

# The origins of Brass Band Associations

*Gavin Holman – February 2020*

The formation of "county band associations" was originally promoted as early as 1882 by William Seddon and other high profile bandmasters, but it took some years for the ideas to bear fruit.

The following list of brass band associations is not exhaustive, and many details of their formation (and demise in some cases) are missing. Some have fallen by the wayside over the years, but a good number are still active, though it is increasingly a struggle to find people to help run them. William Seddon's letter is appended below.

- Birmingham & District [Counties] Amateur Band Association -



- Bradford & District Brass Band Association
- Brass Band League of Northern Ireland
- British Amateur Brass Band Association - formed in 1893. One founder member was Ardwick Scottish Brass Band
- Buckinghamshire & District Brass Band Association – founded in 1970
- Carlisle Brass Band Association – probably formed in 1893, as it held its third annual contest in April 1896
- Cornwall Brass Band Association
- Cumberland and Furness District Brass Band Association – formed on 15 July 1893 at St John's Parish Room, Workington, following an earlier meeting held in June 1893 chaired by J. Goddard of the St John's Church Army Band.



- Cumbria Brass Band Association – founded in June 1977
- Durham County Brass Band League – founded in 1940
- East Anglian Brass Band Association –



- East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire Brass Bands Association - formed on 27 October 1900 at a meeting at the Pack Horse Inn, Beverley with representatives of 9 bands
- Essex and Middlesex Amateur Brass Bands Association - formed in early 1896, with its first contest being held at the Victoria Hall, Walthamstow on 12 March 1896
- Forfarshire Amateur Brass Band Association - formed on 28 May 1897 at the South Port Society's Room, Brechin
- Glasgow and Suburban Brass Band Association - active in 1863, when it promoted a Grand Musical Demonstration of nine Volunteer bands at the City Hall
- Gloucestershire Brass Band Association –
- Harrogate & District Brass Band Association – founded in 1926
- Huddersfield & District Brass Band Association – founded in October 1918



- Lancashire Amateur Brass Band Association – formed in early 1894, with its first contest being held at Standish on 24 March 1894

- Leicestershire Brass Bands Association – two dates for its formation – 1910 and 1926
- Lincolnshire Brass Bands Association
- London & Home Counties Brass Band Association - formed in March 1898 and promoted its first contest at the Parsons Green Cricket Ground, Fulham on 10 Sept 1898 (where the St Albans City Band took first place with the test piece "Moses in Egypt").



- Manchester & District Amateur Brass Band Association –



- Midland Counties (Amateur) Brass Band Association - active in 1888 when it promoted its first contest at Long Eaton on 8th September 1888
- North East Midlands Brass Bands Association – founded in 1946
- North of Ireland Bands Association – originally founded on 7 March 1907 as the North of Ireland Flute Bands' Association, it decided in February 1909 to include brass bands and brass & reed bands, forming the organisation as it is today.
- North Wales Brass Bands Association - formed on Saturday 21 March 1896 at the Grosvenor Hotel, Rhyl with representatives of 18 bands
- North Western Area Brass Band Organisation (also known as North West Area Brass Band Association) –



- Northants & District Brass Bands Association – formed in 1910
- Northern Counties Amateur Brass Band Association [England] – formed in spring 1898, holding its first contest at Felling on 11 June 1898
- Northern Counties Amateur Brass Band Association [Scotland] –
- Northumberland Brass Band League
- Oxford & District Brass Band Association – founded in April 1923, with its first contest being held in the grounds of Worcester College, Oxford in June 1923. Also known as Oxfordshire & District Brass Band Association



- Scottish Amateur Brass Band Association - formed in early 1895, its first general meeting was held at the Imperial Hotel, Edinburgh on 16th March 1895. The association was formed after a letter was received from Besson & Co. offering a challenge cup, value 50 guineas, for competition between Scottish bands, but that Besson's were debarred from formerly offering such a prize as there was no responsible body to be custodians of the trophy.



- South East Wales Brass Band Association –
- South Wales and Monmouthshire Band Association - founded in March 1891 following a meeting at Miller's Coffee Tavern, Market Street, Aberdare, with 21 bands represented. The first president was George Hanney, of the Morrision Band. Later known as the South Wales Brass Band Association.



- South West Brass Bands Association – founded on 7 December 1946, with 9 bands represented

- Southern Counties [Amateur Reed and] Brass Band Association – founded in January 1893, holding its first contest at Redhill on 19 July 1893
- Southport & District Brass Band Association – founded in 1960
- Three Counties Brass Band Association – founded on 7 March 1896 at a meeting at the Cowper Arms Hotel, Cheapside, Luton, for bands within the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, with 15 bands represented.
- Tunbridge Wells & District Band Federation (also known as the Royal Tunbridge Wells Brass Band Association) –



- Welsh Brass Band Association – founded in 1960
- Wessex Brass Band Association – founded in the 1930's
- West Midlands Brass Bands Association –
- West Riding Band Society – founded in 1930



- West Wales Association of Brass Bands – founded 14 September 1901
- Yorkshire & Humberside Brass Band Association – founded in 1956

Associations were originally members of the umbrella organisation – the *National League of Bands' Associations*. Later, the *British Federation of Brass Bands* took on this role.

### **Chronology of formation of associations:**

1863	Glasgow and Suburban Brass Band Association
1888	Midland Counties (Amateur) Brass Band Association
1891	South Wales and Monmouthshire Band Association
1893	British Amateur Brass Band Association
1893	Carlisle Brass Band Association
1893	Cumberland and Furness District Brass Band Association
1893	Southern Counties [Amateur Reed and] Brass Band Association
1894	Lancashire Amateur Brass Band Association
1895	Scottish Amateur Brass Band Association
1896	Essex and Middlesex Amateur Brass Bands Association
1896	North Wales Brass Bands Association
1896	Three Counties Brass Band Association
1897	Forfarshire Amateur Brass Band Association
1898	London & Home Counties Brass Band Association
1898	Northern Counties Amateur Brass Band Association [England]
1900	East Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire Brass Bands Association
1901	West Wales Association of Brass Bands
1907	North of Ireland Bands Association
1910	Leicestershire Brass Bands Association
1910	Northants & District Brass Bands Association
1918	Huddersfield & District Brass Band Association
1923	Oxford & District Brass Band Association
1926	Harrogate & District Brass Band Association
1926	Leicestershire Brass Bands Association
1930	Wessex Brass Band Association
1930	West Riding Band Society
1940	Durham County Brass Band League
1946	North East Midlands Brass Bands Association
1946	South West Brass Bands Association
1956	Yorkshire & Humberside Brass Band Association
1960	Southport & District Brass Band Association
1960	Welsh Brass Band Association
1970	Buckinghamshire & District Brass Band Association
1977	Cumbria Brass Band Association
<i>unknown</i>	Birmingham & District [Counties] Amateur Band Association
	Bradford & District Brass Band Association
	Cornwall Brass Band Association

	East Anglian Brass Band Association
	Gloucestershire Brass Band Association
	Lincolnshire Brass Bands Association
	Manchester & District Amateur Brass Band Association
	North Western Area Brass Band Organisation
	Northern Counties Amateur Band Association [Scotland]
	Northumberland Brass Band League
	South East Wales Brass Band Association
	Tunbridge Wells & District Band Federation
	West Midlands Brass Bands Association

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## Letter from William Seddon

### DISTRICT BRASS BAND ASSOCIATIONS

*Ringley Fold, Stoneclough, near Manchester, Sept. 11th, 1882*

As many bandsmen have enquired of me as to the full meaning of my letter, published in June number of *Brass Band News*, I will try to explain to all what I think is wanted to promote the progress of amateur brass bands, both individually and collectively.

- 1<sup>st</sup> A full and representative meeting of all bands worthy of the name. This meeting to draw up a code of rules for contesting, and also to appoint a committee to act for all from year to year.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> To regulate contests, and also to promote them, that is to say, where there is two or more contests annually in the same neighbourhood and none of them paying, to get them to join their interests and give better or more prizes, and in districts in which there are no contests, to promote the same.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> To establish consolation contests, to take place at the end of the season, in which none but those who had competed a certain number of times unsuccessfully should be eligible.
- 4<sup>th</sup> The establishment of an annual meeting in mid-winter, at which competitions in the following order should be instituted: First, for an original composition for full brass band, to be played at such meeting; second, for original composition for octuor of brass; third, for original composition for solo; fourth, for best arrangement and rendering of a set piece for octuor of brass, &c.
- 5<sup>th</sup> The appointment of a visiting and examining staff of professional teachers, who should visit and advise all bands in the association, and report to committee. This same staff of teachers to meet at stated intervals to examine and instruct amateur bandmasters. Also to grant certificates of ability and proficiency to such as passed, and publish the same in the organ of the association.

- 6<sup>th</sup> The registration of judges of proved ability and integrity.
- 7<sup>th</sup> The promotion of contests in set pieces in preference to leaving such to choice of bands, which rule clogs progress in its true sense.
- 8<sup>th</sup> To try to help those amongst us who show an original and marked talent for music to prepare themselves for the competitions for free scholarships in connection with the Royal College of Music.

The above programme seems very formidable, and, perhaps, to none but my own imagination will it appear to be feasible. But one can scarcely doubt the success of the 4<sup>th</sup> item, if taken up in a proper spirit. There exists at the present time within a reasonable distance of Manchester say 200 bands, or, perhaps, double that number. Suppose the competition to take place in the Free Trade Hall is one not justified in predicting a success? The original compositions could be examined in score by a competent and impartial committee, and those which were found to be inferior might be rejected and the best retained. There needs no plea for the first item I have set down; perhaps the 5<sup>th</sup> is the most difficult of all.

One may feel sure that scores of leaders or bandmasters will submit with an ill-grace to be told by the visiting examiner of all the faults to be rectified before the band is worth hearing. These gentleman (the visitors) if engaged by the association, need not be afraid to speak the truth, the report of their visit could be published in the organ of the association. One can easily imagine the spur that would be given to practice when the time of each visit was fixed.

It is absolutely impossible for all bands to engage gentlemen of high professional standing, but all musicians know that the advice and tuition of such, in however limited a scope, would work an immense amount of good. I have already taken more than my share of your valuable space. With the greatest respect for you and your readers, I remain yours, &c.

WILLIAM SEDDON.