

Springfield Hall Brass Band - promoting the Wesleyan Methodist message in South London

Gavin Holman, 11 January 2023

A new Methodist church was built on Wandsworth Road, Lambeth, and opened in March 1902. The first minister, from 1902-1907, was Reverend George Whitley. The building itself was massive, elegant and fit for purpose and had several functional communal spaces, together with a large basement. It bears a striking resemblance in architectural terms to C. Harrison Townsend's Bishopsgate Institute (1895) and Whitechapel Art Gallery (1897), and to this day is a prominent landmark feature of the area. The new building was known as Springfield Hall.

Institutions set up within the Mission included: a Boy's Brigade, Cripples' Parlour, St John Ambulance Class and a Public House Brigade, 'to rescue some of their less fortunate brothers from the thralldom of the drink fiend.'

A series of concerts was arranged in the first few weeks after the opening of the Church, proving to be very popular and increasing the numbers of those interested in joining the various church groups and activities. One of the first groups established was a brass band, and by the 5th April 1902, 15 men had offered themselves to join this musical effort. However, money and instruments were needed to get the band off the ground – musically at least.



The band's first conductor was H.L. Young, and he soon had sufficient good players with instruments for the band to enter its first contest, on 3 May 1902, at Blakenhall Heath. The test piece was "*Songs of Scotland*" and the new Springfield Hall Brass

Band were drawn number 7, in a field of 11 bands. They were unplaced, not surprisingly, since they had only been in existence for a month.

The Band soon settled into its role of supporting the Church in its activities, one such early one being at a meeting of the Springfield Hall Men's Own, at the Hall on Sunday 17 August 1902, which concentrated on the evils of drink. The Band provided some selections of music, and over £6 was raised for Band funds.

The Band paraded the district twice each Sunday in 1902, encouraging people in the parish to attend the Church.

Its second foray into the contesting arena took place on 6 September 1902, when it travelled to Wolverhampton to compete in two competitions there. For the first, 'own choice' test piece contest, they were drawn number 1 out of 9 bands, but were unplaced in the results. The second contest had the set test piece "The Slave", the Band, playing number 2, were again not in the prizes.

The Harvest Festival at the Wandsworth Road Wesleyan Mission (Springfield Hall) was held on Sunday 21 September 1902, with the Band providing suitable musical selections.

The death of Hugh Price Hughes, a Methodist clergyman and founder of the West London Methodist Mission, was marked by various services throughout London. At Springfield Hall, on Sunday 23 November 1902, the packed congregation listened to the Band playing the "Dead March" from "Saul" in the porch.



Springfield Methodist Church, Wandsworth Road, Lambeth

Temperance meetings were often supported by the Band. On Saturday 6 June 1903 there were no less than eight such gatherings in London parks. At Battersea Park, the Springfield Hall Temperance Band played for the assembly, conducted by H.L. Young.

The Band next took part in a contest at Wembley Park, on 27 June 1903. The test piece was "*Crown of Victory*", and the band were drawn to play no. 6 out of 9 bands, conducted by H.L. Young. They achieved 3rd prize.

Once more, the Band mounted the contest stage – this time at the National Brass Band Championship Finals at the Crystal Palace, on 26 September 1903. They competed in the 'Challenge Cup' (5th) section, and were drawn no. 9 of 22 bands (Hull Waterloo having withdrawn), playing the test piece "*Gems of Welsh Melody*", but were unplaced in the prizes (see the extract from the 1903 programme below).

11.30 **In Maze Band Stand.**
Brass Band Competition for the "Champion Journal"
Challenge Cup.

Section 5.—Adjudicator, Mr. J. WALKER

NAME OF BAND.	CONDUCTOR.	NAME OF BAND.	CONDUCTOR.
Aylesbury Printing	W. Greenwood	Great Central and Met. Railway	J. H. Lay
Barking Town	F. W. Stevens	Lewisham Boro'	W. G. Hales
Bedminster Silver	J. E. Wilkinson	Maesteg Volunteers	W. Evrett
Belvedere Excelsior	F. Alder	Rushden Volunteers	J. Holdsworth
Biggleswade Town	F. H. Gee	Skipton Mission	F. Metcalf
Blaengarw	T. Threlfall	Southwark Boro'	C. Perry
Burry Port	David John	Springfield Hall	H. L. Young
Burton Latimer Britannia	J. E. Fidler	Stony Stratford	T. Sharpe
Dartford Volunteers	L. T. Exeter	Tutbury Town	R. Few
Eastwood Ambulance	Fenton Reushaw	Wendover	W. Underhill
Farsley	J. Brier	Yiewsley	E. Brophy
Hull Waterloo	C. Norman		

Two further contests were entered in 1904. Firstly, at Lewisham (in the 2nd section), on Monday 4 April 1904. This was an 'own choice' test piece contest, where the bands could select from "*Gems of Tschaikovsky*", "*Gems of Scotch Melody*", and "*Selections from H.M.S. Pinafore*". Springfield Hall were conducted by H.L. Young, and were unplaced out of 15 bands. Later, at Wembley Park, on Saturday 25 June 1904, again playing an own choice test piece, they were unplaced out of 13 bands.

The next event recorded for the Band was their performance at a Benefit Concert for Municipal Employees of Battersea Town Council, at Battersea Town Hall on Thursday 30 November 1905.

A Wesleyan Garden Party was held at Bromwood Road on Saturday 9 June 1906. Among the various amusements were performances by the Springfield Hall Band and the Battersea Salvation Army Band.

On Saturday 22 September 1906, the Rotherhithe Men's Own Band organised a contest under the auspices of the London and Home Counties Amateur Band Association, which had established a 'mission band' section, containing 21 such bands. All of these were invited to enter this contest, but only seven took up the challenge. The test piece was "*Hail Blessed Day*" and the contest was adjudicated by George Marshall. The competing bands were East Finchley Wesleyan, Old Nichol

Street, Hoxton Crusaders, Rotherhithe Men's Own, St James-the-Less Men's Service, South Tottenham Primitive Methodists, and Springfield Hall. East Finchley gained 1st prize.



Staff of the Springfield Methodist Mission, 1908 - Superintendent, Rev. James Doran, Lay Agent, Mr C.S. Hunt and Sisters of the People, Sister Hettie, Sister Emma

Two quartets of players from the Springfield Hall Band took part in a quartet competition, arranged by the Guinness Crusaders Band at the Berger Hall, Bromley-by-Bow on Saturday 16 February 1907. The test piece was an extract from "*Elijah*" (Mendelssohn), arranged for the occasion by William Rimmer. The second quartet from Springfield Hall gained third prize and were presented with medals and certificates. Other bands which supplied quartet groups were those of Collingwood Street Mission, Dalton Central Mission, East Finchley Wesleyan, Guinness Crusaders, King's Cross Mission, Leysian Mission, North Camberwell, Nunhead Christians' Out-and-Out Mission, Rotherhithe Men's Own, St James-the-Less, and South Tottenham P.S.A.

On Monday 4 March 1907, the Springfield Hall Band took part in a grand brass band festival arranged by the Leysian Mission at their Hall. Some 175 players from the Leysian Mission, East Finchley Wesleyan, Guinness Crusaders, Springfield Hall, and West Ham Crusaders, combined to perform various items singly and en masse, with pieces including the march "*O.M.M.T.*", the anthems "*Sun of My Soul*" and "*Shepherd of Souls*", Rossini's overture "*Semiramide*", selections "*Silver Cross*" and "*H.M.S. Pinafore*". Songs and instrumental solos also formed part of the evening's entertainment.

The Band participated in a concert at the Anchor Brewery Lecture Hall, Emerson Street, on Monday 13 May 1907, held in celebration of the return of Thomas Hanson to the brewery after a long and painful illness.

Ever willing to help out, a number of players from the Springfield Hall Band took part in a concert at the Tent Mission Hall, Queen's Road, Battersea on Thursday 15 October 1908. The evening was in aid of the newly-formed Tent Mission Brass Band, whose members were augmented for the occasion by the visiting Springfield players.

Sunday 14 March 1909 was the seventh anniversary of the Springfield Hall Mission. A great gathering took place, with the Mission Brass Band and the Fife and Drum Band parading the streets previous to the celebratory meeting.

The annual mass temperance meetings for children in various London parks took place on Saturday 26 June 1909, with the one in Battersea Park being attended by the Springfield Band and over 700 children.



Children - members of a 'Band of Hope' temperance group

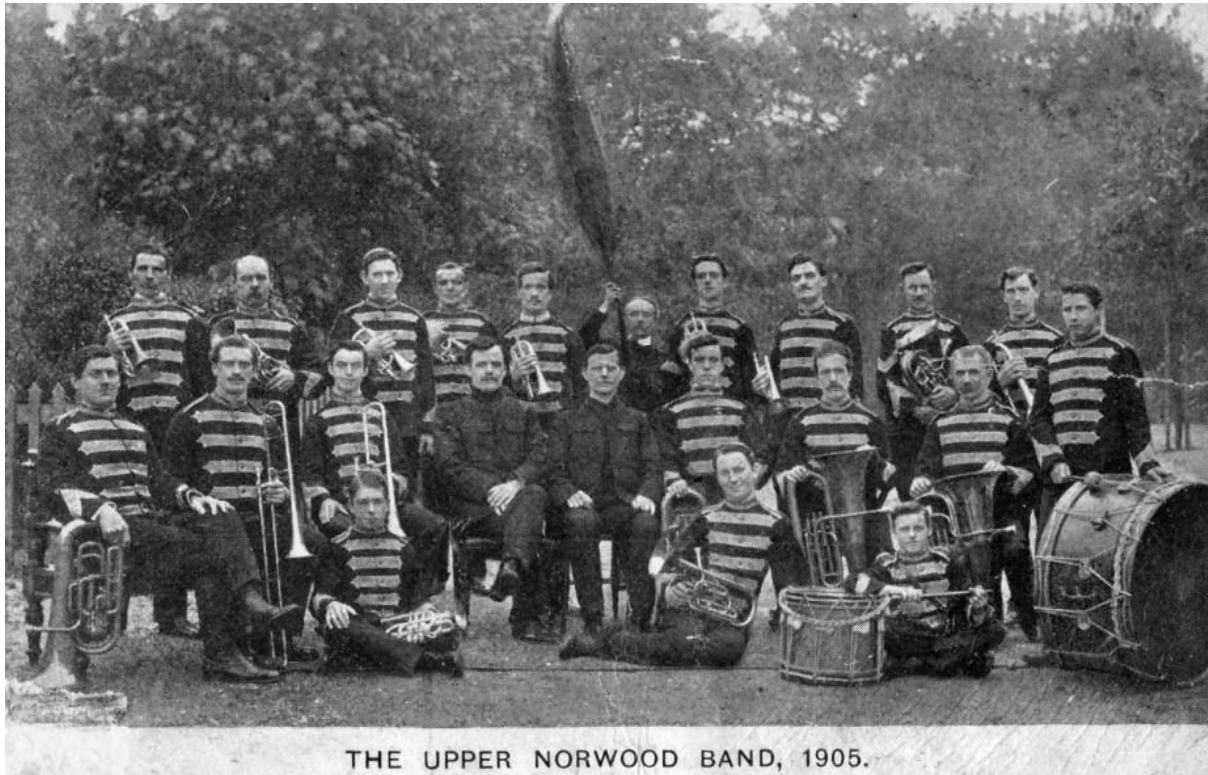
The subsequent event, on 25 June 1910, was again supported by the Springfield Band with their music, but fewer children attended due to the inclement weather.

A demonstration of Brotherhood and P.S.A. societies was held on Clapham Common on Sunday 10 July 1910, at which the Springfield Band and the Tent Mission Band provided music.

The Leysian Mission organised another brass band festival on Monday 15 May 1911, along similar lines to the one held in 1907. About 200 bandsmen took part in the

event, the bands being those of Springfield Hall, People's Tabernacle, Woodbridge Chapel, St Barnabas Men's Bible Class, Camberwell Free Salvationists, Hoxton Hall, and the Leysian Mission. The band pieces included the march "*The Countersign*", fantasia "*Water Witch*", "*A Hunting Trip*", "*Italian Carnival*", "*British Melodies*", "*Fireside Fancies*", "*Happy Land*", "*A Venetian Carnival*", "*Souvenir of Savoy*", and "*Queen of Angels*".

The 10th anniversary of the Springfield Hall was celebrated in March 1912, with the Brass Band, conducted by Frank Shannon, providing suitable musical entertainment.



The Upper Norwood Prize Band arranged a quartet contest, in two sections, on Saturday 7 March 1914. Attracting entrants from as far as Cheshire and Birmingham in addition to those from more local bands, the first section was won by a quartet from Foden's Motor Waggon Works Band, and that from the Springfield Hall Band took the fourth prize in the second section.

The Band played 'light music' to entertain guests at a garden party at The Firs, Clapham, in June 1914; and provided music for the Cottenham Park Flower Show at Dorset Hall, Merton, in July 1914.

The Battersea Carnival in September 1916 featured a mile-long procession of more than 5,000 people which included the Springfield Hall Band together with three others at points in the parade.

On Saturday 12 May 1917, a concert was held at the Springfield Hall, in aid of the National Brotherhood Fund for war victims, at which the Springfield Band performed various selections.



Foden's Band Quartet, 1919

The next mention of the Band is after the Great War. The Band provided musical entertainment at the Nine Elms Swimming Club Gala on Wednesday 24 September 1919. At this time they were being conducted by Mr Lockyer.

Monday 12 July 1920 saw the Band playing at an open-air meeting for the Free Church Council in Battersea.

A concert was held on Thursday 12 May 1921 at Battersea Town Hall, to raise funds for an outing for 150 disabled men, who were currently training in the tailoring trades, under the patronage of the Minister of Labour, T.J. Macnamara.

The Band had another evening entertaining the Nine Elms Swimming Club Gala, which took place on Wednesday 21 September 1921.

Another contest appearance was undertaken on Sunday 11 June 1922, in the Brotherhood Contest at the Crystal Palace. The test piece was "*Classic Gems No. 1*". The Band was conducted by Harold Herring, and was unplaced out of 6 bands – the winner being Nunhead Christian Mission Band.

A mass demonstration a celebration of Wesley's Day and Empire Day was held at Hyde Park on 24 May 1924, at which the Springfield Band led the singing of hymns and anthems.

This was followed, on Saturday 8 November 1924, by the Band giving a concert at the Queen's Road Wesleyan Church in aid of the Nine Elms Brotherhood Sports Fund.

1925 saw the Springfield Brass Band, conducted by Harold Herring, take part in the procession of the Carnival organised by the supporters of the Anti-Vivisection Hospital, on Saturday 13 June 1925. The Battersea Borough Prize Band (bandmaster

F. Matthews) and the Battersea Maritime Brigade Brass Band (bandmaster J.E. Moore) were also in attendance.

Later, Sunday 20 September 1925, the Band, with 32 players, provided music for the opening service for the Mortlake Brotherhood.

The Band provided music for the celebratory tea given for the Pimlico Boys' Club, which met at the Central Hall Mission, on Saturday 20 March 1926. A similar concert, on behalf of the Senior Boys' Club at the same Mission, took place on Saturday 29 May 1926; with the Band also entertaining the Mortlake Brotherhood on Sunday 11 July 1926.

The Band made its last known contest appearance on Saturday 20 November 1926, at Caterham Drill Hall. The Springfield Hall Band entered the second section, against nine other bands, all playing a selection from Bizet's opera "*Carmen*". The winners were Highgate United Band, and Springfield Hall, conducted by Harold Herring, were not placed in the prizes.



Details of the Band's activities in subsequent years were few, but these included:

- Appearing with the Lavender Hill Temperance Choir in a concert in aid of band funds, giving five items under the direction of Harold Herring, on Saturday 3 November 1928.
- Advertising for new players, with instruments provided, only for those interested in Mission work, on 31 October 1930.
- Playing at the great demonstration of Wesleyan Methodists in Hyde Park, together with Tooting Silver Band, Deptford Band, and the Lycett Band, on Tuesday 20 September 1932.

- Performing at the 13 hours' service at the Holy Trinity Church, Clapham Common, on Tuesday 4 September 1934, which celebrated the centenary of the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies on July 31 1834.
- Took part in the massed bands concert at the Lambeth Civic Festival at Brockwell Park, on Sunday 9 September 1934, together with Lambeth Borough Silver Prize Band, and Brixton and Clapham Silver Band, all conducted by G. Daley.
- James Alfred Young was noted as being a member of the Springfield Hall Band, in the announcement of his wedding to Alice Elizabeth Luker, on Saturday 11 April 1936. Both of them were lieutenants in the Life Boy team attached to Springfield Hall.
- The Childer Chaine Fete, at Brixton, on Saturday 25 June 1938, saw the Band providing musical entertainment.
- The following week, on Saturday 2 July 1938, the Band performed at the District inspection of Scouts at Clapham Rectory.

The final mention of the Band is in January 1940, when a report of the death of Thursa Emily Herring noted that her husband, Harold Arthur Herring, was still the bandmaster of the Springfield Hall Band.

Further information:

- Holman, Gavin - *Thirsty work - brass bands and the temperance movement in the 19th century* - March 2018

Here are a few examples of other Wesleyan brass bands from around the same time as that of the Springfield Band.



East Street Wesleyan Brass Band, Southampton, 1907



Fleet Wesleyan Mission Band, Hampshire



Leadgate Wesleyan Mission Band



St George's Wesleyan Brass Band, St George in the East, London, c.1905



Middleton Wesleyan Temperance Band, 1908



Southall Wesleyan Mission Brass Band