

Hammersmith Borough Band – a Band’s Life in Five Acts

Gavin Holman, 17 June 2020

Act 1. Wormholt Silver Band

- Wormholt Silver Band was founded in early 1927 by A.W. Breadman.
- Nothing more is known about the band’s activities until it was renamed Hammersmith Silver Band in early 1929.

Act 2. Hammersmith Silver Band

- 7 April 1929 – the band visited Wormwood Scrubs Prison to give a concert, with 22 players, conductor H. Shinner – just one of many such visits over the next few years. Having recently been reorganised under its new name, Hammersmith Silver Band (and associated with the Church of St Catherine Coleman). It performed the same evening at its old ground near Starch Green Pond, Ravenscourt Park.
- 25 July 1929 – Participated in the procession for the Shepherd’s Bush Kiddies’ Outing.
- 21 November 1929 – “newly reorganised” - officers included A.W. Breadman (chairman), F.G. James (bandmaster and conductor), T.S. Appleton (vice-president), J.C. Clark (vice-president), Sir Marshall Hays (president), and J.W. Christmas (secretary). Their “first” public concert included the march *Reliance*, a musical medley, *Sandringham*, and *Fidelity*. D. Skingle, L. Skingle, J. Digby, and G. Handy were members of the band at this time. It had recently asked permission from Hammersmith Council for the band to be known as the Hammersmith Borough Silver Band.
- 11 January 1930 – the band held their New Year Social – performances during the evening included *Cottonopolis*, *Andante in G*, *Irish Melodies*, and *Old Comrades*.
- In January 1930 the band was playing outside the Western Avenue Hotel every Sunday morning, having started that regular engagement on 13 October 1929. The band were dressed in their uniform of dark blue with black and gold braid facings.

Act 3. Hammersmith Borough Band

- By April 1930 the band had adopted the new name “Hammersmith Borough Band”, having been approved by the Borough Council.
- In May 1930 the band was conducted by J. Dicks. They had a sixteen-week engagement to play every Sunday evening in Richmond Terrace Gardens, Surrey, and playing in the Western Hotel, East Acton every Saturday evening from 7pm to 9pm.
- Referred to as Hammersmith Borough and Wormholt Silver Band when it played at the Acton Hospital Fete in June 1930, and it also performed at the opening of the Great Sale at Murfitts department store in Norland Road.
- Performed at St Aidan’s Catholic Church fete in July 1930. C. Kottaun and G. Barfield were players in 1930.
- At the band’s AGM in October 1934, officers elected were A.W. Breadman (chairman), Mr Pickenson (vice-chairman), F. Burns (secretary), Mr Cull (treasurer), Mr Hardy (librarian), and J.F. Forse (bandmaster & instructor).

- The band won its first prize (achieving 4th place) at the East Ham Association contest in November 1934. At that time it rehearsed at the Crown and Sceptre Inn, Melina Road, Shepherd's Bush.
- Lieutenant A.E. Ashcroft was appointed conductor in September 1939.
- A concert at Boston Manor Park in August 1940 was: *O God Our Help* (Ashcroft), *Quarterdeck* (Alford), *Silver Cloud* (Villiers), *Communityland No. 1* (Stodden), *The Two Comrades* (Rimmer) with duetists G. Lewis & H. Nithsdale, *Scottish Gems* (Burns), *Serenade No. 1* (Heykens), *In a Monastery Garden* (Ketelby), *Merry Widow waltz* (Lehar, arr. Hume), *The Phantom Brigade* (Myddleton), *Darkey's Dreamland* (Bidgood), *Wedding of the Rose* (Jessel), *Paddy's Outing* (Hollyday), *Land of Hope and Glory* (Elgar), and *Abide With Me* (Monk).

Act 4. Hammersmith Home Guard Band

- In January 1942 the Hammersmith Borough Band had joined the Home Guard en bloc, attached to the 43rd Battalion County of London Home Guard. The secretary was F.W. Dickinson, and they rehearsed at the Bridgeway Club, Hammersmith Market, King Street.



Hammersmith Home Guard Band

- During this period the band undertook 54 engagements and also made a radio broadcast.
- The band reverted to being the civilian Hammersmith Borough Band sometime in 1945 after the Home Guard was stood down.



Hammersmith Home Guard Band

Act 3 reprise. Hammersmith Borough Band (again)

- On VE Day Shepherds Bush Green was filled with people listening to the Hammersmith Borough Band, which put together a programme of music to entertain the celebrating local population.



Hammersmith Borough Band, 1947

- At a concert on 12 December 1949 at Hammersmith Town Hall, with the London Light Opera Society, the band had to play their joint music with the choir a full tone higher than what was printed, to suit the choir – at one day’s notice!



Hammersmith Borough Band, late 1940's

- Members of the band in 1953 included E. Lewis, H. Bates, J. Hutchins, B. Lamprell, H. Allen, B. Moran, B. Edwards, R. Barton, G. Cavanagh, P. Rutland, T. Moran, O. Way, J. Whitehead, D. Flack, J. Morris, H. Evans, E. Banks, W. Sloane, R. Banks, A. Cowlin, J. Doyle, G. Hopkins, J. Cook, H. Graves, and D. Perrie.



Hammersmith Borough Band, late 1940's

- In December 1953 the band obtained new uniforms and instruments – the latter were hired from the Town Council – which were formally presented to the band in January 1954.



LIEUT A. E. ASHCROFT SEATED WITH THE MAYOR AND MAYORESS AND THE BAND EXECUTIVE

- A junior band was established in February 1954.
- A newsworthy event occurred in July 1954, when it was reported that the band would be spending three guineas on repair and reconditioning of a bass drum as a result of “fair wear and tear”.
- In 1956, band chairman Percy Edwards (one of the original players from 1927) bemoaned the lack of players in the band and appealed for new blood, blaming lack of interest among youngsters, National Service and a minor depletion of the band’s numbers, also stating that the annual hire of the instruments (£150) could not be paid. The band was rehearsing at Brackenbury School, Shepherd’s Bush on Thursday evenings, and Westcott Lodge, Lower Mall, Hammersmith on Sunday mornings.
- Musical director Emlyn Lewis in 1957.
- Appeal for more instrumentalists in April 1958, when Peter Roy Barton was a cornet player.
- It is assumed that the band folded soon thereafter.



Hammersmith Borough Band, early 1950's

Act 5. Hammersmith Borough Band (new)

- Later in 1958 the Hammersmith Borough Council loaned the instruments to the Addision Institute on the basis it would form a band to be used at civic events and parades. By February 1963 nothing had happened, and H. Gurney Doe, band instructor and adjudicator, was given six months to raise a band from the class that he taught at the Institute. This he achieved, and the new band's first public outing was at a carol concert at Hammersmith Town Hall on 22 December 1963, under the baton of Gurney Doe.
- Edrich Siebert compèred a complimentary concert by the band at Hammersmith Town Hall in February 1964.
- Band officers in February 1965 were: William Brind (president), Miss L.A. Humphrey (vice-president), Mrs H. Ricketts (vice-president), F. Payne (vice-president), J. Woodman (chairman), Harry Cornthwaite (deputy conductor).
- Harry Cornthwaite became musical director following the death of Gurney Doe in October 1965.
- Mrs H. Ricketts was secretary in 1967 and rehearsals held Monday and Thursday nights.
- The band was still active in 1979 but nothing more is heard of it after that date.



Hammersmith Borough Band, 1964

With thanks to Heather Campbell, whose grandfather, A.E. Ashcroft, was musical director of the Band from 1937 to 1956, and who provided a number of pictures and information about the band.

An article about the band

“Hammersmith Borough Band” - *Bandsmen of the World* - Vol. 1 (1), April 1947, pp. 8-11

Hammersmith Borough Band started approximately twenty years ago as the Hammersmith Silver Band. During the first few years of its existence, it was largely due to the tremendous amount of work put in by the Secretary, Mr. F. W. Dickinson, that the Band was kept in a playing condition. On September 3rd, 1939, Lieut. A. E. Ashcroft, the present Musical Director, was appointed Conductor. Lieut. Ashcroft had come from Wales sometime previously [*in 1937*] to take over the West London Silver Band (now defunct). This appointment as Conductor of Hammersmith unfortunately coincided with the outbreak of war, and the band, like most others, began to lose men through the call-up to the Services. However, due to the energy and enthusiasm of the Conductor and Secretary they were usually able to "field a full side".

Soon after the formation of the Home Guard, the Band was offered in its entirety to the 43rd County of London (L.P.T.B.) Battalion, and the offer was accepted by Col. Cleary,

the C.O. of the battalion. The Conductor, Mr. Ashcroft, was appointed to Commissioned rank as Lieut. and the Secretary and Deputy Conductor were promoted Sergeants. The Band rapidly forged ahead and became one of the best Home Guard Bands in the London area. During the season of 1944, they fulfilled a total of 54 engagements under the London County Council and various Metropolitan Boroughs. Also at this time came their first broadcast from the London Studio. During the blitz years, the Conductor, N.C.O's. and Bandsmen took their turn at all-night duty at the Battalion Headquarters, as well as attending numerous parades for their own and other battalions.

In 1945 they again turned their attention to contests, and after one or two minor contests, decided to take the plunge straight into the Championship section at the first of the "Daily Herald" London Area Contest. Gradually improving with each contest, they achieved the distinction of being placed third at their last contest in the Championship section at East Ham.

On the disbandment of the Home Guard, the Band resumed its civilian status, and, with another successful season in 1948, negotiations were commenced with a view to their being taken over by the Borough. At the Annual General Meeting at the close of the year, Mr. F. W. Dickinson, the Secretary, tendered his resignation owing to ill-health. He was accorded a vote of thanks, and then Councillor W. H. Brind announced that the Borough Council had decided to give the band its official support. A Committee of nine was then elected, and an Advisory Council was formed, consisting of five members of the Borough Council and five members from the Band Committee, under the Chairmanship of Councillor W. H. Brind. Lieut. A. E. Ashcroft was appointed Musical Director, Mr. R. G. Abbott, Bandmaster, and Mr. Arthur Berry and Miss E. M. Bentall, Joint Secretaries - Miss Bentall also acting as Hon. Secretary to the Advisory Council. Mr. D. A. Hogg, the Borough Treasurer, consented to act as Hon. Treasurer to the Band. The Mayor of Hammersmith, Alderman R. J. Buckingham, J.P., has become President of the Band, and Mr. A. Edwards, one of the original members of the Band, agreed to carry on as Chairman of the Band. It was decided that the policy of the Band should be one of increasing efficiency, both as regards contests and engagements.

The Band has got away to a flying start for 1947 by securing a contract to play at Fulham Football Ground on the occasion of every first team home match. Their practice room must be one of the best in London, as they have been granted facilities for rehearsals at the New Town Hall, Hammersmith. The Band has now affiliated to the newly-formed Hammersmith Musical Society, and has high hopes of making a name for itself in the Brass Band world.

The band's contesting results (1931 – 1974)

Date	Contest	Place	Piece	Draw	Conductor
26-9-1931	Crystal Palace (Junior Shield - C)		A Village Pastoral		W. A. Smith
30-9-1933	Crystal Palace (Junior Shield - C)		Gems of Melody	27	J. F. Forse
2-6-1934	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)		Gems of Schumann No. 2		
29-9-1934	Crystal Palace (Junior Shield - C)		No. 2	15	J. F. Forse
17-11-1934	East Ham Contest (Section 3)	4	William Tell		J. F. Forse
1-6-1935	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)	3	Gems of Wagner No. 2	1	J. F. Forse
29-6-1935	Romford Contest (Third Section)	3	Gems of Wagner No. 2		J. F. Forse
17-8-1935	London and Home Counties BBA Contest (Third Section)	2	Gems of Schumann No. 2		J. A. Potts
24-8-1935	Enfield Contest (Section 3)		Gems of Schumann No. 2		J. F. Forse
28-9-1935	Crystal Palace (Junior Shield - B)	W	Die Feen		
16-11-1935	East Ham Contest (Section 3)		Sunrise to Sunset	2	T. M. Chappelle
23-5-1936	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)	4	Mignonne	2	J. A. Potts
26-9-1936	Crystal Palace (Junior Shield - C)		Edelweiss	28	J. A. Wood
29-5-1937	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)		Tchaikovsky		J. A. Potts
19-3-1938	London & Home Counties BBA Spring Contest (Third Section)	4	Deep Harmony Selection		J. A. Potts
28-5-1938	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)		Sunrise to Sunset		
19-11-1938	East Ham Contest (Section 3)		Over the Hills		
18-3-1939	London & Home Counties BBA Spring Contest (Third Section)		Wayside Scenes		
20-5-1939	Hanwell Contest (Division 3)	2	Over the Hills		O. Parish
8-7-1939	Uxbridge Contest (Section 3)	1	Wayside Scenes		O. Parish
8-7-1939	Uxbridge Contest (Section 2)	4	La Favorita		O. Parish
1-6-1940	Hanwell Contest (Division 2)	3	Emilia		A. E. Ashcroft
16-2-1946	London and Southern Counties (Championship Section)		A Downland Suite		
6-4-1946	London & Home Counties BBA Spring ("Victory") Contest (Championship Section)	3	Themes from Symphony No. 5 [Beethoven]		A. E. Ashcroft
26-4-1947	London and Southern Counties (Championship Section)		Akhnaton		
6-12-1947	Bletchley Brass Band Contest (Championship Section)	4	Coriolanus		A. E. Ashcroft
13-3-1948	Hammersmith Contest (Championship)	3	Beethoven's Works		A. E. Ashcroft
10-7-1948	Daily Herald Brighton Open Brass Band Festival (Championship Section)		Carmen		
9-4-1949	London and Southern Counties (Second Section)	2	Sirius	12	A. E. Ashcroft
21-5-1949	St. Albans Contest (Division 1)	1	Schubert's Symphony in C		A. E. Ashcroft
21-5-1949	St. Albans Contest (Division 2)	1			A. E. Ashcroft
17-9-1949	National Championship of Great Britain (Second Section Final)		Sirius		
25-2-1950	London and Southern Counties (Second Section)	4	Three Brass Band Studies		A. E. Ashcroft
18-3-1950	Hammersmith Contest (Second Division)	2			A. E. Ashcroft

10-4-1950	Leicester Brass Band Festival (2nd Section)		Coriolanus A Northern Rhapsody		A. E. Ashcroft
3-6-1950	Hayes Contest (Second Section)	2			
1-3-1952	Hammersmith Contest (Championship)	2	Resurgam	3	A. E. Ashcroft
19-7-1952	Daily Herald Brighton Open Brass Band Festival (Championship Section)		Eine Kleine Nachtmusik		
7-3-1953	London & Home Counties BBA Spring Contest (Championship Section)		Rhapsody in Brass		
28-3-1953	London and Southern Counties (Championship Section)		Rhapsody in Brass		
21-11-1953	Berkshire & Neighbouring Counties Band Festival Guild (Championship Section)		Rhapsody in Brass		
6-3-1954	Hammersmith Contest (Championship)		Clive of India	1	A. E. Ashcroft
3-4-1954	London and Southern Counties (Championship Section)		Clive of India		
5-3-1955	Hammersmith Contest (Championship)		The Severn Suite		
2-4-1955	London and Southern Counties (Championship Section)		The Severn Suite		
23-11-1957	Berkshire & Neighbouring Counties Band Festival Guild (Second Section)	6	Snowdon Fantasy	1	Emlyn Lewis
22-11-1958	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 2)	2	Petite Suite de Ballet	1	Emlyn Lewis
15-5-1965	SCABA Autumn Contest (Championship Section)	3			
3-10-1965	London & Home Counties BBA Spring Contest (Third Section)	W			
5-3-1966	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 2)	1			H. Cornthwaite
7-5-1966	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 1)	1			H. Cornthwaite
7-5-1966	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 1)	2			H. Cornthwaite
19-11-1966	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 1)	3			H. Cornthwaite
5-3-1967	Hammersmith Contest (Third Division)	3			
5-3-1967	Hammersmith Contest (Second Division)	3			
25-11-1967	Royal Tunbridge Wells Contest (Section 1)	1			
1-4-1973	Hammersmith Contest (Third Division)	3			
17-2-1974	Hammersmith Contest (Third Division)			2	Derek Greenwood

A.E. Ashcroft's letter head



LIEUT. A. E. ASHCROFT

BAND TEACHER

54 LIMERSTON STREET, LONDON, S.W. 10

NEARLY THIRTY YEARS FIRST-CLASS CONTESTING EXPERIENCE

.....194

Recent successes include:

Rhymney Festival 1935 and 1936

—
S.W.B.B.A. Championship 1936

—
National Band Festival
Alexandra Palace 1937 and 1938

—
Hayes, Uxbridge, Yiewsley,
Romford and Walthamstow
Contests, 1938

L. and H.C. Contests :

Paddington 1939

Romford 1939

Third Division Championship :

Hanwell 1940

3rd Prize, 2nd Division

Hanwell 1940