry to tell.
I then wished that I'd stayed back at home!

Mr. Wise did say, on the very next day:
"I've got news for you!
Your playing was bad, and what's more my lad,
You lost us the contest, too!"
I went pretty red, "and what's more" he said,
"You'll never play a slide Trombone."
So my heart went like a great lump of lead,
And I crept out the door to go home.

I was a true-bred bandsman, boys,
But now my hopes have gone.
My thoughts of being a Trombone star
Just didn't last very long
But a ray of hope from my old friend Phil
Has made me feel so grand
I'm bashing away with my Trombone still,
With the boys of the 'Southdown Band!' [*a dance band*]

BLESS 'EM ALL! – HSB LYRICS

Bob Lee [Heathfield Silver Band], 1983

Now I'll sing you a song all about Heathfield Band,
A Band full of talent and class,
In their red uniform, looking ever so grand,
They won't make the Best in Brass!

There's no class distinction, between females and males,
They all mix together so well.
If he plays his cards right a male never fails,
To get himself fixed with a gal!

[Chorus]

Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
As into the bandroom they crawl,
Bless the dear people in Alexandra Road,
The poor souls have got all the patience of Job,
Twice a week there's a racket they hear,
For fifty-two weeks in the year.
Then at Christmas we knock, with the old money box,
And wish them a Happy New Year!

Every Tuesday is practice night for all the Band,
Every body turns up prompt on time.
Conductor Dick Turner looking ever so grand,
Says "We'll start with the march *Thin Red Line*."

He raises the baton, all ready to go,
It's all quiet, you can't hear a thing.
Then a little voice says- "Hold on half a mo!!"
It's the voice of the sweet Jenny King!

Bless her all, Bless her all,
she nearly creates an uproar,
Dick turns and says- "What's the matter my dear?"
Jenny replies that the music's not clear!
When at last the Band gets under way,
The march, it goes off with a sway,
Mostyn thrashes the drum,
Paula wiggles her bum- The practise is well under way!

The cornets let rip, with a good rasping sound,
Played by Janet and Peter and Steve,
The basses then lift off the roof to the ground,
The leader is young Gordon Neve!

There's many a face that is red as a rose,
As cheeks all puff out like balloons
The floor it fair rocks with the tapping of toes,
And poor Anna Lee she just swoons!

Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
Ben Guile and Susan and all,
Bandings their hobby, they're there all the time,
A musical duo, they're just doing fine,
And it's so very plain to see,
That with children like theirs - one, two, three,
They play other games, we won't mention names,
It's practised in bed, plain to see!!

The trombone are blowing a little off key,
Jim gets the blame in the end.
He gets a real rollicking too, from Bob Lee,
Who says, it drives him round the bend.
Then Roy Crompton joins in with his north country voice,
"If you don't Bloody stop I'll go 'ome!!"
"I'm solo trombone, I've got the choice,
I've got the privalidge to moan!"

Bless ol' Ray, Bless ol' Ray,
He sure is a hell of a boy.
He learnt to play trombone up on Wigan Pier,
Still trains at night, with large glasses of beer.
His wife plays with him in the Band,
She's the opposite side of the stand,
A cornet, she plays, and the eyebrows all raise,
When Julie blows out three pints - canned!!

The Euphos are two handsome blokes you'll agree
And excellent players as well.
There's Taffy from Wales, and Young David T.
They give out a tone that is swell.

Now Dave is a teacher, a J.P. as well,
As a hobby he also keeps bees.
Now Taffy's main hobbies are guzzling beer,
And studying girls legs and knees!

Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
Taffy and David Threeefall [*sic*],
The things they enjoy after practice at night,
Is blowing the froth off a pint!
I think that their playing is grand,
And there's one thing you must understand.
As everyone knows, that without the Euphos,
It just wouldn't sound like a Band.

I must give a mention to dear old Ted Lee.
The Band's Tenor player for years.
He's not I point out a relative to me,
For which I give out three big cheers!

He sorts out the music for which the Band play,
A job which he does to a turn.
If there's anything there that he knows he can't play,
He takes it to Vines Cross to burn!!

Dear old Ted, Dear old Tcd,
We want the bandroom painted red!
Being a painter he's in charge of the job
Painting the bandroom - assisted by Bob.

But he can't name the date for a start,
So it's dropped the Band right in the cart.
The walls are all peeling and so is the ceiling
The bandroom is falling apart!

There's Dennis the baritone from Tunbridge Wells,
He's also the Secretary as well.
As well as band business, he chats up the girls,
He has a good story to tell!

He does all the fixing of jobs for the Band,
A job that he works at so hard.
But he'll get no promotion or shake of the hand,
And not many thanks - times are hard!!

Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
The Baritones, Basses and all,
Bless all the tenors, the cornets as well,
Also the drummer for banging like hell.
Poor old Dick he sure needs a big cheer,
For starting out front for the year.
Trombones on the right, - cornets blowing with might,
Enough to drive him to the beer!

Carnivals, Bonfires, Church Fetes, Church Parades,
The Band plays at these every year.
It brings lots of fun to the lads and the maids,
Especially when there is free beer.

The Band looks a treat as it goes down the street,
I must say especially the girls.
With their split shirts and minis, looking so neat
The sight of their legs gives you thrills!

Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
They march like they're ready to fall,
Mostyn keeps step with a bang on the drum,
Paula's still out there an' wriggling her bum!
But they're such a good crew one and all,
the long and the short and the tall,
The old Heathfield Band's not the best in the land,
But they're certainly having a ball!!!

DAVID THRELFALL AND HIS BAND

Bob Lee [Heathfield Silver Band]

Now the finest people in the land
Are David Threlfall and his Band.
There's Cornet Tommy, Tenor Ted,
Eupho Jack, & Cornet Fred,
Drummer Gerald, Flugel Guile,
And Roy the Bass stands out a mile.

Now to a contest they did go,
Intent on having a smashing blow.
With Cornet Peter, Cornet Sue,
All intent to win it through –
Instruments all sparkling bright,
Hoping for a successful night.

Now David waves his stick to start,
But Tenor Jack has lost his part.
The trombone section - they aren't blowing –
They're watching Julia - her leg's all showing!
But then at last, they set off fine, with a roaring march
That's called *Pendine*.

Next on the programme, what a joy;
A solo played by Trombone Roy.
He stood out front, all stiff and pale,
And said: "I just can't play - I've had no ale!"
But *The Acrobat* came out so well –
How he played it sober, we just can't tell!

CHRISTMAS TIME

Gordon Higginbottom

Folk say that Christmas is for Kids
That starts on Christmas Eve
But things went on at err ous
You wud scarce believe

Wid aft gerrup reight urly
To gi mi mam an 'and
Cos shee at mekk a tater pie
Ter feed awt lads int band

See t' band wur gooin carollin
Rount village , street bi street
Wid set off early mornin
An not get back till neet

Collectors ud cum wi us
Collectin Box in hand
Nockin ont doors fer money
Tu elpus run the band

No matter wot the weather
Be it hail er Rain er Snow
Dad ud keep on waggin stick
Whilt rest onnus at blow.

Err Fingers ud bi frozen
ann err Slides kept icin up
Sum guys browt flasks u tea ur Rum
And thid let mi ave a sup

Wonner two ut thouses
Ud invite us in
Fer coffee anna mince pie
Ter gerrus warm agin

Best of all, wurt pubs 'n clubs
Thurs lots er folk in theer
Thid join in singint carols
Cos they wur allus full o beer

Becos a wur a little lad
they med a fuss o me
"Con e really play that thing"?
"Tellim doit , ... lerrus see"

Dad gimmit solo cornet part
Here lad , play "O Come...
A did mi best but med a mess
A scryked an run off whom

Mi Mam she wur upset
Oer worrad gone n done
"No matter wot they think of you
I'm proud of you, my son"

Went band cum back to eight thur pie,
mi father sed ter me
They awe thowt theh did reelly well
And a whiprahnd just fur thee.

He passed me oer an envelope
Wi loads u cash inside
A felt mi sadness changing then
To a smile a good mile wide

"Dont think it wur a present
Gin aht er Sympathy
Ferget it wur a Whiprahnd
Consider it ...a Fee!

A allus hated Carollin
Frozen fingers, toes like Ice
If only we cud do it
Sumwur warm un sumwur nice

But thar ah new wurnt possible
my dream cud never be
But 50 odd yrs later
A wur carollin bit sea.

My tale it may seem far fetched
and very strange to you
What is so strange about it
is basically its true !!

RELIANCE

Tony Rogers

Bandsmen of old
Were young
Going for brass
Not gold
Every member playing their part
Brass band amateurs
With professionalism at heart
Disciplined practice
Rehearsals
Once twice or
7 nights a week
Your partner has to be
A brass bander
To understand
Such a commitment
To a town brass band
Each corner has a soloist
Cornet euphonium
Bass or trombonist
To name but a few
Ready to play their important cue
But a band is not a quartet
Or trio
It relies on everyone
Playing their part
Commitment to the brass band art

The terms principal
Second or third
Are all part of the chord
If any are missed
It's no longer perfect
But diminished
When the conductor conducts
And brings down the baton
The scales and long notes
Hours of home practice
Produce the note
That the composer
Intended
It will never be perfect
There will be a split
Or note that fails to resonate
Ambitious bands
Will show the player the door
And replace the player
With another ace
Until they can't keep pace
They will rise and rise
And fall and fall
But a true band
Will understand
The note has gone
But the band
Will go on

THE BANDSMAN

Anon

You've met the chap who says he's good
Rehearsals just a lark ,
He doesn't need to practice
He'll meet you in the park

His solo comes, a clanger too
A hush goes round the stand
It couldn't possibly be him
He's the good 'un in the band

If you're a player like this chap
Never worries, never cares
Do us all a favour jack
And hoppit down the stairs.

PECUNIA OBEDIUNT OMNIA

Anon, c. 1680 – from John Harley [Music in Purcell's London], 1968

The publick waites who liveryes do own,
And badges of a City, or some Town,
Who are retain'd in constant Yearly pay,
Do at their solemn publick meetings play.

And up and down the Streets, and Town in cold
Dark nights, when th'Instruments they can scarce hold
They play about, and tell what hour it is,
And weather too, this Course they do not miss,

Most part of Winter, in the Nights; and when
Some generous Persons come to Town, these Men
As soon as they're Inform'd, do then repair
Unto their Lodgings play them some fine Ayre

Or brisk new tune, such as themselves think fit,
And which they hope, with th' Gallants fancies hit,
They cry God Bless you Sirs; again then play,
Expecting Money, e'er they go away.

OWD JOE

Gordon Higginbottom

Owd Joe wur a brilliant Laker
The best fur miles around
Is tong wur like a Rattlesnake
N' ea ad a glorious sound

It didna matter wor ee played
be it slow ur fast
Ee semt to av a magic touch
That left us aw aghast

Wi aw knew wot texpect like
Wen Joe wur on is feet
But Summat special 'appened
on err Christmas concert neet

Band allus did that concert
Twixt Christmas ant New Year
Wid invite our sponsors as err guests
N' Eeven't Mayor wur there

Crowd cheered us as went ont stand
expectin summat grand

So 'tsecond piece just at be Joe
Cos he wur star ut band

Conductor introduced him
Wit customary flair
we expected sumat special
Once Joe wur stood up there

Owd Joe gorrup as normal
an wuz just abaht tu play
Wennee stopped n purris cornet dahn
"Thurs summat I wanna say"

"Av bin at top fur mony a year
Av allus dun mi best
Bur inside av bin a strugglin
Its time I had a rest"

"Allus sittin on thend cheer
Teks its toll yuknow
Theres times av felt reight rotten
but av forced mesen to blow"

"So this'l be mi Swan song
annav chozzen it wi care
Coz from tomorrer Mornin
Ahm movin deawn a chair"

As wi sat theer gobsmacked
Not knowin wot to say
Joe purris cornet up agen
An quietly, began to play

He timed it to perfection
The audience rose as one,
Saluting Joe the master
for everything he'd done

Strangely they were silent
As if in prayer they stood
wi couldna play & spoil it
Cos if wi did... , wi would

Wen Joe ad dun He tuk is bow
Ant crowd they just erupted
Summint band wur sheddin tears
Whilst tothers sat dumbfounded

Av neer known owt like it
An never will agen
Awe in onner of our owd Joe
A Giant among us men

Wi met at t'bandroom New years day
T'play int Church that neet
a wondrin worrud appen
Who'd be sittin on thend seat

It wur so unexpected
The sight that met err eyes
Wen wi enteret bandroom to
A real New Year surprise

Joe ad kept iz word alreet
Eed moved deawn ,just one place
Bumperrup wur on thend cheer
Wi a grin awe oer iz face.

Wiv both got summat tellyer
Theres summat y'ave to know
Worappend at tlast concert
Wur planned some months ago

We said yer silly buggers
Wy didnt yer think ter tell us
Joe sed wi kept it secret
Cos Ah didnt want a fuss

That summed owd Joe up, to a tee
The daft owd crafty fox
EE sed "ahl only ever leave this band
when am carrid aht .. in me Box"

Some years later Owd Joe Passed on
His time on earth was done
Worra legacy ee left us
He woz the best , bar None

Wi awe remembered worreed sed
and carried im to rest
Knowin tharrin heaven
Owd Joe wud still bit Best

We think of Owd Joe Offen
Not just now n then
Eel allus be our hero
A Giant amongst us men

THE COLORED BAND

Paul Laurence Dunbar, c. 1895

You kin hyeah a fine perfo'mance w'en de white ban's serenade,
An' dey play dey high-toned music mighty sweet,
But hit's Sousa played in ragtime, an' hit's Rastus on Parade,
W'en de colo'ed ban' comes ma'chin' down de street.

Oh, de white ban' play hits music, an' hit's mighty good to hyeah,
An' it sometimes leaves a ticklin' in yo' feet;
But de hea't goes into bus'ness fu' to he'p erlong de eah,
W'en de colo'ed ban' goes ma'chin' down de street.

THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE WEST

E.O.H., 1927 [Camborne Town Band]

How sweet the name of music sounds In a musician's ear.
Our band's a credit to the town And worth your while to hear.
It makes the wounded spirit whole, It puts our heart to rest;
'tis manna to the hungry soul, Because they were the best.

Two years ago they won those cups At Bugle, so to speak,
And once again their name is up, In making it complete.
Take Mr Parker, first of all, Who trains the four-and-twenty;
Although he isn't very tall, As good – we haven't many.

There's Fred, the cornet soloist, He takes a lot of beating;
It's very rare he makes a miss, He never gets the feeling.
With Jimmy Thomas on the slide The trombone is his hobby
He showed St Dennis how to hide Away from Bugle Bobby.

The rain kept falling all the day, Till five there was no ceasing;
We knew our band was on its way, Those notes of music squeezing.
The judge made reference to the hymn. How beautiful they played it;
When every man used all his vim, Their tone and splendour stayed it.

To see the people stand erect When, in their test selection,
They must have played it quite correct. They gave such good attention.
And then the masses all arose, They all then started cheering;
'Twas quite five minutes, I suppose, Before there was a hearing.

Our bandsmen too, I'd like to say, Are men of various sizes;
They are the only band today, That bring home all the prizes.
From Hocking's drum to double B; Their tone is simply splendid;
And those at Bugle don't you see, Were sorry when 'twas ended.

The evening came, as time went on. The people were returning;
We had no news to harp upon, Which kept us all a yearning.

Just after nine good news arrived; Our band is crowned with glory;
The people then were all alive, 'Twas quite another story.

The news soon flashed, the people thronged, To glance upon the prizes;
While some chewed on banana long, And some Moncini's ices,
"Praise ye the Lord" by Holman's Clock Was sung in simple fashion;
A cry went up, they had to stop, The band is here in action.

No one can say but what we stayed, And gave a good reception.
The cups they won, for which they played; Are such a good collection.
They gave us music through the street, And all that was desired;
And to accomplish such a feat, Our men were very tired.

Then Sunday on the sporting pitch, Again some music rendered;
They went right through without a hitch, Five thousand people tendered.
Some people take it as a joke. Give medals too for playing!
But Mr Collins when he spoke, He knew what he was saying.

Yes! Medals we can give of gold, Encourage to be steady,
Some people here in town I'm told, Are always ever ready.
Congratulations to the Band, For all their past successes;
May they through fame be there to stand, Upright against the Besses.

JILLSON'S BAND

William A. Boss, 1868 [Hope Valley, Rhode Island]

Oh! come one and all, who love music and pleasure,
In the Mechanics' Brass Band, you'll find a treasure.

The first is their leader, his name it is Jillson,
Then Wood and there's Morton, there's Chase and there's Wilson;

There's Clay, and there's Griffith, and Jimmy the drummer,
And Amos and Jason, both jolly as summer:

And then there's one Henry, and also a Josie,
And when all together are pleasant and cosy.

Then hail to the Band, all lively and jolly,
They'll scatter the blues, drive off melancholly.

If you wish a tune played, you have only to choose,
And if they can play it, they will never refuse;

Oh was ever such music heard in creation,
Old Yankee Doodle they will play like the nation;

The Red, White, and Blue, the Star Spangled Banner,
The Poor Old Slave and Oh Susianna;

Cease then ye grumblers, oh cease then your fretting,
They'll play at your suppers, your socials and weddings.

BRYAN CORNET BAND [Ohio]

Henry "Hank" McLaughlin, c. 1889

Bryan has a cornet band,
The best one in the state.
They practice every evening,
Improving much of late.

They played so awfully jolly,
When they went to Put-in Bay,
The moss backs' hair stood straight on end,
When the band began to play.

Oh! When you come to Bryan,
Don't go home 'til night.
The band it plays so sweetly,
It will fill you with delight.

They practice in the court yard,
And they music 'em so sweet
The girls stay up 'til ten o'clock
A listening in the street.

John Connin was the leader,
Of the Bryan Cornet Band,
And as a famous leader
Was always in demand.

The boys and girls would join him
On the evening of the ball, and
All started out in order
The grand march round the hall.

As the evening passed away
And the strains of music ceased,
Long's hall was soon vacated
For the regular evening feast.

So down the stairway with a rush
Near time to say adieu,
They all went down to Berks Hotel
To get their oyster stew.

THE HOME TOWN BAND

Ralph Littick, 1943

When the home town band starts playin',
With the blare of many horns,
It makes me want to shake my feet
Regardless of my corns.

It starts my blood to flowin'
Up to a tinglin' heat.
Yes, it affects my head
Much as it does my feet.

AN OHIO BAND

Anonymous

There was the band
In the old bandstand-
the music was plenty poor;
But we played real loud,
And the town was proud,
And that's really what bands are for.

Every talent we had,
Good, medium, bad,
Wis given a chance to show;
And who can say
That our life today
From some such seed didn't grow?

I sometimes pity
the kids in the city
Though they'd be the first to frown
On the simple joys
Of the girls and boys
Who grew up in a little town.

ODE TO A LEGEND AND A FRIEND

Brian Rutherford

Now there is a man when he has a baton in his hand
You would think he was Harry Potter
And its easy to tell when you're under his spell
Because you're able to play so much better.

He has the ability to inspire when he is on fire
And he always has stories to share
And it doesn't take him long to fix things that are wrong
And this talent is hard to compare.

There are so many bands, who in his careful hands
Have walked off a stage faces beaming
Having played at their best and beaten the rest
And going home with their silverware gleaming.

He is a young person's guide to play with passion and pride
And develop their skills for the future
Because there is potential to prise with some words from the wise
And he really is a fantastic teacher.

Now I've had the pleasure and some great moments to treasure
In the company of one of life's legends
Making music make sense and rehearsals intense
And that man is my friend Richard Evans.

THE BANDSMAN'S BURIAL

Alfred Brant, 1893

On the occasion of the funeral of Andrew Humberstone, member of the Leicester Rifles Band from 1871, and later the Leicester Yeomanry Band.

We bear our comrade to his tomb,
With music brightening sorrow's gloom
A bandsman good was he, we say,
Who could right well the cornet play.

Strike up! In crowds the mourners come,
As on we march with muffled drum.
Euphoniums with their tenderest breath
Proclaim the pity of his death;

The trombones blare in tones profound,
Like dirges pealing underground,
Bombardons mightily outroll
And, with this requiem, thrill the soul.

The trumpets with their vibrant swell,
Recall the sounds he loved so well;
As sweet and sad as Love's goodbye,
The clarinets make low reply.

But ah! the bandsmen wait in vain
To hear their comrade's crowning strain.
Strike up once more for Music's voice
Can make the mourner's heart rejoice.

Let grief depart, the 'Dead March' cease,
Our brother bandsman rests in peace;
And who would cheer the World but he
Who links his life with melody.

BANDSTAND

Jackie Kay, 2021

Imagine then on this old bandstand,
In this great park, where the trees
Have congregated for years,
All the artists have gathered
Firmly here, on the wooden floor
Passionate as peace protestors.

And the brass band plays the songs.
And the poets read The Storm Cones.
And the photographers catch the goings-on.
And the artist sees the stark future
Roar over the mound of the hill
Down the road towards the open stage
And somebody shouts Venceremos!

TEDDY'S GEET A PROBLEM

Gordon Higginbottom

Owd Teddy's geet a problem, its written awe o'er iz face
Seems Th'only time ees appy, iz wen ees playin iz bass
Rest ut time ees maudlin.....this reelly can't go one
Wull discuss it at'tcommittee, tu see wot can bi done.

Wi elda meetin follerin neet, an cawd Owd Teddy in
Wi sed , wur awe a bit concerned , baht mood the't allus in
Theh nerr sez owt t'nobedi, just sits theer lookin sad
It caunt bi baht thi playin , cos theh knows that's never bad

Evryboddys noticed , annit canna bi gud fert band
Wi wanna keep uptut standards ,as one ut best bands in the land
That's wen Ted gorrup ,,an sedWi Wur..... but not no more
Mebbe once thi wur up there, but that wur years before.

Wen I joint band ...thi wur on a rise ,anna helped them in thur quest
A pro MD come in as well.. to gerrum t'play thur best
Former stars cumback tut band ,.. wi wur really on the up
Wi even started contesting and won a bloomin cup.

Since then the dreaded rot set in , and folk began to leave ,
Many reasons were offered . many difficult to believe
Covid musta stopped a few , uhthat ahm pretty sure
But nah . wiv only arf a band, it int same onnymoor

Tell thi truth , av ad enuff , am wantin jack it in
Sin MD's'gone , wi caunt play out , bands wurst its ever bin
Mi brain keeps tellin mi, gerrout , thurs better bands aht theer
But then mi art sez . stick wee it lad , thet badly needed here

Ah just caunt gerrit aht mi mind ,anna caunt get kip at neet
Wi Tossin n turnin aweneet long ... its really got mi beat
Am awe mixt up , in a reet owd state ,so tellus wot ter do
Wi sed ,Teddy ? only one chap eer can say , and he ,my friend, is YOU

Wiv no idea ut thowtcum ,,willee goo er willeestay
Burra do av a suspicion , thareel packitin wunday.
Ah ope ee dunt goo yet tho , cos tharrud bi a shock
Eez vital to a band like ours , cos to uz ee is err rock

WIV LOST ANOTHER MATE

Gordon Higginbottom

Our Secretary cum reant our ouse
His face woz long an sad
Ee sed av got sum news for thee
Annam afraid its very bad.

Wiv lost another mate today
ees gone and passed away
It wur so unexpected
They found im ded ibed.

Ee allus turned aht spick an span
allus smart an laffin
Ah bet eel be a smilin still
Wen ees lyin in is coffin

Ee offen sed he'd want no fuss
No bands, nor schrykin folks
Just a few ter see im off
wi tales an loads er jokes

Ah durnt know how weel do it
Bi 'ard keepin folk away
Loads er bands av sed they want
To pay respects an play

But thats not worree wanted
Ee didna wanna band
No procession either
cos tharrud bi too grand

Wot dust think can appen
ter keep it azzee says
Lets just av a line up
an mek sure nobdy plays.

Wi really aft do summat
ter show wi really cared
Well,, er MD's a vicar ,
So mebbe ee can say a word

Ah think that izza gud idea
Just one prayer at most
an then a minutes silence
So theh can play tlast Post

Thats it ...awe a settled then
Wiel pass the word around
Then wen its dun an dusted
An eez restin in the ground

Weel arrange a reight gud gathrin
Int pub at Moses Gate
Wi sandwiches an lots of ale
An we can really celebrate

Thats Exactly worree wanted
Its Follered to a tee
an Organised like clockwork
Thanks to thee an Me

SHOULD I PACK IN PLAYING?

Gordon Higginbottom

How willa know went time has come
for mi to caw it a day. ?
Will sumdi tellus or willa bi sacked
and nor allowed to play.

I durnt wanna quit too early
un durnt want levvit terlate
an avvin folk a whisperin
Baht time wi showd im t'gate

Worrel ado on practice neets
cos av noweer else to go
N' sin a gi mi cornet back
A carn eeven av a blow

Alav no frends t'goo aht wi
Thur all int band dust see
It wont bit same wenna go tutpub
wi no one theer but me

Nobody I can talk to
Awe mi mates av gone
Am behnt bi bloomin lonely
Wen mi bandins done

A dred thet time a cummin
Cos a wurnt no wot t'do
An wen it gets tu thy turn
Ah berrits same fer you

I bet theh wurnt no eether
thell bi miserable like me
Burra av a plan tget raund it
As eazy as A B C

If wi both wrap up at t'same time
evrythin will be awreet
Lets packit in together
wurl finish ont same neet

Ah thowt ad gorrit sorted
but fahned aht to my cost
wen Ah packed in Tha didnt
An now ahm bloody lost

WUR OR WEN DID IT AWE GO RONG?

Gordon Higginbottom

Bandin wur really at its best, in the days of owd
Adurnt no that missen, but thats worrav bin towd
Sems thousuns ufolk uset follert bands abaht
But nowadays thicaunt bi botherd even turnin aht

Thi towd mi thinglish bands wurt best
Wi wur miles in frunt of awe the rest
Mebbe t'wer Besses wurld tour uz startit rot
Showin awthem foreigners just wot wiv got

Sems awe n'sundry wanted t'same
So-it mun well bi Besses wur terblame.
Bands sproutid up awe oer tland
Till evry villige ad a band

Mills 'un factris luvd bands terbits
Evn feawnd jobs fer players dahnt pits
Shipyards, Railways , Planeworks too
If theh cudplay thid avva job fer you

Contestin started slowly , abaht 1855
It woz a reel boost,cos thats wen bandin cum alive.
Famous names were bein created , by Fodens and the like
Stalybridge 'n Besses Oth Barn . and specially Black Dyke

Even Contest venues became well known to all
such as Crystal Palace ,Belle Vue ant Royal Albert Hall
Sadly .Since those heady days, Bandings lost its way
Ive sin it go with my own eyes , dwindling every day

Famous names have disappeared, since I've been on the scene
Irwell Springs and Bickershaw, and Clayton Analine
CWS and Morris Motors , Crossleys Carpets too
Barrow Shipyard , Cammell Lairds just to name a few.

Audiences have shrunk .players are less , and many bands are struggling
Sponsors and promoters are finding Budget cuts need juggling
When I did my first massed bands, within the Albert Hall
There were TWO packed houses and a TV slot but now theres none at all

I dont know what the reason is ,nor how to reverse this trend .
But I fear that if it isn't reversed , our banding daysull end.
Perhaps someone when they read this muse, can offer a suggestion
Better still ,its taken up changing suggestion, to Solution

JUDGIN' (WHIT FRIDAY?)

Gordon Higginbottom

A wur axd ter start a judgin .. A band contest, no less
A sed a know nowt abaht um so itterd only be a guess
Dirnt a get sum trainin afore yer let mi loose
If a gerrit rong therlav mi angin . a danglin from a noose

Its norras bad asthat thi sed , just pretend thez judged afore
Nonnut bands ul no thi, an thill think thez studdit score
Judge wid bookd cawnt doit ,cos eez gon deawn ill wit flu
Theh wur learnint trambone once, so in err eyes tharrull do

A felt mi art a meltin , they wur really up the creek
Wens soddin contest appnin then? .. thi sed a Friday week
Wull let thi av awt tackle. a wissle, papper an pen
Un wull ide thi in a caravan , so nobody will see yer then

A marshal will luk after thee. githee music an some tea
Therl be a seat n table, anna toilet too , so you can av a pee
All yer do is mek a list , and write down wot' Marshal says
Like number ut competin band nt name ut piece it plays

Wen thez dun thi writin pick up thi wistle an blow
Awt crowd outside l'shurrup then, cos thats the signalt go
Whilst thur playing ,write summat down , write down wot theh thinks
But just be careful wot tha writes , theh cannot say it stinks.

So that wur awe mi trainin done , anna turned up on the night
Ah wur urly as they towd mi be , an thur want a soul i'sight
Thi put m mi intuit Caravan, anna settled mi down int cheer
Marshall cum an browt mi stuff , an a welcome pint u beer

He towd me, only him ad see cos others wurnt allowed.
Scarcely half an hr had gone when wi heard a gathrin Crowd.
Reet ee sed ,am off out now al get things under way.
Al cum n githit music , afore theh blows ter mek um play

Everythin semt simple , Ah enjoyed it - evry band
cos each one semt get better , wi a fresh pint in mi and.
All gud things cum to an end, A think thats worree sed
I remember feelin dizzy , with a bangin in mi ed.

I think sum body cum intuit van sayin thats it then..wiv done
Asta geet results yet, a sed I av, burrav no idea whos won
sumdi took awt pappers , thi just grabbed em aht mi and
thi sed theh dusnt needum naw that last lot wurt last band

Next day, thi sed me papperwark just showed ad no idea
A sed it seemd allriecht to me , it musta bin the beer
The comments worrad written, you cud say wurnt a hit
(praps Marshal shunt a towd mi , ee thowt one band wur shit!)

Ahl never do another contest , thats a fact fur sure
Them uz ran it ,wrapped it up, The contest is no moor
Other folk ave now decided to have another try
They ant axd mi to judge it tho , Av no idea why

GUESS WHO?

Gordon Higginbottom

My mates a real rough Diamond
Burriss face belies the truth
Cos damage wonnt thru feightin
but playin rugby in is youth !

Age med mimate to pack it in
and tek another direction
E did.. an nah thell find im
it middle uvva bands Bass Section !

E started from't beginin
bi larnin eaw ter blow
Then thur wur awt fingrin
progress wur reight slow

But t' lad, he did stick attit
An picked it up a treat
Sometimes wid after stop im
else he'd practiss day and neet

Of course ee add another job
That sometimes gorrint way
Despite runnin a company
Its clear eed' rather play

All t'hard work an practissin
Worked wonders in the end
It wasnt easy cos he had sum rows
drivint neighbours rahn the bend.

My mates now in a famous band
He sits there Proud an Tall
He's med it to the very top
On't stage at Th'albert All

But nah he canna grasp it
Just wot he has achieved
Ee thinks tharrif e sez owt
Eed never bi believed

WE WERE ROBBED!

Gordon Higginbottom

Wi thowt wid played a blinder n mustbe int top three
But wen results were posted our name wi coulnt see
Twer obvious that thid gorrit rong , un gorrawt bands mixt up
Rest ut band thowt same , an sed - wur gooin ome wit cup

A reckoned Judges missed us , probbly on a brek fer tea
Or they didnt hear the same as us ..thats worrit seemed to me
So A waited fer awt judges , cummin aht ut thawll
Wenna axed em why wi ant wun , Thised.... av you erd em all

They axed mi how mony Bands ad erd , an adda studied tscore
They sed be 'onest nah ...as sed 3 ""or mebbe four
Well shut thi gob , wee yard em all, and med us notes as well
An wi compured awt bands i detail.... .. Oh.... summat rang a bell

Ah went back tut wife ter teller . Perhaps they gorrit reet
A pondered o'er wot thid sed .. anna didna sleep that neet
Its likely that they did hear us and why wi dint win
I realised tharrad gorrit wrong ,an Worra stupid pratt ad bin

So at awe mi future contests ahl neer du that do more
Av pledged to lissen evry band and follow them ont score
No moor will ah slag judges now a knows wot they afta do
One day a hope, ah met be able, to do sum judgin too

Further reading...

- Stephen Etheridge's **Brass Band Poems and Working Class Culture** - <https://bandsupper.wordpress.com/2016/01/22/brass-band-poems-rhymes-about-working-class-culture/>
- Eric Johnson - ***Follow the Tame - Collected Verse (Including Dialect)*** - Mossley Band, 1976. [The Awakening; Pots and Pans; On a Pennine Hill; A Summer Evening at Kiln Green; Mossley; Whit Friday; A Friend Remembered; Eawt O' Step; A Reet Gud Neet; The Mossley Band; Th' Belle Vue September; Taitu Pie; The Saga of Sam; Th' Gradliest Day o' th' year; Curiosity; Winter; A Neet Eawt; A Kesmus Visitor; Kesmus Eve.]
- Emily M. Parris - **Strike Up the Band!: A book of Poetry about Band Concerts** - Parris Publishing, Kansas City, Missouri, 2016
- Doreen Smith – **Coals Made Brass!** – collected poems about brass bands in the North-East – Doreen Smith, Bishop Auckland, 2002